

Psychoanalysis, Fantasy, Postcoloniality: Derivative Nationalism and
Historiography in post-Ottoman Turkey

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Abstract

Probably nowhere are the themes of tolerance and multiculturalism more prominently at display than in the recently flourishing literature on Ottoman religious-ethnic communities in Turkey, wherein Ottoman rule, particularly *the Millet System* of the 15th - 17th centuries, is romanticized by Turkish nativist historiographers as a perfect model of peaceful coexistence distinguished by exemplary hospitality and multicultural tolerance toward the Other, the “minorities”, be they Jews, Armenians or Greeks. In this dissertation, I investigate the role of these nativist historians and their historiography in the recuperation of Turkish national imagery, as well as the pitfalls of this sort of remembrance. While doing so, I draw upon the psychoanalytically-inspired concept of fantasy and postcolonial theory to demonstrate how the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance as a melancholic attachment to the past deals with the empire’s loss by pointing to internal and external enemies as threats to the unity and coherence of the nation. Domestically speaking, this fantasy promises to bring back the golden age in as much as enemies new and old will be eliminated on the way to restoring the nation’s power. At the same time, this fantasy takes on an international significance as it captures the essence of the reaction to the European imperative: “you should become multicultural and liberal like us.” The fantasy of the Ottoman Tolerance beats its European Other at its own game by claiming: “we were already multicultural.” Seen in these terms, the analysis of the nostalgic literature on Ottoman peace can illuminate how the “Occident/Western” and “Oriental/Derivative” (i.e. the Ottoman and Turkish) formations of the national imaginary are constructed, remembered and contested in the contemporary Global South. In light of these discussions I will question the conditions and possibilities of the ethics of remembering the Empire, and of entertaining a different relationship to the past in contemporary politics in Europe and Turkey. The key concern of my work is then to inquire into alternative ways to remember the Empire without remaining trapped in the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance, or its obverse, the fantasy of Oriental/Ottoman Despotism.

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Introduction

When a few environmentally conscious activists set up tents in a small park near one of Istanbul's most central squares in Istanbul in late May 2013, they could not have anticipated the chain of events that their actions would instigate. The small patch of green space in the centre of a buzzing metropolis, Gezi Park, was under the threat of redevelopment as an Ottoman-era army barracks to be used as a museum and a shopping mall.¹ For the critics of the redevelopment project, the barrack cum-museum symbolized the Prime Minister's imposition of a conservative Ottoman-Islamist ideology, while the shopping mall signified the government's neo-liberal policies and ambition to spawn a society of conspicuous consumption. As the protests escalated, police brutality and heavy use of tear gas against peacefully assembled crowds quickly brought out demonstrators in the thousands, who joined at initial handful of sit-in protestors. The protestors rallied not only in what is symbolically the most important square of Istanbul, Taksim, but also in other parts of the city; the protests quickly mushroomed in many other major cities in Turkey, and escalated in terms of their tenor. What started as an attempt to save a few trees spontaneously burgeoned into a movement in which a vast array of grievances were given voice; marginalized and oppressed people found themselves free to articulate their collective traumas and demand recognition from the state. While the wellspring of the protests had been centered at the occupied and re-collectivized Gezi Park, throughout Turkey multitudes performed both time-tested and novel forms of protest and civil disobedience.

One of the most significant points of contention between the state and the protestors was the use and abuse of history and, in particular, the questioning of certain milestones in Turkish collective memory. While the protests did take aim at recent state policies for curtailing basic freedoms and rights (e.g., pertaining to reproduction, to alcohol consumption, etc.), history, as usual in Turkey, was one of the most important terrains of

¹ Critical coverage and details of the events surrounding the Gezi Park revolts can be found in international media. See for instance: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/turkeyprotests> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-22924886>.

this struggle. The critical space opened up by the revolts enabled demonstrators to recall silenced collective memories, traumas and wounds of the past 20, 50 and even 100 years, going as far back as the Armenian atrocities committed at the hands of the Young Turks. It seemed as though everyone had gotten their hands on an Ouija board and was invoking sacred spirits and ghosts of late heroes and leaders, and slogans from various periods of the past. Some of the demonstrators made recourse to the War of Independence in 1923 and believed that its spirit of solidarity was uniting people on the streets across Turkey in self-defense of their way of life and territory. Others likened the struggle waged against Prime Minister Erdoğan's uncompromising attitudes and his authoritarian regime to the struggle for liberation from Ottoman Sultans' oppressive Islamic rule. Some recalled internationalist anti-fascist student and leftist movements of the 60s and 70s and invited people to stand in solidarity against the brutality of the oppressive state apparatuses as they chanted: "either all of us or none of us". Not only the struggles of Turks but also those of Armenians within Turkey were conjured up by the protests. For it came to light that the part of the park housed a significant Armenian cemetery which had been confiscated by the state and recast as a site of public recreation in the 1930s, and this former life of Gezi Park was commemorated by participants of the protest. Besides the Armenian minority, one of the biggest Muslim minorities, Alevis (Alewives), raised their voice in protest of the state's attempt to give the name of the 16th century Ottoman Sultan to the new bridge project on the Bosphorus. For Alevis, Sultan Yavuz Selim was responsible for the massacre of thousands of their ancestors and a bridge with his name on it would only add insult to injury.

The person who was the main target of the revolts, Erdoğan, along with his cabinet, responded to these voices of dissent by making references to Turkish-Ottoman history. To those who accused him of authoritarianism, the Prime Minister tried to justify his actions by reminding the Turkish public that from the founder of the Ottoman state, Osman Bey to the Sultans of the Golden Age (Fatih the Conqueror and Süleyman the Magnificent) and to the founder of the Modern Turkey, Atatürk, all great leaders had "distinguished characters and idiosyncratic styles". Furthermore, the Prime Minister contended that the demonstrators resembled the Janissaries, specially trained Imperial troops, well known for posing a threat to the Sultans' sovereignty, especially in their revolts in 19th century. More importantly, as he addressed his supporters at the airport upon returning from a trip to North Africa at the

height of the protests, Erdoğan asserted that the protests had been plotted by those seeking to prevent the emergence of a powerful Turkey, that would stand as a model to the countries in the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caucasus. Then he went on to acknowledge (alleged) messages of support for his government coming from Bosnia, Baku, Cairo, Baghdad, Aleppo, Mecca and Medina. When one connects these dots, what emerges, of course, is the map of the Ottoman Empire at its peak. What the Prime Minister sought to accomplish by invoking the Ottoman legacy was to portray the protests as nothing more than the result of plots orchestrated by external forces and internal collaborators to sidetrack Turkey from regaining its power as the heir of the Ottoman Empire.

The representatives of the US and the European Parliament, the Prime Minister claimed, crossed the line when they publicly shared their worries about police violence and violations of the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of speech. According to him, Western states and media such as CNN and BBC misunderstood the nature of the events and misrepresented them to the international audience. To put it in Erdoğan's words, "their masks fell off" and they were revealed as conspirators against the Turkish state. Moreover, the American government that allegedly killed seventeen people to tackle the Occupy Wall Street protests, did not, according to Erdoğan, have the right or the moral authority to give any advice or ultimatums to their Turkish counterparts. Similarly, the European Parliament's warnings about freezing Turkey's accession due to its handling of the protests were deemed hypocritical, since it was the same European states that had violently suppressed mass demonstrations recently in their own countries (e.g., Greece). Turkey's Minister of EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Egemen Bağış further blamed the EU for their hesitance to intervene against the oppressive Assad regime in Syria and this, he argues, clearly evinced a "double standard". According to the Minister, beneath the surface of Turkey-EU relations there exists an undercurrent of European resentment towards Turkey, which "has the most reformist and strongest government in Europe and the most charismatic and strongest leader in the world".²

² The full text of the Minister's press release can be found at the Turkish Ministry for European Affairs' website: <http://www.abgs.gov.tr/index.php?p=49004&l=2>.

The immanent opponents, such as artists, journalists, progressive union members, dissident students, minorities and liberal business elites – basically, whoever criticized the state policies -- were immediately labeled as collaborators of foreign powers seeking to weaken Turkey. Those who do not fit in with the image of Turkishness prescribed by the state, i.e., as ideal national subject, were declared as obstacles and threats to Turkey as an “emerging regional great power”. As the Secretary of the State, Hüseyin Çelik, put it, those demonstrators abused the tolerance and patience afforded by the Prime Minister and his government and should face what they deserved for crossing the line and becoming intolerable.

For anyone who knows a bit about the official version of the Turkish history, this paranoia about plots by external forces and traitors from within strikes a familiar chord. Unsurprisingly, the same pedagogical narrative of Turkish nationalism is used to explain the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire a century ago, with the same tropes of holding European imperial powers and Ottoman non-Muslim communities. It seems as though the ghostly presence of the lost Empire is still haunting and informing Turkish politicians – and, as we will see, the Turkish historians.

Rare are the moments such as the Gezi revolts that bring into such sharp relief not only the broader transformations and antagonisms that face Turkey today, but also the ways in which history is used by the powers that be to grapple with these issues. The Occupy Gezi movement, in that regard, was quite revelatory as it cast light on how the legacy of the Ottoman Empire has been appropriated by the state, especially over the last decade, to consolidate Turkish identity domestically as well as internationally.

In this dissertation, in terms of first hand material and field research, I investigate the role of historians and historiography in the recuperation of Turkish national imagery and collective identity. I conceive of the recently emerging Ottoman historiography over the last two decades as part of this rehabilitation process which attempts to design a Turkish self based on a Turkish-Muslim essence vis-à-vis the West as well as those segments of the Turkish society that do not fit that mold. In the following chapters, you will find an in-depth analysis of works by the Turkish historians and scholars who subscribe to the historical narrative of the “glorious” Ottoman Empire with an eye to (re)defining modern Turkish identity as the

heir to the Ottomans. I argue that the work of these Turkish historians, İlber Ortaylı, Kemal Karpat, Yavuz Ercan and Ahmed Akgündüz to name a few, who teach humanities, science, literature and law at various Turkish state universities (mostly based in Anatolia) as well as at prestigious universities abroad, is an important object of analysis to any student of nationalism and Orientalism. Alongside Turkish historians, in this thesis, I also incorporate the works of certain Western scholars whose body of work constitutes a major frame of reference for these Turkish intellectuals, both as a source of inspiration and scientific support. Bearing this connection in mind is crucial to discursively locate the recently flourishing nationalist Ottoman-Turkish historiography. I am also aware of the mutual influence and exchange between history and popular, public and political discourse. For this reason, I analyze certain public discussions and political narrative in relation to the uses and abuses of Ottoman history.

To be sure, the connection between nationalism and historiography has always been a closely interwoven one. Whenever nationalism and nation formation need to engender an origin, homeland, golden age, etc., historiography is put in the service of this project. As discussed in detail in Chapter Two, what distinguishes the nationalist-cum-Ottomanist historiography of the Turkish historians under study here is the heavy emphasis on historical and essentialized notions of *tolerance* and *multiculturalism* with direct reference to the imperial, pre-colonization era. Particularly since the rise of the religious right to elite positions in Turkish politics, there has been a phenomenal and officially sanctioned proliferation of the kind of Ottoman historiography that praises Ottoman peace, hospitality and multiculturalism that minorities are claimed to have enjoyed under the tolerant rubric of the Empire, known as the Millet System. Ottoman-Turks, in this portrayal, were the creators of a great civilization that made possible the survival of various ethnic and religious communities and cultures until the modern age and the intrusion of European powers into Ottoman state affairs. Based on this assumed historical legacy, the latest manifestations of Turkish nationalist imagination projects that unity and harmony can be successfully restored under the protective umbrella of “great” and “powerful” Turkey as long as it can revive and practice the principles that had guided the Muslim Ottomans for many centuries. This paternalistic, religion-based and fantasy driven notion of minority rights in the name of “tolerance” no doubt has serious repercussions for both the older and newer minorities in today’s secular Turkish Republic.

As will be illustrated in Chapter One, tolerance and multiculturalism have become very popular in the political lexicon in the age of global liberal governance since the 1980s. They are seen as the foundational principles with which Western societies supposedly deal with the immigrant minorities from their former colonies and the Global South who have settled in their midst. I wish to demonstrate in this thesis that in the case of post-Ottoman Turkey, the state and nativist intellectuals appropriate the contemporary Western governmental language of difference, but with a strong Occidentalist twist. Over the last two decades this newly emerging discourse has been striving to rebut the Orientalist stigmas attributed to Turkish-Ottoman culture and civilization—such as barbarian, despotic and authoritarian—and construct its own historical tolerant and multicultural imagery. In particular, neo-Ottomanist historians are trying to beat Europe at its own game by proclaiming: We were already multicultural!

What could be so troubling about constructing a nationhood declaring itself tolerant, peaceful and multicultural? As this dissertation will reveal, it blocks, cleanses and silences. The objective of this dissertation is thus to critically analyze the pitfalls and dangers of this kind of an approach to history and societal memory. To this end, postcolonial theory, criticism and experience offers invaluable insights and lessons from anti-colonial and derivative nationalisms in South Asia to North Africa and Middle East. If the task of postcolonial criticism, as spearheaded by Aime Cesaire (1955), Albert Memmi (1957), and Frantz Fanon (1952, 1961), and Amilcar Cabral (1973) is to investigate and deconstruct the uneven dynamics of social authority and the cultural and psychic representation during the colonial encounter between the West and non-West from which subjectivities of nation, gender, ethnicity, class, race and empire emerge, the Ottoman-Turkish case appears as an interesting terrain for the analysis for postcolonial criticism. Unlike other “exotic” colonial countries in Latin America, South Asia and Africa, the Ottoman Empire is geographically proximate to Europe, which made the encounter between the two civilizations all the more intimate and the threat from the other side all the more imminent. Thus the Ottomans were at the same time very close to and very far away from Europe. Or, to put it differently, they were the *extimate* Other of Western identity. This extimacy was also haunting the Ottoman-Turkish state authorities and elites’ perception of Europe, which was seen superior and

accepted as something to be mimicked and internalized. Yet, the West was the archenemy, the alien force threatening the Empire, encroaching upon it like a vulture. Despite this extimacy in the European and Turkish collective unconscious, the Ottoman-Turkish case is left out of the literature and has until recently remained as a black hole in postcolonial criticism.

This omission in the postcolonial literature was nicely diagnosed by the scholars in Turkey who registered the ambivalent situation of the Ottoman-Turkish states in the works of prominent scholars of Orientalism. This invisibility of the imprint of the Ottomans in the history of colonialism stems from certain complications in properly locating the features the Ottoman-Turkish experience. On the one hand the Ottoman Turks had been known as a colonizing force, surviving through the modern age and controlling many colonies in North Africa and the Middle East. They were the colonizers. On the other hand the Ottoman state authorities and elites witnessed the hegemony of Western colonialism as it tore the social fabric of the Empire by inciting minorities and by beginning to seize Ottoman territories. The Ottoman state elites tried everything to maintain the sovereignty of the Empire even when survival necessitated that they mimic and adopt the very model of Western modern colonialism that it simultaneously despised and admired. The Ottoman-Turks, once colonizers, had themselves become the subjects of European imperialism. Their once-colonizer-then-colonized situation means that they occupy an obscure location in the victor-victim dichotomy. Perhaps the big challenge for postcolonial scholars reflecting on the case of Turkey is this ambivalence, which may well result in silence and oversight.

Since the late 1990s there has been robust dialogue and engagement in Turkey as some scholars mobilized the critical analysis strategies of Orientalism and postcolonial critique as pioneered by Said (1979 and 1993), Bhabha (1994) as well as Chatterjee (1993) and Chakrabarty (2000) to inscribe the Ottoman-Turkish experience into the history of modern colonialism and nationalism. These Turkish scholars wished to demonstrate that the Ottoman Empire and its Turkish successor state are significant cases of the transnational processes of the modernity and modern colonial history. These fruitful engagements with the postcolonial criticism have recently offered important contributions to fill in the gaping hole within which Ottoman-Turkish history fits. The melancholic intellectual and political

climate that the encounter with Western hegemony and Westernization had evoked in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey have been designated as *Internalized Orientalism*, *Occidentalism*, *Ottoman Orientalism*, *Belated Modernity*, etc. In Chapter Three I discuss the works of scholars such as Hasan Bülent Kahraman (2002), Meltem Ahıska (2003), Selim Deringil (2003) and Nurdan Gülbilek (2003) who have bridged Ottoman-Turkish and postcolonial criticism; this melding of literature has yielded insights into how Western hegemony has had a hand in the construction of not only the identities of Ottoman state authorities but also the identities of those they governed, and of intellectuals.

Insightful as these scholarly works may be, they nonetheless mostly remain focused on the period of transition from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Turkish Republic (1870-1930). Thanks to these scholars' contribution to post-colonial criticism, we are well informed about the ways in which Ottoman-Turkish governors and elites of is period constructed an image of themselves in response to the Orientalist perception of their backwardness and belatedness, countering these judgments with resentment and self esteem. In this study, I investigate the recent past and, more specifically, the recent surge of scholarly (and popular) interest in Ottoman minorities, in the post-1980s - a surge that acts in defense of a national culture. The emergence of this new Turkish-Ottoman imaginary and its discourse of a Turkish nativism and Occidentalism that emphasizes minority rights, tolerance and the harmonious coexistence of a plurality remains an under-explored territory for postcolonial criticism. These fantasies of nationalist historians, which can be summed up through their discussion of Ottoman tolerance, multiculturalism i.e., in the Millet system, and their critical connection to the fantasies of "derivative" Turkish nationalism have not been adequately investigated. The public discourse of Ottoman multiculturalism and the Millet System has only been tangentially examined and when it has been mentioned, the phantasmatic and affective aspects of the historians' discourse on the Ottoman peace are often left unanalyzed. Elsewhere, when the concept of fantasy has been employed, the dangers and pitfalls of this sort of Turkish-Ottoman nationalist historiography and remembrance have not been probed to their limits. Yet, Turkish historians' recent discourse must constitute a pivotal object of investigation in postcolonial studies: scholars must analyze how Turkish nationalism deals with the melancholy and affective injury that arose from the loss of the Ottoman Empire as

well as how colonialism gave rise to contemporary ambivalence towards a European identity and European hegemony.

Let me state it from the outset that my goal is not to disprove the theses of historians of Ottoman nostalgia. It is not my primary goal to prove that their accounts do not match the reality. As will be discussed in Chapter Two in detail, there has been a series of scholarly attempts to veridically correct these historians' "ideologically biased" accounts and to offer in their stead a more truthful picture of the Ottoman past. Rather than following this path, I intend to explore urgent questions regarding ethics and politics of collective memory. Instead of focusing on whether these Turkish historians misrepresent historical reality, I am interested in the ways in which their narratives of Ottoman tolerance constructs and makes possible the social reality of the modern national subject. This is why I call this nativist nationalist historiography *the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance*. Throughout the dissertation I employ the psychoanalytically inspired notion of this "fantasy," conceiving of it as a prerequisite for managing the impossibility of harmonious society.

Nationalist fantasies, such as Ottoman tolerance, are vital because, such narratives coordinate the affects and that of desires of their adherents. What interests me in this dissertation is the mobilizing power of the fantasy of the Ottoman tolerance. It is the quintessential social fantasy, the vital ethno-symbolic myth of the new Turkish-Islamic nationalism, which enables its adherents to claim that it is who are the "authentic natives" of the historical Turkish-Islamic state and to sustain their present identities via the promise of a harmonious order in the future. Further, the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance explains not only why things went wrong in the past, but also singles out certain inassimilable elements as the culprits for the problems of the present. Reifying past traditions as essential culture and mobilizing the subjects of the nation with the fantasy of a lost Golden Age is a trope common to most anti-colonial and postcolonial nationalisms. The path of the Turkish historians and the politicians that I closely examine in this dissertation is variation on this trope. In Chapter Three, we will delve into the deployment of the fantasy of a glorious, tolerant and multicultural Ottoman past to stimulate and energize an expansionist, imperial tendency.

Inasmuch as I aim to delineate and discursively demarcate the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance, in this dissertation I also explore alternative ways of remembering and their limits. In other words, not only do I aim to discursively map out this fantasy, but I also want to discuss the conditions for traversal of this fantasy by imagining and remembering different paths and pasts. Insofar as the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance, in so far as it is fixated on the loss of the Empire, it silences other stories and injuries. Moreover, since this fantasy constantly displaces the guilt and fault regarding past violences onto external and internal Others, it substantiates and preserves a narcissistic Turkish collective group identity. A mourning process wherein subjects unquestionably identify with Ottoman-Turkish ancestors and the old social order, feeling betrayed and backstabbed for having tolerant is very perilous for the present and the future of this post-imperial/post-colonial society. As long as history is remembered in this way, the Other - be it Armenians, Greeks, Alevis or Kurds- is doomed to be seen as a problem in need of requires immediate solution and if necessary, elimination. Past traumas and injuries will continue to haunt the relations between the Turk and its Other(s). However, I firmly believe that it is possible to relate to the Ottoman past in a different way. This is why, in Chapter Four, I will seriously consider the question of how future generations could remember or relate to the Ottoman past without disavowing it as a dark age or elevating it to the status of a paradise lost. In light of literature on the ethics and politics of mourning collective losses, we will probe the conditions of confronting the loss of the Empire and the sense of belatedness without forcefully and fully forgetting its socio-cultural history or oversaturating the present with it. To that end, I will entertain different possibilities offered by historiography and lend an ear to alternative genres that encounter the Ottoman loss. By taking a critical glance at works in oral history, documentary novel; and memoir forms; I will question whether they may enable us to genuinely come to grips with the loss of the Empire-cum-fantasy.

Chapter One

Minorities in the Age of Global Liberal Multiculturalism: The Turkish Candidacy and Promise to Become European

What distinguishes the last two decades in contemporary Turkey from earlier periods of Republican history is the phenomenal increase in academic literature and official/state-sanctioned discourse that romanticizes Ottoman rule, particularly the so-called “Golden Age” between 15th and 17th centuries, as the epitome of cosmopolitanism and multicultural tolerance towards “minorities.”³ For scholars and intellectuals who glorify the Ottoman peace [Pax-Ottomana], the classical Ottoman social-political structure, commonly referred to as the Millet System constituted the bedrock of how the Empire successfully dealt with the question of the Other. They regard the Ottoman Empire as exhibiting one of the most astonishing and beautiful experiences of “the art of living together”² in peace and with tolerance towards the Other. The Empire is deemed praiseworthy for its purportedly benevolent treatment of non-Muslim subjects, be they Christian, Armenian or Jewish. The authors characterize this so-called classical structure of the Ottoman Empire as “peaceful,” “tranquil,” “generous,” “just,” and “benevolent.”⁴ In these accounts, the Ottoman Empire is thus hailed as “humanist,” “egalitarian,” “liberal,” “plural,” “multicultural,” and so on. She is

³ According to this narrative, the Ottoman non-Muslim ethnic and religious communities - mainly the Armenian, Jewish and Greek communities - were recognized by the Ottoman state as *millet*s and granted the autonomy to self-govern their communal cultural, judicial and religious affairs. See Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Gayrimüslim Tebanın Yönetimi* [Governance of non-Muslim Subjects in the Ottoman Empire] (Istanbul: Risale Yayıncılık, 1996), 17, 49; and Gülnihal Bozkurt, *Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu (1839-1914)* [Legal Status of non-Muslim Ottoman Citizens (1839-1914)] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1996), 9-10.

² This phrase stands for the title of a book compiling speeches and panels discussing the tolerant multi-religious structure of the Empire in 1999. The municipality of Istanbul organized and hosted the panels in 1999 along with other activities, to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the Ottoman Empire. Mustafa Armağan, ed. *Osmanlı'da Hoşgörü: Birlikte Yaşama Sanatı* [Tolerance in the Ottomans: The Art of Living Together] (Istanbul: Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı Yayınları, 2000).

⁴ Bilal Eryılmaz, “Osmanlı Devletinde Farklılıklara ve Hoşgörüye Farklı Bir Yaklaşım,” in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2000), 203; Aryeh Shmuelevitz, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Administrative, Economic Legal and Social Relations as Reflected in the Responsa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 30; and Yuluğ T. Kurat, “Çok Milletli bir Ulus Olarak Osmanlı İmparatorluğu,” [The Ottoman Empire as a Multinational Society] in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2000), 170.

lionized as the “Oriental architect of multiculturalism” and her Millet System is cherished as a prototype for a “mosaic society.”

The main premise of this chapter is to analyze how the current fascination with the Ottoman past (imagined as liberal, cosmopolitan, just, benevolent, peaceful, multicultural, tolerant and so forth), actually has more to say about the present than the past. A thorough analysis of the Turkish scholars’ and historians’ description of the Ottoman past will be presented in the next chapter. In the meantime, as any critical reading of those intellectuals’ historical accounts of the Ottoman past would immediately reveal, the lexicons of tolerance and multiculturalism that they employ really pertain more to contemporary liberal political discourse than to the past. The issues that conservative and state-sanctioned Ottoman historians deal with are indeed the issues and problems of our age. These Turkish scholars whose anxieties, concepts and problems stem from our times, have tapped into the reservoir of history to find inspiration and solutions to modern predicaments.

Notions of tolerance and multiculturalism have become key features of Western liberal discourse. Therefore, to properly analyze the works of Turkish historians who draw on the idea of Ottoman tolerance, we need to examine the basic parameters of our contemporary global governmental lexicon as well. To this end, this chapter explores the debates surrounding multiculturalism and minorities with an eye towards the issues faced and limits stumbled upon both in Europe and Turkey. “In many parts of the world,” as Gerard Delanty has pointed out, “there is little attention given to how non-Western societies have responded to the rise of multiculturalism, which, having been internationalized, is now part of most societies throughout the world.”⁵ This chapter in particular, and the dissertation in general, aims to analyze the internationalization of multiculturalism in “non-Western” societies, in particular within the context of Turkey’s candidacy for the European Union membership. This chapter primarily delves into the ways in which minority rights are negotiated and contested during the European enlargement debates between Turkey and Europe. I will then analyze at length how Turkish historians use Ottoman historiography to

⁵ Gerard Delanty, “Multiculturalism From a Cosmopolitan Perspective,” in *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Renewal of Critical Social Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 132.

respond to this internationalized and contemporary “multicultural condition” in the following chapters.

Here, my aim is not to provide a complete overview of theories of multiculturalism or a complete inventory of the discussions on multiculturalism. Rather, my goal is to work through the literature on multiculturalism and minorities to touch on the major areas of tension and antagonism that appear critical to understand the making of European and counter-European, post-colonial and post-imperial identities. The emphasis here is on the rhetoric between the European Union and Turkey and the issues that are highlighted as Turkey continues to seek accession to the EU. This inventory is important for critically engaging with the recent surge of fascination with Ottoman tolerance, older forms of multiculturalism and their use in the restoration of a particular fantasy of Turkish identity in contradistinction to the Orientalist perception of the Turk as barbarian, authoritarian and despotic. This inquiry is key to analyzing the making of contemporary Turkish national identity during the post-1980 period where Turkish state authorities and nativist intellectuals and addresses questions of Otherness and democracy by making reference to an assumed Golden Age. The imaginary of Ottoman tolerance of minorities remains a melancholic nativist nationalist reaction, which tries to beat its European other at its own game by proclaiming: “we were already multicultural!” Thus, the inquiry into the key areas of tension and antagonism of multiculturalism is essential for making a connection between past and present, as well as history and politics.

1.1 Liberal Multiculturalism and Tolerance in the West/Europe

There are a few foundational features of governance, such as democracy, liberalism and tolerance, which are commonly assumed to characterize the trajectory of political maturation in Western societies. Alongside these elements of Western states, which are often cited in reference to the rights of the individual, we witness emerging concerns about minorities, multiculturalism and group-differentiated rights. These features are significant to understand the negotiations between the European Union and Turkey and to analyze Turkish historians’ responses to these negotiations.

In the post-WWII European context, particularly in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the protection of the rights and liberties of the individual is no longer seen as adequate in and of itself. These rights and liberties are to be supplemented with group/minority rights as Western liberal societies are striving to deal with difference and incorporate diverse ethnic and religious communities into their structure. Thus, harmonious coexistence appears to be a pressing question “In the Age of Extremes,” to use the title of Eric Hobsbawm’s 1994 book⁶. Negotiating difference and addressing the question of “Can We Live Together” (to refer to another book, this time by Alan Touraine⁷) is more pressing than ever. The massive atrocities witnessed in the 20th century and continuing into the 21st confront us again with the age-old question of how to deal with the Other, or how to love thy neighbor. The UN’s designation of 1995 as “the year of tolerance” was quite symptomatic in this respect, as it had been preceded by ethnic cleansing, rampant nationalism and racial hatred in the heart of Europe, Bosnia.

Recent discussions and a rapidly flourishing literature on multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism(s) with emphasis on their moral, political and cultural aspects propose and imagine alternatives to the totalitarian and racist logic of ethnic nationalism. It is impossible within the confines of a short section to go through the intricate genealogical account of how minorities have come into existence as an entity and how they have become an issue for nation-states and the United Nations. However, it goes almost without saying that after the Second World War, the question of how nations treat the ethnic and religious minority populations within their territories has become a focal concern for transnational organizations, scholars and activists. As Will Kymlicka reminds us, several international treaties signed at the end of the twentieth century could be seen as a measure towards resolving minority questions.⁸

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994).

⁷ Alain Touraine, *Can We Live Together?: Equality and Difference* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁸ He provides the names of a few significant treaties that address this sensitivity: “The United Nations (UN) adopted a Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities in 1992. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labor Organization, and the World Bank, have also developed norms on minority or indigenous rights”. (Will Kymlicka, “Introduction,” in *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4). Kymlicka’s list would be extended by adding another significant document, the Council of Europe’s 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National

In addition to concerns about the rights of historical minorities, “indigenous minorities” and “national minorities” who have existed in a territory for a long time (such as Armenians in Turkey), new influxes of immigrants, - be they refugees, asylum seekers or workers - to the West also brought minority questions to public and political attention, especially since the 1950s. Countries such as Britain and France solved the problem of demographic decline and labor shortage by opening their borders to their ex-colonial subjects. Considerable number of South Asian (Indians, Pakistanis and Bengalis) and Caribbean immigrants started to arrive in Britain in the 1950s and 60s. Similarly, many Algerians and Moroccans began to move to France in the 60s to find a “better life.”⁹ While Britain and France relied on their former colonial relations for resources, countries like Germany and Sweden tried to solve their labor and population problems by initiating guest worker programs. Guest workers brought in by trade agreements worked in factories and mines and they served in low-states public and municipal sectors (e.g., as bus drivers and garbage collectors). Germany, for example, signed bi-lateral trade agreements with countries such as Spain, Turkey, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia and Yugoslavia.¹⁰ In addition to this wave of labor-based immigration, there emerged another wave of “guests.” Especially around the 1960s, European countries opened their gates to asylum seekers and refugees from countries experiencing socio-economic turmoil such as Turkey, Chile and Somalia. Thousands of people from Algeria, Vietnam, Iran and Iraq also sought refugee status in the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark and France. Thus, the Europe of today is striving to integrate and absorb millions of immigrants who once came as guest workers, asylum seekers, and refugees but now have become residents, citizens or undocumented aliens in their host countries. Not only in Europe but also in Canada, Australia and the United States, Western societies in general, have been absorbed in debates regards to the recognition and negotiation of difference as they struggle to accommodate and govern diverse ethnic and religious groups.¹¹

Minorities, which attempts to set standards for European Union countries in regards to their treatment of minority populations under their sovereignty.

⁹ See Robin Cohen, *Migration and Its Enemies: Global Capital, Migrant Labour and the Nation-State* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006) and Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009).

¹⁰ Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 25.

¹¹ Not only in Europe but also in Canada, Australia and the United States, Western societies in general, have been absorbed in debates regards to the recognition and negotiation of difference as they struggle to accommodate and govern diverse ethnic and religious groups. In academic circles and scholarly debates,

Considerable research has been done to formulate policies in different cities of Europe, from those of France and Switzerland to Belgium and Ireland, to better integrate the immigrants and minorities into the fabric of the society. Some of the policies pursued under the rubric of multiculturalism, such as the 1991 Declaration entitled “Towards a New Multicultural Policy for Multicultural Integration in Europe,” aimed to foster better participation of immigrants by assuring their involvement in public enquiries and consultation and involving consultative councils of immigrants within local authorities decision-making processes.¹² Granting immigrant residents the right to vote in local elections was also part of such plan. Similarly, the Council of Europe’s Report on “Community and Ethnic Relations in Europe” is also a good case in point to illustrate Western society’s rising need for recognition and incorporation of immigrant others. In the legal field, for instance, this mentioned report urges European countries to “extend rights of residence and formal citizenship – linked to providing greater access to the electoral process, education, housing, the labor market, health care, social services and access to public support for cultural and religious activities.”¹³ In terms of the socio-economic sphere, the Council of Europe suggested “the establishment of structures and institutions supporting tools for integration – language classes, special advice and employment agencies, vocational courses, and the ‘opening up of insufficiently accessible institutions’ – through making accommodations in education, housing provision, monitoring employment and extending infrastructural provisions through urban renewal programs.”¹⁴ In regards to the cultural dimension of immigrants’ integration and participation, the Council underlines “the need for making special accommodations in public services by way of linguistic provisions and sensitivity to cultural values, recognizing religious

concepts like “fluidity”, “network”, “hybridity”, “transnational citizenship” and “differentiated citizenship” and reflective of the pressing issues of nation states and the difficulties of governing difference. For an eloquent discussion of the first three concepts, fluidity, network and hybridity, see Gerard Delanty, “Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 57, no.1 (2006). On transnational and differentiated citizenship see (respectively) Rainer Baubock, *Transnational Citizenship: Membership and Rights in International Migration* (Aldershot: Elgar, 1994); and Iris M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹² Steven Vertovec, “Multicultural policies and modes of citizenship in European cities,” *International Social Science Journal* 50, (1998): 191.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

practices, providing mother-tongue teaching, and supporting the organization and activities of voluntary associations.’’¹⁵

According to Canadian multiculturalism expert Will Kymlicka, this last domain of cultural rights is particularly important for the successful accommodation of immigrant groups by Western liberal democracies. What he conceptualizes as the poly-ethnic rights of immigrant minorities would provide them with public funding for their cultural practices, e.g. the funding of ethnic associations, magazines and festivals.¹⁶ In addition to demanding better public support of their arts and culture, these ethnic and religious minorities, Kymlicka points out, demanded their exemption from laws and regulations that negatively affect them due to their religious practices. Here are some examples he enumerates of such exemptions:

Jews and Muslims in Britain have sought exemption from Sunday closing, or animal slaughtering legislation; Sikh men in Canada have sought exemption from motorcycle helmet laws and from the official dress-codes of police forces, so that they can wear their turban; Orthodox Jews in the United States have sought the right to wear the yarmulka during military service; and Muslim girls in France have sought exemption from school dress-codes so that they can wear the chador.¹⁷

In light of these sample debates, suffice it to say that the notions of minority and plurality along with those of group-based and poly-ethnic rights have become a central focus for Western countries, especially since the 1960s. One can indeed venture to say that the Christian theological commandment of “love thy neighbor” is extended to the secular commandment “you shall be multicultural”.

1.1.1 The Crisis and Failure of Multiculturalism

Whether these models and policies have proved effective in creating and regulating a harmonious society is an ongoing question in the West, where liberal “tolerant” multiculturalism has come under attack and scrutiny from many corners. Let us now

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 31.

¹⁷ Ibid.

examine take a look at them one by one to discern the problems and limits of liberal multiculturalism, and to establish which subjects have emerged as the most thorny.

First and foremost, multiculturalism has come under criticism for its failure to go beyond compartmentalizing and stereotyping communities into discreet cultural groups and for its neglect of intra-group diversity/multiplicity. From the perspective of its critics, multiculturalist policies place a great emphasis on the cultural expression, language, and arts of minority groups, but subsume other attributes of minority populations such as tradition, religion and ethnicity under the term “culture,” at the expense of politics. A statement in the Canadian Constitution of 1971 is one of the best examples of how difference and alterity in Canadian society are thus defined: “The Government of Canada will support all of Canada’s culture.”¹⁸ This statement is supplemented with three more objectives, which aim to foster the full participation of all cultural groups; creative encounters and interchange among cultural groups; and acquisition of one of Canada’s official languages by immigrants.¹⁹ As such, the state discourse, through the constitution, delineates the groups and immigrants in Canada through the sphere of culture. As a result of “culturization of politics,” as Slavoj Žižek coins the term, we often find ourselves engulfed by “political differences, differences conditioned by political inequality, economic separation, etc., [which] are naturalized/neutralized into ‘cultural’ differences, different ‘ways of life,’ which are given, something that cannot be overcome, but merely ‘tolerated.’”²⁰

The second issue regarding the crisis of multiculturalism, as seen from the perspective of progressive critics, is also germane to the way difference has been conceived of in contemporary liberal political traditions. As the argument goes, liberal multiculturalism de-centers and obscures the location of power by making it multiple.²¹ It depicts society as though all groups and components enjoy and share equal power and they are equal partners. To put it differently, multiculturalism has been found at fault for trivializing and effacing the unequal power dynamics in the society and history by reducing everything to mutual

¹⁸ Phil Ryan, *Multicultiphobia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 46.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Slavoj Žižek, “Tolerance as an Ideological Category,” *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 4 (2008): 660.

²¹ Gerard Delanty, “Multiculturalism From a Cosmopolitan Perspective,” 148-151.

exchange and mutual recognition. By hiding historically constituted inequalities and disadvantages in the society, multiculturalism thereby perpetuates the status quo.

In this context, Zizek provides an insightful criticism of the two problematic aspects of liberal multiculturalism so far mentioned:

Multiculturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a 'racism with a distance' – it 'respects' the Other's identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community towards which the multiculturalist maintains a distance made possible by his/her privileged universal position of all positive content (multiculturalist is not a direct racist; he or she does not oppose to the Other the particular values of his or her own culture); nonetheless he or she retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) other particular cultures properly – multiculturalist respect for the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's own superiority.²²

Zizek's critique of this insincere form of respect for the Other's culture signals another critical issue pertaining to how liberal multiculturalism employs the discourse of tolerance²³ when it comes to the conception of the Other qua immigrant minorities. For instance, Gerard Delanty has rightly asked "where the limits of tolerance lie: does tolerance have to translate into solidarity across culturally defined groups or does it breed indifference? [Or] does tolerance amount to accepting others who are different and possibly intolerant?"²⁴ In practice, the hegemonic discourse of tolerance sees the Other as someone who is intolerant and radically different. Thus, rather than genuine recognition and dialogue, the act of tolerance in multicultural democracies constitutes a dichotomy between the sovereign and the subject by the very act and performance of tolerance. The Other's difference in this dialectic relationship is tolerated as long as it does not transgress the line and bother Us. To put it in the words of Wendy Brown, tolerance as a political discourse of Western democratic societies:

²² Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject* (New York: Verso, 2003), 216.

²³ See John Rawls on 'Toleration and The Common Interest' and 'Toleration of the Intolerant' in his seminal work *A Theory of Liberal Justice* for fundamental axioms of toleration in liberal tradition (John Rawls, *A Theory of Liberal Justice: Revised Edition* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999 [1971]), 186-194.). Michael Walzer's book *On Toleration* for an analysis of its application in various regimes, such as multinational empires and nation-states, and to practical issues, e.g., religion, education, gender and so on (Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). These two books serve as standard texts for liberal theory's understanding of tolerance.

²⁴ Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination*, 149.

involves not simply the withholding of speech or action in response to contingent individual dislikes or violations of the taste but the enactment of social, political, religious, and cultural norms, certain practices of licensing and regulation; the making of subjects of tolerance as inferior, deviant, or marginal to those participating tolerance, and a justification for something dire or even deadly action when the limits of tolerance are considered breached.²⁵

She adds “almost all objects of toleration are marked as deviant, marginal, or undesirable by virtue of being tolerated, and the action of tolerance inevitably affords some access to superiority.”²⁶

As Brown brilliantly puts it, an important feature of tolerance as a discourse deployed by Western liberal democracies is that it subsume the issues of minority status and marginality, be it of immigrant, ethnic and or religious communities under its hegemony. This is why critics such as Delanty, Kymlicka and Gilroy criticize liberal tolerance and in its stead call for “acceptance and recognition,” “dialogue,” and “conviviality/convivial culture.”²⁷

It is only the progressive critics such as Brown, Kymlicka, Zizek or Delanty, who have questioned multiculturalism.²⁸ While these critics complain about “not enough” dialogue and seek recognition of difference, conservative politicians, intellectuals and public figures accuse it for allowing “too much” space for difference and diversity. Multiculturalism has been criticized even in its own “home,” Canada, where it was legislated as the official ideology. In 2009, Jason Kenney, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, Multiculturalism in Canada stated on several occasions that he was deeply concerned about the way multicultural policies of Canada allowed too much difference and segregation.²⁹ As a result, he maintained, Canada is suffering from not having a common and unifying culture.³⁰ Being trapped in their

²⁵ Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 14.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination*, 191; Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 171; Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 150.

²⁸ See also Sara Ahmed “Multicultural Love,” in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 133-143.

²⁹ For an elaborate analysis of Jason Kenney’s discourse see Phil Ryan, *Multicultiphobia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 200-206.

³⁰ Very similar musings emerged in the British public debate as well, see Bhikhu Parekh, *Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (London: McMillan, 2000), 142-176.

ethnic ghettos, he claimed, allowed immigrants to keep their old cultures and traditions intact without having adequate language proficiency in either English or French, and without being properly integrated into their new country. Criticizing the multicultural policies of the 70s, which he deemed responsible for dilution of Canadian values and identity, Kenney stated that his government does not “want a country that is a bunch of different silos where people don’t associate with each other.”³¹ As part of measures aimed at better integration, he proposed more thorough implementation of language requirements for newcomers. Furthermore, Kenney stated that “if you can’t complete the [citizenship] test in one of those two languages, you are not supposed to become a citizen” and “it is just basically saying go back and study more and come back to us when you can get by in one of those languages.”³²

In fact, it was not only the Minister of Immigration but also other influential figures in Canadian public discourse that harshly criticized multiculturalism in the 1990s. The criticism they leveled against multicultural policies is multi-layered, addressing both the past and the present of multiculturalism. In his eloquent discourse analysis of those public critics and their attacks on multiculturalism, Phil Ryan demonstrates that despite their divergences on certain issues, attacks on multiculturalism are based on the assumptions that it causes harm to society by fostering: i) a poised sense of history, obsessed with various alleged sins of our past; ii) the loss of our “centre;” iii) mere coexistence; iv) cultural walls and separatism; v) divided loyalties; vi) a weakened English Canada; and vii) a weakened collective life.³³ Thus, we are asked through these conservative articulations to believe that the cohesion of Canadian national identity is under severe threat due to multiculturalism.

The failure of multiculturalism as state policy was also announced recently by certain European leaders, namely German Chancellor Angelina Merkel, British Prime Minister David Cameron and former French President Nicolas Sarkozy. They echoed one another’s strong conservative tone as they criticized multicultural state policies for allowing segregation of different cultures and separation of lives rather than making attempts to

³¹ Raj Athia, “Minister Wants Ethnic Communities Embrace Canadian Values,” *Calgary Star*, April 4, 2009. Quoted in Phil Ryan, *Multicultiphobia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 203.

³² “French or English competence needed for citizenship,” *The Canadian Press*, March 20, 2009, accessed November 9, 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/03/20/immigration-language-kenney.html>.

³³ Phil Ryan, *Multicultiphobia*, 41-2.

successfully integrate immigrants and create a cohesive national identity. In 2010, while addressing the young members of the Christian Democratic Union Party, Angela Merkel said the “tendency had been to say ‘let’s adopt the multicultural concept and live happily side by side, and be happy to be living with each other’ but this concept has failed, and failed utterly.”³⁴ In arguing that immigrant guest workers did not properly adapt to German society, Merkel effectively obscured the reality of institutionalized German racism and forced assimilation policies that have been in effect for the last 40 years. Following on the heels of Merkel’s declaration of the failure of multiculturalism was David Cameron’s comments on the British experience of multiculturalism. In his first speech as Prime Minister, at a 2011 security conference in Munich, he also criticized immigrant communities and the laxness of British immigration and integration policies. In remarks resonating with Merkel’s, Cameron stated that “we have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong to,” and added “we have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values” which are “freedom of speech, freedom of worship, democracy, the rule of law, equal rights, regardless of race, sex or sexuality.”³⁵ Before the dust of Merkel and Cameron’s speeches settled, it was Nicolas Sarkozy’s turn in 2011 to declare, during a media conference held at the EU summit in Brussels, that multiculturalism in France had also failed.³⁶ According to him, policies, which had been intended to promote religious and cultural difference, instead bred segregation. Like Merkel and Cameron, he maintained that tolerating the existence of divided communities, prevented France from having better-integrated immigrants, who would accept the core values of France. Here again we observe that the burden of failure of Western tolerant multiculturalism was placed heavily on the immigrant Other who ostensibly resists integration. Interestingly, however, in these speeches immigrants are not depicted as the only ones responsible for the failure of multiculturalism. From the perspective of these leaders, the state must also be criticized for being overly tolerant or passively tolerant of these ethnic and religious communities, via

³⁴ Gavin Hewitt, “‘Failure’ of multiculturalism,” *BBC*, October 18, 2010, accessed September 14, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/gavinhe Witt/2010/10/failure_of_multiculturalism.html.

³⁵ “State multiculturalism has failed, says David Cameron,” *BBC*, February 5, 2011, accessed September 14, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12371994>.

³⁶ “Nicolas Sarkozy joins David Cameron and Angela Merkel view that multiculturalism has failed,” *Dailymail*, 11 February, 2011, accessed September 15, 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1355961/Nicolas-Sarkozy-joins-David-Cameron-Angela-Merkel-view-multiculturalism-failed.html>.

them, official policies that encourage separatism and extremism by being too tolerant of religious and cultural differences. The choices immigrants make are welcome as long as they do not threaten the “French life style,” for instance.

The year 2010 was particularly gloomy for immigration issues across Europe. Many more public critics joined the choir of anti-immigrant conservative sentiment and called for better integration and tighter immigration. The former Bundesbank member Thilo Sarrazin published a book entitled *Germany Abolishes Itself*, which claimed that immigrants, especially Muslims, did not properly integrate with German values and culture and had contributed to the decline of Germany.³⁷ Similarly, the Bavarian state’s Premier, Christian Social Union leader Horst Seehofer proposed to suspend immigration from Turkey and Arab countries due to insurmountable cultural differences.³⁸ Not only in Germany, France and the UK did multiculturalism stir such heated political discussions: in Australia and Spain too, multicultural policies were criticized. The former prime ministers of these countries John Howard and Jose Maria Aznar respectively, also expressed their concerns about the results of “unsuccessful integration.”³⁹ These reactions from right wing or conservative politicians have been conceptualized by Etienne Balibar as the demonstration of “‘immigrant complex,’ which is based on a meta-racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences.”⁴⁰ It “does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others,” Balibar argues, “but only the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions.”⁴¹

³⁷ Gavin Hewitt, “‘Failure’ of multiculturalism.”

³⁸ Matthew Weaver, “Angela Merkel: German multiculturalism has ‘utterly’ failed,” *The Guardian*, 17 October, 2010, accessed September, 15, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed>.

³⁹ “Nicholas Sarkozy declares multiculturalism has failed,” *The Telegraph*, February 11, 2011, accessed September 15, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/8317497/Nicolas-Sarkozy-declares-multiculturalism-had-failed.html>.

⁴⁰ Etienne Balibar, “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism’?,” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Veron, 1991), 21.

⁴¹ Ibid.

1.1.2 Cultural Racism and Islamophobia in Europe

There is an added element to this whole debate of the immigrant Other, and it concerns the age-old fear of Oriental or colonial subjects. For Balibar “this consideration is particularly important for the interpretation of contemporary Arabophobia, especially in France, since it carries with it an image of Islam as a ‘conception of the world’ which is incompatible with Europeanness.”⁴² Of course, France is not the only case in point. The perception of Islam as a threat to Western liberal and secular values can be extended to other Western nation-states. In addition to France’s population of 5 million Muslims, there were approximately 4 million Muslims living in Germany, and 2 million in Britain.⁴³ In terms of distribution of the Muslim population according to European cities, Muslims are demographically predominant in “Amsterdam and Rotterdam in Holland; Duisburg, Cologne, and the Berlin neighborhoods of Kreuzberg and Neukoln in Germany; and Blackburn, Bradford, Dewsbury, Leicester, East London, and the periphery of Manchester in England.”⁴⁴

Recent history is full of incidents that, according to many conservative critics of multiculturalism, have raised questions about the compatibility between the “West” and Muslim communities. The controversy and reaction caused by Salman Rushdie’s (1988) novel *Satanic Verses* in Britain, the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh after the release of his controversial film on women in Islam (2004), the publication of cartoons of Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper (2006), the banning of wearing of face covering veil, such as burka in France (2011), and the riots of Muslim youth in the banlieus of Paris (2005) all drew the Western eye toward the “tension” between Muslim immigrants and the assumed core values of the West: tolerance, secularism, freedom of speech.

Even a cursory look at European history reveals that Muslims have not been the only group deemed inassimable into the society. Jews and Catholics have each been posited as alien to the modern European state and society, depending on the national context. Religious violence around the 16th century between the Catholics and Protestants caused immense

⁴² Ibid., 24.

⁴³ Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 96.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

problems. As a result, as we are often told, religious tolerance emerged out of the necessity to peacefully coexist. Religious tensions and violence have always existed in the midst of Europe. However, the rhetoric of those who oppose Islam would have us believe that it is irrevocably incompatible, depicting it as the newest and most violent threat to what is conceived as Western civilization.

The turn of the millennium also was marked by the “return” of religion and fundamentalisms. Everyday we face excessive media coverage on religion and religious extremism. As Asad cogently observes, our perception is bombarded with images where

[i]n the West Bank and Gaza, Jewish zealots attack and kill Palestinians; in Egypt, Muslim zealots murder policemen, Copts and other civilians, in Algeria, the scale of terror directed by the Islamic Salvation Front at overthrowing the present unconstitutional regimes escalates to unmanageable proportions; in India, the Hindu nationalist movement targets Muslim, foments riots, threatens to take over state power, and upper-caste Hindus burn transgressive outcasts alive; in Iran, a despotic Islamic government persecutes religious minorities and homosexuals; in the US, “pro-life” Catholics and Protestants threaten abortion doctors with death.⁴⁵

Rosi Braidotti echoes these sentiments about fundamentalism as she points out that “religious extremism and the political return of God hold for all monotheistic religions nowadays and the Christian-backed new virginity and sexual abstinence movements, the Evangelical Protestants’ ‘born-again’ fanaticism” poses equally problematic conservative perceptions of humanity.⁴⁶ However, at the end of the day, amongst all of these “fundamentalisms,” it is Islam that is brought to the fore and believed to be the most incompatible with modern democratic states and institutions. Different geographies and eras of Muslim countries and states are all condensed into one overarching civilizational bloc which emerges as the antithesis of West and irreconcilable with modernity. In the semiological construction of Islamic alterity to Europe, Islam is matched with a chain of equivalences such as patriarchy, authoritarianism, terrorism, fanaticism, and intolerance and seen as a culture and civilization that accommodates and fosters them. Thus, it appears as something inherently antithetical to modernity and the Enlightenment. Even if similar ideas

⁴⁵ Talal Asad, “Europe Against Islam: Islam in Europe,” *The Muslim World* 87, no.2 (1997): 183.

⁴⁶ Rosi Braidotti, “In Spite of the Times: The Postsecular Turn in Feminist Theory,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no.6 (2008): 4-5.

and practices exist elsewhere – as in European Jewish communities which have ritual practices of slaughtering animals and in which the status of women is reduced in religious law pertaining to marriage and divorce, as Asad correctly reminds us – we are asked to believe that it is ultimately Islam that render them threatening.

It is all too common today to see the representation of Muslims transposed with images of raging “fundamentalist” masses with flaming eyes who are ready to attack at any second, with pictures of attacks on Western missionaries and offices and promises of revenge, with footage of hostage takings and kidnappings, with images of veiled and silenced women and children, and with ominous call to prayers and massive praying crowds.⁴⁷ Similarly, it is all too familiar a read to find articles reporting poll results measuring how Europeans feel about Islam. Here again, we encounter the same tropes and issues when Islam is discussed and understood in Germany, France, Britain or the Netherlands. It has become everyday routine to read yet another poll reporting that the majority of Europeans find Islam intolerant, authoritarian, overly traditional, antithetical to modernity, oppressive to women, and pro-terrorist and that they experience a sense of threat at the number of Muslim immigrants in Europe.⁴⁸

In addition to the issues of fear and anxiety regarding the way western nation-states accommodate (or fail to accommodate) Muslim communities, there is another important dimension to “Islam in Europe” debate: the connection often made between Muslims living in Europe and Islam abroad. It is assumed that Muslim immigrants have brought all the antagonisms and conflicts pertaining to their culture and traditions to their new homes. From endorsement of Shari’a law and arranged marriages to blood feuds and honour killings, not to mention the “inferior” position of women, Islam’s supposed excesses and horrors occupy the gaze of the European public. In this perception of Islam and Muslims, — whether a German-speaking Turk in Berlin, an English-speaking Pakistani in London, a Dutch-speaking Somalian or Moroccan in Rotterdam — all Muslim immigrants in Europe share the same culture, one assumed to be irreconcilable with western modernity. For this

⁴⁷ Gülise Gökçe and Orhan Gökçe, *Avrupa’da İslam ve Türk İmaji [The Image of Islam and the Turk in Europe]* (Ankara: Birleşik, 2011), 59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 72; and Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 95.

reason, Muslims in Europe are seen to carry the threat of Islamic fanaticism, extremism and jihadism, no matter how many generations they may have been living in Europe. Again, as Talal Asad observes “on the whole the media confined themselves to two kinds of questions: on the one hand, the requirements of national security and the danger to civil liberties of the war on terror, and on the other hand, the responsibility of Islam as a religion and Arabs as a people for acts of terror.” As Asad’s argument goes, “this has placed the ‘religious minorities’ in a defensive position.”⁴⁹ In short, Muslims in Europe are seen as connected with transnational religious forces as well as global Islamic resurgence.

1.1.3 European Tolerant Multiculturalism, Its Limits and Borders: Turkey’s Image as Wall-cum-Bridge

Inasmuch as the discourse of tolerant and multicultural governance is related to an urgency for the West to regulate its Others domestically qua its minorities, the same discourse comes into play when the West interacts with the “non-liberal”/“non-Western Other” in the international sphere. Just as Western states depict certain domestic minorities as unruly, intolerable subjects and attempt to regulate and tame them, nonliberal transnational forces seen as threats to Western tolerant liberalism can be subjected to the same disciplinary practices and discourse.⁵⁰ In terms of how the “nonliberal” Other outside the West is tackled, European Union debates involving Turkey’s candidacy are quite revelatory. Debates about and contestation of Turkey’s accession lay bare many of the West’s fundamental anxieties and fears in terms of both public and elite opinion about non-Western Muslim societies.

While Eastern European nations and especially Russia had long been part of the “Eastern Question”, the Ottoman Empire and the figure of the Turk constituted the Obscene Other well beyond eastern borders, and took on great significance for European identity.⁵¹ While Ottoman-Turkish imagery had been conceived of as alien and antithetical to everything that

⁴⁹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7-8.

⁵⁰ Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 8.

⁵¹ Thierry Hentsch, *Imagining the Middle East*, trans. Fred A. Reed (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992); and Zachary Lokman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: the history and politics of Orientalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

makes up European identity, this obscene external other occupied a great deal of influence at the very core of European society and its discussions of democracy, monarchy and despotism. Relying on this culturally distant Islamic, Asiatic other as a foil for Europeanness, whether regarding the essence of good government or women's liberation, meant making it ironically proximate and intimate to European identity. In many respects this image of otherness has persisted into the present. Thus, this extimacy is by no means a thing of the past; it continues to manifest itself well into the 21st century. Take for instance, the selection of Istanbul (once the capital of the Ottoman Empire) as the European Capital of Culture for 2010 even though Turkey has yet to become a part of the European Union. Or take for instance, the 2008 European Cup quarterfinal match that the Turkish national soccer team played in Vienna. If the European sports commentators did not openly joke about "Vienna being under siege by the Turks once again" it was probably only out of political correctness. After all, as all the commentators and spectators well knew, Vienna had been the outermost point of Ottoman incursion into Europe, in defense of which European powers had united several times. No doubt, this ambivalence of the Turkish-Muslim identity takes on great importance when one thinks of Turkish immigrants living in Europe. Since the 1950s Turkey has sent a near army, millions of immigrant workers to Europe, primarily to Germany but also to Sweden, France, the Netherlands and Britain, fuelling paranoia about a cultural siege.⁵²

1.1.4 Inclusive vs. Exclusive Views on Turkey's Candidacy to the EU

The expansion of Europe has not been limited to question of Turkey's accession. The European Union continually incorporated new members into its body. When it emerged as the European Coal and Steel Community in the 1950s, its primary aim was to control the production and use of steel as well as coal within Europe. It was thought that, regulated otherwise and left to the control of a few countries, monopolized access to coal and steel would give rise to another regional (if not world) war. The establishment of the European Community was expected to prevent the possibility of sole control over these resources by

⁵² Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, 23-31.

any single country (as Germany had done for instance during both World Wars) or the possibility of another war caused by nationalist and imperialist motives. In other words, the formation of the Community stemmed from the necessity of stopping the bloodshed as well as the desire to foster region-wide post-colonial economic prosperity rather than any community-building or identity politics.⁵⁸ Once the dust settled and peace was established again in Western Europe, the civilizational project started taking on greater significance. As a result of this transformation, the European Economic Community (EEC) was formed in 1957.

After the inclusion of Ireland, the UK and Denmark into the EEC in 1973, came the 1980s accessions of Greece, Spain and Portugal, which had left behind regimes of dictatorship. In the 1990s, the main question for the EEC became the destiny of the former countries in the newly dissolved Soviet Bloc. In 2004, eight countries of eastern and central Europe joined the erstwhile European Economic Community (EEC) now the European Union. With the integration of Romania and Bulgaria, the number of states within the Union reached 27.

In 1993 the EEC became the European Union and its member states signed the Treaty of Maastricht to form a common European citizenship. The Union thus became an institution that facilitates the regulation and coordination of member states' issues, such as health, environment, education, security, defence, justice and human rights. It has evolved into an organization setting standards and controlling the implementation of its core values, known as the Copenhagen criteria, e.g. respect for the rule of law, democracy, freedom of speech and movement, human rights and so forth. By the turn of the millennium, the European Union had merged as a gigantic entity that makes decisions about domestic and international affairs through its own Parliament, controls its vast borders, and provides its citizens with closely regulated and high standards of living.

Despite optimism about integration and enlargement, questions remain about the eastern borders of the European Union and the membership of Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey. So far, the EU has seemingly managed to solve a certain part of the "Eastern Question" by

⁵³ On the emergence of European Union see Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity and Reality* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995).

incorporating central and eastern European countries into its standards and governance. Now the “Eastern Question” has become pushed forth towards the Bosphorous of Istanbul, the strait connecting the two continents, which symbolizes the basis of the ambivalence and anxiety. In light of this respect, the announcement of the European Union’s 2005 decision to start full negotiations with Turkey evoked heated debates, excitement and panic across Europe. For some, this expansion was a natural evolution of the partnership between Europe and Turkey, which has been developing since the 1960s when Turkey first made its application. Chronologically speaking, Turkey’s candidacy goes further back than those of Poland, Latvia or Estonia, which are presently EU member states. Moreover, Turkey’s supporters claimed that when it comes to criteria such as the rule of law, democracy and free market, given Turkey’s “remarkable historical experience” of modernization, democracy and economy, it would be no harder to incorporate Turkey into the EU than it had been to incorporate Hungary or Romania. Therefore, the stumbling blocks to Turkey’s membership cannot be easily explained by rational calculations and the criteria of *realpolitik*.

Turkey’s candidacy brought a number of controversial topics and discussions to the fore that directly relate to our previous discussion of multiculturalism and tolerance. The main issues surfacing in this particular context are about who Turks are and where Turkey belongs along civilizational faultlines. Whether for or against Turkey’s incorporation, all the arguments made regarding Turkey’s accession mobilize the same set of concepts to make claims about the essence of Turkish identity. Images of culture, civilization and historical tradition are utilized to describe how Turkey is as seen via the European gaze. What is equally important in this process is the construction of European identity; by constructing the imaginary of Turkey, Europe is simultaneously forming its own identity. No doubt there are many definitions of Europe and Turkey and these views and descriptions are heterogeneous, contingent and fragile.⁵⁴ For the sake of simplicity, however, here we can narrow these views on Turkey’s accession down to two main camps.

⁵⁴ For a detailed discussion of these various perspectives on Turkey’s identity and location see, Feyzi Baban and Fuat Keyman, “Turkey and Postnational Europe: Challenges for the Cosmopolitan Political Community,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no.1 (2008). See also Bülent Küçük’s article for an eloquent analysis of inclusive and exclusive views on Turkey’s candidacy and various attributions of bridge and border metaphors in German political and public discourse: Bülent Küçük, “Borders of Europe: Fantasies of Identity in the Enlargement Debate on Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 41 (2009).

The first of these approaches, which is celebrated by many European scholars, public and political figures, imagines a Europe without Turkey. It draws on the classification and categories of classic Orientalism and mobilizes them against the Ottoman Empire and its successor, the Turkish Republican nation-state. According to this perception of the world, Europe and Turkey represent two fundamentally distinct blocks. Europe conjures up the image of ancient Greeks and Romans, and signifies the cultural and historical tradition—including Christianity — that gave birth to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and modern science. Turkey, as far as the argument goes, has no place in this European heritage. On the contrary, there exists an insurmountable gap between them because Turkey belongs to the world of Asiatic civilizations and its culture pertains to the Orient. It has been the great Oriental menace — embodied in the Ottoman Empire — that the Christian European states managed to stop in Vienna in 1668. Therefore, Europe should not now surrender its borders, but should continue to keep its historical enemy at bay. Otherwise, Europe would face the danger of blending two antithetical traditions. Given Turkey’s considerable population and unstable political structure, it is also suggested that in so doing, Europe may end up trying to bite off more than it can chew. From this perspective, such a cultural mixing would water down European identity by incorporating a large populace of unbridgeable diversity into its governance. Juxtaposing such diverse and opposing ways of life and world-views would constitute a major barrier to the development of a more secure and unified European Union.

One of the best exemplars of this particular perception has been Nicolas Sarkozy’s: In public speeches as French President in 2007 and 2009, he underlined the geographical and cultural difference between Europe and Turkey.⁵⁵ In his imagination of Europe and the European Project, there could be no place for Turkey. However, for him, leaving Turkey outside the European Union would not mean for him cutting off all ties with her. Regional trade and political cooperation with Turkey as a Mediterranean neighbor or “special partner” must be pursued via different platforms, Sarkozy said. His view was backed by Angela Merkel, who expressed similar concerns and worries about mixing culturally and geographically different

⁵⁵ For a thorough analysis of Sarkozy’s depiction of Turkey see Luis Bouza Garcia, “European Political Elites’ Discourses on the Accession of Turkey to the EU: Discussing Europe through Turkish Spectacles?,” *European Perspectives* 3, no.2 (2011).

entities, and about the ramifications of this “wrong-doing” for the future of the project of Europe. Merkel, too, supported the idea of a special partnership with Turkey. Not only have France and Germany resisted the accession of Turkey but public discussions on Turkey’s membership in Austria and the Netherlands have also been replete with controversy and anxiety. Regardless of whether this discourse is constructed by politicians, intellectuals or journalists, the location of Turkey is always one apart. It is through this exclusionary act of demarcation that Turkey (and simultaneously Europe) take their identities, as Turkey is placed outside Europe’s border⁵⁶. In that the emphasis is placed on Turkey’s aloofness, the border becomes a “wall,”⁵⁷ analogous to the Berlin wall, which had served to separate Western democracies from the Communism state.

The other approach to Turkey’s candidacy highlights its proximity. From this angle, rather than radical difference and antagonisms between Turkey and Europe, brought to the fore are common political and economic interests and shared histories. The “special geo-political location” of Turkey is emphasized in terms of its crucial role in the accession process as well as its capacity to enable interaction. Turkey, as it has been pointed out many times by the adherents of the inclusionary perspective, is a regional mediator between Europe and the Middle East. Should Europe turn its back to Turkey and leaves her to her own devices, Turkey might drift into Islamic fundamentalism. It follows that the excluding Turkey would only contribute to a rise of Islamic fundamentalism and along with it, increased hatred towards the West at regional and global levels. By taking a dismissive attitude and ostracizing Turkey, Europe could find itself in the midst of a clash of civilizations rather than a dialogue of civilizations. Only welcoming Turkey into the European Union and keeping her close could come to benefit Europe. Were Turkey to be internalized, this argument goes, it would bring stability to Europe’s eastern border.

This position also maintains that, as a country with a Muslim majority, Turkey would be a significant ally — one that successfully synthesizes democracy and Islam in a parliamentary system and hence provides an opportunity to establish a dialogue-based and peaceful answer

⁵⁶ Bülent Küçük, “Borders of Europe: Fantasies of Identity in the Enlargement Debate on Turkey.”

⁵⁷ Nilüfer Göle, *Islam in Europe: The Lure of Fundamentalism and the Allure of Cosmopolitanism*, trans. Steven Redall (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2011), 16.

to the doomsday scenarios of the clash of the civilizations thesis.⁵⁸ The hope is that if Turkey had a considerable success in copying the Western model, then other Muslim countries, too, could achieve the same goal.⁵⁹ Just as Europe had managed to incorporate Eastern European countries by seducing them with a “secure” democratic and financial system, so too could Turkey, be seduced to participate in the project of Europe. Otherwise, Europe may face the peril of locking itself inside its rigidly marked terrain. It may result in a Europe where xenophobia and ethnic and racial fear prevail. This basically signals, for the critics, that Europe would be unable to adapt to the realities of the multicultural and transnational world. Instead it may well find itself in a severely polarized world, where West and East appear as opposing forces. To prevent this scenario, a strategic ally like Turkey must be drawn closer, as Spanish president Jose Zapataro and the UK Minister of Foreign Affairs David Miliband, contra to critics like Merkel and Sarkozy, stated on a number of occasions.⁶⁰ Mottos such as “melting pot of civilizations,” “alliance of civilizations,” and “Istanbul: where the continents meet” accentuate the articulation and interwovenness between Turkey and the EU.

In this sense, the ruling pro-Islamic party in Turkey, Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in power since 2002, is described as a successful model for the rest of the Muslim world. Regarding the AKP, U.S. newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, prominent German newspapers such as *Die Welt*, and officials of the European Union acknowledged it as a democratic example for other Islamic movements to follow.⁶¹ Moreover, it received support from “the East” as Malaysia’s well-known Islamic activist Anwar Ibrahim as well as the Palestinian movement Hamas publicly expressed their admiration for the AKP model.⁶²

⁵⁸ A detailed and insightful discursive map of the inclusive view on Turkey can be found in Fuat Keyman, “Turkey and Postnational Europe: Challenges for the Cosmopolitan Political Community,” 117; and Bülent Küçük, “Borders of Europe: Fantasies of Identity in the Enlargement Debate on Turkey.”

⁵⁹ Cihan Tuğal’s recent work is another very illuminating text that maps out various discourses on Turkey as model, copy and bridge. See Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

⁶⁰ Luis Bouza Garcia, “European Political Elites’ Discourses on the Accession of Turkey to the EU: Discussing Europe through Turkish Spectacles?”

⁶¹ Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution*, 5.

⁶² Ibid.

Were Turkey to be internalized, this argument goes, it would bring stability to Europe's eastern border. In short, Turkey is seen as a "bridge" that symbolizes the dialogue between the West and the Muslim world. This point used to support Turkey's accession could be summed up as the following: Turkey is not as radically different as it has often been presented. Further, the argument goes, one can observe a common heritage between Europe and Turkey. As the successor of the Ottoman Empire, historically Turkey has always been a collaborator in international treaties, coalitions and commerce made with Europe. During the long lasting reign of the Ottoman Empire, Turks had left their imprint in the Balkans and the Mediterranean region. The Empire, as a Muslim-Turkish civilization, had harbored diverse ethnic and religious communities under its umbrella. If Europe wishes to move towards a postnational and multicultural future, commentators claim that Turkey with its inherited cosmopolitan and multiethnic social fabric must be incorporated in the EU.⁶³

The point to be noted here concerns the use of the history. Regardless of their position, proponents both sides of the debate regarding Turkey's accession and identity have taken recourse to history. In order to account for the current state of affairs, history is always invoked. Images of an alien Asiatic culture, a great menace to European states, or a cosmopolitan Ottoman-Turkish Empire are recalled and conjured up to explain why Turkey should be, or not, incorporated into Europe; in each instance, history serves as a source for imaginaries, discourses and collective memories. As we will see shortly, this also holds for the discourses produced in Turkey. History is often used to mark Turkey's authentic identity and unique location.

1.2 Turkey as an EU Membership Candidate

While commenting on the historical development and the future of multiculturalism and minority rights, Will Kymlicka points to a trend of internationalization in the following manner:

⁶³ Fuat Keyman, "Turkey and Postnational Europe: Challenges for the Cosmopolitan Political Community," 117.

International intergovernmental organizations [such as UN, ILO, UNESCO, World Bank] are encouraging, and sometimes pressuring, states to adopt a more multicultural approach. Those states that are prepared to consider adopting models of multicultural citizenship will find an array of international organizations willing to provide support, expertise, and funding. Those states that cling to older assimilationist or exclusionary models find themselves subject to international monitoring criticism and sanction. In short, we are witnessing the increasing ‘internationalization’ of state-minority relations, and the global diffusion of multiculturalism as a new framework for reforming those relations.⁶⁴

Perhaps there is no better case than Turkey’s accession into the EU that could serve as an illustration of the paradigm Kymlicka puts forth above. The accession requirements in respect to minority rights and culture have made it harder for Turkish authorities to operate with their standard “assimilationist” and “exclusionary” policies. It seems the European Union sometimes gives Turkey the carrot, and sometimes the stick: the European Court of Human Rights provides funding for various projects in Turkey aiming to protect and invigorate minority culture while also sanctioning Turkey for human rights and minority rights violations. Before going into a detailed analysis of the violations issues that have been sanctioned by the European Court of Human Rights, a small detour is necessary. Let’s have a short glance at Turkey’s historical path of internationalizing minority rights and multiculturalism.

As already mentioned, Turkey’s EU candidacy goes back to the 1960s.⁶⁵ Turkey and the European Economic Community signed the Ankara Agreement in 1963 and initiated a collaborative project to harmonize the European Customs Union between the two parties and establish Turkey’s full membership to the EEC. By 1996, the long-awaited process reached its goal and Turkey became the part of the European Customs Union. With this development, the economic relations between Turkey and the EU were to go beyond tariff agreements. In other words, their interaction now exceeded the level of a simple trade agreement and occasioned coordination of policies for domestic and international markets. Moreover, Turkey’s application for full membership in 1987 and the EU Council’s

⁶⁴ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

⁶⁵ For a useful chronological of important events in Turkey’s interaction with the European Union see Özgül Erdemli, “Chronology: Turkey’s Relations with the EU,” *Turkish Studies* 4, no.1 (2003): 4-8.

subsequent recognition of Turkey as a candidate state made Turkey and the EU more proximate with Turkey's promise to become European. Overall, this was the closest interaction possible between the EU and any non-member country, especially 'a country of Muslim majority'.

No doubt, the ambivalence about the future of EU-Turkey relations was also felt in Turkey. There are multiple views in Turkey on the country's accession to the EU. The idea of Europe and Europeanization arouses and mobilizes various feeling from anxiety and fear to excitement and hope. Political and public opinion are split. For some critics, the EU is nothing more than a dressed up facsimile European imperialism. According to this view, interactions with this imperialist supranational power inevitably decrease the power of the Turkish nation-state. The main concerns of the national socialist and nationalist left are the erosion of national sovereignty, independence and the power of the state. Such imagination of accession to the EU underscores the birth of the nation from the War of Independence against the European imperial powers of the World War I. It conceives of the European Union as a reincarnation of European imperial powers of the early twentieth century and as a result, Europe appears as a poison for Turkey. According to opponents of Europeanization, internalizing Europe's capitalist market, capitalist economy, and neo-liberal policies and its incompatible culture into a "developing country" such as Turkey would only result in a national catastrophe.

This perception also pervades in the imagination of the nationalist front and Islamists in Turkey who conceive of Europe as the obscene Other. European integration is imagined as a major threat to sovereignty, to the process of independent Parliament decision-making, and to the continued possession of Turkish soil.⁶⁶ Especially in the 1990s, the path to EU membership brought up tension-filled public debates and panic-laden prognoses about the erosion and loss of Turkish culture, values and tradition. The national hysteria stirred by the European "penetration" manifested itself in the parliamentary elections and brought considerable seats to the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) of that time, who had been opposed to Europeanization. This would not come as a surprise when one considers the way

⁶⁶ Hüsamettin İnanç, "Avrupa Birliği Entegrasyonu Sürecinde Türkiye'nin Kimlik Problemleri," [Turkey's Identity Problems During the Process of European Union Integration] *Doğu/Bati* 23, (2003), 195.

in which MHP wove anti-European sentiments into their discourse and became the voice of Europhobia. As the common motto of those days “national interest vs. European imposition” illustrates, the West was seen a menace encroaching upon the Turkish social fabric and threatening Turkey’s national unity, the public good, the moral values of the Turkish nation, national character, and sovereignty.⁶⁷ What is worth noting here, as I mentioned above, are the constant references made to the past, where the union of European-Christian powers presumably to the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and Turks. Accordingly, Turkey’s tension-filled encounter began with the reforms that were undertaken by the Ottoman authorities in the mid 19th century at the behest of European powers acting as the guardians of non-Muslim minorities. Fast-forward to the 21st century and anti-European discourse once again finds Turkish authorities passing one law after another to meet the requirements set by the European Union for full membership. For the adherents of this perspective, the promise to adopt EU regulations and reforms concerning human and minority rights, as well as to change in the economic, political and legal fields, are different than those undertaken in the 19th century.

Of course, to disagree with the right-wing perspective is not to deny that there have been certain important changes in both the form and the content of the relationship between Europe and Turkey along the way from the 19th century to the new millennium. For instance, while Turkey is predominantly a Muslim population, Kurds alongside Alevis and their political/cultural rights are high on the current reform agenda. That said, it is difficult to read republican Turkish history without a sense of déjà vu taking us back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Armenian and the Greek questions, which the Ottoman authorities had to negotiate with the European powers of the time, are back on the table reincarnated as Armenian genocide recognition and the Cyprus problem respectively. It seems that a constant short circuit between the past and the present exists as long as the relation between Europe and Turkey is at stake. The present politics and identities are haunted by the fears and anxieties of the past. We will examine how this collective memory, which shuttles relentlessly between the past and the present, informs the fantasy of contemporary Turkish nationalism in the following chapters in detail. For now, suffice it to

⁶⁷ Nergis Canefe and Tanil Bora, “Intellectual Roots of Anti-European Sentiments in Turkish Politics: The Case of Radical Turkish Nationalism,” *Turkish Studies* 4, no.1 (2002): 135-6.

say that in the anti-European discourse, the image of Europe conjures up disdain, humiliation, contempt and exclusion. In what is commonly known as ‘the Turkish-Islam synthesis’, which imagines the pedigree of Turkey as essentially Islamic, the founding myth pushes the history of European encounters farther back to the Crusades and associates that event with the recent accession of the European Union. Therefore, for its opponents, the imagery of Europe merges the Greek, Roman and Christian tradition into one linear historical continuum, which is deemed by its very nature antithetical to Turkish-Muslim society. This resonates almost identically with the Orientalist’s view on Turkey and the image of Turk, which again view again the Other as a reified image. The same features of Europe, capitalism, science, Enlightenment, democracy and Christian heritages, are deployed – albeit in reverse order – to define Europe. What makes Europe a significant civilization becomes, for the anti-European discourse, its source of degeneracy and alienness. In sum, all these discussions and debates of anti-European sentiment point to fears and anxieties about accession. Like its European imaginary twin, the anti-European position sees Turkey’s integration and cultural blending as disastrous. This perception of Europe would Turkey have be wary of the degeneration, culture shock and alienation that would accompany Europeanization.

Some commentators, however, conceive of the European Union as a civilizational project that would assure the establishment of certain core universal values, such as, human rights, freedom, and the supremacy of the law in Turkey. Here, the idea of Europe is supposed to bring the winds of change, or to use another metaphor, the project of Europe is like a train that should not be missed. In a “developing” country such as Turkey, where single party rule and coup d’états have become the harsh reality of politics, it is hoped that accession reforms would balance and control the powers of the army and the state. In a similar vein, it is believed that adjustment to and fulfillment of the EU’s criteria would enhance individual and minority rights as well as solve the issues regarding freedom of religion and conscience, which remain problematic areas. Indeed, certain powerful factions of Islamists in Turkey supported the EU accession process for the aforementioned reason. They hoped that the excessive power of the secular state and army elites would be checked and monitored by the EU Council. Similarly, the pro-Islamic Justice and Development party (AKP) announced its

support for the accession process when it came to power in 2002 and resumed negotiations with the EU, promising to actualize the Copenhagen Criteria.

In 2013 it is hard to sense the same level of optimism about Europeanization as shown in the previous decades. The debates about accession and the national aspiration for undertaking European reforms have lost their momentum. In the news it is commonplace to read yet another poll result indicating decreasing public trust and desire for membership. After having been shaken by economic crises, the EU and the Euro are no longer considered as secure and stable as they once had been, making the accession far less attractive economically. It has become a journalistic and editorial cliché to state that Turkey is turning its face eastward, and prioritizing political cooperation and commerce with its ex-Ottoman neighbors as well as countries in North Africa, the Middle East and the Caucasus. Turkey's expectations for economic growth, development and progress are not as fixed to the parameters of the EU as they had been some years ago. Despite this pessimism, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that membership in the European Union still constitutes a goal and that Europe appears as a horizon, if not a telos. At times the image of Europe emerges as that of a harsh super-ego, a disciplinary authority who sets the standards for the conduct of behavior, human rights, and democracy. Still, Europe today serves as a significant object of admiration, denial, envy, resistance, love and hate in Turkish politics and public discourse. For that reason the relationship with Europe cannot be only a matter of rational and national interest and realpolitik analysis. The imagery of Europe does not touch only on rationality but deeply registered in the collective unconscious and in collective memory in Turkey. Europe is still both a significant friend and fiend in the Turkish political and public discourse, and Europeanization and the accession of Turkey are important open-ended processes and points of reference.

To what degree Turkey will keep its promise to become European is a controversial subject. In 2001, it had promised to legislate and implement European Union standards in its National program in order to adapt to the criteria of the EU Council. As part of this arrangement, the European Council promised to include Turkey if it fulfills the requirements of membership. It is through this act of promising to become European that political subjectivities of “the European” and “the Turk” are reproduced. Regardless of its immediate

results, Turkey's promise to become European will likely to remain on the horizon for both parties.

1.2.1 The Promise to Become European: Respecting Minorities and Their Cultural Rights

In 2001, the Turkish government announced its road map for reforms and a set of short term and middle range plans – known as the National Program. Two years later, the Turkish Parliament established a harmonization commission to facilitate this process. Turkey's enthusiasm for reforms was well received by the members of the EU and consequently, in 2005, the European Council officially started negotiations on Turkey's membership. Member states are required to adopt the European Union “acquis” – the bedrock of European Union law, which covers many areas and issues that are addressed in 35 chapters.⁶⁸ So far, the chapters on health, consumer protection, company law, transportation, taxation, free movement of capital, intellectual property, science and research and information society and media to name a few, have already been opened. What interests us centrally here are the negotiations and protocols regarding minority culture and rights. Respect for and protection of minority rights is one of the major socio-political criteria on which the EU bases candidacy. There are a number of issues such as torture, ill treatment of civilians by the state, prison conditions, as well as freedoms of expression, association, thought, conscience and religion, that the EU considers the backbone of liberal democratic values and foundational individual freedoms. A new and emerging focus for the EU is sensitivity toward minority rights alongside individual liberties. The European Convention for Minority Rights was designed to set out certain standards for this critical subject of our age. What follows is an analysis of certain events and topics that recently occupied pivotal space in terms of Turkey's human and minority rights record as seen from the perspective of the European Council.

The Turkish term for minority, *azınlık*, is usually applied to the Greek, Armenian and Jewish

⁶⁸ A detailed list of the chapters opened and to be opened as well as an extensive chronology of the Turkish and the European Union relations can be found at Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs official website <http://www.abgs.gov.tr>.

communities in Turkey, those “national minorities” inherited from the Ottoman Empire. The Lausanne Treaty of 1923 brought these minorities under the protection of the League of Nations, though this protection was not truly effective. For a long time, the successive Turkish governments resisted recognition of any other group as a minority. This state tradition was maintained until the last decade of the millennium. In the 1990s, especially as the Kurdish movement started to demand recognition and certain rights the government was under increasing pressure to broaden this category. With the support of international organizations such as the European Council, the nascent Kurdish forces pushed state authorities to take measures to recognize the “Kurdish Problem.” To that end, the laws of birth registration were changed and the ban on giving certain “non-Turkish” names to children was removed. This change in the law enabled people of different ethnic traditions to register their children by using hitherto prohibited native names. Moreover, in 2009 the Turkish government came up with a new reform package, the “Kurdish Opening”⁶⁹ which aimed to improve the cultural rights of Kurdish citizens. Amongst these measures, the right to education in the Kurdish native language, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, was recognized and broadcasting of Kurdish on TV and radio appeared. The legislation permitting education and broadcasting in Kurdish had proceeded from the formal “Kurdish Opening,” going back to the years 2002-2003 when state authorities first initiated the European Union reforms. The “Kurdish Opening” is the revised and extended version of the promises given in the National Program. Since then education and communication in Kurdish have been the topics of contention.

Recent history abounds with examples of improvement of Kurdish cultural rights, especially when compared to previous decades. In December of 2012 the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) approved an application by Tunceli University for the foundation of a Department of Eastern Languages and Literatures, which would include *Zaza* and *Kumanji* Kurdish.⁷⁰ Similarly two universities in eastern cities, Muş and Mardin, offered post-graduate and graduate courses in these languages. The new curriculum of the Ministry of National

⁶⁹ The year 2009 also witnessed the “Alevi Opening” and the “Roman Opening”. These two openings like their sibling the “Kurdish Opening”, aimed to guarantee and improve the cultural rights of Alevi and Roma citizens of Turkey. However, as though throwing them into a dusty drawer in a governmental office building the government suspended almost all the openings before it seriously implemented them.

⁷⁰ European Commission, *Turkey 2012 Progress Report* (Brussels, 2012), 32, accessed Feb 12, 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/strategy-and-progress-report/index_en.htm.

Education has made possible the opening of primary school courses in living languages such as Kurdish or Circassian, with an enrollment minimum of ten students.⁷¹

The attempts to improve and protect the rights of minorities are not limited to Kurds. The reform program also regards national non-Muslim communities and laws that regulate their educational institutions, property rights or newspapers. In the area of education, efforts have been made in favor of minority schools and some public schools have been issued new textbooks that addressed these communities' demands. In the 2010-2011 academic year mathematics and introductory science textbooks were translated into Armenian and distributed free of charge.⁷² In an effort to address terms of property rights, the government reorganized the General Directorate Charitable Foundations and related laws on endowments between 2002-3 which made it easier for non-Muslim community organizations to own and register property.⁷³ To give a concrete example, "in March 2011, Turkey implemented the ECHR judgment of March 2009 on the property rights of the Kiminis Theodoku Greek Orthodox church on the island of Bozcaada (Thenodos), by transferring the property titles to the Bishop of Imvros and Tenedos."⁷⁴ Another promising case cited in the report of the EU Council was that "in November 2010 the Ecumenical Patriarch received the deeds of the Büyükkada orphanage from the deeds office in Istanbul, following the ECHR ruling in the Ecumenical Patriarchate vs. Turkey case."⁷⁵ Overall, according to progress report, "the law on [charitable] foundations continued to be implemented, albeit with delays and procedural problems, enabling the return of 181 properties to community foundations."⁷⁶

In light of all this, one can detect considerable improvement in the issues facing minorities, changes which would have been unimaginable even a few years ago. Compared to the laws and policies of the twentieth century, those of the new millennium can be considered more inclusive and progressive. What would have been impossible to expect in the official

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² European Commission, *Turkey 2011 Progress Report* (Brussels, 2011), 38, accessed February 12, 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/strategy-and-progress-report/index_en.htm.

⁷³ Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar [Minorities in Turkey]* (Istanbul: İletisim, 2003), 117.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 38.

ideology of the 80s and 90s began to be uttered and demanded. Dozens of laws were passed and reconfigured to extend rights to citizens from different ethnic and religious groups in Turkey. This case allows us to analyze how minority rights are demanded domestically as well as how multiculturalism is negotiated transnationally between Occidental/European and Oriental/Turkish sides.

1.2.2 The Failure of Multiculturalism and Minority Rights in Turkey

Despite all its promises to reform multicultural policies and develop a new model for Turkish citizenship, Turkey faces a serious crisis in terms of achieving a harmonious social order. When it comes to the implementation of recently legislated laws addressing minorities, one observes the half-heartedness of Turkish state authorities. From the right to education in one's native tongue to the management and ownership of non-Muslim community endowments, legal procedures are carried out with resistance from authorities at the local and national level. Perhaps it is the same resistances that have made Turkish state authorities thus far defer becoming signatories to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minority Languages. Another symptom of reluctance to seriously address the issues of minorities is evidenced by the general failure to prosecute media for hate speech towards minorities.⁷⁷

Resistance against Kurdish radio and television broadcasting has persisted in the state-run Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) and the Radio Television Supreme Council (RTUK) even after the "Kurdish Opening" has made Kurdish broadcasts a possibility. The state authorities initially announced that TRT would not air any program in Kurdish. However, in 2004 the state television channel softened its line and started devoting a small portion of the broadcast of shows of within a 30-minute to one-hour duration, to Kurdish programming. This, by most standards, is a token gesture at best. Private, non-governmental radio and television channels choosing to broadcast in non-Turkish languages are subject to constraints on how much non-Turkish programming they can broadcast in a day: languages and dialects other than Turkish can be broadcast, for a maximum of one hour a day and five

⁷⁷ European Commission, *Turkey 2012 Progress Report*, 31.

hours a week whereas TV channels are allowed to show cultural programs of at most 45 minutes a day, four days per week. Such constraints on the format and content of the programs are significant in revealing the government's reluctance towards improving cultural rights as promised by the National Program.

It comes as no surprise that the EU Council's report concludes:

Overall, Turkey has made some progress on cultural rights, and fewer restrictions on the use of Kurdish in prisons during visits and exchanges of letters were reported. However, some legislation still restricts the use of languages other than Turkish, including the Constitution and the Law on Political Parties. Also, the judiciary took a number of restrictive decisions on the use of languages other than Turkish, including the use of Kurdish in court cases concerning Kurdish politicians and human rights defenders.⁷⁸

And finally, referring to Turkish state authorities' human rights and minority issues record over the last three years, the report finds that the 2009 democratic opening that intended to address both the "Kurdish issue" alongside other reforms to state dealings with minorities was actually not implemented as planned.⁷⁹

It is not only Kurds and Alevis who cope with the failure of recognition of minority rights in Turkey; non-Muslim communities such as Greeks, Jews and Armenians also face these difficulties. For instance, the EU council report affirms the continued oppression of the Greek minority within Turkey by suggesting they continue to "encounter problems regarding access to education, property rights" even on the Turkish islands of Gökçeada (Imvros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos) where they represent a significant portion of the population. Similarly, the 2008 law on charitable endowments and land ownership aimed at returning formerly confiscated minority assets has suffered a number of delays and procedural difficulties.⁸⁰ The difficulties minorities face holding land is further evidenced by the State's confiscation of a large number of properties held by the Catholic Church across the country.⁸¹

In terms of promises made to reform education, the report found that the management of

⁷⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ European Commission, *Turkey 2011 Progress Report*, 37.

⁸¹ Ibid.

minority schools “remained an issue, pending an implementation regulation.” With minority schools in Turkey facing “procedural and bureaucratic difficulties with registration, budget problems and sustainability issues due to the number of students enrolled” and the restriction of these schools, by Turkish law, to offer education only to those students of the same minority.⁸² Another concern that faces these schools is that the state sponsored textbooks are required to use often feature rhetoric against the very minority groups such as Christian missionaries, the schools target.⁸³

In the case of reforms to the media, the report found ample evidence of anti-Semitism and other culturally-based hate crimes perpetrated through film and television which have gone unpunished. In response to the commonality and the lack of response to those most offensive representations the report states that they feel it represents a “culture of intolerance against minorities.”⁸⁴ In addition to these concerns, three prominent cases underscore the lack of seriousness with which the court system views hate crimes against minorities: the recent killings of three Protestants, a Catholic priest, a Bishop and Armenian journalist Hrant Dink remain unprosecuted.

Overall... Turkey’s approach to minorities remained restrictive. Full respect for and protection of language, culture and fundamental rights in accordance with European standards have yet to be achieved. A comprehensive approach and further efforts are needed to enhance tolerance, security and promote inclusiveness vis-à-vis minorities. There is a need for revision of existing legislation, the introduction of comprehensive legislation to combat discrimination and the introduction of protection mechanisms or specific bodies to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance.⁸⁵

I argue that the restrictive approach of Turkish state authorities stems from their perception of minorities in Turkey. That is to say, the state offers an infantilized portrayal of minorities as groups of individuals who share a culture but are in capable of making decisions for themselves. The state strives to become the sole authority in determining what would be “good” for their interests and to decide which cultural and social rights are to be granted through multicultural policies such as the Kurdish Opening. The existence of diverse ethnic and religious communities is celebrated inasmuch as these minority cultures in the official

⁸² Ibid., 38.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ European Commission, *Turkey 2012 Progress Report*, 25.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 32.

narrative of Turkish-Ottoman mosaic. In other words, as long as they represent Turkey's Turkish-Muslim tolerance, peace, and hospitality, and signify the "richness" of the country's cultural spectrum to the rest of the world, some Greek Churches might be restored or certain Christian and Jewish religious ceremonies might be allowed. Yet, the same minorities are depicted as collaborators of malicious foreign powers and internal threats to the unity of the nation when they formulate their own political and cultural demands and push for official recognition of their own agenda. The Turkish state authorities fear that if they recognize these "excessive" demands, the nation will disintegrate. When their demands diverge from the official multicultural projects, minority groups' cultural and political claims are seen as divisive and sectarian. When minorities push for the recognition of their perception of culture and difference, they become intolerable for the state and may face disciplinary and violent treatment (torture, imprisonment, or murder). What we should bear in mind is that the Turkish state defines itself as sovereign and as the host in a multiethnic, multicultural homeland, where religious and ethnic minorities are defined as the guests. In the next three chapters I will critically examine just how Turkish historians put the Ottoman history and legacy into use to construct an image of Turks as the benevolent host of Turkey, and ethnic and religious Others as their guests.

The European enlargement debate is an important process that allows us to analyze the internationalization of multiculturalism and how Western liberal multiculturalism is negotiated and contested with the European-to-be, the supposedly Oriental Muslim Turkish Other. Both the European Union and the Turkish nation-state are deeply affected by certain antagonisms, failures and impossibilities cast up by questions of how to peacefully accommodate a plurality of ethnic and religious communities. Europe is encountering this open-ended process as the European states strive to integrate minorities and immigrants into secular liberal public space. Turkey, too, is going through a process of reforming itself to become more democratic, liberal and tolerant in accordance with European standards. In so doing, state authorities are trying to formulate solutions to the demands, in particular, of Kurdish, Alevi, and Armenian communities. What interests us here in this dialectic between the EU and Turkey is how governing difference/minorities becomes a nodal point of contestation in the global age of liberal multicultural politics.

It is against this backdrop of EU accession debates, and Turkey's aspirations to European-ness, that we should analyze the recent nostalgia for the golden days of the Ottoman rule. Only then we can appreciate the recent glorified accounts of the Ottoman past as symptomatic of the identity crisis that Turkey faces. In my view, Ottoman tolerance is a crucial point of investigation at a juncture in which European nations and Turkey look for solutions and models of harmonious accommodation of minority populations and negotiate the principles of these future transformations. Will Europe be able to genuinely learn from other cultures like Turkey without too readily perceiving Turkish Europeanism as the oxymoronic?

Similar questions are relevant for contemporary Turkish national identity: can Turkish state authorities deal with questions of Otherness and democracy without a nostalgic and melancholic attachment to an assumed Golden Age whose downfall is blamed on minorities and Europe? Will the imaginary of Ottoman tolerance for the minorities remain as a nativist nationalist reaction that tries to beat its European other at its own game by proclaiming: "we were already multicultural!" Or can the remembrance of the Ottoman past serve as a genuine model through which the limits on human and minority rights are pushed to their limits? We will address these knotty questions of our times in the following chapters where we thoroughly discuss the pitfalls of Ottoman historiography and the fantasy of the Golden Age it produces.

Chapter Two

Making Identity and the European Enlargement Project: Ottoman Historiography

The fantasy, useless as a tool to explain its object, can shed light on its producers and adherents.
Mladen Dolar, introduction to *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the Ottoman Empire*⁸⁶

The discussions over Turkey's candidacy for European Union have demonstrated once again that a debate on identity is always a debate about history and how to remember the past. All of interlocutors in the debate over Turkish and European identities invoke traditions, lineages, and legacies to support their arguments. Whether in an effort to demonstrate the symbiosis and confluence between these two cultures or the irreconcilable differences between them, historians, politicians and other public figures use history as a repository for their imagination. History is the battleground on which contemporary identities of Europeanness and Turkishness are contested and negotiated. An important terrain on this battleground is the Ottoman Empire and its legacy. As I will try to elucidate in this chapter, the recent surge of interest in this topic is not just a matter of scholarly pursuit by Turkish "native" scholars and historians of Ottoman historiography, for whom the Ottoman Millet System is not only the epitome of *past* multiculturalism and harmonious coexistence, but also a viable solution to the domestic and international challenges facing Turkey *today*. My goal here is not to disprove or debunk this historiography or debunk it as irrational, untruthful, emotionally biased etc. Others have already presented a more truthful and scientific version of Ottoman history and I will analyze the core of their discussions in the second part of this chapter, where I discuss scholars whose works offers counter narratives to that of Ottoman tolerance and Millet. Some of these critics, such as Marc Baer and Joseph Hacker, will examine narratives of the Jews who had been victims of the expulsion, forced migration and confiscation under Muslim rule. Similarly Macit Kenanoğlu and Daniel Goffman will give reasons as to why one should be suspicious of the proximity of the narrative of Ottoman tolerance and Millet system to realist historiography. In this dissertation my primary focus

⁸⁶ Mladen Dolar, introduction to *Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, by Alain Grosrichard (New York: Verso: 1998), xiv.

will be to analyze the role of nativist Occidentalizer historiography in the consolidation of Turkish identity and nationalism over the last twenty to thirty years vis-à-vis its European/Western Other as well as domestic minorities. In other words, I am interested in the Ottoman past only insofar as it is put to the service of re/formation of today's Turkish identity. In order to understand how discourse surrounding Ottoman peace and tolerance has influenced the recent phase of Turkish nationalism, one must deploy, as I will argue below, the concept of *fantasy*. I particularly draw on Lacan's notion that fantasy should be assigned the central role in sustaining its adherents' affective energies and social reality. Elaborated further and applied to analysis of formation national group psychology, by scholars such as Sigmund Freud, Slavoj Žižek and Reneta Salecl, this conception of fantasy is a crucial tool for me to investigate the narratives of Ottoman tolerance with which its producers and public audience sustain their Turkish-Ottoman identification, as well as how they deal with the impossibility of a harmonious nation and with the loss of the Empire.

Before sketching the broad contours of this recent historiographical literature on Ottoman Millet System and its putative tolerance and multiculturalism, I would like to start off with a detour and introduce the deeply rooted image of the Turk and The Despotic Ottoman Empire/Sultan in Western historiography and social and political thought. This brief exposition is necessary to set the stage to which recent Turkish-Islamic historiography responds. By juxtaposing these two images of the Empire and the Turk as historically both "despotic" and "tolerant" my aim is to better aid our interpretation of the EU and Turkey's debates and the issues surrounding them as well as of how a considerable number of Turkish historians speak to these debates by deploying a nativist historiography that glorifies a pre-colonial multicultural and tolerant society.

2.1 Oriental Despotism and the Image of the Turk and the Ottoman Sultan in Western History

The Ottoman Empire has long been an intriguing object of analysis, arguably ever since Ottoman territories expanded into the Balkans. Unlike other oriental empires of the ancient times, be they Mogul, Persian or Chinese, the proximity of the Ottoman Empire made it an

important and integral part of the formation of European identity.⁸⁷ At least from the sixteenth century onwards, the Empire troubled many prominent social and political thinkers. From Machiavelli, Locke and Weber to Montesquieu, Hume, Marx, Goethe and Nietzsche, it specifically has occupied a substantial space in the accounts of many authors of the Enlightenment.⁸⁸ In their accounts, the Ottoman Empire mostly figured as the “other” of Europe. For centuries, it was thought of and studied as a monolithic Islamic civilization, which was “essentially” different than its European counterpart.

In myriad representations of otherness, the Empire frequently came to denote the barbaric and demonic other of Europe. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Ottomans were commonly referred to “as the barbarian, the infidel, the public enemy or the present terror of the world.”⁸⁹ To put it in Said’s words, “the ‘Ottoman peril’ lurked alongside Europe to represent for the whole of Christian civilization a constant danger, and in time European civilization incorporated that peril and its lore, its great events, figures, virtues, and vices, as something woven into the fabric of life.”⁹⁰ However, it was especially around the eighteenth century that tendencies to depict the Empire as a “despotic,” “corrupt,” “stagnant,” and “backward” sovereignty gained momentum and wide discursive purchase.⁹¹ In the writings of well-known figures of the time, especially those of Montesquieu,⁹² the Ottoman Empire’s despotism designated that extreme form of political structure where the

⁸⁷ Donald Quartet, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

⁸⁸ For a detailed discussion of how Orientalism operates in the works of these thinkers see: Bryan S. Turner, “Islam, Capitalism and the Weber Theses,” *British Journal of Sociology* 25. no. 2 (1974): 230-243; Patricia Springborg, “The Contractual State: Reflections on Orientalism and Despotism,” *History of Political Thought* 8 (1987): 395-433; Aslı Çırakman, *From the ‘Terror of the World’ to the ‘Sick Man of Europe’* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996); Michael Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam: European Thinkers and Oriental Despotism in the Middle East and India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Ian Almond, *History of Islam in German Thought: From Leibniz to Nietzsche* (Routledge: New York, 2010).

⁸⁹ Çırakman, *From the ‘Terror of the World’ to the ‘Sick Man of Europe’*, 38.

⁹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 60-1.

⁹¹ Çırakman, *From the ‘Terror of the World’ to the ‘Sick Man of Europe’*, 109.

⁹² In the writings of Montesquieu, despotism as a political regime was distinguished from republicanism and monarchy by its nature and principle. In terms of their nature, both republican government – in which locates power all (democracy) or several (aristocracy) govern – and monarchical government, which locates power in a single individual, are distinct from despotism because they involve government according to law (Alain Grosrichard, *Sultan’s Court: European Fantasies of the East*, introduced by Mladen Dolar (New York: Verso: 1998[1979]), 34). Despotism was defined as an ‘extreme’ form of government in which a single individual exercised absolute and arbitrary power without laws. Despotism is demarcated from the first two regimes because it is imagined to work only thoroughly fear. (Ibid., 35-6). In contrast, republicanism operates on the principle virtue and honor and monarchical governments on that of honor.

ruler reigns supreme over his slavish and obedient subjects.⁹³

Certainly, the image of the Despot played a crucial role in giving shape and form to that regime, against which the European subjects defined themselves – as “liberal,” “republican,” and “democratic.” The Western conception of citizenship has a lineage that weaves together different times and spaces across the West, and traces the origin of citizenship and democracy back to ancient Greek and Roman civilizations.⁹⁴ Drawing from this heritage, Enlightenment republicans were struggling with absolute monarchies for greater rights to political participation and more representative institutions in Europe states, despotism being the “dire threat, the smear term” used against those monarchies that were understood to be antithetical to those ideals.⁹⁵ Thus, it was against the inverted mirror image of the Oriental other that the European identity was constituted and sustained. Oriental despotism was merely a stronger version of the hostility, directed at European kings primarily, which invoked fears of the dreaded Turk and more distant oriental “tyrannies” by implication.⁹⁶ Description of the absolute and excessive power of the Ottoman sultan and of the lack of autonomy and civil society in the Empire accompanied almost every discussion of despotism and patrimonialism.

Insofar as this “unbridgeable” gap between the Oriental and Occidental political structures is concerned, one should not miss another critical aspect of European accounts/narratives of the excessive power enjoyed and wielded by the Empire. It is impossible to read these accounts without taking note of how imbued they are with their “object” of study. As Alan Grosrichard has vividly illustrated in *Sultan’s Court*, it was the unfathomable and boundless enjoyment of the despot that was so riveting for the European gaze. Grosrichard’s genealogical work on the creation of *the monster* showed that even the smallest details of the Sultan’s enjoyment were highly captivating for Europeans as evinced by their prominence in a wide-ranging literature. Grosrichard insightfully demonstrated that the will to know the Empire was inextricably mixed up with fascination with the Other’s (the Despotic Sultan)

⁹³ Çirakman, *From the ‘Terror of the World’ to the ‘Sick Man of Europe’*, 118-9.

⁹⁴ See Engin F. Isin. “Citizenship after Orientalism,” in *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, ed. Engin F. Isin and Brian S. Turner (London: Sage, 2002); and Patricia Springborg, “The Contractual State; Reflections on Orientalism and Despotism,” *History of Political Thought* 8, no.1 (1987).

⁹⁵ Patricia Springborg, “The Contractual State; Reflections on Orientalism and Despotism,” 414.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

enjoyment.⁹⁷ As the hidden abode of this enjoyment, the seraglio has become a recurrent theme in the accounts of Oriental Despotism.⁹⁸ In the introduction to Grosrichard's seminal study, Mladen Dolar does a splendid job of capturing this eroticized and exoticized image of the Despotic Sultan and his lavish and hedonistic lifestyle as seen through the gaze of its European spectators:

the subjects who abase themselves before a despot, the sole possessor of all political power; the despot's utter capricious arbitrariness, unbounded by any law or predictability; summary executions, tortures, mutilations, confiscations [...] an incredible lust for goods, which constantly stream into a black hole, that supposed paradise of supreme enjoyment; the unfathomable structure of the despot's court, with the seraglio at its centre, displaying a highly codified hierarchy of viziers, janissaries, mutes, dwarves, eunuchs, and countless despot's wives [...] the immense sexual lust, [...] the despot's endless copulation with an endless number of women.⁹⁹

Dolar also reminds us that this deep European fascination was by no means incidental. For European subjects in the age of Enlightenment, all these unconditional and one-way flows of services and material wealth to the Sultan were utterly illogical and forbidden; the Sultan's despotic exuberances were antithetical to everything the incipient liberal and democratic political regimes of the occident stood for. Seen in these terms, the inaccessible and unreasonable and hence excessive enjoyment of the oriental other constantly caught the envious eye of European subjects and played itself out in their writings of the period quite conspicuously and frequently. It is important for our analysis to bear in mind that enjoyment of the other plays a pivotal role in different domains of politics. I will return to the discussion of these psychoanalytical insights about enjoyment and its centrality in the

⁹⁷ Mladen Dolar, introduction to *Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, by Alain Grosrichard (New York: Verso: 1998), xii-xiii.

⁹⁸ Seen from this angle, Sigmund Freud's story presents an interesting case. On the one hand we find a Freud who, in his brief correspondence with Einstein, *Why War?*, underrated the conquests of Turks 'bringing only disaster' vis-à-vis Romans and French kings contributing to 'the transformation of force into lawful order' (Sigmund Freud, *Why War?* (Chicago: Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1978), 2). On the other hand, according to some commentators, it was the same Freud, according to some commentators, whose indulgence in the Ottoman divan, (a typical object in Orientalist paintings of harems that eventually became Freud's psychoanalytical couch), had to do with his fascination with Turks' polygamous sexuality and with his affair with his sister-in-law (Sebnem Senyener, "How the 'Divan' became the 'couch'?" *Eurozine* February 03, 2004, accessed November 4, 2013, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-03-03-senyener-en.html>). Whether his affair was really related to his envy for Turkish polygamy and harems is a controversy I will leave to Freud experts to resolve. What is important here to note is his dismissed the Turks' barbarian conquests (with a gesture informed by oriental despotism) in favor of Roman and French civilizations, while bringing an object of this 'alien' culture, laden with sexual connotations, to the core of his office.

⁹⁹ Mladen Dolar, introduction to *Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East*, xii-xiii.

constitution of our socio-political reality and of forms of otherness in chapter three.

Thus, the emergence of the interest and fascination with the despotic enjoyment of the Ottoman sultan was concomitant to the deep crises and anxieties of the western political regimes. Writings on Despotic Sultan's enjoyment proliferated as the European states began to feel their impasses more acutely.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, despotism, despite its radical alien-ness, was very intimately connected to the worries, crisis, and struggles of European states. In other words, the discourse of the Oriental despotism 'was a reflection of basic political anxieties about the state of political freedom in the West'.¹⁰¹ Under these conditions where fear, anxiety, and discontent were widespread, the enjoyment of the Sultan fascinated the European subjects all the more. This fascination with the Ottoman Empire and the Sultan-cum-Oriental Despot is more revealing about the Occidental subjects and their predicaments than the Oriental object of their gaze.

To be sure, the trope of Oriental Despotism is not a thing of the past. It is not hard to find echoes of Oriental Despotism in contemporary discourses: one need not look further than the titles of some books: *The Bloody History of the Ottomans*¹⁰² or *Turkish Turanism: From Fundamentalism to Fascism*.¹⁰³ Or as a certain body of work demonstrated recently, many scholars and authors in Balkan and Arabic nation-states are very much vested in similar portrayals of the Ottoman Empire. In their nationalist perception of historiography, it is the Ottoman Empire with its Despotic regime that is believed to have held these geographies back from keeping pace with 'developed' civilizations. While these ex-Ottoman territories were stagnant under the archaic and capricious rule of the Sultan, their counterparts in the West were caught up in an innovative fervor and making strides in democracy, human rights

¹⁰⁰ For instance, discontent with the socio-political structure was very common in France, where there was an ongoing struggle between republicans, aristocracy and the Absolute Monarch. In the end, was not it Montesquieu who used the term Asiatic despotism to explain the degeneration of the Roman Republic: 'The failure of rule in an overgrown French Republic, expanded by military conquest, and inability of the magistracy to curb growing extremes of wealth and poverty, luxury and power' (Springborg, 1987: 414-5). However, as Springborg emphasizes, rather than reflecting the features of the Oriental states, these aspects were more related to the social conditions in the French society under absolute monarchy (Springborg, 1987: 414-5).

¹⁰¹ Miriam Hoexter, "The Waqf and the Public Sphere" in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 119.

¹⁰² İsmail Metin, *Osmanlı'nın Kanlı Tarihi [The Bloody History of the Ottomans]* (Istanbul: An Yayınları, 1996).

¹⁰³ Saleh Djihad, *Turkish Turanism: From Fundamentalism to Fascism* (Beirut: As-Sadaqa Publishing, 1987).

and other domains. As Todorova puts it:

The arrival of the Ottomans was thus a calamity of unparalleled consequences because [...] Ottoman rule left the Balkans untouched by the great ideas and transformations, the Renaissance and the Reformation. The Ottomans have been unanimously described as bearers of an essentially different and alien civilization characterized by a fanatic and militant religion [...] This picture of ‘the saddest and darkest period’ in Balkan history makes the five centuries of Ottoman rule the historiographical counterpart of the Western European ‘Dark Ages’ before the advent of historical revisionism.¹⁰⁴

These discourses on Ottoman despotism broaden and deepen our perspective on the particular economy of enjoyment at play when the Ottoman Empire is investigated and remembered. Whether they are from the seventeenth century France or the twentieth century Balkans, we see these authors orienting themselves towards the image of the Turk and the Ottoman Sultan, almost mesmerized by the excessive power enjoyed by this Oriental Other, which had been all the more fascinating for its inaccessibility in their own sociopolitical regimes.¹⁰⁵

Having said all this, one should bear in mind that image of the Ottoman Empire did not always evoke fear, hatred, absolutism and terror. Apart from the enjoyment of the Despotic Sultan and his excessive power, some other aspects of the Ottoman life were brought into the European narratives and exoticized, eroticized, and jealously desired and aspired to. In this chapter, I now move in this direction and elaborate on these other images and depictions coexisting with those of Oriental despotism. In other words, I want to turn to the other side of the image of Despotism and delve into how the Ottoman Empire is also appropriated into other principles, such as tolerance and peace.

¹⁰⁴ Maria Todorava, “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. Carl Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 70-1.

Albert Hourani and Karl Babir accentuate that the same discursive strategies are deployed by some authors of the Arab nation-states in their retrospective reconstruction of Arab history and the Ottoman legacy. Here we again confront the same depiction of the Empire as an alien intruder and oppressor. See Albert Hourani, *The emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981) and Karl K. Babir, “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. Carl Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁵ On the representations of the image of the Turk and the Ottoman Sultan in various sources ranging from 16th century French poetry to Russian literature and 20th century cinema see the edited book composed of symposium presentations delivered between 13-14 May, 2005, in Pera Palas, Istanbul. *Dünyada Türk İmgesi*, [*The Image of the Turk in the World*] ed. Özlem Kumrular (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005). See also the editor’s own work on the same subject: Özlem Kumrular, *Türk Korkusu* [*Fear of the Turk*] (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008).

To desire these different aspects of the Ottoman life was not a new inclination or phenomenon. It could be traced back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when some European authors fixed their admiration on certain things in the Empire – especially in its Capital. For instance, they cherished “the absence of nobility and private property,” “slaves serving as bureaucrats,” “meritocracy,” “religious toleration,” “multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature of the Empire,” and lastly “the concern for amenities” (e.g. fountains and lodging places for the poor).¹⁰⁶ Life in the Empire was praised for its religious rituals, kindness, generosity, lawfulness and toleration of other religions.¹⁰⁷ Seen in these terms, in contradistinction to the image of the Ottoman Sultan and his despotic reign, these authors were fascinated with a number of distinguishing features of the Empire, wherein with which the Orientals/subjects of the Empire were endowed with a desirable, harmonious enjoyable society. In other words, many European subjects became fascinated with the other’s enjoyment but this time with different aspects and objects of the Empire as their focus.

In this dissertation, however, I want to focus on contemporary reflections of this different orientation and its accompanying images. Furthermore, instead of European thinkers and authors of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, I want to dwell on contemporary Turkish historians, who are presently writing similar descriptions of the Empire. This dimension was not elaborately discussed yet and has still been waiting to be explored. To that end, I will investigate what one would call narratives of the Ottoman Peace – Pax-Ottomana. To be sure, its instant resonation with Pax-Romana is not accidental here.

2.2 The Ottoman Empire and the Millet System: A Land of Peace and Tolerance

The Ottoman Empire has been the object of fascination for historians and social scientists from various schools of thought both in Turkish social sciences and humanities as well as

¹⁰⁶ Asli Çırakman, ‘*Terror of the World to the Sick Man of Europe*’, 53-61.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam*, 62.

international academic circles for a long time.¹⁰⁸ The state elites in the first decades of the new Turkish Republic attempted to erase the memory and heritage of the Empire, by creating a sanitized official version of history, effacing or trivializing the traces of the Ottoman era. Büşra Ersanlı eloquently captures and lays out the tenets of this official Kemalist historiography, which has been invented between the late 1920s and late 1930s.¹⁰⁹ The Republican elites perceived the Ottoman Empire through the lens of Oriental Despotism and portrayed it as an archaic and traditional civilization, which was, by its essence, antithetical to the rule of law, democracy, the Enlightenment and modernity in general. In the perception of the early Republican historians of Kemalist historiography:

1. Ottoman history is insufficient to explain the origins of the people of the new Republic; for while modern Turkey is a national state, Ottoman society consisted of a wide variety of ethnic groups. 2. Turkic history goes back to pre-Ottoman and the pre-Islamic times; Central Asian Turks migrated to Anatolia and the Middle East in general, thus establishing links between their old and new homes. 3. Turkic peoples have created the most ancient civilization of the world, which has influenced all other notable cultures. 4. The Turks have no connection with the ‘yellow race’ or with the Mongols; quite to the contrary, as Aryans, they belong to the white race. 5. Except during the period of expansion between 1450-1600, Ottoman political life showed grave defects; in the later stages, and especially during the last two centuries of the Empire’s existence, ‘corruption’ was rife. 6. A revolutionary break therefore become necessary, politically as well as culturally.¹¹⁰

These attempts to burn the bridges with Ottoman past, however, failed to fully erase its legacy. It seems the ghost of the Empire returned (if ever left) shortly after the Second World War.¹¹¹ Especially in the 1960 and 70s, the Ottoman legacy and the idea of Ottomanism aroused excitement in Turkish nationalist scholars and became the icon of the nationalist historiography. What is commonly called the Turk-Islam synthesis, pioneered by İbrahim Kafesçioğlu, brought the Ottoman (and the preceding Muslim state, the Seljuk

¹⁰⁸ See the work of Cemal Kafadar and Suraiya Faroqhi for eloquent analyses of different ecoles in the Ottoman historiography in the 20th century: Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (California: University of California Press, 1996); Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁹ Büşra Ersanlı, “The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era: A Theory of Fatal Decline,” in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A discussion of Historiography* eds. Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 115-6.

¹¹¹ The 1950s, the return of the Empire manifested itself with the opening and establishment of organizations such as The Community of Istanbul’s Conquest, The Istanbul Conquest Society, and the Istanbul Institute in once Ottoman Empire’s glorious capital.

Empire) legacy and identity to the front and praised the Ottoman's 'historical success' in ruling the world and its military expertise. Not only Kafesçioğlu but also generations of Turkish scholars (Nihat Banarlı, Mualli Cevdet, Nuri Ergin, to name a few) were equally inspired by the other central figure, Yahya Kemal, who located the basis of Turkish identity in Ottoman past and its history.¹¹² They also underscored the continuity between the Ottoman and Turkish states. In contradistinction to the Kemalist ideology which tried to sever all ties with the Ottoman past, these scholars argued for a direct lineage between that past and the Turkish Republic. The return to the Ottoman legacy, therefore, was seen as the only proper way to come to terms with Turkish culture. No wonder then that they zoomed in on the 15th century and Istanbul, where Turkish Muslim Emperors ruled non-Muslim, as they believed that this was the golden age of Turks.

All this teaches us an important point: the admiration for the Ottoman past and legacy has been with us for a long time. The above-mentioned strata of the history of Ottomanism in Turkish social and political thought up until the 90s has been studied and documented well. What I particularly want to investigate in this chapter and dissertation in general is the recent surge of interest in the topic by the Turkish scholars of Ottoman-Turkish historiography with an emphasis on multiculturalism, peace and tolerance.¹¹³ I am aware that the Ottoman Empire and its ways of negotiating difference are also of international interest. Political philosophers such as Slavoj Žižek, Wendy Brown, Michel Walzer and Will Kymlicka have already mentioned the Ottoman Millet system as a historical case to reflect on when considering issues of human rights, freedom of conscience, minority rights, liberalism and (multicultural) tolerance.¹¹⁴ International historians who study the multicultural, tolerant and plural aspects of the Ottoman Empire abound.¹¹⁵ Canonical figures in the Ottoman history

¹¹² Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Osmanlıcılık," [Ottomanism in the Republican Turkey] in *Muhafazakarlık [Conservatism]*, eds. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003).

¹¹³ Mithat Sertoğlu's 1969 article on the Minority Issue in the Ottoman Empire for instance one cannot encounter the lexicon of multiculturalism and tolerance. This lexicon is used by the more contemporary scholars who are the main objects of this dissertation. Mithat Sertoğlu, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Azınlık Melelesi," [The Issue of Minority in the Ottoman Empire] *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi* 25, (1969).

¹¹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, "Against the Human Rights," *New Left Review* 34 (2005), 115-6; Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 2006, 33-4; Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 156-8; Michael Walzer, *On Toleration*, 17-8.

¹¹⁵ Daniel Goffman, "Ottoman Millets in the early 17th Century," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 11 no. 4 (1994); Maurus Reinkowski, Ottoman 'Multiculturalism'? The Example of the Confessional system in Lebanon a lecture given at Orient Institute of the Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft, Istanbul 17 February 1997;

such as Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, Marc Epstein, Avidgor Levy, and Bernard Shaw had already written books praising on Ottoman peace, tolerance and the pluralist Millet system.¹¹⁶ These books came into high in demand among Turkish historians and were perceived and appropriated as the bone reference point for the creation of Turkish nativist historiography over the last two decades. I will refer to this “foundational” Western literature and incorporate it into my work, but only insofar as it is appropriated by the Turkish nativist intellectuals in the service of creating a counter image to the Western perception of the Ottoman Turkish Empire as the land of despotism and barbarism.¹¹⁷

2.2.1 The Medina Vesikası (Covenant) as the Origin of the Millet System

Even a cursory look at the literature should suffice to provide a sense of the significance in studies on the Ottoman Empire of the Medina Covenant for the Millet System. As will be discussed below, the Millet System is understood to be the bedrock of the state apparatus with which the Sultan and Ottoman authorities negotiated the question of otherness. Scholars estimate the non-Muslim population before the Ottoman conquest around the number of 30,000. In the aftermath of the conquest on 1453, years of state ordered transportation of non-Muslim populations had brought thousands as a new labor force. As of the year 1477, according to Imperial census, the number of non-Muslims rose to 70,000.¹¹⁸ The same census indicates that Orthodox Greeks had 3151 households, 1500 Jewish household, and all other communities – Armenians, Latins and Gypsies – combined owned 3,905 households whereas Muslims had 8951 household.¹¹⁹ These are striking

Karen Barkey, “Islam and Toleration: studying the Ottoman Imperial Model.” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 19, no.1/2. (2005).

¹¹⁶ Marc A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Freiburg: K. Schwarz, 1980).; Benjamin Braude, “Introduction”; “Foundation Myths of the Millet System.” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982); Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994); Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (Hong Kong: MacMillan Academic and Professional Ltd, 1991).

¹¹⁷ Similarly in this chapter I engage with the minor literature such as Joseph Hacker and Marc Baer insofar as they pose a counter narrative to the fantasy narratives of the Ottoman historians and intellectuals.

¹¹⁸ Donald Quartet, *Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2000), 21.

¹¹⁹ Halil İnalçık, “The policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City,” in *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1978), 247.

numbers. Ratios in the new Ottoman capital demonstrate how rapidly the city had been revitalized by encouraged, welcomed and forcefully moved non-Muslims.

There is a wide consensus in the literature that the origin of this system can be traced back to the Medieval Islamic States, especially the reign of the prophet Muhammad, who made a pact called Medina Vesikası, with non-Muslim groups in Medina in 622.¹²⁰ Many scholars consider this agreement to be the first document in the history of Islam to explicitly lay out the principles for a peaceful coexistence of different religious communities.¹²¹

The Medina Covenant was brought to the attention of the public in the early 1990s, primarily by Ali Bulaç, in conjunction with the discussions of Islam's compatibility with civil society and pluralism in Turkey. In terms of plurality, at the turn of the twentieth century, the multi-religious demographic distribution for the period before WWI was one out of every five persons was non-Muslim: Jews made up 0.81 percent, Greeks 9.67 and Armenians 7.5 percent of the population.¹²² After the atrocities of the war, this number fell from 20 percent to 2.5 percent.¹²³ Currently scholars suggest that the Greek population varies between 1500-3000, Armenians 50,000-60,000 and Jews around 25,000 in metropolitan Istanbul, which has populated by approximately 15 million inhabitants.¹²⁴

In addition to the non-Muslim communities, one cannot ignore the situation of demographically peripheral Muslim communities in Turkey. Kurds are estimated to have a population of 12 to 15 million, mostly comprised of Zazas and Kirmanci Kurds. The number of Alevis in Turkey is also estimated around 12 million.¹²⁵ One fourth of Kurds are

¹²⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, "Millet and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. B. Braude and B. Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 148.

¹²¹ Macit M. Kenanoğlu. *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek* [Millet System in the Ottomans: Myth and Reality] (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004), 5.

¹²² Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Azınlıklar* [From the Ottoman Empire to the Republic] (Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2009), 242-3.

¹²³ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye'de Devlet ve Sınıflar* [State and Class in Turkey] (Istanbul: İletişim, 1989), 69, quoted in Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve Türkleştirme Politikaları* [The Wealth Tax and Turkification Policies] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000).

¹²⁴ Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar* [Minorities in Turkey] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 117; and Çağlar Keyder, "A brief history of modern Istanbul," in *Cambridge History of Turkey Vol. 4: Turkey in the Modern World* ed. by Reşat Kasaba. 2008 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 509.

¹²⁵ Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar* [Minorities in Turkey], 53-57.

estimated to be Alevis and Alevi belief combines selected elements from shamanism, Zoroastrianism and Islam, which makes it the Other of orthodox Sunni Islam.

According to Bulaç, the Medina Covenant is essential because it is a political contract regulating the governance of a functional partnership the Muslims, polytheist Arabs, and Jews in Medina. This contract was meant to be participatory and differed little from J.J. Rousseau's social contract.¹²⁶ The importance of the Medina Covenant lies, in other words, in the fact that it was a document written in 622, whose codification and implementation came out of mutual dialogue and consensus among three different religious and social blocs.¹²⁷ More significantly, for some scholars, this pact also constitutes a blueprint for contemporary societies. In Bulaç's words, "based on certain abstractions and generalizations derived from the Covenant's provisions one can use it as a reference point for the principles of a pluralist social project."¹²⁸

Laudatory reactions notwithstanding, Bulaç's study came under some criticisms.¹²⁹ All these criticisms are definitely worth a close reading but I would like to particularly focus on one of them. Although this covenant was in effect for only six months to one year at most, Ragıp Ege has pointed out, it nonetheless marks a pure and pristine reference point for future generations who wants to use history.¹³⁰ This perception of the pristine origin in the Islamic society may be very inspirational to scholars and politicians praising the Ottoman Golden Age. However this sort of understanding of the past also becomes a troubled memory and

¹²⁶ Ali Bulaç, "Sözleşme Temelinde Toplumsal Proje," [A Contract-Based Social Project] *Birikim* 40 (1992): 53-62.

¹²⁷ Ali Bulaç, "Medine Vesikası ve Yeni Bir Toplum Projesi," [The Medina Covenant and a New Project of Society] in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık* vol. 6, ed. Yasin Aktay (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), 511.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ For instance scholars highly questioned to what degree the Covenant had been inclusive, see Ragıp Ege, "Medina "Vekisa Mı? Hukuk Devleti Mi?" [Medina, a Charter? or a Constitutional State?] *Birikim* 47, (1993): 27). Moreover Ege argues that frequent contradictions occur between Bulaç's sources and their interpretations, p. 33. Another critic, Ahmet İnsel, is intrigued by how the Islamic tradition perceives non-Muslims. For him the perception of the non-Muslim other as the radical other who must be called to the teachings of the last and most inclusive religion Islam by the believers, Muslims, constitutes a serious barrier to Bulaç's imagery of an Islam inspired civil society (Ahmet İnsel, "Totalitarizm, Medina Vesikası ve Özgürlük," [Totalitarianism, The Medina Charter and Freedom] *Birikim* 37, (1992): 31). İnsel sees this homogenizing tendency as the cardinal problem of the Islamic imagery of society, which, according to him, failed shortly after its implementation in the seventh century.

¹³⁰ Ragıp Ege, "Medina Vekisa Mı? Hukuk Devleti Mi?" [Medina, a Charter? or a Constitutional State?] 28-9.

huge burden for the future in as much as the discourse (myth) of beginning imposes the duty of reincarnating of the past in the present and the future. In other words, as long as the Medina Covenant signifies the origin of a harmonious past, it will remain a utopian challenge for the imagery of Islamic society. We will come back to the detailed analysis of the issues of the remembrance of the past in the final chapter of this dissertation. For the time being it is important to bear in mind that these assumed principles of the Medina Covenant are believed to be ideal for successive Islamic states to follow thereafter as the basis for dealing with non-Muslim communities. From this perspective, in medieval Islamic states non-Muslim groups, dhimmis,¹³¹ are granted considerable autonomy in that they are allowed to practice their religion, maintain their own places of worship, and, to a very large extent, run their own affairs.¹³² It is argued that the Ottomans had adopted this system from the Selcuks, the preceding Islamic state established in Anatolia.¹³³

2.2.2. The Millet System as Multiculturalism, Tolerance and Peace

Thus, researchers commonly hold that the legal pluralism of the Ottoman Empire was neither a historical coincidence nor a simple result of the Ottoman tolerance and benevolence. Rather it emerged out of religious duty and obligation. In parallel to the perception of difference qua non-Muslims in the Islamic law, the Ottomans embraced pluralism and considered it a virtue.¹⁸⁴ That being said, it is Mehmed II who is considered to

¹³¹ In the literature this pact is known as *dhimma* and non-Muslim communities party to it are called ‘people of the pact’, *dhimmis* or *zimmi*.

¹³² Benjamin Braude, “Introduction”; “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System.”, 5.

¹³³ Aryeh Shmuelevitz, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Administrative, Economic, Legal and Social Relations as Reflected in the Responsa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill), 16. Shmuelevitz also underscores that the Byzantines in their treatment of the non-Muslims might have influenced the Ottomans since the Jews and the foreign merchant communities had been relatively autonomous in the Byzantine Empire (1984: 16). Seen in these terms, the Ottoman state, from the very beginning, had a longstanding tradition to draw on in managing the heterogeneous groups under its rule. For Shmuelevitz, it is owing to this lineage that even in the early stages of the Ottoman state Jewish communities “had enjoyed a kind of autonomous structure” (1984: 17). İnalçık concurs that the Ottoman state governed non-Muslims and Muslims harmoniously even before the establishment of its classical definitive structure in the fifteenth century (2000: 7).

¹³⁴ İhsan Yılmaz, “Çesitlilik, Yasal Coğunluk, Osmanlı Yüzyıllarında Barış İçinde Yaşama,” [Diversity, Legal Pluralism and Living Together in Peace during the Ottoman Centuries] in *Osmanlı’da Hoşgörü* [Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire] eds. Kemal H. Karpat and Yetkin Yıldırım (Istanbul: Timaş, 2012), 103.

have given these diffuse practices and policies an institutional coherence for the first time.¹³⁵ To that end, he founded a nexus of institutions in the new center of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople. The System conferred on certain non-Muslim communities (people of the book and monotheistic religions) autonomy in organizing their administrative, fiscal and legal affairs.¹³⁶ After establishing the institutions of the Orthodox Patriarch (1454), the Armenian Gregorian Patriarch of Constantinople (1461) and later the Chief Rabbi of the Jews (1454), the Sultan appointed a chief leader to each of these institutions and recognizes their community status. These institutions arranged “ecclesiastical matters such as ownership and maintenance of religious and educational building, conduct of religious services; and operation of millet schools”.¹³⁷ Under this setting, the Catholic Armenians, the Orthodox Greeks and the Jews were designated as constitutive *millets* and their religious leaders and ecclesiastical cadres became entitled to regulate their communal activities as they deemed fit. They became fully in command of “matters concerning the personal status of millet members such as recording births, marriages and deaths, the collection of taxes according to the state’s records; adjudication of heritance cases, and other civil cases that might arise between members of the same community”.¹³⁸ To put it differently, under the auspices of this structure, non-Muslims enjoyed a great deal of religious and cultural freedom and self-appointed their leaders within their administrative and legal jurisdiction.¹³⁹ Autonomy enabled various communities to sustain and develop themselves without being exposed to undue pressure or interference. As a result, the argument goes, the non-Muslims’ acceptance of the

¹³⁵ Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Gayrimüslim Tebannı Yönetimi* [Governance of Non-Muslim Subjects in the Ottoman Empire] (Istanbul: Risale Yayıncılık, 1996), 29.

¹³⁶ Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, 41; Daneil Goffman, “Ottoman Millets in the Early 17th Century,” 136.

¹³⁷ Aryeh Shmuelevitz, 16.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

These rights are subject to certain reciprocal obligations and exceptions. Like *dhimmis* of the medieval Islamic states, the non-Muslim groups of the Millet System pay poll tax and are subject to certain restrictions regarding wearing bearing arms or riding horses., or wearing certain clothes.

¹³⁹ Kemal Karpat, “Klasik Osmanlı Dini Kültürel Düzeninden Ulus-Devlete,” in *Osmanlı Hoşgörüsü* [Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire], 36.

Ottoman reign was based on consent¹⁴⁰ and the minorities within the border of the Empire were permitted to retain their religious identities in peace and order in the Millet System.¹⁴¹

According to the presentation common in the literature, this period of relatively stable and peaceful co-existence lasts until the 19th century when the Empire begins to crumble under drastic fiscal and political problems, which strained the Millet System as well. The Empire's capacity to control the security and property of the subjects gradually eroded as new rival groups rose to power and challenge the incumbent religious leaders. Moreover, the emergence and the spread of nationalism among the different communities in the Balkans pose a grave threat to the functioning of the Millet System, which had been predicated on compartmentalization of non-Muslim communities along the lines of their religious affiliations. During the nineteenth century, under the influence of the era's modernization and centralization movements, the Ottoman authorities launched a series of reforms known as *Tanzimat Reforms* that substantially transformed the way the Empire governed its subjects. At this point, it is important to note that, according to this pervasive interpretation in the literature, these reforms were not only unable to bring stability to the Empire, but had fomented its disintegration.¹⁴² The harmonious order of the Millet System was bygone. Up until the 19th century non-Muslim subjects of the Empire had a serene life within the Millet System.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Önder Kaya, *Tanzimat'ta Lozan'a Azınlıklar* [Minorities From Tanzimat to the Lausanne Treaty] (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2004), 32.

¹⁴¹ Yelda Demirağ, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Yasayan Azınlıkların Sosyal ve Ekonomik Durumları," [Social and Economic Conditions of the Minorities in the Ottoman Empire] *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezî Dergisi*, 13 ((2003): 16.

¹⁴² Gülnihal Bozkurt, *Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu (1839-1914)* [Legal Status of Non-Muslim Ottoman Citizens (1839-1914)] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1996); Salahi R. Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire* (Ankara: Turkish Printing Historical Society Printing House, 1993).

¹⁴³ Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Azınlıklar* [Minorities from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic] (Ankara: Berikan Kitapevi, 2009), 22. As mentioned above the literature on the Ottoman minorities and tolerance abounds. The list of the work of Turkish historians can be easily extended. I will revisit and incorporate some of them later on in the third and fourth chapters. See İlber Ortaylı, "Millet Sistemi," [The Millet System] *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Ansiklopedisi* 4, (1985): 996-1001; Hidayet M. Vahapoğlu, "Yönetim ve Azınlıklara Bakış Açısından Osmanlı Devleti," [The Perspective of the Ottoman State on Governance and Minorities] *Erdem* 22, no. 8 (1996); Hikmet Özdemir, "Azınlıklar için bir Osmanlı Klasığı: 1453 İstanbul Sözleşmesi," [An Ottoman Classic For Minorities: The 1453 Istanbul Pact] *Osmanlı* 4 (1999); Nuri Adıyke, "İslahat Fermanı Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Millet Sistemi ve Gayri Müslimlerin Yaşantılarına Dair," [On the Millet System and Experiences of Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire before the Reform Edict] in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001); Gül Akyılmaz, "Tanzimattan Önce ve Sonra Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayrimüslimlerin Hukuki Statüsü," [Legal status of non-

2.3 The Jewish Experience and Ottoman Hospitality

The image of the Jewish immigrant setting foot at a port of Istanbul in the year of 1492, weary of the past exodus but joyous at the prospect of the lying ahead, figures prominently in the contemporary scholarly discourse. As we will see later, glorification of this figure is not limited to academic literature but can also be found in textbook(s), poems, newspapers and commemorations. It is considered emblematic of Ottoman hospitality that the Ottoman Empire had graciously extended a welcoming hand to massive influxes of Jews at their time of need. According to narrative common in the literature, concomitant with the homogenization of populations in the European states, the turn of fifteenth century witnessed huge flows of migratory Jews migrating across and beyond the continent. After being expelled from Europe (especially from Spain and Portugal), Jews had been welcomed settlers in geopolitically strategic regions of the Ottoman territories. Amongst other cities, Istanbul – the Capital of the Empire already home to a myriad religious and ethnic groups – hosted a considerably large Jewish community. As we will see shortly, in the literature on the Ottoman Jews, it is widely believed that Jews had secured and entrenched their position in due course within the Millet System as their influence over the Empire grew rapidly -be it in the form of high-ranking administrative posts or lucrative mercantile activities. Moreover, against this background we are often told that the trajectories of the Ottoman Jews epitomize the Empire’s hospitality, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence. It is those aspects of the Jewish history that are gratefully remembered and commemorated today. Therefore, an investigation of the particular trajectory of the Ottoman Jews, as narrated and described by contemporary Turkish scholars may well serve as an illustrative entry point into narratives

Muslims in the Ottoman State Before and After the Tanzimat], in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001); Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayrimüslimlerin Yönetimi [The Governance of Non-Muslim Minorities in the Ottoman Empire]* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2008); Abdurrahman Küçük, *Ermeni Kilisesi ve Türkler [The Armenian Church and the Turks]* (Ankara: Berkin Yayınevi, 2009); On Ottoman tolerance and peace see also Ragıp Güzel, *Osmanlı'da Hoşgörü [Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire]* (Istanbul: Yağmur Yayınevi, 2008); Erhan Afyoncu, *Osmanlı Hayaleti [The Ghost of The Ottoman Empire]* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2010); Mustafa Armağan, *Geri Gel Ey Osmanlı! [O, Ottoman Empire, Come Back!]* (Istanbul; Timaş Yayınları, 2011).

of Ottoman tolerance and peace. As one of the constitutive communities of the Millet System along with Armenians and Greeks, the depictions of the Ottoman Jewish experience in the academic literature is key to our investigation of the Ottoman peace and tolerance. In this chapter, I discuss these depictions of the Jewish life and analyze how they present an “idyllic” image of the Ottoman society as one in which Muslims and non-Muslims are peacefully and harmoniously accommodated. Before, however, delving into the new *adventure* they embarked upon in the land of the Empire, let’s first take a brief look at the historical conditions, which gave rise to the large scale displacement of Jews and made 1492 a moment in history, 1492, so memorable.¹⁴⁴

2.3.1 Jewish Life in Europe Before 1492

The literature on the Ottoman Jews, often emphasizes that the persecutions the Jews suffered in the hands of their European rulers dated back to well before 1492. In tandem with the emergence of religious homogenization movements in the European states, anti-Semitism was rampant across the continent. In 1078, for instance, the Pope issued a decree stating that “Jews should not occupy important positions in Christian countries and that no Jew could be superior to any Christian”.¹⁴⁵ This and many similar denouncements same sort by higher echelons of the clergy not only jeopardized the professions of Jews influential in the economic and political arena in France and Germany but also paved the way to the confiscation of the assets of Ashkenazi Jews in Trier, Worms, Regensburg, Mainz, Speyer, and Cologne during the preparations for the first Crusade, and especially after 1095.¹⁴⁶ Massacres had taken place in Frankfurt in 1241, in Munich 1285-86, and Amleider in 1336-37”.¹⁴⁷ Jews were targeted, blamed and held responsible for the spread of the Black Death across the Western Europe and fell victim to massacres, particularly between 1348 and

¹⁴⁴ Here I am referring to the title of a book, *500 Yıllık Serüven (500 Year Adventure)* by Hakan Alkan. See Hakan Alkan, *500 Yıllık Serüven: Belgelerle Türkiye Yahudileri-1 [500 Year Adventure: Jews of Turkey with Documents-1]* (Ankara: Günce Yayıncılık, 2000).

¹⁴⁵ Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 8.

1350.¹⁴⁸ In 1394, the Jews expelled by King Charles VI took refuge in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁹ Ashkenazi Jews in 1470 became subject to expulsion from Bavaria at the behest of King Ludwig.¹⁵⁰ We are told that alongside confiscations and expulsions, Jews had also been subjected to humiliation, exclusion and forced conversions in these lands. In Europe, especially Spain, some of the convert Jews – called “converso” – continued practicing Judaism clandestinely while pretending to be Christian in public life. In response, the Spanish State and the Church form commissions in 1480s to investigate whether ‘new Christians’ had truly converted.¹⁵¹

Their plight in the preceding era notwithstanding, it is the marriage of King Ferdinand of Aragon and the Queen Isabella of Castile in 1469 that is widely believed to have ushered in the demise of European Jewry. With that marriage King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella not only consolidated their lands but also unite their powers against the “Jewish problem.” To that end, they first established a special court to bring religious purity to their countries and punish “deviant” acts of Jews. The court, i.e., the Spanish Inquisition, was founded with the express purpose of identifying and punishing “all heretics, particularly those like the ‘conversos’ who were accused of remaining Jews in secret and thus corrupting not only the Church but also the Kingdom.”¹⁵² To bring the Jewish problem to a definite end King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella ultimately ordered, in March 1492, the expulsion of Jews from Spain and thereby set in motion one of the largest migratory flows in the history of this people, who were granted only three months for preparations and allowed to take only their movable assets only—except gold, silver and the other forbidden ones.¹⁵³

The Ottoman Empire did not immediately appear as a designation for many of the expelled Jews in Spain. Rather, most of them initially moved to neighboring countries such as Portugal and the small Kingdom of Navarre to other proximate ports of Europe such as

¹⁴⁸ Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, 5.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ahmet H. Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Yahudiler (XIX Yüzyılın Sonuna Kadar) [Jews in the Ottoman State]* (Ankara: Alperen, 2000), 66.

¹⁵¹ Abdurrahman Küçük, “Türklerin Anadolu’da Azınlıklara Dini Hoşgörüsü,” [Turks’ Religious Tolerance to Minorities in Anatolia] 576.

¹⁵² Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, 12.

¹⁵³ Yusuf Baselel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri [Ottoman and Turkish Jews]* (Istanbul: Gözlem Basın, 1999), 41.

those in Italy and Sicily.¹⁵⁴ It was only after they realized that their new destinations were not much more hospitable than their former “homeland,” for instance in their 1496-7 expulsion from Portugal that the displaced Jews begin to converge on a preferred destination, the Ottoman Empire. Their migration from the Iberian Peninsula to the Ottoman territories had taken many decades.¹⁵⁵

Scholars point out certain important reasons why conditions were particularly conducive to the welcoming of the Jewish immigrants by the Ottoman territories.¹⁵⁶ First, European Christendom was the common enemies of both; the Ottoman authorities were confident that the enemy of their enemy would be their friends¹⁵⁷ and that the displaced and homeless Jews would not attempt to revolt against their gracious saviors.¹⁵⁸ Further this common enemy, their knowledge of Europe and its languages and their medical, financial, diplomatic experience and skills made the Jews important actors and beneficial to the Ottoman interests.¹⁵⁹ It is important to note, however, that the strategic advantages gained from the influx of Jews notwithstanding, the scholars under study here are typically at pains to make the case that the integration of Jews into the fabric of the Ottoman society was not motivated by any utilitarian calculations, but was essentially a manifestation of the Ottoman tolerance and leniency.

¹⁵⁴ Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 4.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Walter F. Weiker, “Turkish-Jewish and Turkish-Christian Relations: Some Comparisons,” in *Studies on Turkish-Jewish History: Political and Social Relations, Literature and Linguistics*, eds. David F. Altabe, Erhan Atay, and Israel J. Katz (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1996), 22; Marc A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 46.

¹⁵⁷ Sara Reguer, “Interrelations Between Ottoman Turkey’s Sephardim and the Sephardim of Italy,” in *Studies on Turkish-Jewish History: Political and Social Relations, Literature and Linguistics*, eds. David F. Altabe, Erhan Atay, and Israel J. Katz (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1996), 15.

¹⁵⁸ Ahmet H. Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Yabudiler*, 62.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. and see also Sara Reguer, “Interrelations Between Ottoman Turkey’s Sephardim and the Sephardim of Italy,” 15.

2.3.2 Jewish Life in the Empire

The literature on Ottoman Jews often emphasizes that the Empire had attracted a considerable number of Jewish immigrants well before 1492. It had become a new home to many Jewish communities fleeing from European anti-Semitic bigotry:

Ashkenazi Jews from Germany, Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal [...] settled in the major Ottoman centers in Southern Europe where there were already flourishing communities of Ottoman Jews, such as Istanbul, Salonica and Edirne, others settled among their co-religionists in Anatolia as well as in the Arab provinces, at Cairo, Damascus, Beirut and Tripoli in particular, as well as in the Holy Land at Safed and Sidon more than at Jerusalem.¹⁶⁰

Besides this steady stream of migratory flows from Europe, the Empire had been populated by Jews who once lived in the regions incorporated gradually into Ottoman rule, going as far back as 1326 when the Ottoman State conquered Bursa and assimilated a Jewish community for the first time.¹⁶¹ As the Empire continued to expand in three continents, so did the Jewish population brought under the Ottoman rule. This demonstrates that the Ottoman Empire already had in place institutions to deal and negotiate with the members of this religious community prior to 1492.

An important milestone in that respect was the 1453 Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, although what this epochal event brought about was not so much an engulfment of new Jewish communities as the reconfiguration of those already under Ottoman rule. As historians point out, the Conquest brought about a surge of interest in Jews, as evinced by Ottoman authorities proactive initiatives aimed at redeploying them to Constantinople.¹⁶² In particular, Romaniot Jews (native Greek speaking Jews of the former Byzantine Empire) brought from Anatolia and northern Greece played a significant role in repopulating of the

¹⁶⁰ Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, 33.

¹⁶¹ Bursa is a very geopolitically important city in the interior Anatolia that long served as the buffer zone between Byzantines and the Ottomans and other Muslim groups. See Abdurrahman Küçük, "Türklerin Anadolu'da Azınlıklara Dini Hoşgörüsü," [Turks' Religious Tolerance to Minorities in Anatolia] 577.

¹⁶² Halil İnalçık, "Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation," in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History 15th Century Through 20th Century*, ed. Avidgor Levy (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 4.

new Capital.¹⁶³ Jews took over many abandoned houses and entire districts and many settled in the business center of the city, i.e., the port area formerly occupied predominantly by Venetians.¹⁶⁴

Historical accounts of the period abound in stories of Jews thriving under Ottoman rule. An exemplary story is that of Italian born Jacopo (Yakup), who, after serving both Murat II and his son, Mehmed II – Fatih the Conqueror – as a physician and thriving as a businessman gained the favor and the trust of the Sultan and was promoted to the rank of vizier.¹⁶⁵ Another Jewish figure frequenting the Palace had been the Chief Rabbi, who on certain important occasions took his place besides the Sultan along with high-ranking state officials such as Seyhulislam.¹⁶⁶ Historians take this as a testament that Fatih recognized Jewish religious leaders and institutions on par with those of the Armenians and the Greeks; that he did so also captured the essence of what has come to be known as the Millet System. It is widely accepted that in this formation, religious leaders of non-Muslim communities and their ecclesiastical cadres were authorized to carry out many important functions within communities under their jurisprudence (e.g. collecting tax, assigning Rabbis, implementing communal court trials). In addition to the socio-political autonomy they enjoyed in their internal affairs under the Millet System, it is commonly accepted that Jews had also commanded economic influence far beyond the confines of their immediate religious community throughout the fifteenth century and onwards. In Istanbul Jews had been goldsmiths, silversmiths, moneychangers, purveyors of turbans and headwear, dealers in wool, silk, and linen, bookbinders, coin-minters, and collectors of fees and taxes.¹⁶⁷

I will re-visit the issue of communal and religious autonomy and tolerance later. Here it is worth underscoring scholars' wide consensus that Jews had taken their place within the

¹⁶³ Steven Bowman, "Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees: Aspects of the Balkan Jewish Experience from Byzantine to Post Ottoman Times," in *Studies on Turkish-Jewish History: Political and Social Relations, Literature and Linguistics*, 30.

¹⁶⁴ Halil İnalçık, "Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation," 5.

¹⁶⁵ Yusuf Baselel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri* [Ottoman and Turkish Jews]; Onur B. Kula, "Türk Yahudi Birlikteliğinin 1492 Öncesindeki Tarihine İlişkin Birkaç Açıklama," [A few comments regarding the History of Turkish-Jewish association before 1492] *Tarih ve Toplum* 109 (1993): 6-9.

¹⁶⁶ Seyhulislam was the highest-ranking religious post in the state and he served as a member of Sultan's court. Seyhulislam held the ultimate authority over the interpretation of Quran for worldly state of affairs in the Palace.

¹⁶⁷ Marc A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 106.

Millet System and thereby enjoyed relative autonomy within their communities since at least the mid-fifteenth century.

2.3.3 1492: Expulsions and Arrivals

With their co-religionists living under these favorable circumstances, Jews fleeing persecutions in Europe threw themselves on the mercy of the Ottoman Empire beginning in 1492. The narrative has it, the Empire extended its hospitality to the new immigrants and integrated them within the Millet System. They were allowed to maintain their traditional community organization and autonomy in their internal affairs and were to be protected against acts of fraud and oppression.¹⁶⁸ It is also commonly accepted that together with their co-religionists who already lived in the Empire, the newcomers contributed to the many aspects of economic, social and political life in the Empire and found in their new destination a suitable milieu in which to exercise and take advantage of them.¹⁶⁹ Among such 'know-how' are "printing and a range of new technologies and methods of production utilized by the Ottomans in the exploitation of mineral resources and the manufacture of textiles, arms, munitions and other products."¹⁷⁰ In addition to transferring knowledge of European applied sciences, Jewish immigrants also breathed fresh air into the social sciences. Jewish social historians, such as Yasef Hak-Kohen and Eliyahu Kapsali, gained prominence in the sixteenth century.¹⁷¹ In general, owing to the transplantation and revitalization of Iberian Jewish culture, Salonica, Istanbul and Safed emerge as new and vibrant centers of Jewish intellectual life.¹⁷² Jews also brought dynamism to the economic sphere of the Empire. They contributed to the development of the Empire's industries, especially to the manufacture of woollens in places such as Salonica, Safed, and Istanbul.¹⁷³ In the textile trade,

¹⁶⁸ Halil İnalçık, "Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation," 8.

¹⁶⁹ Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 26.

¹⁷⁰ Halil İnalçık, "Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation," 8.

¹⁷¹ Hakan Alkan, *500 Yıllık Seruven: Belgelerle Türkiye Yahudileri-I [500 Year Adventure: Jews of Turkey-I]* (Ankara: Gunce Yayıncılık, 2000), 48.

¹⁷² Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 37.

¹⁷³ Halil İnalçık, "Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation," 8.

they served as middlemen between Europe, local, and Middle Eastern merchants.¹⁷⁴ The Marrano Jewish family of Mendes, for instance, became highly influential via its wide network of agents and came to control a large portion of commerce between the Empire and Europe.¹⁷⁵ All in all, the literature highlights that the ascendance of the Jews gained momentum during the reign of Mehmed II (1451-1481) and reaches its peak in the sixteenth century.

2.3.4 Five Hundred Years of Friendship

Although Jews had immigrated to the Ottoman territories, well before, the year 1492, this date assumed such a symbolic significance in recent years that one can be excused for believing that 1492 marked the very first encounter between Jews and Ottomans. Even the scholars who ascribe such significance to the date 1492 acknowledge, sometimes in the same breath, that the Ottomans' favorable treatment of Jews predated 1492, oblivious to the somewhat contradictory nature of these two statements.¹⁷⁶ From the outset 1492 is posited to be the pivotal moment in the history of the Ottoman Jewry whose importance is matched by no other. It is the epochal event that ushers in the Ottoman Jewish history in all its glory. Jewish prosperity under the Ottoman rule, the narrative goes, lasted for a long time, even if it may have not been for five centuries. It is admitted that the conditions of the Ottoman Jews began to take a turn for the worse towards the end of seventeenth century, but this development is deemed natural and inevitable because it paralleled the decline of the Empire.¹⁷⁷ And in any event, as long as it lasted, the Ottoman Empire was a safe haven for Jews

To be sure, this view is not held solely by the scholars of the Ottoman history under study here. Rather it is possible to find the reflections of this glorified image of Ottoman society in many other domains, reproduced and disseminated through newspapers, textbooks, conferences, etc. The glorification of 1492, however, eclipses much of what transpired

¹⁷⁴ Sara Reguer, "Interrelations Between Ottoman Turkey's Sephardim and the Sephardim of Italy," 15.

¹⁷⁵ Halil İnalçık, "Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation," 11.

¹⁷⁶ Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 3; Ahmet H. Eroglu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Yahudiler*, 66; Marc A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 106.

¹⁷⁷ Marc A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 156.

before and, as much of what was to come. For instance, in one newspaper article regarding the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Sephardic Jews, we read Elena Neuman saying – in reference to the speculation that “Christopher Columbus was a Marrano, a Jew forced to convert to Catholicism in 15th century Spain” —that “thousands of other Jews who fled [...] in 1492 had a better sense of direction [...] [because] in the same year that Columbus discovered the New World, thousands of Sephardic Jews [...] found a safe haven in the Ottoman Turkish Empire.”¹⁷⁸ Neuman is by no means the only person who thinks Sephardic Jews had the good fortune to choose the most hospitable refuge at that time. In the same article, Naim Gülerüz, one of the prominent leaders of the Turkish and international Jewish community, similarly comments on Ottoman tolerance: “I think Turkey is the only country in the world where Jews have lived for five centuries peacefully and continuously.” In another newspaper article on “Living as Jews in Turkey for 500 Years” the author echoes the warm sentiments above and writes that Turkey’s Jewish community “had lived for almost 500 hundred years in harmonious coexistence with its predominantly Moslem neighbors.”¹⁷⁹ Elsewhere, a textbook designed to teach secondary level students about the 500 years of Turkish Jewish experience promotes a similar view.¹⁸⁰ The book mentions that there existed discriminatory restrictions for all monotheistic non-Muslim ethnic and religious communities and they had always been second-class citizens vis-à-vis Muslims. However, it states: “nonetheless, the privileges and freedoms enjoyed by the Jews in Ottoman lands clearly outweighed the restrictions, especially in comparison to what was happening to the Jews of Europe during the same time.”¹⁸¹ Even this minor caveat is drowned by sweeping generalizations such as: “[B]y allowing non-Muslims cultural and religious autonomy and the freedom to practice their own way of life under the Millet System, the Ottomans eliminated many of the sources of dissatisfaction and unrest usually felt by minorities.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Elena Neuman, “Sephardic Jews found Safe haven in Ottoman Empire,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, October 25, 1990, 20.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Marc Silberman, *A Curriculum on Five Hundred Years of Turkish Jewish Experience: Major Aspects and Their Present-Day Significance*, ed. Norma Scheider (New York: The Quincentennial Foundation of Istanbul, 1992), 14.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Nowhere has Ottoman hospitality been exalted as unconditionally and ecstatically as it was during the official commemoration of Jewish life in the Empire and, by extension, Turkey.¹⁸³ For example, in 1991 *Türkiye'nin Yahudi Dostları Derneği* (Association of Jewish Friends of Turkey) convened in Florida to show their thankfulness for Ottoman hospitality in celebration of the then forthcoming five hundredth anniversary of 1492.¹⁸⁴ A newspaper report indicated that the common message of the speeches delivered during the event was that Turkish hospitality and the rights granted to the Jews would always be gratefully remembered. Similar events took place elsewhere. As a part of the activities organized by the Quincentennial Foundation to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Spanish Jews in Turkey, an exhibition entitled “In the Court of the Sultan” was displayed in New York.¹⁸⁵ The resemblance to the title of Grosrichard’s aforementioned book *Sultan’s Court* should not be missed here. However, the resemblance goes beyond the titles. As was mentioned before, the Sultan’s Court was a site of European fascination for its wealth of objects of desire, ranging from desirable objects to place, ranging from exotic animals to precious fabric. Similarly, “In the Court of the Sultan,” over 300 hundred objects from recreated ritual baths to folk art pieces (e.g., wedding contracts) to traditional clothes (e.g., silk brocade jacket for the circumcision ceremony) were showcased. The articulation of these objects in the exhibition, as is typical in modern museums, makes them objects of aesthetic appreciation and molds them into conveyors of a certain image. In this particular case, the image that the assemblage of objects conjures up is that of the Golden Age of the Ottoman Empire where the Jews enjoyed peace, tolerance, and cultural/material prosperity.

Academic literature, newspapers, textbooks, panels and exhibitions do not exhaust the list of domains in which Ottoman tolerance, hospitality and Jewish life are interwoven. But these cases suffice for the far-ranging nature of these passionate attachments to the glorious past and its peaceful negotiation of difference to be grasped. I will discuss the logic of this nostalgic remembrance of the past and its functioning in contemporary societies in chapter three. For now, however, it is important to note that the nostalgic remembrance of Jewish

¹⁸³ This short-circuit between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic is quite typical of this discourse.

¹⁸⁴ Mahmut Esat Ozan, “We are thankful to the Turks,” *Hürriyet*, April 15, 1991.

¹⁸⁵ Carol K. Abrams, “In the Court of the Sultan” *Cleveland Jewish News*, 15 June 1990, 37. Floral and crescent shaped roseta pins of silver, gold, diamonds, an engraved silver Torah crown and a traditional silk brocade circumcision jacket and many other cultural objects were shown during the exhibition on Sephardic Jews of the Ottoman Empire, which was held at the Jewish Museum in New York.

life in Ottoman society has been enacted by the Jewish community in Turkey and abroad. In my reading, they depict an image of a loyal minority whose integration into the state exemplifies a story of success. Although I mostly focus on the narratives created by Turkish historians in this dissertation, I want to emphasize that these depictions are constitutive of the broader theme of Ottoman peace and tolerance. Thus they too are subject to the criticism, discussed below as well as in third and fourth chapters, that depictions of history are over-saturated with Ottoman tolerance of the pitfalls of over-saturation of history of Ottoman tolerance.

2.4 Silenced and Trivialized Histories and Moments of Hostility: 1660

In the previous section, I have shown how Jews figure in narratives of Ottoman hospitality and tolerance. These accounts constantly accentuate and remind us of the expulsions of Jews from Europe; their arrival in the Empire, the hospitality with which they are received, and the ensuing era of Jewish prosperity. In contrast, in this section, through Marc Baer's study, I will turn our attention to different facets of Jewish life that are all too conveniently left out in the narratives depicting the Ottoman Empire as the blueprint for multiculturalism. Baer's text brings those suppressed traumatic aspects to the fore: (i) the expulsion of Jews from the core areas of Istanbul and confiscation of their assets; (ii) erosion in the positions of the Jewish physicians in the seventeenth century; (iii) the fundamentalist animosity exhibited by Kadilizade movement, especially toward Jews; and (iv) the attitudes of the Sultan and the prominent figures in the Palace regarding conversions of non-Muslims and names of villages. These elements appear to break the unity of the fantasy that had peaceful coexisted Muslim and non-Muslim groups in the Empire.

In July 24, 1660 a fire starts in Istanbul. It begins in the west of Eminönü and spreads quickly over a vast area. It devastates almost two thirds of Istanbul, including the New Mosque and the nearby Jewish neighborhoods in Eminönü and Bahçekapı. Approximately 40,000 people lose their lives and 280,000 homes are burnt to ashes. In his historical

investigation, Baer argues that this event marks a turning point for the Jews in Istanbul.¹⁸⁶ According to Baer, in the aftermath of the event, the fire is blamed on the Jews: “Ottoman historians, writers, palace preachers and royalty accused and cursed Jews for residing where a mosque was to be constructed, blamed Jews for starting the fire, and viewed the destruction of Jewish homes as divine punishment.”¹⁸⁷ The Palace also orders Jews to evacuate the area for the restoration of the New Mosque. With no other choice but to abide by the decree, they leave their old neighborhoods. However, Baer points out that for many years to follow, Jews are not allowed to re-settle there. The Palace takes advantage of the fire and the renovation of the mosque to put their antipathy toward Jews into action. The state authorities confiscate Jewish assets and synagogues and hand them over to Muslim waqfs.¹⁸⁸ Jews are expelled from the center of the city to peripheral areas (e.g., Balat, Hasköy, Ortaköy), which ruins the economic and social network of many. In Baer’s analysis, the Ottoman state authorities view “the expulsion of the Jews and the construction of the mosque as ‘reconquest’ of ‘infidel’ space.”¹⁸⁹ The great fire of 1660 wreaks havoc with Muslim and Christian neighborhoods as well, particularly churches. Nevertheless, Christians manage to resettle in their neighborhoods and retain their assets whereas Jews face incomparable losses.

From the 1660s onwards, Baer explains, Jews faced significant erosion in their positions as high-ranking administrators and as business owners, and their overall social positions took a sharp turn for the worse. He underscores that it is a commonplace in the literature to attribute this erosion to a few factors such as the rivalry between the Jews and Orthodox Christians; changes in global political and economic conditions which had negative effects on the lucrative connections of the Jews; and finally a perception that Jews were incapable of adapting to change.¹⁹⁰ Without neglecting these possibilities, Baer point outs that the role of the Ottoman Sultan and State authorities in the deterioration of conditions of the Jewish

¹⁸⁶ Marc D. Baer, “17.Yüzyilda Yahudilerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndaki Nufuz ve Mevkilerini Yitirmeleri,” [Jews’ loss of status and influence in the Ottoman Empire in the Seventeenth Century] *Toplum ve Bilim*. 83 (1999 Kış); and Marc D. Baer, “Honored By The Glory of Islam: The Ottoman State, Non-Muslims, and Conversion To Islam in Late Seventeenth-Century Istanbul and Rumelia” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2001).

¹⁸⁷ Marc D. Baer, “Honored By The Glory of Islam,” 123.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

community has been overlooked in the literature. Rather, he argues, ‘anti-Jewish sentiment’ in the Palace was highly effective in altering the determining trajectories of the Jews. Baer emphasizes the policies and the attitudes of the State that played a crucial role in the Jewish loss of influence and social position. This point is very pertinent to our discussion of the fantasies and the depictions of the Ottoman tolerance and therefore deserves special attention and elaboration here.

2.4.1 Ottoman State attitude toward Jews and the Kadilzade Movement

Taken in isolation from their historical context, the events of 1660 might strike one as puzzling, arbitrary and senseless. How is it that Jews, who had found a safe haven in the Ottoman Empire, could be treated so cruelly in the aftermath of a tragedy that was not of their making? Baer argues that knowledge of the Kadilzade movement is key to answering this question as it puts in perspective the political atmosphere in the seventeenth century. According to Baer, this movement emerged in the early seventeenth century during the reign of Sultan Murad IV (1623-40), but reaches its pinnacle between the 1660s and early 1680s.¹⁹¹ Basically, the Kadilzade movement attributed financial crisis, military defeats, and socio-political instability facing the Ottoman State, to a deviation from ‘proper’ Islam. The members of the movement believed that a return to piety and ‘proper’ Islamic reforms would restore order and save the Empire.

What distinguishes the later cadres of the movement, who had become active under the leadership of Vani Mehmed Efendi between the late 1650s and early 1680s, was that they directed their hostility against unorthodox Muslims, Jews, and Christians abroad and within the Empire: “Whereas earlier Kadilzade leaders aimed to reform Muslim behaviour alone, Vani Mehmed Efendi sought to change both the beliefs and practices of Muslims and public position of Christians and especially Jews as well”.¹⁹² Baer emphasizes that Vani Mehmed Efendi and people in his circle directed their hostility more strongly toward Jews for two

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁹² Ibid., 119.

main reasons. First, since Vani Mehmed Efendi and his bankers were of rural origin and lived in relatively austere conditions in Erzurum for a long time, they were shocked by the conspicuous consumption, wealth and positions of Jews in the Palace when they came to Istanbul. Secondly, Jews were more vulnerable than the other non-Muslim group, namely, Orthodox Christians, who comprised the largest non-Muslim group in the city, had a Patriarch, international backing from Christian powers, and increasing financial strength.¹⁹³ Nonetheless, Baer cautions against placing all responsibility for the new attitude toward Jews on Vani Mehmed Efendi. Rather, Baer suggests that Vani Mehmed Efendi had found a very “receptive audience for his ideas” in Sultan Mehmed IV, grand vizier Köprülü Fazil Ahmed Paşa and Valide Sultan (the Sultan’s mother).¹⁹⁴ Through the rapport he establishes with these highly influential figures, Vani Mehmed Efendi became the chief preacher in the Sultan’s mosque and one of the Sultan’s most trusted advisors.¹⁹⁵

In his investigation, Baer shows that the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV directly involved himself in proselytizing non-Muslims and played an increasingly ‘solicitous role’ in that respect, especially during the second half of his reign, from 1661 to 1687.¹⁹⁶ According to Baer, “converts appeared at the sultan’s traveling court whether he was on military campaign, or at a palace or royal pavilion.”¹⁹⁷ Baer states that while some converted at their own valorization, others were compelled to convert by the Sultan and his retinue.¹⁹⁸ In one case, Sultan Mehmed IV offered a monetary reward to a non-Muslim drover to convince him to change his religion. Besides the conversion of the non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, the Sultan’s interest in converting the names of certain villages was indicative of his attitude regarding non-Muslims. Baer points out that Sultan Mehmed IV and his retinue convert the names of villages for instance from Priest Village – *Papaz köyü* – to Islamic – *İslamiyye* –.¹⁹⁹ Also emblematic of the anti-Semitic attitudes of the sultan and the prominent figures in the Palace in the second half of the seventeenth century was their treatment of Jewish physicians. According to Baer, serving as a physician in the Palace has been a highly

¹⁹³ Ibid., 119-120.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 120.

¹⁹⁵ Marc D. Baer, “17.Yuzyilda Yahudilerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndaki Nüfuz ve Mevkilerini Yitirmeleri,” 209.

¹⁹⁶ Marc D. Baer, “Honored By The Glory of Islam,” 181.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 190.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 187.

prestigious position, dominated by Jews especially in the sixteenth century. However, in the seventeenth century, the number and the proportion of the Jewish physicians shrink considerably and many of those who remain in their position convert to Islam.²⁰⁰ Although Baer detects a common tendency in the literature to attribute this change to the factors other than the Sultan and Ottoman State authorities, his historical investigation shows that the Sultan and state officials had no small part in the process. Baer contends that Jewish physicians felt pressured to convert to Islam to maintain their positions, the common belief in Palace circles that a Jewish physician would have to “clean himself of the ‘filth’ of infidelity and ‘distinguish’ himself from the Jews.”²⁰¹ While Jewish Palace physicians of the previous century had not faced such attitudes, Baer argues, the leading physicians of the late seventeenth century, such as Hayatizade and Nuh Efendi, had felt feel the pressure to convert to Islam.²⁰²

Baer’s historical investigation provides us with an entry point to thinking about the limits of narratives of Ottoman peace and tolerance. But it is surely not the only one. One can find similar examples, which undermine the consistency of the narratives of the Golden age. For instance, Joseph Hacker, a well-known scholar of Jewish history, offers similar historical material and insights, illustrating how Jews in the Empire underwent forced resettlements called *Sürgün*. Moreover, he similarly illustrates how these aspects of Jewish life are silenced and trivialized in the literature.

2.4.2 The Sürgün System and Its influence on Jewish Communities

Joseph Hacker shows that the Ottoman *Sürgün* system was deployed for different purposes.²⁰³ Two main objectives it served were punishment of individuals or groups and repopulation of newly conquered areas in the Empire. Without neglecting the former motivation, in his historical investigation, Hacker dwells on the latter and shows how certain

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 191.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 201.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Joseph Hacker, “The Sürgün System and Jewish Society in the Ottoman Empire during the Fifteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries,” in *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership*, ed. Aron Rodrigue (Indiana: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1992), 2.

Jewish groups suffered from Ottoman state authorities and the Sultan's *Sürgün* policies, which were aimed at developing and repopulating selected regions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. According to Hacker, although these policies and operations did not exclusively target the Jews in the Empire, a disproportionate number of Jews were involved in the Ottoman *Sürgün* system in these centuries. Hacker contends that these processes and policies enormously influenced the structure and the composition of the Jewish communities in the Empire especially Romaniot Jews, i.e., native Greek-speaking Jews of the former Byzantine Empire who had been living in the islands of the Mediterranean Sea under Latin rule.

According to Hacker, 1453 – the year of the conquest of Constantinople – constituted another milestone for the Jews. It is well known that, after the conquest, Mehmed II wanted to make the city the new hub and the Capital of the Empire. However, many inhabitants fled for fear of their lives and the conquest disrupted the economic and social life in the City. The Emperor took certain measures and implemented policies to revitalize and repopulate the city. Relying on Muslim and Christian sources, Hacker points out that Mehmed II resorted to methods of releasing certain amount of captives to use them in the rebuilding process.²⁰⁴ He also promises previous inhabitants who fled during the conquest to give them tax exemptions and their property back if they return by a given date. In addition, he asks foreign states to send back escapees.

In addition, Mehmed II used the method of population transfer, relevant to our investigation of Jewish life since it had manifold repercussions for the Jews living in the Empire. Hacker contends that the *Sürgün* system gained momentum between 1454-1459 and it was used during the reigns of the successors of Mehmed II, namely Selim II, Süleyman the Magnificent, and so on. Population transfers continued to bring many Muslims, Jews and Christians to Istanbul from Anatolian, European, as well as Middle Eastern territories of the Empire. Amongst these peoples, Jews were particularly targeted by these policies since they were well known for their expertise in commercial activities. In this period we see Jews being resettled from Egypt to Istanbul; from Salonika to Rhodes; or from Buda, Hungary to the Empire.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 8.

Hacker argues that these *Sürgün* policies, which spanned long periods of time, brought about serious consequences for the Jews subjected to them. Drawing from various sources (such as writings of contemporary Byzantine Jews and persons living in the Latin colonies), Hacker illustrates that these events have had deep impacts on the Jews and resulted in much suffering “just as the exiling process led to the development and the flourishing of Jewish Istanbul, so it also led to the decay and eventual obliteration of many Jewish communities throughout the Empire, particularly in Anatolia and the Balkans.”²⁰⁵ The *Sürgün* policies and the social status accompanying it involved certain obligations that, in many cases, applied for life. According to Hacker, none of them “was able to free himself of this status, which obliged him – first and foremost – to be vassal of his place of residence, without the ability to leave it before first having obtained the permission of the authorities.”²⁰⁶ Further Hacker underscores that the *Sürgün* process itself causes many complications. In some cases, resettlement itself created certain conditions endangered the lives of migrants, such as starvation and epidemics. Moreover, loss of financial networks, abandonment of property, and loss of emotional ties – such as to homeland – pose highly serious problems for the Jews in exile. Compared to other Jewish communities in the Empire, Byzantine Jews become remarkably subject to the *Sürgün* processes and bore the brunt of deportations and compulsory resettlement, struggling with plague as well as economic and cultural crises.²⁰⁷

These aspects of Jewish life, Hacker contends, are mostly glossed over in the literature and overshadowed by the migration of the Spanish Jews. Many authors, he argues, rely on the historical accounts of a Jewish scholar from 16th century, Eliyah Capsali, whose favorable descriptions of the Ottoman rule are commonly accepted by modern Jewish scholarship and the historians of the Ottoman Empire. According to Capsali, Mehmed II appointed and recognized the Chief Rabbi and entitled him to attend the meetings of Divan-ı Humayun (Imperial Council) and to collect taxes from Jewish communities. Moreover, Capsali’s writings conveyed positive images of Constantinople where the invited Jews enjoyed tax

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 34.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁷ Joseph R. Hacker. “Ottoman Policy toward the Jews and Jewish Attitudes toward the Ottomans during the Fifteenth Century,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1980), 121.

exemptions and were granted houses where their culture flourished.²⁰⁸ Overall Hacker finds Capsali's descriptions of the period too rosy. For Hacker, Capsali's portrayal of Jewish life is skewed; he stresses certain of Mehmed II's policies, which provided particular Jewish communities with protection, economic and social development, but omitted deportations, plague, and Jewish discontent. Hacker notes that Capsali wrote in 1523, in a period wherein many exiled Sephardic Jews from Spain settled in important cities of the Empire and felt sympathetic towards Ottoman authorities. Hacker argues that Capsali's "picture of the Ottomans contained only praise, the worst deeds of the sultans held to be admirable and just".²⁰⁹ Hacker states that in the late fifteenth centuries and throughout the sixteenth centuries, Sephardic Jews outnumbered Byzantine Jews and occupied important positions both in the Palace and the society. While Sephardic Jews became highly influential, the newly-emerging community structure eventually incorporated the Byzantine Jews and their tragedy. As a result, the expulsion of the Iberian Jews, extension of the Ottoman hospitality, and the improvement of the conditions of Jews within the Empire eclipse the situation and the suffering of the Byzantine Romaniot Jews. In Hacker's view this narrative gained wide purchase, being commonly accepted in the scholarly literature of the sixteenth century and onward, and still pervasive in contemporary literature.

2.4.3 Silenced and Trivialized Traumatic Moments and Events

Indeed, a close look at the sources I have discussed so far supports Hacker's conclusion. The trajectory of the Byzantine Jews is not mentioned in many writings, which almost exclusively focus on the favorable aspects of Jewish life in the Empire, highlighting Ottoman hospitality and Jewish prosperity. In other narratives, the situation of Byzantine Jews is given trivial attention, or, quickly deemed an exception proving a rule. The authors praising Ottoman tolerance indeed mention *Sürgün* policies of the Sultan and state authorities in their works. They agree that the Ottoman state authorities resorted to "forceful settlement" and "forced

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 123.

migration.”²¹⁰ Nor is it denied that “driven from their homes under the resettlement (*Sürgün*) system;” many groups -especially the Jews- were “transferred” - and “forced to resettle in the new capital” by Ottoman state authorities.²¹¹ Or elsewhere we are told that compared to his immediate predecessors and successors, Sultan Bayezid II (who reigned between 1481-1512) took a “conservative” and “rigorously devout” stance and tightened the interpretation of Islamic law for the non-Muslim population.²¹² Thus, “the privileged were assailed, recently constructed synagogues were closed, and pressure was exerted on Jewish physicians and tax farmers, important figures in the life and commerce of the Empire, to adopt Islam and, indeed, some did.”²¹³

While admitting that all was not well for Ottoman Jews, these authors put forward explanations that play down the significance of these “incongruous” moments. They tend to deem these events as aberrations or exceptions that prove the rule. In other words, as soon as these authors near a traumatic moment, they immediately employ certain discursive strategies to hold us within the bounds of the narrative of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. In the case of *Sürgün* system of the fifteenth century, Inalcik concedes “[Fatih Sultan Mehmed] Conqueror resorted to forced Jewish resettlement from Balkan and Anatolian towns to Istanbul [and] the measure caused disruption in the economic well-being of these towns.”²¹⁴ However, Levy immediately stresses that the evacuations brought about the opportunity for the new Jewish communities from Spain to settle in those towns.²¹⁵ In another instance, Levy reminded us that the Ottoman authorities provided various incentives to motivate immigrants.²¹⁶ Or in another instance, Epstein highlights that the Jews had become preferred by the Ottoman authorities for their skills and that this motivated the authorities to force them to immigrate.²¹⁷ Epstein tells that Sultan Bazeyid II’s era was a

²¹⁰ Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 25.; and Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, 28.

²¹¹ Halil İnalcık, “Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation,” 5; Marc A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 103, 151.

²¹² Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 11.

²¹³ Marc A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 153.

²¹⁴ Halil İnalcık, “Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire,” in *From Empire to Republic: Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1995), 109.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 25.

²¹⁷ Marc A. Epstein, *The Ottoman Jewish Communities and Their Role in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 151.

temporary setback and that his strict practices subsequently gave way to “policies of tolerance.”²¹⁸ Thus, even when it is accepted that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jewish communities went into serious decline, the role of Muslim Ottoman authorities is obscured. As Marc Baer’s discursive analysis maintains, this turn in the trajectories of the Ottoman Jews is explained (away) by external factors.

In addition to such discursive maneuvers, one can notice further overarching generalizations in narratives regarding Ottoman attitudes toward non-Muslim groups. After their detailed accounts of hostile attitudes, tragic experiences and sufferings of certain Jewish groups in the Empire, these narratives, nonetheless, invite us to believe that the Ottoman Empire and its dealing with its non-Muslim subjects deserve to be seen as “relaxed” and “pluralist,” especially when compared with most European societies.²¹⁹ After taking stock of three centuries of experience, the narrators have no qualms about concluding that the life in the Empire for the Jewish groups was overall desirable.²²⁰ One can detect similar generalizations and orientations in different sources that belong to the same plane of thought, tantalizing with depictions of a society that one cannot help but desire:

For the most part, then, all these marks of discrimination were relatively minor, they applied to all groups, and they were dictated more to prevent conflict among individuals and groups than they were to manifest feelings of superiority or inferiority [...] What real misrule there was in the Ottoman system in the Golden Age took place within millets by religious leaders whose powers over their followers were more absolute than that of members of the Ottoman Ruling Class over the subjects, and where there was little remedy from abuse, either from Ottoman or *millet* laws (emphasis original).²²¹

The Ottoman Jews also knew periods of material and spiritual impoverishment, reflecting the general decline of the Ottoman state and society. What makes their experience unique, however — is that over a period lasting six centuries, in good times or bad, Jews were never singled out for persecution or oppression because of their religion. In fact, for much of this period they enjoyed the status of a favored minority. Most Jews appreciated the security that they enjoyed in the Ottoman Empire and the

²¹⁸ Ibid., 155.

²¹⁹ Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 17.

²²⁰ Ahmet H. Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Yahudiler*, 8.; Abdurrahman Küçük, “Türklerin Anadolu’da Azınlıklara Dini Hoşgörüsü,” [Turks’ Religious Tolerance to Minorities in Anatolia] 581-2.

²²¹ Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, 83.

plural character of its society, and these evoked among them sentiments of loyalty and patriotism.²²²

“In brief,” Halil İnalçık contends, “Islamic law and the state generally accepted non-Muslim communities, including Jews, as part of the larger Islamic society.”²²³ This last aspect of narratives about Ottoman Jews along with the other common discursive strategies mentioned above are of interest to us since they exemplify how contemporary representations of the Ottoman Empire and the past are shaped by narratives of the Ottoman peace and tolerance. This chapter discussed certain traumatic incidents in which Ottoman Jews were subjected to expulsions, confiscations, forced migrations and conversions. My interest in these events is motivated by the question of how they are – and have been – reconciled with narratives of a Golden Age of glorified Ottoman hospitality and generosity toward the Other.

In the beginning of the chapter, by focusing on a certain moment in the Ottoman history, namely 1492, I have attempted to delineate a certain discourse, which, in tribute to the Ottoman tolerance, idealizes and romanticizes the life of Ottoman Jewry. The prosperity of Ottoman Jewish communities in general and the turn of fortune for exiled Jews in their new destination in particular are familiar motifs that figure in the historical narratives as the unmistakable tokens of Ottoman benevolence and hospitality. Titles from the scholarly literature like *the Ottoman-Jewish symbiosis* or *Jewish allegiance to the Ottoman State* say it all.²²⁴ The academic texts are at pains to drive home the point that the extent and the depth of the Jewish influence in the Empire could have reached nowhere near their level had it not been for Ottoman tolerance. We are consistently reminded of the autonomy and equal treatment enjoyed by Ottoman Jews. Such celebratory accounts of Jewish life under Ottoman rule are by no means confined to scholarly literature but, as exemplified in this chapter, are widely circulated in popular culture. As illustrated above, not only academic discourse, but also popular discourse (textbooks, newspapers, exhibitions and so on) memorialize and celebrate the golden age of peace and tolerance. Themes of *prosperity* and *tolerance* have repeatedly

²²² Avidgor Levy, “Introduction,” in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History 15th Century Through 20th Century*, ed. Avidgor Levy (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), xix.

²²³ Halil İnalçık, “Foundations of Ottoman-Jewish Cooperation,” 6.

²²⁴ Avidgor Levy, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 19.

played themselves out in these historical accounts, which offer a relatively coherent and untroubled narrative about Jewish life.

Later in this chapter, on the other hand, I investigated historical cases and events, which disrupt the unity of narratives of Ottoman tolerance. These included: (i) confiscations, expulsions and erosion of prestigious office-holding of the Jews, coupled with hostile attitudes of the Sultan and state elites in the seventeenth century; (ii) “forced” migrations and their consequences – such as loss of financial network and emotional ties, or danger of plague – in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; (iii) strict interpretations and applications of the Islamic law during the reign of Bayezid II; are the ones we encountered up until now. One might expand this list by adding the often-neglected trajectory of Ottoman slaves who had been captured during the conquest of Constantinople. Prominent Ottoman scholar Ömer Lütfi Barkan’s work on these slaves reminds us that the same Fatih Mehmed who granted minority rights and autonomy to non-Muslim communities also used captured Christians to reconstruct and revitalize villages surrounding Istanbul.²²⁵ Can we still call the Empire tolerant and peaceful after having learned that around the beginning of the 16th century more than one hundred villages had become populated by the Christian slaves? Similarly, if one lends an ear to scholar Selçuk Akşin, one can come across further narratives of socially and politically peripheral communities.²²⁶ According to Akşin, due to their religious and cultural peculiarities, the Alevi and Zaidi Muslims who did not accept the Sunni version of Islam, or the Yezidis and the Crypto-Christians who mostly were not seen as Muslims, and, lastly, nomadic and tribal communities such as Kurdish tribes and Bedouins became the target of the Ottoman administrative and political interventions (such as Sunnification and sedentarization) especially in the 19th century.

Not surprisingly, these traumatic events and hostile moments hardly find a place in the accounts of Ottoman scholars hailing the Empire’s peace. On the rare occasions that they are not completely silenced, they are treated as marginal, sporadic or exceptional, the

²²⁵ Ömer Lütfi Barkan, “XV. ve XVI. Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Toprak İşçiliğinin Organizasyonu Şekilleri, I: “Kullar ve Ortakçı Kullar,” in *Toplu Eserler* (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınevi:1980), 575-717.

²²⁶ Selçuk Akşin Somel, “Osmanlı Modernleşme Döneminde Periferik Nüfus Grupları,” [Peripheral Demographic Groups During the Ottoman Modernization Period] *Toplum ve Bilim* 83, (1999/2000): 178-199.

underlying message being that, save for some unfortunate and short-term aberrations, Jews lived in happiness and peace for centuries under the Ottoman rule.

In juxtaposing “peaceful” and “violent” moments of the Empire, my goal in this chapter is not so much to supplant the narratives of Ottoman tolerance with those of Oriental Despotism as to shed some light on the discursive strategies deployed by ardent believers in Ottoman hospitality in the face of all the ‘evidence’ to the contrary. To put it differently, I want to draw attention to the ways in which the fantasy of the Ottoman peace and tolerance mediates and shapes our representation and remembrance. This work is necessary to have a clue as to how passionate descriptions of Ottoman peace and tolerance address and conceal traumatic elements to make the narratives of Ottoman peace coherent. In other words, my goal here is to illustrate the ways in which these narratives mediate our perception, and silence and trivialize traumatic events, in order to leave the “idyllic” image of Ottoman society intact. This gives us significant insights into what kind of strategies these authors use to hold us within the bonds of Ottoman peace and tolerance and narratives of the desired age.

2.5 Is It Enough to Dispel the Myth?

Of course, narratives about the Ottoman Millet System and Ottoman peace and benevolence have not gone unrivaled. Many scholars have called them into question repeatedly. These criticisms, while mostly taking issues with misuses of the term “millet,” sometimes can go so far as to deny the very existence of the Millet System as such.²²⁷ For example, in his oft-cited piece, Bernard Braude finds many scholars guilty of jumping to hasty conclusions on the basis of a highly limited number of special cases where the term ‘millet’ appears in the official correspondences.²²⁸ In his analysis, up until 19th century, the Ottoman officials did employ the term *millet* but rather reserved it for “themselves, Christian sovereigns, rare

²²⁷ Benjamin Braude, “Introduction”; “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System,”; Daniel Goffman, “Ottoman Millets in the Early 17th Century,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 11 (1994 Fall); Macit M. Kenanoğlu. *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek* [*Millet System in the Ottoman: Myth and Reality*] (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004).

²²⁸ Benjamin Braude, “Introduction,” and “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System,” 71.

Jewish favorites but not for the mass of their non-Muslim subjects.”²²⁹ In his critique Braude is joined by Goffman,²³⁰ who points out that some historians tend to conceive the millets as “religious estates, or perhaps better, guilds, undergoing only slightly internal evolution [...] but remaining basically unaltered and even ‘unpolluted’ from the fifteenth (and perhaps even from seventh) until the nineteenth centuries.”²³¹ For Goffman, the Ottomans put the ‘millet’ signifier to so many different uses across time and space that it is virtually impossible to arrive *an operating* definition of the term. Moreover, as Braude and Goffman demonstrate, the Ottoman authorities typically used a variety of nomenclature to designate non-Muslim groups.²³² Goffman also points out “in the first half of the seventeenth century, the most common Ottoman word for a ‘group’ or a ‘community’, whether religious, social, military, or political, was not *millet* at all, but *taife*.”²³³ It was not until the nineteenth century that “millet” came to denote the European understanding of term, i.e., a non-Muslim protected community.²³⁴ Hence both Braude and Goffman warn us against the fallacy of looking at the Ottoman history retrospectively through the lenses of contemporary usages of the term.

However, Braude takes the criticism further and calls into question the very existence of the Millet System as a “system,” i.e., as an institutionalized, stable and structured framework. Instead he suggests “it was not an institution or even a group of institutions, but rather it was a set of arrangements, largely local, with considerable variation over time and place.”²³⁵ Kenanoğlu on the other hand, characterizes as “myth”²³⁶ the autonomy that the religious communities are believed to have been granted under the Millet System. In place of this “myth,” he tries to show that non-Muslim religious institutions were firmly embedded within the state organization and exercised hardly any autonomy in their administrative, fiscal, judicial and punitive affairs.²³⁷ According to Kenanoğlu, the Ottoman authorities appointed

²²⁹ Ibid., 71.

²³⁰ Daniel Goffman, “Ottoman Millets in the Early 17th Century,” 136.

²³¹ Ibid., 136.

²³² According to Braude, the non-Muslim communities –*dhimmis*– in the Empire were commonly called “*taife* (group, people, class, body of men, tribe) and less commonly *cemaat* (congregation, religious community)”. See Benjamin Braude, “Introduction,” and “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System,” 72.

²³³ Daneil Goffman, “Ottoman Millets in the Early 17th Century,” 139.

²³⁴ Benjamin Braude, “Introduction”; “Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System.” 73.

²³⁵ Ibid., 74.

²³⁶ It is important to note here once again the title of Macit Kenanoğlu’s book. See Macit M. Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek* [*The Millet System in the Ottoman Time: Myth and Reality*].

²³⁷ Ibid., 396.

and used religious leaders of non-Muslim communities as tax-collectors (*mültezims*) and took advantage of their positions and spiritual authority to command control over administrative and fiscal matters. This way, he goes on to argue, the Empire successfully assimilated non-Muslim religious organizations within its administrative structure.²³⁸

In a somewhat similar vein, other scholars have argued that the writings on the Ottoman peace and tolerance in the Classical Age should be taken with a grain of salt either because they are “optimistic readings,” “extremely sympathetic reactions,” or “ideologically biased,” and “based on emotions.”²³⁹ Instead, we are invited to take a more nuanced and balanced approach toward the Ottoman history and the relations between the Ottoman authorities and non-Muslim communities. For Rodrigue, “reconceptualizing this relationship requires moving away from the nationalist historiography of an almost idyllic, harmonious coexistence in the Ottoman Empire.”²⁴⁰ According to Rodrigue, in order to gain this proper distance we need to unmoor ourselves from the post-Enlightenment-Europe-centered perspective, which views history through the lenses of the minority/majority duality and modern notions such as “equality” or “discrimination.” He finds this kind of conceptualization “fundamentally wrong” and maintains that minority/majority issues and concerns about discrimination and equality are based on the principle of demographic majority, which in turn is coterminous with the rise of modern European nation-states and therefore can not be used to understand the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Classical Age.

Doubtlessly, the literature correcting and criticizing Pax-Ottomana provides a broader perspective on the subject matter. That being said, I want to underscore a problematic aspect and a shortcoming of this literature, which is key to our investigation of Ottoman tolerance and peace. Authors such as Braude, Goffman or Kenanoğlu (and in this sense, Baer and

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ See respectively Çağlar Keyder, *Memalik-i Osmaniye`den Avrupa Birliği'ne* [From the Well-Protected Ottoman State to the European Union] (Istanbul: İletisim, 2003), 14; Tankut T. Soykan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Gayrimüslimler* [Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire] (Istanbul: Utopya Kitapevi, 2000), 20; and Berdal Aral, “Idea of Human Rights as Perceived in the Ottoman Empire,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 26 (2004): 454-482.

²⁴⁰ Aron Rodrigue, “Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire,” interview by Nancy Reynolds *Sebr* 5, no.1 (1996): 1, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/rodrigue.html>.

Hacker as well), who correct the “myth” with a more truthful account of the Millet System, still maintain that there exists a more realistic representation of the Ottoman Empire and of how it dealt with its non-Muslim subjects. For them, this misperception and myth can be avoided to the extent that we get closer to the historical “truth.” Similarly, scholars like Keyder, Aral, Soykan and Rodrigue, who find the descriptions of Pax-Ottomana to be “optimistic,” “extremely sympathetic,” or “ideologically biased” still assume that these pitfalls can be shunned with the help of a more realistic approach. Thus, whether they purport to dispel the myth altogether or amend it, the critics of the Pax-Ottomana are informed by the same realistic episteme according to which it is historical misconceptualizations that hinder historians from grasping the truth of Ottoman history and the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims therein.

However, we are still left with an important question as to how one can achieve “proper” distance from emotional distortions and ideological biases as one analyzes the Ottoman history—or for that matter, any historical period. In other words, the critiques above still beg the fundamental question of to what extent and in which ways we can attain this nuanced and balanced approach. One would search the said literature in vain for a satisfactory answer. Of the authors mentioned above, Rodrigue comes closest to providing an answer but even his admonition against the (mis)conceptualization of the *millet*s as minorities and his call for a break with the post-Enlightenment-Europe-centered perspective do not amount to a positive prescription; as with the other scholars, his criticisms expound only what is wrong with the historiography of Ottoman history but fall short of delineating what a “good” historiography should look like.

Ironically, one can hear similar charges of anachronism voiced by the adherents of Pax-Ottomana themselves. These authors also warn against the fallacy of confusing *millet*s of the past with the minority groups of today. Eryılmaz, for one, argues that it would be a mistake to conceive of Ottoman history in contemporary terms such as multiculturalism.²⁴¹ Yet, it is none other than Eryılmaz himself who, only a page later, contends that “it was a ‘deliberate’ choice on the part of the Ottoman State not to have recourse to the kind of homogenization

²⁴¹ Bilal Eryılmaz, “Osmanlı Devletinde Farklılıklara ve Hoşgörüye Farklı Bir Yaklaşım,” [A Different Approach to Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman State] *Yeni Türkiye* 38, (2000): 702-709.

of diverse cohorts undertaken by modern nation-states and colonial administrations.”²⁴² Likewise, Ortaylı points out the error in equating the non-Muslims of the Millet System with minorities in the modern nation-states.²⁴³ Nevertheless, as I have seen above, Ortaylı commits the very anachronism he is critical of: “there is no fuss and fight with the neighbors, identitarian claims, resistance to being assimilated or assimilation, i.e. the kind of quarrelsome conducts typical of minority members in modern societies.”²⁴⁴ Yet, all these substantivist critiques, be they sympathetic to the idea of Pax-Ottomana or dismissive of it, fail to provide us with any insights as to what is at stake in these heated debates on the treatment of non-Muslims under the Ottoman rule. It is the contention of this dissertation that the issue at stake is not simply a matter of being faithful to historical truths in our representation of the past—as the realist episteme informing the debate would have us believe—but one of affective investments, which, in turn, are inextricably intertwined with our contemporary predicaments. As discussed above, although the literature correcting and criticizing the descriptions of the Pax-Ottomana and the Millet System offers us their realistic models and more truthful accounts of the Ottoman history but this does not offer us much insight into the logic of nostalgic remembrance and affective investments in “myths,” “misperceptions,” “favorable readings,” or “erroneous accounts.” We are still left wondering why proponents of Pax-Ottomana, such as Turkish intellectuals and scholars, so passionately orient themselves in the present toward the idealized and romanticized Ottoman past, a long gone era, and draw parallels between the situation of *millet*s and that of the minorities in the modern societies. Why this passionate attachment to Ottoman nostalgia in the face of all the corrections and criticisms? The last twenty years have seen the publishing of a considerable number of books and articles sharing almost the same titles, themes and chronologies on the Ottoman minorities. To be able to even begin to address these questions, we need to shift our perspective and change our vocabulary from ‘myths, and ‘misperceptions’ to that of “fantasy” as understood in Lacanian theory.

²⁴² Ibid., 704.

²⁴³ İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Barışı [Ottoman Peace]* (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitap, 2003), 21.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 29.

2.6 The Role of the Fantasy of Ottoman Tolerance

As soon as we realize that critics fail to explain why passionate attachments to the idealized image of the past are pervasive, how emotive and affective investments mediate writing history and remembering the past (despite all attempts at demystification and debunking), we are in the terrain of Lacanian fantasy. In this framework, fantasy coordinates our desires and affective/emotive investments. It does so by offering to cover up the fractures and fissure in socio-symbolic order and by enabling subjects circumvent traumatic elements and impasses. Rather than assessing it in terms of its proximity to “better knowledge” and “truth,” fantasy assessed by its functioning for its adherents and what it promises for its producers. In Lacanian perspective, *fantasy* appears as a vital element in subjects’ constitutions of reality and is related to how subjects deal with their ultimate impasse. In Lacan’s framework, reality is constructed (rather than covered or curtailed) by our symbolic and imaginary capacities, which mobilize signifiers and discourse: “the reality with which psychoanalysis is concerned ‘is upheld, woven through, constituted, by a tress of signifiers’; reality, in other words, ‘implies the subject’s integration into a particular play of signifiers.’”²⁴⁵ According to the Lacanian framework, after their entry into language and the symbolic order, subjects as *the slaves of language* begin to desire with and through signifiers and their interplay in the symbolic order.²⁴⁶ Rather than satisfying their “pure needs,” subjects express their needs through the medium of language and signifiers, which results in the domestication of our pre-symbolic enjoyment — *jouissance*.²⁴⁷ In other words, not only do subjects experience lack, but also the

²⁴⁵ Yannis Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1999), 55.

²⁴⁶ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977[1966]), 86, 316.

²⁴⁷ From the Lacanian perspective when subjects sacrifice their enjoyment/*jouissance*, i.e., direct unmediated fulfillment of need, the symbolic order falls short of providing this lost/impossible fullness. After their entry into language and the symbolic order, subjects express desire through signifiers and their interplay in the symbolic order. At the same time, this entry into language and the play of signifiers bring us symbolic castration. Rather than satisfying their ‘pure needs,’ subjects express them through the medium of language resulting in submission of their pre-symbolic enjoyment (*jouissance*). From the Lacanian perspective when subjects sacrifice their enjoyment/*jouissance*, their direct unmediated fulfillment of need, the symbolic order falls short of providing this lost/impossible fullness. Our discursive and symbolic constructions always fall short of being realized in a self-contained and harmonious order. There is certain limit — a lack at the core of our symbolic realm and capabilities — which makes impossible the full realization and wholeness of identities and other discursive constructions. These disruptions and the impossibility of full foreclosure not only pertains to subjects but also to our socio-symbolic resources where subject is implicated. For Lacan, lack in the

symbolic order/the big Other is lacking. Jouissance becomes the condition that makes possible these relentless attempts to symbolize and tame constraining limits (economic crises, AIDS virus, environmental disasters, wars, genocides) and to attain a whole and ideal state. Subjects continue to take part in the socio-political reality as desiring subjects. But how is that possible? How does the subject cope with that tension, the tension between reality and the *enjoyment*?²⁴⁸ Fantasy is a central concept in tackling this question. From the Lacanian perspective, it is *fantasy* that makes subjectivity bearable for us, in as much as it promises to fill out the lack in the symbolic. This defensive character of fantasy is of pivotal place in Lacan's theoretical apparatus (as well as Freud's).²⁴⁹ Rather than opposing reality, in its Lacanian appropriation, it is fantasy that supports reality by offering our lost real *jouissance*.²⁵⁰ In Žižek's words, "a fantasy constitutes our desire, provides its coordinates; that is, it literally 'teaches us how to desire.'"²⁵¹ And yet, the promise of this fantasy nevertheless falls short of attaining and recapturing our real *jouissance*. To put it in Lacan's words, "the real supports the fantasy, the fantasy protects the real."²⁵² One fantasy frame after another attempts to fill in and tame this fundamental impossibility.

A important body of literature in social and political thought puts these psychoanalytical insights to the service of social and political analysis of nationalism and (post)colonialism. The psychoanalytic perspective enables us to analyze how national and imperial formations

symbolic order – the big Other- and is after all lack of pre-symbolic *jouissance*, which is visceral and always posited as lost.

²⁴⁸ Thus Lacanian psychoanalysis is interested in how the subject and the symbolic deal with this remainder. the psychoanalytic point of departure is the remainder produced by the operation; psychoanalysis does not deny the cut, it only adds a remainder. The clean cut is always unclean; it cannot produce the flawless interiority of an autonomous subject. The psychoanalytic subject is coextensive with the very flaw in the interior. In short, the subject is precisely the failure to become the subject. As Dolar points out, "different subject structures that psychoanalysis has discovered and described –neurosis (with its two faces of hysteria and obsession), psychosis, perversion– are just so many different ways to deal with that remainder" (Mladen Dolar, "Beyond Interpellation," *Qui Parle* 6, no.2 (1993): 78). He also adds that "on the social level as well as –on the level of discourse as a social bond- the four basic types of discourse pinpointed by Lacan [The Master, University, Hysteric, Analyst] are the four different ways to tackle that remainder" (ibid., 79). This insurmountable element and always returning remainder is a crucial point in Lacan's understanding of the unconscious dimensions of language, the symbolic, symptom, *object petit a* and fantasy.

²⁴⁹ See Jean Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), 318.

²⁵⁰ Fantasy attempts to cover up the traumatic elements and events that mark subject's impossibility of full enjoyment. It achieves this by setting a stage for what Lacan calls the *object petit a* – *the object cause of desire*- "embodying, in its absence, this fullness" (Yannis Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political*, 53). With this aspect, fantasy is the condition of possibility our desires and our constitution as desiring subjects.

²⁵¹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), 7.

²⁵² Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, 41.

organize the libidinal bonds and energies of their subjects through rituals, conducts, entitlements, etc., while simultaneously displacing the failure and antagonism at their core. As far as this psychoanalytical conception of social fantasy goes, depiction of harmonious representation of the reality is always accompanied by a demonic element, which explains and justifies why things went wrong and who is responsible for our failure, loss, psychic wounds and affective injuries.

This perspective draws from Sigmund Freud and particularly his work on group psychology. Although Freud did not make nationalism and the nation the object of direct inquiry, his work contributes significantly to an understanding of nation as a group formation process. What primarily interested Freud as he investigated Church and Army were primarily the affective and libidinal aspects of the group formation which go beyond – or at least cannot be reduced to – the symbolic and discursive register of our identification. Thus, Freud underscores the importance of the body's libidinal energies of and the significance of affective investment in orientation toward a group (e.g., race, nation, caste, profession and institution), firmly asserting “a group is clearly held together by a power of some kind” which he call Eros or emotional ties.²⁵³ He argues that identification with a group and object cathexis (i.e., orientation toward a love object such as a chief commander in an army) enable subjects to organize their libidinal investment. In this collective formation, “the individual gives up his distinctiveness in a group [...] because he feels the need of being in harmony with them rather than in opposition to them.”²⁵⁴

While Freud underlines the significance of love and in-group psychology, he does not overlook the roles of hatred and aggression. He states “it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to

²⁵³ Sigmund Freud “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 19, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 2001[1921]), 92.

In the literature on nationalism, canonical authors do mention affect as an important register of nationalism. For instance, Gellner, Hobsbawm and Smith respectively pointed out that “feelings”, “sentiments” and “powerful affective dimension” are indeed important aspects for the formation of national identification Ernst Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), 67; (Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 93; Anthony Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nations*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9. However, they discuss these factors only in passing rather than through a thorough analysis. Although these authors do connect the body-of-the Nation and the body-of-subject, they do not thoroughly explore the issue of affect.

²⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” 92.

receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness”.²⁵⁵ In other words, a group is constituted by love as long as inherent aggression is displaced onto the other(s) of the group. It is important to note that Freud’s caution came during the rise of Nazism which would see certain groups such as Jews and Gypsies being targeted by the German nation-state.

Raneta Salecl and Slavoj Zizek drew upon these Freudian insights in the early nineties by mobilizing the Lacanian concepts of jouissance/enjoyment, the symbolic and fantasy.²⁵⁶ According to this framework, fantasy, in the psychoanalytical sense, relates to how the subjects sustain their realities and identifications in the face of the impasses of the socio-political order. In the Lacanian framework, fantasy promises this state of fullness and harmony by covering over the central impossibility that is indelibly inscribed both in our bodies and our socio-symbolic order. This is a crucial aspect of how Salecl and Zizek understand and deploy *fantasy*. To hammer the point home, they use the concept of fantasy not in its common, vernacular sense, as something that opposes or distorts reality. Rather, it is conceived of as a fundamental and indispensable formation, which sustains subjects’ coherence and desire by promising full closure, harmonious order and offering a road map to ‘lost’ enjoyment. In that sense, there is no reality that is not mediated through fantasy. As far as this perception of fantasy goes, harmonious representation of the reality is always accompanied by a demonic/dark underside, which justifies why things went wrong and identifies who is responsible for our failure and dissatisfaction, or to put it in psychoanalytical terms, for the “theft of our enjoyment.”

According to Zizek and Salecl, there are important insights to be gained from this perspective in relation to nation-state formations, for these formations are not merely symbolic constructs of harmonious belonging but also the way the subjects deal with the impossibility of harmonious nationhood by channeling their affective attachments and libidinal energies. While national fantasies sustain our reality and desire by teaching us how to deal with our enjoyment, they also frame our representations of the other. This aspect of

²⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, 2001[1929]. “Civilization and Its Discontents” In *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 64-149, vol. 21, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 2001[1929]), 114.

²⁵⁶ Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).; “Enjoy Your Nation as Yourself,” in *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1993).; and Reneta Salecl, *The Spoils of Freedom: Psychoanalysis and Feminism after the fall of socialism*, (New York: Routledge, 1994).

fantasy is so important that eminent scholar Jacqueline Rose daringly argues that “there is no way of understanding political identities and destinies without letting fantasy into the frame” since “fantasy – far from being the antagonist of public, social being – plays a central, constitutive role in the modern world of states and nations.”²⁵⁷ In other words, our representation of the other (e.g. ethnic, racial, oriental) is always mediated by fantasy scenarios and through the way that we deal with our enjoyment. While fantasy attempts to cover the impossibility of full real enjoyment, it also brings forth the Other’s enjoyment.

Seen in these terms, our fascination with the other’s ‘excessive’ enjoyment, which is denied to us, is linked to our impasses and the fundamental lack in the symbolic order, the Nation. In their analyses, Žižek and Salecl show that the other’s enjoyment and its inaccessibility to us/our society/our way of life take on a crucial importance in our fantasy scenarios of nationhood. As Žižek puts it, “we always impute to the ‘other’ an excessive enjoyment: he wants to steal our enjoyment (by running our way of life) and/ or he has access to the some secret, perverse enjoyment.”²⁵⁸ When the other is constituted as the radical Other (ethnic, religious, etc.) and seen as completely alien to ‘our’ society/species, the enjoyment of the other can all too easily turn into an object of hatred and fascination and fuel antagonisms.

In short, what really bothers us about the ‘other’ is the peculiar way he organizes his enjoyment, precisely the surplus, the ‘excess’ that pertains to this way: the smell of ‘their’ food, ‘their’ noisy songs and dances, ‘their’ strange manners, ‘their’ attitude to work.²⁵⁹

Jokes, slanders, stereotypes, political speeches, and ethnic and national mythologies are often replete with and symptomatic of this ambivalent fascination with the enjoyment of the other. The eruption of ethnic conflicts between Albanians, Croatians, Serbians, and Bosnians in ex-

²⁵⁷ Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 4.

²⁵⁸ Slavoj Žižek, “Enjoy Your Nation As Yourself,” 203.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

Jean-Paul Sartre’s reading of the passion economy between the Jew and Anti-Semite highly resonates with Žižek’s conception of the theft of enjoyment. Almost half a century earlier than Žižek, Sartre similarly demonstrated how positing the Jews as robbers makes possible for the Anti-Semites to constitute themselves as proprietors “since the Jews wish to take France from them, it follows that France must belong to them” (Jean Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), 25). Thus, Sartre argues, “the anti-Semite is in the unhappy position of having a vital need for the very enemy he wishes to destroy” (Ibid, 28). Although Sartre points to the psychic aspects of Anti-Semitism in French nation-state such as disgust and hysteria, he nonetheless does not cut to the core of the issue as much as psychoanalytically influenced literature does. This is why it is more fruitful to read the work of Sartre alongside that of Freud, Žižek, Salecl, and so on.

Yugoslavian territories of 1990s is a good case in point. As Salecl and Žižek illustrate, in these geographies enjoyment became entangled with ethnic conflicts as Serbian nationalist groups blame the Others of stealing their wholeness and of having unreasonable, inhuman attitudes²⁶⁰. The following passage from Salecl gives us a clear idea about the articulation of the theft of enjoyment into the eruption of ethnic conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia:

A clear example of this ‘theft of enjoyment’ is Serbian authoritarian populism which has produced an entire mythology about the struggle against internal and external enemies... In Serbian mythology, the Albanians are understood as pure Evil, the unimaginable, which cannot be subjectivized; beings who cannot be made into people, because they are radically Other. The Serbs describe their conflict with the Albanians as a struggle of ‘people with non-people’. The second enemy — the bureaucrat — is presented as a non-Serb, a traitor to his own nation who is also effeminate. The Croats are portrayed as the heirs of Goebbels, i.e. as brutal Ustashi butchers who torment the suffering Serbian nation, whose fate is compared to that of Kurds in Iraq. And the Muslims are named religious extremists who would like to expand their religion all over the world.²⁶¹

What Salecl and Žižek demonstrate is that our enjoyment is always implicated in a psychic economy and it is always constituted vis-à-vis the enjoyment of the other. In other words, in the fantasies of the nation the other’s enjoyment is “extimately” connected to that of our very own. In light of the insights of Freud, Salecl and Žižek, we can argue that fantasy formations of nationhood single out immanent and external others as causes of the failure to attain and recapture wholeness, the pristine state of being. The significance of these studies for our investigation is that they illustrate how our representations (e.g., of the ethnic other, the woman) are always mediated by fantasy scenarios. These social fantasies depict the other as enjoying more than us and the inaccessible enjoyment of the other comes to occupy what we lack. In other words, enjoyment is a political factor and, as Žižek puts it, it is always entangled with the constitutions and representation of alterity. Therefore, fantasy scenarios mediate our representation (of the other) when we deal with our traumas and impossibility

²⁶⁰ Arendt’s analysis of tribal nationalism and its construction of its others/enemies echoes Žižek and Salecl’s psychoanalytical approach to national enemies and “the theft of enjoyment”. According to Arendt, tribal nationalism always insists that its own people is surrounded by “a world of enemies,” “one against all,” that a fundamental difference exists between this people and all others. It claims its people to be unique, individual, incompatible with all others, and denies theoretically the very possibility of a common mankind” (Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004[1951]), 293). Although Arendt argues that this is the essential character of tribal/romantic nationalism, her observation may yield insights into how and nationalist hatred operates in other forms of nationalism and nation formation, such as civic nationalism.

²⁶¹ Renata Salecl, *The Spoils of Freedom*, 22.

of full enjoyment. This aspect of nationalism and citizenship, however, is mostly overlooked in the Western conception of the rational, unencumbered citizen. In that respect, it should be noted that stigmatizing and scapegoating certain communities as thieves of enjoyment is characteristic not only of virulent forms of nationalism, but is deeply ingrained in even the seemingly most benign forms of nationalism such as civic nationalism, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism.

As far as the fantasy of the Ottoman peace is concerned, we must explore its relevance and functioning in today's Turkey. Social fantasies qua the Ottoman Millet System and Tolerance are very much related to how their producers, Ottoman historians, and their public audience sustain their Turkish-Ottoman identifications and how they deal with the impossibility of the harmonious nation as well as the loss of the Empire. As was mentioned above, to answer properly requires a shift in focus from the *object-cause of desire* –the Ottoman Millet System and its desired elements– to the socio-political context in which these authors and adherents are situated. In other words, rather than focusing exclusively on fantasies of the Ottoman tolerance and their veracity (or lack thereof), we should also try to shed light on their producers and adherents and ask what fractures, fissures, losses these fantasies cover up in the socio-symbolic fabric of contemporary Turkey. This also means shifting the debate from an epistemological terrain to an ontological one. That is, rather than problematizing whether narratives are faithful to the historical truth, we need to investigate the contemporary significance of these narratives of the Ottoman tolerance and peace for their contemporary champions. In order to understand how Fatih the Conqueror's Istanbul in the 15th century and its purportedly peaceful and harmonious denizens are very much alive in the new 21st century, we need to investigate the historicity of the fractures and impasses of the current socio-political context.

The fantasy of Ottoman tolerance,²⁶² as I will show, is an important narrative for its adherents, the Turkish state authorities, nativist historians, pro-Islamic political parties and movements, to consolidate the Turkish identity through Ottoman history and collective memory. This fantasy produced by the Ottoman historians provides its supporters with a

²⁶² From my perspective, this fantasy weaves together many themes and concepts, such as peace, multiculturalism and the Millet System. For the sake of simplicity and clarity from now on I refer to it as the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance.

social script of collective memory, which they can appropriate for national and identity formation. This historical (collective) memory of the glorious tolerant and multicultural Empire enables its subjects to sustain their individual- autobiographical memories. It allows the subject of nationalism to picture and imagine itself by relying on the social memory of the nation. As one of the pioneer thinkers who noticed this important connection between personal and national memory, Maurice Halbwachs contended that:

{T}he individual memory is not completely sealed off and isolated. A [man must often appeal to other's remembrances to evoke his own past. He goes back to reference points determined by society, hence outside himself. Moreover, the individual memory could not function without words and ideas, instruments the individual has not himself invented but appropriated from his milieu.²⁶³

In terms of the words, ideas, and instruments that the individual appropriates from his/her milieu, I conceive of the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance created in Ottoman historiography as a vital reservoir for its adherents' and individual memories. Through its historians, it is Ottoman historiography that allows the subjects of the nation to speak, write and read these narratives and therefore remember themselves as part of a victorious people who once conquered Constantinople in 1453 and transformed it into a harmonious multicultural Empire.

I will delve into the working of the Turkish-Ottoman nationalist fantasy and the ways in which it appropriates collective memory and legacy of Ottoman Empire in especially in Chapter Four. In the mean time suffice it to say that the discourse of Ottoman Tolerance undergirds "the Neo-Ottoman" Islamo-Turkic social fantasy through which Turkish nation-state comes to terms with the loss, belatedness and melancholy ensuing the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the concomitant question of Europeanization/Westernization. In the next chapters I will elaborate on this new phase in Turkish nationalism and the pitfalls of the fantasy of Ottoman Tolerance in rehabilitation of the Turkish identity vis-à-vis the Western gaze and domestic antagonism.

²⁶³ Maurice Halbwachs *The Collective Memory* trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), 51.

Chapter Three:

Psychoanalysis, Fantasy, Postcoloniality: Turkish Derivative Nationalism and Historiography as the Emerging Global Order

If becoming becomes something, why has it not finished becoming long ago? If it is something, which has become, then how could it have started to become?

Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*²⁶⁴

On January 11, 2011 a new TV series, *The Magnificent Century*, made its debut on Turkish TV. Named after the Ottoman Emperor Süleyman the Magnificent who is synonymous with the so-called Golden Age of the Empire between the 15th-17th centuries, the TV series, even before its premier, fomented hot debate amongst journalists, academics, politicians and film critics. At the core of the polemics was whether the diageitic reality of the TV show did justice to the historical truth or misrepresented it. According to a considerable number of proponents of the latter camp, portraying Süleyman the Magnificent as a lecher man engaging in untold debauchery in the Harem did not reflect the reality of his era. The critics also found the depiction of Süleyman as a tyrant maltreating non-Muslims unacceptable. Distorting the truth about a Turkish ancestor as “magnificent” as Süleyman meant not only insulting Ottoman-Turkish history but also spreading – as a member of the Radio Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) argued – an “Orientalist perception” of Turkey. If we consider the fact that the show has not only nationwide popularity but has a following in many countries in the Middle East and the Balkans, the magnitude of the paranoia about this “Orientalist perception of Turkey” may appear even more threatening to its critics.

The debate became even more heated recently when the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became actively involved in it. Appointing himself as a historian, the Prime Minister condemned the depiction of the Sultan as someone who was highly indulged in debauchery and spent most of his time in his Harem. Instead, he corrected, Süleyman had spent tens of years on the back of his horse on the way to conquering new lands. In a media

²⁶⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Continuum, 1983), 47.

conference condemning the portrayal of the Sultan, the Prime Minister reiterated his earlier comments, with heightened fervor. Alluding to the producers of the TV show, he stated, “some people claim that our history is all about war, swords, intrigues, power struggles and unfortunately the Harem. Although some people who are not part of us keep deliberately telling us our history in this particular way, we can not and will not see our history in that way.”²⁶⁵

He corrected this despotic and barbaric image of the Turk and the Ottoman Sultan with his own illustration:

Conquest is not an attempt at seizing new lands to colonize by war-making, chopping off heads or invasion; on the contrary it is an attempt of conquering the hearts first before the gates. Conquest means carrying the civilization of compassion (sevgi) to near and distant realms. It is believing in the rule of the pen rather than the sword. This is why when the ladies of Byzantium welcomed Fatih Sultan Mehmed and Akşemsetdin, they said ‘we wish to see the Ottoman turban on our head of our state rather than a cardinal’s hat.’ They had this preference because one finds justice under the former and the cruelty under the latter. When our history is at stake, only wars are being brought to attention.²⁶⁶

Furthermore he condemned those who disseminate this history of despotism as a means to destroy the Turkish nation and civilization. This part of Erdoğan’s speech reveals the dark side of Ottoman-Turkish nationalism and its obsession with internal and external enemies:

In our country they have tried it. First, they wanted to exterminate the members of this civilization. We waged the war of independence, struggled for our existence and confidently took our place on the stage of history. However, the ones who could not thwart our civilization then strove to do so with the help of our own hands. Frankly speaking, for years they wished to inject an inferiority complex into the nation. This nation’s own executives have done it as well. They worked hard to have us accept backwardness and underdevelopment. They wanted to straitjacket us into certain models and moulds. Whenever this nation attempted to break its shell and broaden its horizon, various external and internal plots have been set up to disable those attempts.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ “Erdoğan: Tarihimiz savaş, entrika ve haremden ibaretmiş gibi gösteriliyor,” T24, December 6, 2012, accessed January 17, 2013, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/Erdoğan-tarihimiz-savas-entrika-ve-haremden-ibaretmis-gibi-gosteriliyor/219062>.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

The backlash the show provoked (“we were not like that, we were actually like this”) is, I argue, a symptom of the broader process of recuperation of a national identity and tied to and the legacy of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey. It serves, therefore, as an important entry point into the analysis of the recent restoration of Turkish national identity through the fantasy of the pre-modern Ottoman Golden Age, in contradistinction to the Western Orientalist construction of Turkey and Turk. Against this backdrop, in this chapter I want to focus on and analyze the recent surge of scholarly interest in Ottoman tolerance and the Millet system as the new foundational myth of nationalism in Turkey. What interests me is the way in which the debate around these topics puts Ottoman historiography to in the use of the restoration of national identity and the fantasy of harmony. There exist multiple arrays of interdependent domains. This Turkish-Islamic identity recuperation is being undertaken in multiple interdependent domains: arts, city planning, commemorations and monuments, municipal politics, just to name a few.²⁶⁸ In what follows, I will delve into the ways in which this history is used and misused to cement a national identity around this fantasy.

If the historians’ discourse of Ottoman tolerance and peace is a social fantasy of Turkish-Islamic nationalism, the most urgent question to confront is: what is problematic and dangerous about this longing for the Golden Age of an Empire in which a peaceful, multicultural coexistence prevailed? What is so troubling about celebrating ones’ Turkish-Muslim national heroes and Ottoman-Turkish ancestral roots? Why should we think twice when we correct the Western hegemonic discourse of Oriental Despotism with a discourse of Ottoman glory and tolerance? Towards the end of the previous chapter, I already touched on the perils of fantasy, particularly of nationalism, when considering the pivotal role of fantasy in producing representations of alterity and in concealing the impossibility of harmony at the social and individual level. This chapter, I will discuss specific pitfalls of a fantasy of Ottoman Tolerance that strives to invert the Western Orientalist imagery of Turkish-Ottoman past. Let me unpack this critical argument through an in-depth reading of the obverse of Western Orientalism in the Turkish historians’ fantasy of Ottoman tolerance.

²⁶⁸ While reinscribing the Ottoman legacy and its glory in the collective memory of Turkish public, over the last decade the Turkish state authorities and the ruling party, AKP, have been also undertaking reforms regarding the judiciary, health and education system, army and police forces to redesign modern Turkey. All these efforts, including setting harsh restriction on abortion and on alcohol sales, aim to create a Turkish-Islamic society that returns to its source to revive its essence.

3.1 The Dark Side of the Fantasy of Nation: Precoloniality and Enemies of the Ottoman Civilization

A recurrent theme in narratives of Turkish historians is the menace of the West. When historians try to prove the existence of the Golden Age and to disprove the stereotype of Oriental despotism, they do so in tandem with rewriting the image of the West. Europe then appears as a specter of darkness encroaching on the world.

One of the best-known examples of 'Turkish historians' imaginings of the West comes in reference to the situation of Ottoman Jews, in comparison to that of Jews who lived in Europe. For instance, one of the popular names of the literature on Ottoman Jews, Ahmet Eroğlu, while elaborating on the practice of discrimination through dress, offers the following comparison:

The practice of dress code restrictions had different results in Europe and the Ottoman State [...] These restrictions purported to ostracize, assimilate, socially segregate the Other [in the former]; in the Ottoman State these restrictions were deployed to establish the public order. As a matter of fact, this discrimination [in the former] led to the expulsion of the Jews in the 15th and 16th centuries and their forced transportation to the gas chambers in the 20th century. Whereas in the Ottoman Empire it made possible coexistence of different religious and ethnic people living together in a tolerant environment.²⁶⁹

Within the confines of a short paragraph, the author so compresses both time and space as to suggest that gulf of five hundred years and five hundred kilometers between societies can be causally spanned apart as though they were sharing the same social setting. Similarly, Karpat and Yıldırım put forward the following similar comparison:

The Muslim world has a good history with the Jews. There has been almost no discrimination nor a Holocaust -- violations of basic human rights or GENOCIDE did not exist. On the contrary, after they had been exiled from

²⁶⁹ Ahmet H. Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Yahudiler (XIX Yüzyılın Sonuna Kadar)* [*Jews in the Ottoman State (Up Until the End of the Nineteenth Century)*] (Ankara: Alperen, 2000), 15.

Andalusia, the Ottomans welcomed them and always accepted them in their times of need.²⁷⁰

While these authors invariably link history of European genocide is invariably linked with Germany and the Holocaust, the authors remind us that other European nations are also culpable for similar atrocities. Spain, as one of the earlier European colonial powers, is believed to have played a crucial part in the sins of European colonial racism. According to Yuluğ Kurat Tekin:

None of the non-Muslim communities [in the Ottoman Empire] were exposed to oppression and cruelty, nor torture due to their language, customs and traditions. Spain which conquered most of Central and South America in the 16th century, not only used the natives as slaves, but also forcefully converted them to Christianity and exterminated those who resisted. It was the Spanish Catholic culture that destroyed the Inca civilization in Peru. However, it was the Ottoman Empire who saved the Jews from the hell of the Inquisition in Spain and allowed the Jewish community to settle in Istanbul on March 31, 1492.²⁷¹

Elsewhere, the prominent Ottoman historiographer İlber Ortaylı, turns the mirror towards North America. Using Ottoman peace as a foil, he takes issue with the myth of America as a tolerant society for immigrants:

There are actually alliances, engendered by emigration and migration, such as the United States of America. There is no ethnic and religious clash there. This country is as precious as gold when it comes to tolerance and living together. Especially the Jews who turned into soap in Europe, are so content with their life so as to cheer “This is such a sweet country.” On the other side of the Atlantic, Poles and Ukrainians slaughtered each other, when they emigrated to this side, they do not do it anymore. So far everything goes well for them. Germans and Jews, too, are doing well here. But if you ask the same question to the blacks, would they say ‘yes’? Let’s assume that they are somehow dealing with their situation (though this is surely not the case), what about these Mexicans, where did they come from? What percentage of the country’s population is speaking Spanish? Recognition of Spanish as a language is still a big point of contention.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ İhsan Yılmaz, “Çesitlilik, Yasal Çoğulculuk, Osmanlı Yüzyıllarında Barış İçinde Birlikte Yaşama,” [Diversity, Legal Pluralism, and Peacefully Living in the Ottoman Centuries] in *Osmanlı Hoşgörüsü [Ottoman Tolerance]*, eds. Kemal H. Karpat and Yetkin Yıldırım (Timaş Yayınları: İstanbul, 2012), 124.

²⁷¹ Yuluğ T. Kurat, “Cok Milleli Bir Ulus Olarak Osmanlı İmparatorluğu,” [The Ottoman Empire as a Multinational Society] in *Osmanlı dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001), 170.

²⁷² İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Barışı [Ottoman Peace]* (İstanbul: Ufuk Kitap, 2003), 53.

Ortaylı goes on to discuss British and French colonial powers, in contrast to which the Ottoman Empire, once again, shines as a beacon of tolerance:

The Ottoman Empire was the last Empire that adapted to the new world order and was a catalyst for nationalization. In contrast to the colonial empires that wiped out local cultures (i.e., the Brits destroyed the Hindu class system as the French did to the Magreb Arab civilization). The Ottoman state safely carried local cultures and minority populations into the age of nation-states.²⁷³

Hikmet Özdemir's description of the socio-political structure of the Ottoman Empire resonates with that of Ortaylı. Özdemir argues that through successful initiatives aimed at accommodating non-Muslims, Mehmed II set an example vital for our contemporary world, which is engulfed by bloody genocides and many other human catastrophes.²⁷⁴ Similarly, Abdurrahman Küçük points out that Ottoman tolerance and the Millet System enabled people of different creeds and races to co-exist in harmony within the framework of Islamic culture and civilization. According to Küçük, it was thanks to the brilliance of this scheme and the prowess of its administrators that peace and security prevailed for ages in the Middle East, Caucasus, and the Balkans where religious and ethnic strife seem to have become the new law of the land after the demise of the Ottoman rule.²⁷⁵

Parallel to this dark image of the West that historians depict, they portray the pre-colonial Ottoman Empire in an idyllic light. Hasan Güzel seems to entertain this idyllic image of the Empire when he argues "it is widely accepted that within the framework of Pax-Ottomana (Ottoman Peace) human rights and freedom, almost on a par with modern standards, were granted."²⁷⁶ We encountered these sorts of generalizations about the classical times in chapter two where Turkish historians reiterated that up until around the 19th century, life in the Empire was harmonious. But then what?

²⁷³ Ibid., 22.

²⁷⁴ Hikmet Özdemir, "Azınlıklar için bir Osmanlı Klasığı: 1453 İstanbul Sözleşmesi," [An Ottoman Classic for Minorities: 1453 Istanbul Pact] *Osmanlı* 4 (1999): 225.

²⁷⁵ Abdurrahman Küçük, "Türklerin Anadolu'da Azınlıklara Dini Hoşgörüsü," [Turks' Religious Tolerance of Minorities in Anatolia (The Example of the Armenian and Jew (Ermeni ve Yahudi Örneği) *Erdem* 22, no. 8 (1996): 555-582.

²⁷⁶ Hasan Cemal Güzel, "Giriş" [Introduction] in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2000). See also Bilal Eryılmaz, "Osmanlı Devletinde Farklılıklara ve Hoşgörüye Farklı Bir Yaklaşım," in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*.

The Golden Age, as these historians lament, did not last forever.²⁷⁷ Despite the state authorities' attempts to modernize and adapt the Millet System with extended rights and freedom for non-Muslim communities, the social rubric of the Empire and the Millet System along with it, began to shatter around the 19th century.²⁷⁸ The decay of the tolerant Ottoman civilization has been ascribed to various causes and culprits, chief among them Western imperial powers, as in this account of Güzel:

With the Tanzimat Reforms the Millet System was reconfigured. Nonetheless, towards the end of the XIX century the imperial powers began to incite non-Muslim minorities with their hideous plans [...] Russia for instance was behind the incitement of Armenians especially after 1885.²⁷⁹

Likewise, Bilal Eryılmaz explains the fall of the Ottoman Millet system with the overwhelming power of Western imperial powers, as in those accounts of Güzel and Bilal Eryılmaz:

The interventions of foreign powers such as England, France and Russia and their eagerness to act as the protectors of minorities had a negative impact on the relations. Nationalist movements expended considerable effort to erase minorities' affection towards the Empire. Panicked by the conquest of the Balkans by the Ottomans, the Western states accused the Ottomans of being barbarians and this image became a part of their tradition and culture.²⁸⁰

It is important to note that vastly different times and spaces are subsumed under a holistic category of the “West”. Although Western powers and imperialism are seen as the main external forces with which the Empire could not cope, the list of threats to the multicultural fabric of the Empire does not end here. The non-Muslim subjects of the Empire take on a crucial role for the fall of this paradise, as argued by these historians. We will revisit the perception of non-Muslims as the immanent threat in the next chapter. In the meantime, the passages below clearly reveal the dark side of the fantasy of the Ottoman Millet System, in

²⁷⁷ Bilal Eryılmaz, “Osmanlı Devletinde Farklılıklar,” 416.

²⁷⁸ Yavuz Ercan, “Osmanlı Devletinde Müslüman Olmayan Topluluklar (Millet Sistemi),” [Non-Muslim Communities in the Ottoman State (The Millet System)] in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001), 335.

²⁷⁹ Hasan Cemal Güzel, “Giriş,” [Introduction] 12-3.

²⁸⁰ Bilal Eryılmaz, “Osmanlı Devletinde Farklılıklar,” 416.

which virtuous non-Muslim communities turn into sinister ingrates who betray their benefactors:

The collaboration between the Christian minorities, who chase after the idea of independence and autonomy, and the Great Powers willing to use them as strategic allies and means towards their plans against the Ottoman lands goes back to the end of the 17th century where the Empire entered its period of decline [...] Missionaries injected revolutionary ideas into the minds of the Ottoman Christians. The existence of these missionary groups offered fertile ground for the Great Western Powers to intervene and plot amongst the minorities.²⁸¹

Non-Muslim communities' unrest and rebellion against the state continued [in the 19th century]. The reason is that what they really wanted was not more extensive rights and freedom but to become fully independent.²⁸²

Those governed by the Millets [the Ottoman non-Muslims] who carefully retained their national identities did not hesitate at all to use them against the Ottoman Empire. Greek, Bulgarian and Armenian riots were the most distinctive examples of this picture.²⁸³

It is quite possible to extend the Ottoman historians' list of reasons for the disintegration of the Empire. However, the narratives we've delved into so far have revealed certain common discursive strategies. It is important to recognize that through correcting the perception of the Turk as barbaric, the historians reverse the positions of East and West. In narratives of Ottoman peace and tolerance, the West emerges as the global force of havoc wreaking racial/ethnic strife and genocide both within its own borders and globally, and as the saboteur (both directly and through alliance with non-Muslims in the Empire) of a pre-colonial paradise. At the same time the fantasy of the Ottoman Millet System narrates a Golden Age where Turkish ancestors were the respected rulers of the world, this pre-colonial paradise was sabotaged due to both resident Non-Muslims and European colonialist powers.

²⁸¹ Salahi R. Sonyel, "Hıristiyan Azınlıklar ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Son Dönemi," [Christian Minorities in the Final Period of the Ottoman Empire] in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, 399.

²⁸² Yavuz Ercan, "Millet Sistemi," 335.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 365.

3.2 Postcolonial Theory and the Question of Turkish Nativist Intellectuals

The glorification of the pre-colonial past before the arrival of Western hegemony and modernity, which is typical of “colonized intellectuals,” has been problematized by various (post)colonial voices: *Nativism* (Fanon, 2004[1961]), *Orientalism-in-Reverse* (Al-‘Azm, 2000), *Occidentalism* (Chen, 2002; Bruma & Margalit, 2004) and *Postcolonial Melancholy* (Khanna, 2003). These concepts of postcolonial theory and criticism were coined to analyze the dynamics and conditions in which non-Western/Oriental societies and their intellectuals (be they from Africa, the Middle-East, South Asia or the Far East) responded to their image as reflected in the Western hegemonic gaze and discourse.²⁸⁴ The reaction of the Third World intelligentsia, as Xiamei Chen eloquently describes, is “a discursive practice that, by constructing the Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others.”²⁸⁵ Seen from this perspective, the Western construction of the non-West/Orient and the non-West’s reaction to this construction go hand in hand. The Western discourse on the Orient and the Orient’s reversal of this discourse—which essentializes and celebrates its pre-colonial and pre-modern native self—form a symbiotic relationship. These two subjectivities, the colonial and the colonized, implicate one another.

Nonetheless, Chatterjee sees the “active participation” and “indigenous creativity” in anti-colonialist nation formations in Asia and Africa as inventive forms, as opposed to incomplete and failed replicas. In his well-known depiction of these derivative nationalisms, Chatterjee points out that the nation is composed of material and spiritual spheres. For him, the former is “the domain of the ‘outside’ of the economy and of a statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had

²⁸⁴ See respectively: Franz Fanon, the *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004[1961]); Sadik Jalal al-‘Azm, “Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse,” in *Orientalism: A Reader*, ed. Alexander L. Macfie (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002); Ian Buruma & Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: the West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004). and Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

²⁸⁵ Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism*, 2.

succumbed.”²⁸⁶ Whereas the latter, the spiritual domain, he states, “is an inner domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity” [such as Turkish-Muslim].²⁸⁷ While Chatterjee’s attempt to write the colonized subject back into the history of the nation state, and to depict where non-European populations and countries appear as concurrent actors and territories, is illuminating, his making of derivative nationalism through self-appropriation comes with certain consequences and perils. In this dissertation, I analyze the contemporary Turkey, mindful of the warning of postcolonial critics against such perils of derivative nationalism

The dynamics at play in the slave-master dialectic between the West and the Rest has been studied extensively in the context of African, Asian and Eastern European societies. Following in the footsteps of influential early critics of colonialism such as Cesaire, Fanon, Memmi and other more contemporary sources of inspiration such as Said, Spivak and Bhabha, postcolonial scholars critically investigate how African, Latin American, Caribbean and Asian cultures are implicated in European colonialism and nation-state and empire building. We know well, for instance, how colonies such as India, Antilles, Jamaica, Tunisia and Algeria have been constitutive of the Western self and as a result European subjectivity and vice versa. However, the Ottoman Empire and its successor Turkish nation-state, have been curiously and conspicuously missing from postcolonial studies.²⁸⁸ . If the task of postcolonial criticism is to investigate and deconstruct the uneven dynamics of social authority and cultural representation during the colonial encounter between the West and non-West from which subjectivities of nation, gender, ethnicity, class, race and empire have emerged, Ottoman-Turkish culture ought to be an interesting province for such criticism. The Ottoman Empire’s geographical proximity to Europe, which made the encounter between the two civilizations all the more intimate and the threat from the other side all the more imminent. Thus the figure of the Ottoman was at the same time very close to and very far away from Europe. Or, to put it differently, it was an *extimate* Other of Western identity. This extimacy was mutual also haunting Ottoman-Turkish state authorities and elites, who

²⁸⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*. (New York: Grove Press, 1967[1952]); Alice Freifeld, Peter Bergmann and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, eds. *East Europe Reads Nietzsche* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*.

regarded Europe as simultaneously to be emulated and as the archenemy. Despite the mutual extimacy of European and Turkish collective unconscious, the Ottoman-Turkish case has until recently typically remained a lacuna in postcolonial criticism.

This lacuna has been noted by the scholars in Turkey who have registered the ambivalence of prominent scholars of Orientalism toward the Ottoman-Turkish state. The heavyweights of subaltern studies such as Said and Chakrabarty have been criticized for omitting the Ottoman-Turkish case in their work.²⁸⁹ That they have done so stems from certain complications in properly locating the features the Ottoman-Turkish experience. On the one hand, the Ottomans were a colonizing force that continued to wield power over many colonies in North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans until the late 19th and early 20th century. On the other hand, the Ottoman state authorities and elites witnessed the hegemony of Western colonialism in their minds as it tore the social fabric of the Empire by inciting minorities and by beginning to seize Ottoman territories. The Ottoman authorities went to extreme lengths to maintain the sovereignty of the Empire even when its survival necessitated the mimicry and adoption of the very model of Western modernism that they simultaneously despised and admired. The Ottoman-Turks, once colonizer, had themselves become the subjects of the European imperialism. This once-colonizer-then-colonized status is arguably what renders the Ottoman-Turkish case ambiguous for postcolonial scholars, who typically pass over it in silence.

Since the late 1990s there has been robust dialogue and engagement in Turkey as some scholars mobilized the critical analysis strategies of Orientalism and postcolonial critique of Said, Bhabha, Chatterjee, and Chakrabarty to inscribe the Ottoman-Turkish experience into the history of modern colonialism. The melancholic intellectual and political climate that the encounter with Western hegemony and Westernization had given rise to in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey have been designated as *Internalized Orientalism*, *Occidentalism*, *Ottoman Orientalism*, *Belated Modernity*, etc.²⁹⁰ They strove to demonstrate that the Ottoman

²⁸⁹ Selim Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003): 311-42; Ahıska Meltem "Occidentalism: The Historical Fantasy of the Modern," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 (2-3).

²⁹⁰ Hasan Bülent Kahraman, "İçselleştirilmiş Açık ve Gizli Orientalizm ve Kemalizm," [Internalized Manifest and Latent Orientalism and Kemalism] *Doğu-Batı* 20, (2002): 159-185; Meltem Ahıska, "Occidentalism; The

Empire and its heir, the Republic of Turkey, are manifestations of the transnational processes of modernity and modern colonial history. The insightful works of scholars who bridge the Ottoman-Turkish and postcolonial criticism illustrate how Ottoman state authorities and intellectuals as well as their Turkish heirs struggled to cope with the Western hegemony, a struggle which was constitutive of their identity as well as the people they governed. From the founding fathers of Turkish nationalism, such as Kemal Atatürk and sociologist Ziya Gökalp, to one of the most important figures of Turkish modernist literature in the 1930s, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, to the late nineteenth century Ottoman statesmen struggling to defend the peripheral territories in Tripoli, Hejaz, Yemen and Beirut against, what they deemed, “savage” nomadic populations, the Turkish elites’ encounters with the European imperialism, modernity, and culture have now been well documented.

Thanks to these contributions, we are now well informed about the ways in which Ottoman-Turkish governors and elites constructed a self-image in response to the Orientalist perception of themselves. Insightful as these studies are, they nonetheless mostly remain focused on the period of late Ottoman Empire to early Turkish Republic (1870-1930). Instead, in this study, I investigate both the more recent and distant past; more specifically, the post-1980s surge of scholarly and popular interest in Ottoman minorities, a surge, I argue, that is part of a larger process of the reconstruction of national identity, particularly during the last decade. The emergence of this new Turkish-Ottoman imaginary and discourse of Turkish nativism and Occidentalism, with its emphasis on minority rights, tolerance, and harmonious coexistence of plurality remains an under-explored territory for postcolonial criticism. The public discourse on Ottoman multiculturalism and the Millet System has been only tangentially examined and, even then, the phantasmatic and affective dynamics at play are often left unanalyzed. Or, in the rare cases where the concept of fantasy is employed, the hazards of this sort of Turkish-Ottoman nationalist historiography and remembrance are not probed. Yet this discourse could and should constitute a pivotal object of investigation in postcolonial studies; scholars must analyze how Turkish nationalism deals with the melancholy and affective injury which arose from the loss of the Ottoman Empire

Historical Fantasy of the Modern”; Ussama Makdisi, “The Ottoman Orientalism,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002); Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate”; and Nurdan Gürbilek, “Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness, and the Turkish Novel,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (2003): 599-628.

as well as how colonialism gave rise to contemporary ambivalence towards a European identity and hegemony.

As was mentioned above, the Turkish case is not the first time a nation is dealing with the anxieties of encountering the Western hegemony and the loss of a presumed authentic and idyllic age. The question of identity and culture in the context of the West and the Rest dialectic has long been explored. The postcolonial theory and practice constitutes an invaluable source of critical heritage to examine how the ways in which Turkish historians/intellectuals deal with the past involve certain traps. One of the most relevant concepts for problematizing the discourse deployed by colonized people, in general, and the Turkish historians, in particular) in reaction to the Western hegemony, is *nativism*. As Said puts it,

Nativism, alas, reinforces the distinction even while reevaluating the weaker or subservient partner. And it has often led to compelling but demagogic assertions about a native past, narrative or actuality that stands free from worldly time itself. One sees this in such enterprises as Senghor's negritude, or in the Rastafarian movement, or in the Garveyite back to Africa project for American Blacks, or in the rediscoveries of various unsullied, pre-colonial Muslim essences.²⁹¹

For Said this came with a series of severe consequences:

As in the case of negritude trapped itself in what was primarily a defensive role, even though its accents were strident, its syntax hyperbolic and its strategy aggressive [...] Negritude stayed within a pre-set system of Eurocentric intellectual analysis of both man and his society, and tried to re-define the African and his society in those externalized terms.²⁹²

This mode of oppositionality, conceptualized as *Orientalism-in-reverse*, manifested itself among the Arab nations as well. As al-‘Azm puts it: “it simply imitates the greatest Orientalist masters – a poor imitation at that- when seeks to unravel the secrets of the primordial Arab mind, psyche or character in and through words.”²⁹³ Furthermore, because these ideal constituents and perfect character of the Arab nation had once attained a long time ago,

²⁹¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 228.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 229.

²⁹³ Sadik Jalal al-‘Azm, “Orientalism in Reverse,” 232.

adherents of nationalism energized by a reversed form Orientalism believe that it will remain as the chosen one in future. According to al-‘Azm, Arab nationalists based their struggle against the West, and used this image as their opponent, instead of relying on the old figure of imperial powers as national liberation movements did.

Among the most influential figures to criticize this form of opposition to the Western hegemony is Franz Fanon, whose critique of reactionary nationalism holds tremendous significance for the analysis of oppositional political and identity movements, especially in relation to the colonized intellectuals. In Fanon’s reading, the colonized intelligentsia – be they, scholar, artist, writer, of African, Mexican or Peruvian descent –, furiously struggled to renew contact with their people’s oldest essence, the farthest removed from colonial times. For Fanon, the intellectuals of Third World nationalisms have done so “since there is little to marvel at in its current state of barbarity, they have decided to go further, to delve deeper, and they must have been overjoyed to discover that the past was not branded with shame, but dignity, glory, and sobriety.”²⁹⁴ This move is, Fanon argues, is very crucial for psycho-affective equilibrium of the colonized. We will revisit this crucial point in a minute. It uses the racialized discourse of the colonialism and the same rules of logic only to invert it to prove the praiseworthiness of the colonized race and culture.²⁹⁵ The Negritude movement, for instance, while affirming African culture in contradistinction to old Europe, did so by attributing to it a series of positive features such as poetry, exuberance, naïveté, and freedom, which old Europe not only lacked, but was in essence antithetical to through its dull reason, stifling logic, protocol and so on.²⁹⁶ The colonized intellectuals, in an urge to rebuke the colonial regime’s understanding of the pre-colonial era as the dark ages, come to exoticize and glorify their pre-colonial past and culture unquestionably reclaimed customs and revived hitherto neglected traditions. Fanon, along with many prominent thinkers of his generation such as Albert Memmi, Aime Cesair, Amilcar Cabral, found this tendency to run the risk of reifying culture and freezing the past by reducing everything to an inert imagery of a Golden Age. In other words, Fanon, criticized the elevation of custom into culture since this locked culture into a past detached from positive effects of contemporary events: “A national

²⁹⁴ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 148.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 160, 173.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

culture is not a folklore nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature."²⁹⁷ When the past is used in such a way, it would be a disservice to one's people and the nascent nation rising from the ashes of colonialism.²⁹⁸

To be sure, Fanon's critique of national history and identity should not come as a surprise if we think of the Nietzschean influence in his philosophy. In 1873, almost 100 years earlier as Nietzsche wrote "On the Use and Abuse of History" and as Germany – a latecomer to imperial power – to create a robust culture, he has parallel worries about the future of national identity and culture.²⁹⁹ At this point, according to Nietzsche, historians and history took on a great significance to produce a unified national self, of which Nietzsche was very wary. Great lessons can be drawn from his detailed analysis of remembrance of the national memory and past through history writing for the analysis of any form of reactive nationalist discourse, be it nativist, occidentalist, reverse-orientalist etc.

In his musings on the topic, Nietzsche confronted the question of to what degree an individual, a people and a culture are supposed to remember or forget national history. For him, history, when left to misuse, can be a very overwhelming and excessive force and there are certain basic strategies to constrain this potentially destructive power. In the problematic mode of remembering history engages with the classics of earlier times and "learn from it that the greatness that once existed was in any event once possible and may be possible again."³⁰⁰ Used to fuel national imagery and unification/consolidation, monumental history deceives by analogies:

[W]ith seductive similarities it inspires the courageous to foolhardiness and the inspired to fanaticism and when we go on to think of this kind of history in the hands of gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels, then we see empires destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolution launched.³⁰¹

He adds, this form of monumental history is a way in which the weak displaces its hatred

²⁹⁷ Tamara Silanandan, "Anticolonialism, National Liberation, and Postcolonial Nation Formation," in *Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 63.

²⁹⁸ Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 160.

²⁹⁹ Frederick Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 57-123.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

and jealousy in present for the power of the great of its times onto its mighty ancestors of past eras. This troublesome mode, Nietzsche quips, is based on the motto of *let the dead bury the living*.

Nietzsche sensed a great danger in this mode of remembering the past because therein the dead buries the living as long as we expect from glorious ancestors to reincarnate somewhere in the future. Wherever one looks at, one only longs to see is the great times of the bygone civilization and the bodies of the great leaders and soldiers of the nation fleshed out in the monuments. In this perception of history, one turns its face toward the past and draws a linear continuity between the past and the present so much so that the creative energies of human life fade away as one perceives everything in the present as supplement to the original, essential, historical bedrock. In this mode, the past is overbearingly present, sapping the present life potentialities, energies, and forces:

The oversaturation of an age with history seems to me to be hostile and dangerous to life in five respects such an excess creates that con weakens the personality; it leads an age to imagine that and thereby weakens the personality; it leads an age to imagine that it possesses the rarest of virtues, justice, to a greater degree than any other age; it disrupts the instincts of a people and hinders the individual no less than the whole in the attainment of maturity; it implants the belief, harmful at any time, in the old age of mankind, the belief that one is a latecomer and epigone; it leads an age into a dangerous mood of irony in regard to itself and subsequently into the even more dangerous mood of cynicism: in this mood, however, it develops more and more a prudent practical egoism, through which the forces of life are paralyzed and at last destroyed.³⁰²

Nietzsche was much disheartened by whose abuse of history to consolidate German identity by commemorating of stagnant national tradition, folk, continuous replica of conversations, clothing and habitations. This perception of national culture, according to him, weakened individuality and impeded individuals' instincts and creative capacities of individuals. This point regarding instincts and visceral forces and energies was emphasized by Fanon too, who recognized the significance of the national history and national culture for the colonized intellectuals and their psychic affective equilibrium. Colonized intellectuals used history as a shield from the racist and colonialist gaze and discourse of the Western hegemony.

³⁰² Frederick Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," 83.

In terms of the analysis of this inferiority complex and the psychic economy of colonialism, Fanon offers a nuanced and sharp psychoanalytical analysis of “the juxtaposition of the white and black races” and a collective psychological complex he hopes to undo by analyzing it.³⁰³ Drawing on the insights of psychoanalysis, Fanon’s crucial intervention was his emphasis on affect and libidinal economy in the colonial relations. He contends that this colonized subject (e.g., the black man) is produced “as the result of a series of aberrations of affect.”³⁰⁴ Fanon’s emphasis on the affect, the emotion, the passion is crucial here. What Fanon attempts to illustrate in *Black Skin White Mask* is that colonialism not only operates at the symbolic level of representation of the other as the inferior, but it is also embedded in affective and libidinal economy. From this perspective, affects are not generated in one body but are flows among colonial bodies and psyches of colonialism that constitute an intricate libidinal economy.³⁰⁵

This concept of the psychic economy of colonialism recalls Žižek and Salecl’s psychoanalytically influenced analysis of nationalisms. As they have illustrated in their study of the nationalism(s) in territories that splintered from the former Yugoslavia, in which excessive enjoyment and affects are always attributed to the national and ethnic other. In their argument, one can hear the echoes of Fanon’s analysis of how the enjoyment of the colonized people, e.g., “their strange attitude to work” and “their uncontrollable sexual behavior,” enabled the constitution of European subjectivity and management of its libidinal economy. In the colonial racist fantasy, these strange and inaccessible affects and drives were projected onto the colonized people who were deemed uncivilized and subhuman. Thanks to this colonial racial libidinal economy, the white European subject holds an ostensibly safe

³⁰³ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*. (New York: Grove Press, 1967[1952]), 12. Fanon along with Memmi and Cesaire believe that one of the most significant implications of this psychic economy was the inferiority/dependency complex internalized by the colonized. “Willfully created by and spread by the colonizer,” Memmi says, “this mythical and degrading portrait ends up by being accepted and lived with to a certain extent by the colonized” (Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965[1957], 87). He maintains that this inferiority complex “arises after and not before colonial occupation” (ibid., 88). See also Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 2000[1955]). For these thinkers, what should be borne in mind is that this inferiority complex cannot be explained by and reduced to an individual case. It is repeated among masses and should be analyzed by considering the social dynamics of the colonial relations and their effects in individual psychology as well.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 8.

³⁰⁵ Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 47-59.

position uncontaminated by these negative affects and enjoyment. And there lies Fanon's central contribution to the study of nationalism: that European nation-formation (e.g., French nationalism) cannot be understood without taking into account the colonized people and their locus in European colonial racist fantasies. The reversed form of this racist libidinal economy is its influence on the colonized (i.e. Third World intellectual/historians) and anti-colonial nationalism. Thus, we have a portrayal of the colonizer and the colonized who are deeply intermingled and implicated in each other's psyches. This reading of Fanon means that the parties in colonial relations are not distinct but enmeshed as the emotional economies and desire of each of the colonizer and the colonized relies on the projections of each other. Although the Turkey-Ottoman Empire experience is not typically considered an example of colonization in the same way, for example, as are Ghana, Indonesia or Algeria, this mutually constitutive affective economy is no less relevant in the relationship between Turkey and Europe.

In terms of this alterity and colonial affective economy, the West is not deemed the only enemy of the nation. There are other Others that take part in the national politics of emotion in the colonial situation. Having come to see themselves through the categories of biology and race, anti-colonial movements and derivative nationalisms were quick to find internal enemies and threats to the unity of the nation. Fanon gives an example in the context of Ivory Coast, where Dahomeans and Upper Voltans controlling the business sector were targeted in outright racist riots and demonstrations where the participation of the urban proletariat, the unemployed masses, the small artisans characterized, what Fanon called, "ultranationalism, chauvinism and racism."³⁰⁶ In Fanon's analysis, the inhabitants of Niger in Ghana and Sudanese in Senegal were similarly singled out as scapegoats, or "thieves of enjoyment" to use the lexicon of Žižek and Salecl. Moreover, Fanon discerns similar economy of theft of enjoyment between the White and Black Africa:

In some places you hear that White Africa has a thousand year-old tradition of culture, that it is Mediterranean, an extension of Europe and is part of Greco-Roman civilization. Black Africa is looked upon as a wild, savage, uncivilized, and lifeless region. In other places, you hear day in and day out

³⁰⁶ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 103.

hateful remarks about veiled women, polygamy, and the Arabs' alleged contempt for the female sex.³⁰⁷

In sum, anti-colonial experiences of nationalism and nativism became not only responses to the Western Other but were equally directed against immanent others and enemies. Xiaomei Chen duly underscores such a tendency in the experience of Chinese Occidentalism imagination of the nation, where the image of the West serves not to dominate the West: “as a means for supporting a [Chinese] nationalism that suppresses its own people.”³⁰⁸ Chen’s study particularly can also yield useful insights into how postcolonial nations other than China elsewhere manage their domestic and transnational politics. This is a crucial point for my understanding of Turkish postcolonial nationalism and the fantasy of the Ottoman tolerance.

3.3 The Use and Abuse of Ottoman History in post 1980s Turkey

In light of the aforementioned lessons, I read the recent surge of interest in and the discourse on Ottoman peace, multiculturalism, and the Millet system as the backbone of the Turkish-Islamic fantasy of the nation. It is through this fantasy that the Turkish native intellectuals strive to overcome the hegemony of the Western Orientalist perception of the Turkish-Ottoman civilization. In this resentful discourse, The European civilization is considered synonymous with discrimination, the Holocaust, violation of the human and minority rights since it systematically persecuted and oppressed its minorities and colonial populations. It is not difficult to detect the reversed form of the European image of Ottoman Despotism and the barbaric Turk at play here. In these accounts of the Turkish scholars, all the bad qualities and affects are displaced onto the West/Europe.

Meanwhile, the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance described in chapter depicts precoloniality, i.e., the time preceding the demise of the Millet system, as permitting people of different ethnic religious communities lived side by side in harmony. Note that the fantasy’s jargon is borrowed from Western/European liberal multicultural discourse and reversed only in that it

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 108.

³⁰⁸ Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism*, 3.

is cast the Ottoman-Turkish Empire in a positive light. Concepts developed for European socio-political analysis, e.g., multicultural, liberal, plural, and cosmopolitan, etc., are used to describe the Ottoman-Turkish civilization.

Insofar as the assumed glorious Ottoman-Turkish history and culture are celebrated, their erasure are seemed lamentable. According to the Turkish historians and intellectuals, the great powers of Western imperialism along with non-Muslim communities within the Empire, such as Greeks and Armenians, conspired against the Ottoman state. In addition to the imagination of a harmonious pre-modern age as well as external and internal threats to it, narratives of Ottoman tolerance and multiculturalism offer a highly problematic conception of culture and history. The historians' discourse on the Ottoman Millet system runs the risk of unconditionally affirming the Ottoman past elevating the Millet system to the level of essential Turkish-Muslim culture, and then reifying this culture.

The discourse of the native intellectuals' works on the Millet system and tolerance obsessively refer to the same historical events, e.g., the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and figures such as Sultan Fatih the Conqueror or Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Only spectacular moments and heroic Ottoman Turkish ancestors are remembered; everything else fades into the background. We neither hear the voice of the minorities directly and nor do we read about the pain of the Others. The stories of the African slaves recruited during the revitalization of the newly conquered Constantinople, or of the Jewish migrants forced from Anatolia to the new Ottoman capital to deal with the shortage of labor are silenced and trivialized, as Chapter Two has discussed.

The Other qua the non-Muslim minorities in the Empire is invoked only when its existence serves the Ottoman-Turkish founding fathers' interests. The Ottoman Jews are accorded a place in the imagined glorious past because they brought their trade and artisanal skills, and scientific and medical knowledge to the Empire. The Orthodox Greeks play a role in the fantasy because their existence in the Ottoman Empire fueled the rivalry between the Vatican and the East Roman Church authorities. The case of Armenians is invoked as an example of a "loyal nation" (millet). Other "Others" are omitted. This selective attention,

which heavily influences the Ottoman historians' understanding of the past and the Other, also shapes their approach to the perception of the state of affairs in the present.

Prominent Kemal Karpat expressly states that his object in studying Ottoman state history and governance is to use the resulting knowledge to solve today's socio-cultural problems.³⁰⁹ This approach, although not always articulated so explicitly, is typical of the use of the Ottoman history and legacy in the service of the contemporary challenges facing the nation, e.g. relations with the neighbors, minority issues, modernization and reforms and so on. This is important because although my dissertation primarily investigates recent nationalist Ottoman historiographic discourse as a component of the Turkish nationalist fantasy and group identity, these intellectuals' fantasies emerged in the context of social processes and class transformations in modern Turkey and are shaped by many.

These transformations are of particular interest to us because they illustrate a lot about the use of the Ottoman history to energize and mobilize certain classes. In order to have a better grasp of the dynamics of class transformations in Turkey and the rising appeal of the Ottoman revivalism, our analysis must turn to the 1980s as presently written. This decade witnessed the collapse of the statist economy and its import substituting industrialization regime along with the crisis of the modernization project based on secular-Turkish identity.³¹⁰ After the coup d'état of 1980, the state (under the supervision of the army) attempted to solve the impasse in the economy by structurally readjusting it to the globalized economy by means of export-oriented trade and a neo-liberal market. Yet, the Turkish modernity project and its secular-Turkish identity came under question during the years of economic and social turmoil that followed, with Islamists along with Kurds constituting the most significant political movements contesting the official discourse.³¹¹ The popularity of Islam and its promise of "Just Order" can be read as a reaction to the failure of the Westernization/modernization project. By proposing to rediscover core Islamic ethics and

³⁰⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, "Türkçe Çeviriye Önsöz," [Introduction to Turkish translation] in *Osmanlı ve Dünya*, [*The Ottoman Empire and the World*] ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Ufuk Kitapları: İstanbul, 2000), 14.

³¹⁰ Çağlar Keyder "1990'larda Türkiye'de Modernleşmenin Doğrultusu," [Whither the Project of Modernity? Turkey in the 1990s] in *Türkiye'de Modernleşme ve Ulusal Kimlik* [*Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*], eds. Sibel Bozdoğan and Resat Kasaba (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 21.

³¹¹ Resat Kasaba, "Eski ile Yeni Arasında Kemalizm ve Modernizm," [Kemalizm and Modernity Between the Old and the New] in *Türkiye'de Modernleşme ve Ulusal Kimlik*, 13.

aesthetics and reject the supremacy of the Western model of society, Islamic movements and politics promised Muslims a return of the glorious Islamic past in the new world stage.³¹² This worldview was presented as an alternative to Kemalist secular nationalism of the sixty years, which had attempted to sever ties with the Ottoman past.

Istanbul, the glorious capital of the Empire, was a key symbol for the Ottoman/Islamic hegemony and its “re-conquest” has been crucial to revival of the “Ottoman model.”³¹³ This aspect of Islamic politics manifested itself in 1995, the year of the general elections, when the pro-Islamic Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) campaigned by inviting their supporters, people they considered to be the “real inhabitants” of the city, to “conquer the city second time.”³¹⁴ On May, 29 2009, at the anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, in one of the most visited points of Istanbul, in one of the most visited points of Istanbul, the mayor of Istanbul unveiled the Fatih Sultan Mehmed Monument reincarnating the moment when Fatih gave the order for the conquest. The same year the municipality inaugurated Panorama 1453, the Museum of Conquest, with the Prime Minister alongside other important bureaucrats in attendance. According to its designers, the Museum’s purpose is to allow visitors to (re)experience the spectacle of the conquest and witness how Mehmed had earned the title “the Conqueror” through three-dimensional simulations of the historic day. A 2012 blockbuster movie *Conquest 1453*, offered a Turkish version of *Braveheart*, telling the story of the Ottoman Turkish commander, Fatih, and of the genius of his attempts to conquer the city with his heroic soldiers. Among the most recent examples of neo-Ottomanism in Istanbul is the plan to name a new third bridge on the Bosphorus after Yavuz Selim, the third Sultan of the Golden Age.³¹⁵

³¹² Nilüfer Göle, “Modernleşme Bağlamında İslami Kimlik,” [The Quest for the Islamic Self within the Context of Modernity] in *Türkiye’de Modernleşme ve Ulusal Kimlik*, 76.

³¹³ Ayfer Bartu, “Eski Mahallelerin Yeni Sahibi Kim?,” [Who Owns the Old Quarters?] 53.

³¹⁴ Tanil Bora, “Istanbul of the Conqueror: The “Alternative Global City” Dreams of Political Islam,” in *Istanbul Between the Global and the Local*, ed. Çağlar Keyder (Istanbul: Metis, 2000), 48.

³¹⁵ For manifestations of Ottoman revivalism in various fields ranging from gentrification and enactment of pious Muslim subjectivity to museum exhibitions and commercial art and cultural performances see Öykü Potuoğlu-Cook, “Bellydance and Neoliberal Gentrification in Istanbul,” *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no.4 (2006); İpek Türeli, “Modeling Citizenship in Turkey’s Miniaturk Park,” in *Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?*, ed. Deniz Göktürk, Levent Soysal and İpek Türeli (New York: Routledge, 2010); Jeremy F. Walton, “Practices of Neo-Ottomanism: Making Space and Place Virtuous in Istanbul,” in *Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?*

Turkish social scientists scholars usually end their study of the Millet system and its incorporation into Islamic-Turkish imagery with the 1995 elections. However, there is more to the story of Ottoman revivalism and multiculturalism. This is why this dissertation goes beyond the 1995 milestone, analyzing the subsequent historiography and discourse on the Ottoman Millet system and tolerance up until present time. Since 1994, the mobilizing power of Islam has been becoming ever more evident. The Refah Partisi had a significant success in the 1995 local elections of that year, taking over many important municipalities, including Istanbul, and subsequently forming a coalition government. Since 2002, its successor, AKP (the Justice and Development Party), has been the ruling party and continued to entrench its power at the national as well as municipal levels.

It is important to note here that the AKP government endeavored to weave together the discourses of Islamism (emphasizing the Ottoman version of Sunni Islam), nationalism (i.e., Turkish ancestry and blood are still considered important markers of a proper Turk), and neo-liberalism (instituting a deregulated market, privatization, and gentrification, expanding an big export-oriented economy, appropriation of commons, foreign investments, flexible and precarious employment practices).

Amongst many other factors, what made the Islamic movements and pro-Islamic political parties so effective was their appeal to certain sectors of the society, that had been ignored by the global neo-liberal economic system since the 1980s. As Yüksel Taşkın observed, "For those segments of the population marginalized, oppressed and disenfranchised by the onslaught of capitalism, the aspirational tenets of Just Order populism was very appealing."³¹⁶ The Islamic movement reached out to the poor, domestic migrants, living mostly on the outskirts of metropolitan areas and impoverished groups in the agricultural sector. Thus, Islamic party organizations and religious communities served as a caring social network during neo-liberalism for the lower classes and promised to keep their social and economic upward mobility within reach. In that sense, Islamic politics, especially the AKP policies, kept the masses within the capitalist system, whose resentments might have otherwise jeopardized it. As a result of this "passive revolution," as Cihan Tuğal (borrowing from

³¹⁶ Yüksel Taşkın, "Türkiye'de Sınıfsal Yeniden Yapılanma, AKP ve Muhafazakar Populizm," [Class Restructuring in Turkey, AKP and Conservative Populism] *Birikim* 204, (2006): 22.

Antonio Gramsci) called it, anti-capitalist ideas and fractions within the Islamic movements were contained and neo-liberal capitalism was presented as the inevitable model.³¹⁷

However, the adherents of this Islamic mobilization were not limited to the lower classes. Pro-Islamic parties and their governments facilitated the emergence in Anatolia of a new Islamic bourgeoisie, who began to challenge the hegemony of state-supported economic elites of pre-1980s era. This new rising bourgeoisie, usually referred to as “the Anatolian Tigers,” were provincial capitalist entrepreneurs from export-oriented industries in cities such as Bursa, Denizli, Kayseri and Mersin who they received considerable state and local financial support for their global investments.³¹⁸

Seen from this perspective, the Islamic politics of the post-80s brought new and strong economic actors and political elites to the center of Turkish society, which had formerly been occupied by the secular-Turkish elites of the state-sponsored domestic bourgeoisie and by army and civil bureaucrats.³¹⁹ In that sense, the revival of Ottomanism and Turkish-Islamism was a liberation struggle against not directly to the Western colonial power. Instead it aimed to seize the power and conquer Istanbul second time from classes and elites in Turkey who were perceived to be the embodiment of everything the corrupted Westernized, secular life style and culture represented. This class movement was achieved by electoral success rather than armed-struggles waged in the anti-colonial struggles of the 1960s.

To secure its ascendancy Islamic movement mobilized its supporters, including the lower and middle class masses, with the promise of a just and prosperous society. As explained above, what interests me in the class transformations and antagonisms of recent Turkish

³¹⁷ Cihan Tuğal, “AKP İktidarı: Sermaye'nin Pasif Devrimi,” [AKP Government: Passive Revolution of the Capital] *Birikim* 204, (2006): 29.

³¹⁸ Ayşe Durakbaşı, “Taşra Burjuvasının Tarihsel Kökenleri,” [The Historical Origins of the Provincial Bourgeoisie] *Toplum ve Bilim* 118, (2010): 22.

³¹⁹ This form of passive revolution, which incorporates the working class, lumpen classes and the bourgeoisie into the capitalist system, was strongly criticized by Fanon and Cabral. See, Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004[1961]); and Amílcar Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amílcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973). To rephrase their critique for our discussion, as long as anti-colonial movements, which produce their own national bourgeoisie and replace the hitherto-dominant class (Westernized secular Turkish elite) with their own (Muslim capitalists claiming the Ottoman heritage), these movements fail to recognize their potential to undo colonialism's disastrous economic, cultural and political effects. I detect the same resentful tendency, as Fanon and Cabral warned us against, among the Islamic movements and the newly created Islamic bourgeoisie in contemporary Turkey.

politics is the mobilizing power of the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance and Millet System. I perceive it to be the vital foundational myth of the new Turkish-Islamic nationalism. It is the essential social fantasy enabling its adherents – whether they are laypeople or scholars – to claim to be the “authentic natives” of the historical Turkish-Islamic state and to sustain their identities in the present via the promise of a harmonious future. It so does, however, by depicting certain groups as the enemy out to undermine these aspirations. The Armenian and Greek “traitors” of the past and Kurdish “separatists” of the present, for instance, are understood as threats to the unity and stability of the nation and its promise. At the same time, this fantasy takes on an international significance as it captures the essence of the reaction to the European imperative “you should become multicultural and liberal like us.” The fantasy of Ottoman tolerance beats its European Other at its own game: “we were already multicultural.” During the opening ceremony of an Istanbul hospital in 2013, the Prime Minister’s speech reflected on his recent trip to Africa.

At this point, to quote another speech by the Turkish Prime Minister will illuminate how pedagogical political discourse of nationalism caters to the nativist sensitivities. He explained Niger could not be a point of reference for Turkey’s self-image and what he instead regarded as the proper yardstick:

We cannot say that we are better off just by looking at them. If we are to elevate Turkey above the level of the contemporary countries we will take the most developed as our basis. Therefore our goal is to take place in top 10 countries. We are seventeenth at the moment but we do not find the 17th rank sufficient. We will enter the top ten... Once upon a time we were number one in the world but then unfortunately we ended up in the well-known situation. For this reason we have to go back to our essence.³²⁰

This speech crucially illustrates the ways in which derivative nationalism constitutes itself through return to a source-and-essence discourse. Moreover, it shows us how Turkish domestic dynamics are being connected to international ones. On the one hand there are tectonic class antagonisms and movements within domestic sphere. However winning the global development contest is constituted as an object of desire for the disciplined and mobilized domestic classes. “Once upon a time we were the world power,” draws a direct,

³²⁰ “Erdoğan: Bir zamanlar dünyada bir numaraydık, yeniden aslimza dönmemiz lazım,” [Erdoğan: Once upon a time we were number one in the world, we have to go back to our essence] *T24*, January 12, 2013, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/bir-zamanlar-dunyada-bir-numaraydik-yeniden-aslimiza-donmeliyiz/221477>.

spatial and temporal connection between the glorious Ottoman Empire and Turkey. Moreover, we are promised to regain a golden age. Only, it is with one condition: “to go back to the essence.”

This manifestation of an outward glance from Turkey toward the global arena is a good starting point for thinking about her international policy, which is called neo-Ottomanism in scholarly and journalistic circles. It is highly sensitive to the needs and balance of domestic dynamics. Bearing this in mind let us continue our analysis of the global aspects of the Turkish nationalism. Neo-Ottomanism initially emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War and had been presented by Prime Minister Turgut Özal, and a number of journalists, as Turkey’s solution to the changing global power dynamics. As mentioned in the second chapter, Ottomanism has been an important stream of nationalism in Turkish social and political thought. What changed was the revival, especially at the outset of the 1990s, of Ottomanism as a desired international policy that would give more influence over the politics in Caucasus, Balkans and Middle East, vast ex-Ottoman territories. Twenty first century was heralded as the century of the Turks. The 1993 death of Prime Minister Özal and the subsequent economic, socio-political crises impeded the actualization of this fantasy, but over the last ten years, the image of Turkey asserting heightened influence in ex-Ottoman regions was back on the agenda. Prime Minister Erdoğan’s 2011 speech after his third consecutive victory in the national elections was, according to many, a clear manifestation of Ottomanism’s revival: “Believe me, Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul, Beirut won as much as İzmir, Damascus won as much as Ankara, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakır.”³²¹ *The Strategic Depth*, a book by Turkish foreign minister (2007 onward) and scholar Ahmet Davutoğlu, is considered the manifesto behind neo-Ottomanism.³²²

Davutoğlu defines Turkey as a relatively newly established nation-state which had a defensive and introverted character. Except the weak and ill-equipped attempts during Turgut Özal’s presidency, Davutoğlu argues, a defensive, international policy that lacked

³²¹ Kerem Öktem and Ayşe Kadioğlu, Introduction to *Another Empire?* eds. Kerem Öktem, Ayşe Kadioğlu and Mehmet Karlı, (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2012), 4.

³²² Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye’nin Uluslararası Konumu* [*Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Location*] (Istanbul: Kure Yayınları, 2001).

vision was determined Turkey's own national imagery. He moves the hands of the clock way to offer an alternative reading of Turkish history and identity based on the Ottoman Empire, and its legacy. His choice of the term "Ottoman-Turkish international policy" reveals the continuity in his historical analysis. What emerges out of his analysis is a quite assertive identity for Turkey that claims its active role in the dynamic process of global power and regional power reconfiguration.³²³ The new perception of the country must be capable of shaping the future for next generations and cultivating with honor and self-esteem.³²⁴ It is this new Turkey, marching towards her future, that will join the family of the nation harmonizing her own regional existential interest with that of the global one.³²⁵ Furthermore he claims that amongst the superpowers Turkey has a unique place. For Davutoğlu, Turkey's political culture and dynamic character highly distinguishes her from Western Europe and America. This distinction, the argument goes, can be best understood in terms of the essential difference in the 16th century between the Ottoman Empire's stable infrastructure and European societies' internal tensions.³²⁶ He similarly differentiates Turkey's political culture from the tribal culture of Middle Eastern nations caught up between absolute monarchies and totalitarian dictatorships. Eastern European/Near Asian countries are differentiated from Turkey, Davutoğlu believes, because social change and transformation in Turkey come from the society itself rather than elites' struggles. The list goes on, demarcating Turkey's political culture is demarcated from those of authoritarian China, other East Asian countries, as well as Latin American, and African nation-states.³²⁷ In sum, country of the West or East nor of the Global South or North would qualify for a regional influence power as much as that of Turkish-Ottoman origin.

It is important to note that in this picture Turkish people and state appear as the chosen ones. Therefore what is to be done by politicians and scholars, according to Davutoğlu, is to envision a confident strategy for dominance similar to Ottoman Empire's 16th century "Nizam-i Alem" (World Order) project. In addition drawing on the analogy to the Ottoman imperial project, Davutoğlu mentions how important Samuel Huntington's "the Clash of

³²³ Ibid., 63.

³²⁴ Ibid., 11.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid., 80.

³²⁷ Ibid.

Civilizations” thesis has been for American foreign policy.³²⁸ If Huntington’s work lays out the parameters for the future of the U.S international policy, Turkey must find her own Huntington and calculate strategic plans for becoming an influential actor. Only then, he argues, could the lost battle at the front against the West be reversed.³²⁹

During his (2007 onward) term as Turkish foreign minister Davutoğlu no doubt strove to apply the principles and agenda he had set out as a scholar. His interview with Aljezeera News in 2011 is a very good case in point.³³⁰ At its outset, following convention, the host welcomed the foreign minister to the show “Empire.” With Istanbul’s Bosphorus showing in his background, Davutoğlu confidently replied: “Welcome to the capital of the Empire.” In the end of the show Davutoğlu elaborated on his joke with a serious and commanding tone. The host asked why Turkey would want to be a regional power or even world power. Davutoğlu replied: “Which country does not want to be a global power?” Furthermore he stated that when European countries become imperial super powers, no fuss is made but when Turkey elevates herself to this level, she faces obstacles, prejudice and Orientalist perceptions.

Under Davutoğlu’s influence Turkey initiated a number of protocols in what has become is broadly known as “Zero Problem [with Neighbors]”. The main aim was to put the traces of the previous introverted period behind and become a proactive local and transnational trading partner and collaborator. Based on the “Zero Problem” motto, Turkey indeed tried to play a leadership role. The attempt to encourage Iran sign an international treaty for the control of nuclear weapons in Iran, or enthusiasm to play mediating role in Palestine-Israel, and Pakistan-India peace talks, are but a few examples. These attempts have been well received in many circles.

As optimistic as this portrayal of a neo-Ottoman foreign policy may sound, the policy

³²⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

³³⁰ Ahmet Davutoğlu, interview by Marwan Bishara, *Empire*, www.aljazeera.com, June 16, 2011, accessed November 3, 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2011/06/201162810217630746.html>.

nonetheless has run into serious obstacles. Turkey's recent performance reveals that one could almost say the "Zero Problem" motto has resulted in "Zero Peace." Improving relations with the Greeks of South Cyprus was on hold. The protocols initiated with Armenia in 2009 were put aside. Turkey's good relationship with Iran neared a crisis when Turkey accepted to host NATO anti-missile shield bases against Iran's nuclear threat. There have been a series of tense events and disputes between Turkey and the Assad regime of Syria. Likewise, Turkey and Israel had. Many still wonder how Turkey will deal with the Kurdish population in the northern Iraq. Others found Turkey's stance during the Arab spring very problematic and insufficient. While all this is happening the main question mark is being placed on neo-Ottomanism and on Turkey's claim of this heritage. "Is Turkey mutating into a neo-Ottoman fantasies and political influence, as critics particularly in the Balkans and secularist in the Middle East suggest?"³³¹ Apparently the topic whether Turkey is an emerging global power or "soft" and "middle power" will keep journalists and scholars occupied.

Dibyesh Anand's recent work on Chinese and Indian imperial revivalism³³² enables us to unbind our analysis from the Ottoman-Turkish case and detect strategies and rhetoric common in relatively newly independent postcolonial nation-states. Anand's departure point for his brilliant analysis of Postcolonial Informal Empires (PIEs) and the ways in which they deal with their past, historical legacy and minorities within their borders, is the overarching scholarly tendency to neglect the study of the non-Western states or reduce them to merely collaborators or victims.³³³ Instead, Anand offers insights into emerging economic and geopolitical players with limited agenda-setting power in the global order, Postcolonial Informal Imperialism and their creation of a self-image, which portrays itself as former victims of Western imperialism, and "continuations of historical, great civilizational empires, which sets them apart from some Western hegemonic power, such as the United States."³³⁴ I find his reading of these nation-states particularly relevant to the Ottoman-Turkish experience of Empire for two main elements: i) The nationalist appropriation of the past and

³³¹ Kerem Öktem and Ayşe Kadioğlu, Introduction to *Another Empire?*, 4.

³³² Dibyesh Anand, "China and India: Postcolonial Informal Empires in the Emerging Global Order," *Rethinking Marxism* 24, no.1 (2012).

³³³ *Ibid.*, 71.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

ii) the perception of the minorities, ethno religious communities. I would like to quote in length from Anand here to bring his eloquent analysis these two essential strands of the generation of non-Western post-colonial imperialism. In terms of their use and abuse of the past he states that:

PIEs [Postcolonial Informal Empires] nurture discourses of past and future glory. They seek to give a solid base to the core nation-states by marshalling a strong historical memory of being great empires in the not-too-distant past and striving to regain their rightful place soon. The future is seen in terms of a historical continuity ruptured temporally by a couple of hundred years of decline.³³⁵

This last aspect, the issue of the rupture and of attack-via-disunity-within connects us to the perception of the minorities in the emerging powers e.g., Tibetans in China, the Kashmiri Muslim in India.

In PIEs, the minorities especially those on the periphery and those with distinct identities, are represented in a manner similar to the Orientalist depiction of the non-Western world. The images range from that of a grateful, colourful minority to an ungrateful one out to split community.³³⁶ PIEs have a certain paranoia at the hearth of their being. The fear is that a compromise over political control in the periphery is a slippery slope that ends with a break up of the empire/state.³³⁷

The reason I brought these two issues from experience of China and India to our attention is to underscore their uncanny similarity to Ottoman-Turkish case in terms of the appropriation of the past to develop an imperial imaginary, civilizational identity, and of the treatment and perception of the minorities. From the speeches of the Turkish Prime Minister to the foreign affairs minister Davutoğlu's doctrine of neo-Ottomanism, to the Turkish Ottoman historian scholars whose work we've closely examined, one can throughout detect the portrayal of a victimized people, a glorious Empire fallen victim to Western imperial portrayal of a hegemony and the internal backstabbers, the minorities. This discourse is pervaded with a resentful yearning for the not-too-distant glorious days of the Empire, as they prophesize ascendancy of Turkey that is well deserved due to its Ottoman legacy. For the adherents of this neo-colonial fantasy, Turkey's attempt to regain its "rightful

³³⁵ Ibid., 75.

³³⁶ Ibid., 79.

³³⁷ Ibid., 81.

place” in the world history (i.e. becoming a World power, a regional power, among the top ten and so on) has been interrupted all too many times.

This imperial imagination of the Turkish nation, as much as the legacy of the glorious past, appears haunted by the minority question. Like Tibetans in China, and Kashmiri in India, or Kurds, Alevis, and Armenians in Turkey, are all celebrated as symbols of the Ottoman multiethnic mosaic’s harmony. These ethnic and religious communities are to be protected against themselves, from the perspective of the nationalist discourse, since they do not know what is best for them. As we’ve seen in the first chapter, the reluctance of the Turkish state authorities to properly acknowledge the cultural differences and rights of the Kurds as well as the non-Muslim communities, and their half-hearted attempts to recognize their autonomies, are symptoms of this tendency. At the heart of this ambivalent approach, as Anand observes for the cases of China and India, lies paranoia about disintegration of the unity and sovereign totality of the nation. Insofar as much as the Turkish Prime Minister, statesmen and Turkish nativist intellectuals entertain the revival of the Ottoman-Turkish Golden Age and strive to mobilize Turkish-Muslim adherents with it, minorities in Turkey will keep facing paranoiac perception of otherness. We should note that the fear of the nation’s disintegration does not solely target minorities but also other marginalized and suppressed groups, such as feminists, dissidents university students, unions, pro-labour and human rights activists, environmentalist and feminists. Their demands are likewise seen as a threat to the harmony and the totality of the nation.

The chapter of the thesis started off with the premise that Turkish historians’ debate and discourse on the Ottoman tolerance and millet system should be seen not just only as myth, or ideologically-biased but also as a fantasy that of Turkish-Ottoman nationalism. Drawing upon the urgent lessons of post-colonial experience, theory and history, it has investigated the pitfalls of uncritically clinging to such an imaginary. Turkish historians and state authorities today face the same aporias of the colonial history as had that haunted non-Western nationalisms and their reaction to their Orientalist image. The next chapter considers whether there are alternative ways of remembering the Ottoman past and offers different paths toward dealing with the past and its injuries.

Chapter Four:

The Ethics and Politics of Collective Memory and Mourning: Ottoman Loss and Melancholy in Modern Turkey

What kind of a state are we in when we start to think about the state?

Judith Butler and Gayatri C. Spivak. *Who Sings the Nation?*³³⁸

In the previous chapter we saw that the fantasy of the tolerant Ottoman millet system involves a critical pitfall: it offers the image of a pre-colonial and harmonious coexistence under the Ottoman rule. As the narrative goes, this idyllic past was thwarted by external powers and internal traitors from the turn of the 19th century onwards. In this context, Turkish nationalism appears to be an appealing alternative social script, one that is continuously reiterated in contemporary Turkish public discourse. The fantasy of Ottoman tolerance and peace portrays the golden age before the fall and thus creates a narrative of how things went wrong for the Empire. As such, it constitutes a pervasive social text for Turkish nationalist historiography that deals with the past as well as the loss of the Empire.

Staging an encounter with the past through questioning: “who are we?” has become an issue around the 1980s and the importance of this search intensified over the last decade in Turkey. It has become necessary for Turkey to reflect on issues of identity, power and justice given Turkey’s recent history. The focus of much of this criticism has been Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the founding Republican cadre of elite bureaucrats and army commanders who ran the Turkish Republic under a single party regime until the end of 1940s. During this period, the official ideology of Kemalism burnt the bridges with the Empire, which represented archaic and despotic Oriental society and aimed to create a homogeneous Turkish nation composed of Westernized, educated and secular citizens. New state institutions were deployed to modernize the population in the areas such as health, law, education, and family. After intensive state interventions in various spheres of the society

³³⁸ Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State?: language, politics, belonging* (New York: Seagull Books, 2007), 3.

through changes in dress code, alphabet, and marital law between 1923-1950, the following decades witnessed emergence of new political visions, parties and leaders in the parliament. In the 1960, 1971 and 1980 coup d'états, the Turkish army led by high-ranking commanders directly and physically intervened in Turkish politics. The army, "the gatekeepers" of the secular Western republic temporarily declared martial laws on its own accord, not at behest of the government of that time, to restore the "security and order" in the country and prevent the elected government and the society from "extremism" of all kinds, i.e., communism, ultra-nationalism, and Islamism. The army suspended all political activities, and arrested and interrogate politicians, bureaucrats, members of political parties and civil society organizations, and student activists. Those arrested faced injuries, torture and the death penalty for their allegiances. When tanks appeared in the streets of Ankara, in 1997, it was conceived of as an ultimatum by the secular Turkish army to the coalition government run by the "unruly" pro-Islamic Welfare party, which would eventually gave rise to AKP. This event was later considered by the Turkish public and AKP government as another attempted coup d'état. Since coming to power, the AKP has sought to prevent any further army coups. Since the 1980s, but particularly since the early 2000s this pro-Islamic nationalist party has challenged the power of secular Republican bureaucrats, the bourgeoisie and army leaders condemning their suppression of the Ottoman past and their domination of pious Muslim Turks, positioned as underdogs the underdogs and "authentic people" of the nation. The Turkish parliament has also established a commission to investigate criminal activities behind the previous coup d'état interventions, especially since the 1980s.

Minorities in Turkish politics have been frequently targeted by state discourse in the modern history of Turkey. The year of 1915 marked the genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman lands, which the Turkish government up until the present has never condemned more than half-heartedly. The years 1922-23 marked another catastrophic event in which a forced population exchange with Greece moved over a million ethnic Greeks from their towns in Western Anatolia. Under the special circumstances of WWII, in 1942, the Turkish government subjected its non-Muslim mostly Jewish citizens to a special levy which, in certain cases, extracted more than half of their wealth. In September 6-7 of that year, after a racist outburst that mobilized thousands, Turkish patriots looted the stores of non-Muslims located in the most known boulevard of Istanbul and lynched many people in their

neighborhoods and apartments. Many non-Muslims, mostly Greeks fled their homes and left their stores and wealth behind – as they also had to do in 1967. These events of racial violence demonstrate that the minorities inherited from the Empire were subject to the Turkish state’s homogenizing and disciplinary attempts. As a result these state policies the number of the non-Muslim minorities became immensely diminished, and of their occupations and workplaces had been confiscated or handed over to Turkish Muslims. What used to be twenty percent of the late Ottoman population before WWI, has declined to 2.5 percent in 1920s and is today far less than one percent.

Kurds and Alevis, as Muslims were also Others of the Sunni Muslim Turk idealized by Turkish nationalism. They managed to retain their numbers despite that the Kurdish riots of 1925 (involving both Zazas and Kirmanci Kurds) and the 1938 Alevi revolts in Dersim had been repressed by the state, with more than ten thousand of casualties. There were many incidents of massacre, forced migration and torture in the history of Kurds and Alevis from the late 1970s onward. The deep impact of the massacres of Alevis Kurds in Maraş in 1978, Alevis in Corum in 1980 and in Sivas in 1993, are still being felt by the community. Like the Greeks, Armenians and Jews of Turkey, today Alevis and Kurds face the pain and loss of these traumatic events in their collective memories.

In addition to various factions vying for control of the state, contemporary Turkey faces other pending human rights, civil rights and transitional justice issues. International and local non-governmental agencies and minority groups have been making claims for the recognition of the injuries and deaths pertaining to the Republican past. While Kurds and Alevis, alongside Armenian communities, ask for recognition of losses inflicted as a result of ethnic and racial violence, the state wishes to monopolize mourning of deaths and wounds of victims and to claim sole ownership of Turkish collective memory and remembrance.³³⁹ Thus a major part of the contemporary political struggle in Turkey is waged over collective memory of loss and mourning.

³³⁹ Leyla Neyzi, *Ben Kimim? Türkiye’de Sözlü Tarih, Kimlik ve Öznelik* [‘Who am I?’ Oral History, Identity and Subjectivity in Turkey] (Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2003); Nergis Canefe, “Modern Türk Toplumunda Zorunlu Göçlerin Mirası,” [The Legacy of Forced Migration in Modern Turkish Society] in *Anavatan’dan Yavruvatana: Milliyetçilik, Bellek ve Aidiyet*, (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2007); and Leyla Neyzi, “Wish they hadn’t left”: Burden of Armenian Memory in Turkey” in *Speaking to One Another* ed. Liz Ercevik Amado and Nouneh Dilanyan (Istanbul, div international, 2010).

Indeed, Turkey is going through many transformations,³⁴⁰ with seemingly contradictory events are unfolding. On one hand, the ruling AKP party, seeks reconciliation with Armenia and to revitalize commercial activities with it,³⁴¹ so the AKP Prime Minister Erdoğan is holding reconciliation and trade talks with his Armenian counterpart. On the other hand he has ordered the demolition of a peace statue during his visit to one of the Eastern Turkish provinces near the border of Armenia. In a move towards peace, that AKP government recently allowed human rights organizations and Armenian community members to commemorate 1915; concurrently, the Turkish state and public reacted with hysteria to the French parliament's adaption of a bill that penalized the denial of the events of 1915 were genocide.³⁴² The Prime Minister reminded the French public that France herself had committed a bloody genocide in Algeria before and during its decolonization. Furthermore, Erdoğan firmly restated that "there is no such genocide in our past and there is no way we can admit it."³⁴³ This kind of state discourse displaces blame and acts to deny and silence the wounds caused in the past. It also establishes a causal link and attachment to the old order and the Ottoman Turkish ancestors by defending the past. This rhetoric indicates that while Turkey is moving forward in certain areas concerning its image, it still looks at its own history through clouds of denial and silence as it enters the 21st century. The fantasy of Ottoman tolerance plays a crucial role in this process.

³⁴⁰ Since the 1980s, but particularly since the early 2000s the pro-Islamic nationalist party has challenged the power of secular Republican bureaucrats, the bourgeoisie and army leaders condemning their suppression of the Ottoman past and their domination of pious Muslim Turks, the underdogs and "authentic people" of the nation.

³⁴¹ More details on the Turkish government's initiatives to improve relations with Armenia can be found at the following official website: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-56_-22-april-2009_-press-release-regarding-the-turkish-armenian-relations.en.mfa.

For a thorough analysis of Turkish-Armenian relations AKP foreign policy since the turn of the millennium, see Aybars Görgülü, "The Litmus Test for Turkey's New Foreign Policy: The Historical Rapprochement with Armenia," in *Another Empire? A Decade of Turkey's Foreign Policy Under the Justice and Development Party*, eds. Kerem Öktem, Ayse Kadioğlu, and Mehmet Karlı (Istanbul, Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2012).

³⁴² Scott Sayere and Şebnem Arsu, "Genocide Bill Angers Turks as It Passes in France," *The New York Times* January 23, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/24/world/europe/french-senate-passes-genocide-bill-angering-turks.html?ref=armeniangenocide>.

³⁴³ "Erdoğan: Sulandırılmış Bir Oylama" [Erdoğan: The voting for the bill was diluted] *Radikal* December 12, 2011, accessed June 11, 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/Erdoğan_sulandırılmış_bir_oylama-1073292.

Is there any discursive space left out of the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance? Are there alternative ways of remembering the Ottoman legacy? What are other methods of dealing with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the loss of Ottoman civilization than the state-sanctioned official narrative? In this chapter I will discuss these issues at length. In order to be able to properly tackle these questions, let's first take a thorough look at the ways in which conservative (as opposed to revisionist and critical) Ottoman historians and Turkish nationalists conceive the loss of the Empire, and cope with both the ills and excesses of the Western hegemony.

However, towards the end of the chapter on Ottoman history – be it in a scholarly work or high school curriculum material – the clouds start gathering. On the eve of the 19th century, the imagined harmony of the Golden Age gives way to the grief caused by the decline and fall of the Empire, which in this view created melancholy within the Muslim Turkish psyche. According to this narrative, the image of the victorious Turk began to crumble; and it is at the turn of the 20th century that he finally succumbs. The historians' accounts of this fall explain why it happened and who had been responsible for it; in other words their narrative speaks in the language of causes; of how tolerance had been possible towards the Other, and where the limits of tolerance lie.

4.1 The Unbearable Heaviness of External Forces: The Overwhelming Influence of the West upon the Empire

Let us begin our exploration of the “Golden Age” and the subsequent collapse with a sketch of “external forces” as narrated by scholars of the Ottoman Empire. It is impressed on readers of Ottoman history that especially around the 18th century, defeats and land losses had become routine rather than exceptional. Thereafter, then the Ottoman state authorities tried to resist the great powers of the time, such as Russia, Britain, France and Germany, from encroaching geographically and politically. According to Yavuz Ercan, each of these powers wanted a share of the Empire:

The power struggle and interests of the powerful European states converges on Ottoman land. For instance, in order to be successful in colonial battle Russia had to move into temperate seas, such as the Mediterranean.

However, the Ottoman lands were in her way and intervening. The same situation holds for Germany and Austria. As for England, the safest and shortest way to her colonial lands would pass through the Mediterranean, Suez Canal and the Red Sea, which to a large extent were part of Ottoman territories. France and Italy on the other hand, due to their Mediterranean origin, wanted not to see yet another powerful state in the Mediterranean sea but rather to see fewer.³⁴⁴

Due to the conflicting interests of European powers regarding the Empire, which was by then regarded as “the sick man of Europe”, the Ottoman state’s total defeat was deferred. Meanwhile, what the historians call “powerful European states” or “opportunist and imperialist powers” (mainly Russia, England and France) did not aim to conquer the Ottoman territories only by way of war.³⁴⁵ They simultaneously sought to agitate and organize non-Muslim subjects within the Empire to seek autonomy from it. This is why ex-Ottoman territories in the Balkans, such as Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, became independent states one after another. According to orthodox Turkish historians’ reading of Ottoman history, during the fall of the Empire, these foreign powers had a huge influence on the relations between state authorities and non-Muslims. Again, to put it in Yavuz Ercan’s words,

These European foreign powers gave rise to the emergence and spread of revolutionary ideas such as enlightenment and nationalism. Having colonized almost two thirds of the world, the European states promoted the nationalist propaganda among these various ethnic and religious communities that had lived on the Ottoman territories for centuries. Once the revolts began, [the European states] immediately sided with those groups and, as a result of this support, first Serbia, then Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and the other Balkan states separated one by one and became independent.³⁴⁶

Accordingly, these European states damaged the Empire not only by causing land loss through revolts and conquests but also by disturbing the harmonious coexistence in what remained of the Empire. In this way, Christian minorities were divided in accordance with the stakes of outside powers in the declining Empire: Catholics in Turkey were safeguarded

³⁴⁴ Yavuz Ercan, “Türkiye’de Azınlık Sorununun Kökeni: Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Gayrimüslimler” [The Origin of the Minority Question in Turkey: Non-Muslims from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic] (Paper presented at the conference for Ankara University Center for Ottoman History, Ankara, Turkey, March 19, 2008), 5.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.

mainly by France, Italy, and Austria; Protestants by Great Britain, Germany, and the USA, and the Orthodox by Russia. Each of the European state, including Russia, directly or indirectly would cause unrest and agitation, and encourage them to revolt.³⁴⁷

4.2 “Stabbed in the Back”: Ottoman Non-Muslims as Accomplices

In the historians’ narrative, “internal threats” play a keyed role in digging the grave of the Empire. As the narratives above reveal to us, non-Muslims appear as the puppets of imperialist states, fooled into agitated against their own Empire. In this picture, we are asked to believe that non-Muslims would not have wished for independence or extended rights, had these desires not been ignited by outside forces. This sort of belief applies in perhaps most imperial situations: when a nation or minority group’s separation or independence comes to be at stake, they are often accused of acting against own interest under the influence of agitators, as in this quote from Salahi Sonyel:

Some of the Christian spiritual and communal leaders started to collaborate with the foreign powers in their intrigues by abusing the rights and privileges granted by the Empire, which created a state within a state. Fooled by the promise of autonomy or independence these Ottoman subjects were manipulated by the great powers striving to divide and annihilate the Ottoman state.³⁴⁸

Non-Muslims in the Empire became the “instruments” of the European states yet, according to Ottoman historians, the fall of the empire did not hinder them from improving their conditions and wealth. During the 18th and 19th centuries, as the narrative of the Ottoman loss goes, non-Muslim communities’ influence penetrated in all spheres of state and society.³⁴⁹ Thus, the historians’ fantasy of the fall disparages the imagined enjoyment and wealth of non-Muslim communities and subjects, contrasting these to Muslim Turkish

³⁴⁷ Salahi Sonyel, “Hıristiyan Azınlıklar ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Son Dönemi,” [Christian Minorities and the Final Epoch of the Ottoman Empire] *Türkiye* 38, (2001): 689.

³⁴⁸ Ibid. 690.

³⁴⁹ Çağlar Keyder, “Whither the Project of Modernity? Turkey in the 1990s,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, eds. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997); and Reşat Kasaba, “Kemalism and Modernism Between The Old and New”, in *Modernization and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997); and Şerif Mardin, “The Ottoman Empire,” in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building* ed. Karen Barkey and Markvon Hagen (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

losses. This is an imagined class war, where the Other ends up enjoying its difference more than the Self. For Mustafa Gülcan for instance, “the most important reason behind the fact that these communities’ (millets) wish for independence came true was the privileges granted by capitulations and the protective policies of the Western states, which enabled the communities to economically develop themselves.”³⁵⁰ According to Bilal Eryılmaz, the non-Muslims “became economically better off compared to the Muslims, at the same time as they cooperated with foreigners who sought commercial and industrial privileges granted to the non-Muslims, consequently the non-Muslims increased their wealth and welfare while becoming highly influential in the governance of the state and attaining a privileged position in terms of education and economy.”³⁵¹ Similarly, Demirağ firmly believes that “the non-Muslims [who] sent their children to Europe for their education and raised them with the Western culture and [who] attained high ranking posts and benefited greatly from exemption from military service and they rebelled with the desire of independence.”³⁵²

In their recount of the past, what really bothers these historians in their remembrance of the past is that despite the privileges and wealth that non-Muslims enjoyed, they betrayed and wrecked the Empire in times of turbulence. The Ottoman non-Muslim communities’ accumulation of economic, social and political capital, especially in the 19th century, is seen as a theft of enjoyment that was inaccessible to “Muslim Turks.” This theft is inscribed in collective memory and the political unconscious of the historians and of the Turkish society in general. In Küçük’s words, “despite the good will and tolerance of Turks, non-Muslim minorities (whether Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian, Jewish), facilitated the enemies’ plans and some of them even collaborated with enemies instead of helping Turks who were surrounded and attacked on all sides.”³⁵³ Furthermore, Küçük concludes that through the

³⁵⁰ Mustafa Gülcan, “Osmanlı’da Gayrimüslimler,” [Non-Muslims in the Ottomans] *Tarih ve Medeniyet* 61, (1999): 29.

³⁵¹ Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Gayrimüslim Tebanin Yönetimi* [Governance of non-Muslim Subjects in the Ottoman Empire] (Istanbul: Risale Yayıncılık, 1996), 49.

³⁵² Yelda Demirağ, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Yaşayan Azınlıkların Sosyal ve Ekonomik Durumları [Social and Economic Conditions of the Minorities in the Ottoman Empire] *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezî Dergisi*, 13, ((2003): 28.

³⁵³ Abdurrahman Küçük, “Türklerin Anadolu’da Azınlıklara Dini Hoşgörüsü: Ermeni ve Yahudi Örneği,” [Turks’ Religious Tolerance to Minorities in Anatolia: The Examples of the Armenian and the Jew] *Erdem* 22, no. 8 (1996): 582.

tragic flaw of goodwill and tolerance, which had to allowed these Others to retain their ethnic and religious identity, Muslim Turks of the Empire essentially dug their own grave.³⁵⁴

Another historian, Bilal Eryılmaz, expresses a similar mood of vexation in the following sentences:

The issue that has to be thought of is why these communities that had coexisted with each other for a long time begs to pursue the idea of independence and why they ended up at a point like this. Why did the Greeks – ha been endowed with opportunities and rights unavailable during the Byzantine era and who were already a state within a state – feel the need to form a state? Another non-Muslim community, the Armenians, attempted to collaborate with the enemies at the most critical point and stab in the back the [Ottoman] state that granted them rights non-existing before the Seljuks and Ottomans, permitted them to select their own theocratic leaders, assigned them to influential state posts, trusted them so much that they were called “the Loyal Nation”. Why then, had the Jews, who had spread to the most remote corners of the world to flee from the Christian smack, who had taken refuge in Ottoman lands due to the cruelty of Spanish, German and other European nations, did not consider themselves Ottomans.³⁵⁵

This point has a special significance in explaining what was going to happen to the non-Muslim communities during the collapse of the Empire. We are asked to believe that, under the conditions of war, Turks might have been so frightened as to lose their humanity, not only with the Armenians but also with Pontus Greeks in the Black Sea region or in the Balkans.³⁵⁶ For this reason we are told to conceive of what happened to the non-Muslim as both an indignation and reaction to destruction of the Empire from inside and outside forces. When Ortaylı writes “during the process of the fall of the Empire various communities and parties entered into irrational fights” and therefore the histories of the Armenians or Greeks “should not be confused with the anti-Semitism in France or Germany,”³⁵⁷ he asks us to believe that Turks might have been so frightened as to lose their humanity.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Gayrimuslim Tebanin Yönetimi* [Governance of non-Muslim Subjects in the Ottoman Empire], 19.

³⁵⁶ İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Mirasından Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sine: İlber Ortaylı ile Konuşmalar* [From Ottoman Heritage to the Republican Turkey: Interviews with İlber Ortaylı] (Istanbul: Ufuk Kitapları, 2002), 41.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 47.

As we have seen in previous chapters, references to the Holocaust and anti-Semitism are key themes that recur not only in the work of Ortaylı but also other historians taking up theme of the Ottoman tolerance, whether critically or otherwise. As a counterpoint to the “ethnics problems” of the Ottoman Empire, the Holocaust occupies a vital place in the remembrance of the Turkish history and in formations of Turkish identity. The underlying message is that Europe was much worse. This extra-territorial quality of Holocaust memory, which has transcended national boundaries and become part of global collective memory, was nicely captured by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, who argue that events such as the Holocaust are becoming increasingly embedded in the “everyday life and moral life worlds of an increasing number of people” reflecting on their own nations’ histories.³⁵⁸ Turkey’s relationship with the Holocaust warrants investigation in this dissertation, as the appropriation of Holocaust memories provides a means of explaining how Turkishness and Turkish identity have been formed with reference to European modernity. Anti-Semitism in Europe and especially the Holocaust are critical reference points and a negative foil against which Turkish native intellectuals-historians set the image of the “humanist” and “benevolent” Turk. As far as this comparison goes, the Ottoman state authorities extended more tolerance towards the minorities within the Ottoman Empire and what they did to those communities under conditions of war is not comparable to an event as ghastly as the Holocaust. In another interview, Ortaylı gives a similar account for the destiny of the non-Muslims during the collapse of the Empire:

There occurred many bloody incidents between the First World War and the War of Independence. Bloody incidents happened in the 19th century’s Black Sea region and at the turn of the 20th century in Eastern Anatolia which were heavily populated by the Armenians and Kurds. Discussing issue of what-happened-to-who is of no avail. Because there is no loyalty in these sectors [read the non-Muslim communities]. For this very reason these non-Muslim communities have nothing to say about commitment to living together since they were the ones who welcomed the occupying forces marching towards Istanbul during the Balkan War.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, “Memory Unbound: The Holocaust Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002): 88.

³⁵⁹ İlber Ortaylı *Osmanlı Mirasından Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sine: İlber Ortaylı ile Konuşmalar* [From Ottoman Heritage to the Republican Turkey: Interviews with İlber Ortaylı] 42.

In such narratives of Ottoman historians, we encounter a portrayal of the Ottoman non-Muslims as enjoying economic, social and religious rights and freedoms that they could not then have accessed in many places in Europe. It is as though they had been equal citizens, with rights to own land and property and to excel in state service without forced or self-imposed conversion; it is as though there were no restrictions or limitations upon their rights as Ottoman subjects. In addition, we are told time and again that with support of European imperial powers, non-Muslims played an important role in the fall of the Empire. The Other became the enemy that betrayed the Muslim Turks from within. This resentment informs today's public and political discourse in Turkey not only in terms of perception of a non-Muslim alterity, but also in terms of Alevi, Kurdish and other Republican minorities.

4.3 (Self)reproach towards the Ottoman-Turkish Ancestors of the Republican Society

Though narratives of the loss and fall of the Empire fault both imperial Western powers and the “traitor” non-minorities, another factor lurks in the background, between the lines, are touched on only in passing. One can detect in contemporary fantasies of Ottoman tolerance both aggression and self-reproach towards the Ottoman-Turkish forebears of modern Turkish society. Hostility towards Ottoman state authorities, the Turkish-Muslim governors of the Empire in particular, reveals how ambivalent and conflicted the affective bond is between the ancestors and the succeeding generations (e.g. Turkish historians of the Ottoman Empire). Let's take a detailed look at how the Ottoman ancestors failed to modern Turkey as narrated by do as narrated by these historians. Ercan provides a typical account:

The reformation movements undertaken by the Ottoman State aimed to prevent the interventions of the European states rather than saving or developing the collapsing state. Therefore, these so-called reforms, and insufficient reformation movements could not prevent the fall of the state; on the contrary they accelerated the attacks and riots”.³⁶⁰ Although the reforms brought up since the Tanzimat increased in terms of their extent,

³⁶⁰ Yavuz Ercan, “Türkiye’de Azınlık Sorununun Kökeni: Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Gayrimüslimler,” [The Origin of Minority Question in Turkey: Non-Muslims from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic] 13.

they nonetheless remained bad imitations and could not yield the desired results.³⁶¹

The same author also diagnoses why the Tanzimat (Reorganization) reforms of 1839-1876 remained insufficient and bad replicants of Western models of modernity, i.e. because, “the Ottoman state did not pay attention to the inventions in the West, on the contrary it constantly relied on its own power”. Moreover “institutions became corrupted; the educational system, and thus the sphere of science, collapsed, and the economy turned into that of a semi-periphery.”³⁶²

Another author, Yetişkin, essays a similar account of the failure of the Ottomans in consolidating the country and uniting the Empire. According to Yetişkin,

the Ottomans failed to make necessary changes as the time required. In Europe, such developments as the Renaissance, the Reformation, Scientific Revolution, the French Revolution and finally the Industrial Revolution had made fundamental changes in administrations, religious affairs, social and cultural structures.³⁶³

From his perspective, “such ideas as humanity, freedom, democracy, nationalism, human rights, constitutional rights, individualism and liberty increasingly affected public and governmental lives. When these ideas entered the Ottoman Empire, the rulers had difficulty dealing with them.”³⁶⁴

Though self-reproach towards Turkish forefathers is expressed above, at the end of the day these affects are overshadowed by hatred for external enemies and internal betrayers. The latter occupy the center of the narrative whereas self-reproach is only faintly expressed. The fantasy of the Ottoman millet system does not confront the failure of the ancestors or to the hostility and anguish arousing from it. As long as the question of the Ottoman-Turkish ancestors’ and the old order’s role in the Empire’s demise is denied, ignored or indirectly

³⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

³⁶² Ibid., 6.

³⁶³ Mehmed Yetişkin, “The Ottoman Way of Governing Multi-ethnic and Multi-Religious Communities,” 164.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

confronted, it would be very difficult to sustain robust relation between the subject of Turkish nationalism and minorities in Turkey.³⁶⁵

The disintegration and loss of the Empire has left its traces in the contemporary political unconscious as a traumatic event. What are the ways of responding to this loss? What makes it troubling to continually remember the “sick man” (if we borrow the common metaphor of the collapsing Empire), and his dead body as a trope in today’s Turkey? At the turn of the 20th century, even as the Ottoman Empire was facing its disintegration, Sigmund Freud as endeavoring to connect loss to remembrance. His work has become a key source for investigating the catastrophes, traumatic events and losses of the modern age.³⁶⁶ If we remember that Freud himself was invested in both understanding and curing traumatized survivors of WWI, we realized that his interest transcended the clinical setting. His work become a touchstone for scholars problematizing the social and collective process of the emergence of loss, trauma and grief, and how they are addressed. Post-Freudian scholars now conceive of melancholy and mourning as problems that, for survivors of mass trauma – of wars, racism, genocide, apartheid, migration, decolonization, colonial oppression, atomic bombs and the AIDS epidemic – are intrinsically linked to the process of modernity.

This perspective initiated by Freud opened up possibilities for contemporary scholars to problematize social and collective aspects of loss. Although it was written in the clinical context this work yielded insights and analytical tools to analyze how loss, trauma and grief emerge and are dealt with in social and political space. In the contemporary literature this connection between the self and the social world has been made. Post-Freudian scholars now conceive melancholia and mourning as fundamentally historical problem linked to the experience of modernity. From the victims of genocides, wars, racism, migration,

³⁶⁵ For the painful trajectories of non-Muslim communities and Turkish nationalist intellectuals’ and politicians’ antagonistic perception of these communities in modern Turkey since the birth of the Republic see Tanil Bora, “Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik ve Azınlıklar,” [Nationalism and Minorities in Turkey] in *Medeniyet Kaybı* [*Loss of Civilization*] (Istanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 2006). See also the co-authored work “Undivisible Unity of the Nation” for hostile perceptions toward minorities in the recent Turkish context. Ferhat Kentel, Meltem Ahıska and Firat Genç, “*Milletin Bölünmez Bütünlüğü*” [“*Undivisible Unity of the Nation*”] (Istanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2007). The book offers striking in-depth interviews with laypersons in Turkey and analyzes how the subjects of Turkish nationalism perceives the Other, be it an Armenian, a Jewish and a Kurdish, as an object of anxiety and as a threat to the unity and harmony of the nation.

³⁶⁶ Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* vol 14, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 2001[1917]), 237- 60.

decolonization, colonial oppression, and apartheid to those affected by the devastating impacts of the atomic bombs in Japan and the AIDS epidemic, recent contemporary literature looked at how the imprints of the traumatic historical processes of modernity were worked through in collective and cultural settings.³⁶⁷

4.4 Social Losses and Melancholia

For Freud, there are at least two fundamental ways of dealing with the grief of loss, whether it be personal or collective, such as in the loss of a “homeland.” The first is for the ego to be attached to the lost object in a melancholic way, so that “the melancholic lives with the dead”, and “becomes literally the object jettisoned in the grave.”³⁶⁸ Why is it so troubling to live with the dead? Is it not virtuous to remain loyal to them and keep their image alive? From the Freudian lens, the “shadow” of the lost object is seen to fall upon the ego and its apparently irrevocable wound haunts and possesses the present. The too-soon and too-sudden shock of a traumatic event and the loss it inflicts can not be fully known and registered in the consciousness until it imposes itself, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.³⁶⁹ The past’s wound and the present state of affairs become indistinguishable: everything that follows the loss is seen and understood by reference to it. Freud enumerates a number of features that are characteristic of the melancholic response to loss: “painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and lowering of self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviving, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment.”³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, “The Meaning of Working Through the Past,” in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, 89-103, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998[1959]); Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Dominick LaCapra, “Trauma, Absence, Loss” *Critical Inquiry* 25, (1999); Kelly Oliver, “Psychic Space and Social Melancholy,” in *Between the Psyche and the Social*, eds. Kelly Oliver and Steve Edwin (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002); David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds. *Loss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, trans. Rachel Gomme (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

³⁶⁸ Darian Leader, *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008), 175, 195.

³⁶⁹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4, 93.

³⁷⁰ Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 244.

Amongst these features I want to focus particularly on self-reproach for a moment, as it is the most significant for an analysis of post-colonial nationalism and its subjectivities, as well as for how the society copes with the loss of desired socio-political harmony and pre-colonial authenticity. This should come as no surprise to us after having touched in the third chapter upon the affective aspects of derivative nationalisms' strategies for dealing with pre-modern times. While dealing with self-reproach, the melancholic subject is so fixated on the lost object as to simultaneously lives with it and dies. No distance remains between the melancholic subject and the lost object. Psychoanalytically informed analysis would remind us that as the distance between the melancholic subject and its loved ones (e.g. the Empire, the Ottoman-Turkish ancestors) vanishes, the melancholics' reproach towards the lost one is expressed as self-reproach. But why is the lost one to be reproached in the first place?

As Darian Leader eloquently puts it, “[f]or Freud, the melancholic’s self-reproach is in fact a reproach to the lost one” because “the absence is never accepted without rage.”³⁷¹ Seen from this perspective, the loss of the Empire, the fall of paradise, cannot be easily accepted by the adherents of the Turkish nationalist fantasy. Obviously both affection and nostalgia are felt towards the Turkish ancestors of the Golden Age. Yet simultaneously there exists anger and hostility towards the Ottoman ancestors since it was they and their superficial attempts, as the narrative goes, who could not prevent the fall of the Empire despite all of those superficial attempts. We are told that their unsuccessful reforms, in the end, proved only to satisfy the interests of Western states and the Empire’s minorities. The next generations (including the generation of the Ottoman historians) felt a sense of abandonment in this loss – an abandonment is manifested in their narratives of nationhood today.

It is not possible for a melancholic subject to articulate the hostility and anger he feels for the loved lost one, since his intimate identification with the lost object creates an ambivalent distance. This unaccounted, unresolved anger is likely to overwhelm the self. In many cases, this hostility is managed by being directed against Others. How hatred towards the Ottoman-Turkish predecessors is displaced onto the external and immanent others can

³⁷¹ Darian Leader, *The New Black*, 40.

readily be observed. Since Ottoman historians deeply identify with their Turkish-Muslim ancestors, despite their critical remarks on past failures, they place responsibility for the Ottoman fall upon non-Muslims. Even a cursory look at the amount of ink dedicated to minorities and the “destruction” they caused reveals this tendency.

Prominent scholar on collective and national memory and trauma Eric Santner underscores a similar danger to the post WWII generations in Germany. For Santner, narcissistic identification with the old order of Germany, as represented by Hitler and National Socialism, makes it very difficult to properly encounter loss. Instead this identification with the old regime sustains an inability or refusal to mourn the atrocities of the past because a “fantasy of omnipotence” that is a “fantasy of return to the purity of a self-identity” blocks the process. In this narcissistic fantasy, “losses are never necessary or irrevocable there to be lost in the first place.”³⁷² Furthermore, this fantasy of the nation is deeply implicated in “the notion that alterity is something that requires a solution” and narcissism that projected difference and otherness as something that could and should be purged from an otherwise pure system that is seamlessly continuous with the self.³⁷³

Inasmuch as a nostalgic Turkish national identity is enjoyed, the desire for seamless group identity is sought and the narcissistic attachment to a loved object is sustained, the perception of the Other, the Ottoman non-Muslim communities, is doomed to remain hostile. Whether a Jew, an Armenian, a Greek, or any other person seen as a threat to the fantasy of omnipotent Turkish identity and the self-image, the Other is understood as an element to be disposed from the social body. It is as if, under conditions of war, the image of the victimized Turkish-Ottoman is defending himself against the minorities. Such defenses, coupled with experiencing the perceived weight of history as the worst loss of all, do nothing but prevent the possibility of dealing with the loss. In Freud’s jargon, the melancholic subject acts out the traumatic event in the same loop rather than working through the traumatic loss. Hence, the past is reenacted and reincarnated in the present.

³⁷² Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 99.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Being caught up in the fantasy of the nation leaves no alternative to confusing the Armenians of the past with those of in the present. This holds for the other communities of the Ottoman state: Greeks, Bulgarians, Arabs and so on, who are seen as traitors to be held culpable for the loss of paradise. The image nationalist historiography creates of the West is likewise haunted by the intrusion of the past in the present. While Turkish state authorities point to the European Union and its reforms as a goal on one hand, on the other hand the same authorities and their pedagogical nationalist discourse readily evoke the historical image of the West/Europe as overwhelming forces playing various tricks to conquer and divide the country. This inflamed ambivalence between the Turkish and European identities only complicates the prospect of reconciliation in the future.

If this is one way of dealing with the loss of civilization, as it was known, are there alternative paths to encountering the injuries and the traumas of the past? What conditions would trigger a move away from melancholy, living with the dead, displacing unaccounted hostility towards the loved ones to the others around us, away from the suffocating loop of repetitious reenactments that collapse past and present? What would be needed for the energy invested in these resistances to be transformed into strategies of working through the past?

4.5 Mourning Social Losses and Traumas

Another way of relating to loss according to Freud, is mourning, wherein the subject responds to the lost object by relinquishing it go. “Mourning impels,” as Freud has put it, “the ego to give up the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live.”³⁷⁴ Through the mourning process the subject comes to leave the lost object behind. By working painstakingly through the past, the ego breaks out of the loop of recreating the specter of loss and learns to live in spite of it. In Dominick La Capra’s words, mourning

involves a different inflection of performativity [as opposed to melancholic reaction]: a relation to the past that involves recognizing its difference from the present –simultaneously remembering and taking

³⁷⁴ Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 257.

leave of or actively forgetting it, thereby allowing for critical judgment and reinvestment in life, notably social and civic life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms.³⁷⁵ Moreover through mourning and the at least symbolic provision of proper burial, one attempts to assist in restoring to victims the dignity denied them by their victimizers.³⁷⁶

While I agree with LaCapra, there still remains a critical reminder for us regarding Freud's notion of "giving up" the lost object. What Freud means by "giving up the object by declaring the object dead" is not merely its shallow appropriation — i.e., forgetting the lost ideal or country and becoming attached to the new ones.³⁷⁷ The key difference between mourning and melancholy is not the former's "normative supremacy" and latter's "pathological status." Rather, it is that in the mourning process one makes an effort to distance oneself from the loved one and entertain a different relation to it, rather than fully identifying with it. Admittedly mourning is a difficult venture, to put again in Freudian terms, it is an "arduous task" at which we often fail. There are no guarantees. Even Freud with his enduring commitment to the transformation of melancholy, once said: "Experience has taught us that psycho-analytic therapy - the freeing of someone from his neurotic symptoms, inhibitions and abnormalities of character - is a time consuming business."³⁷⁸

That this task is burdensome is no reason not to attempt it. It may yield constructive shifts in our perception of others and their pain.³⁷⁹ In other words, mourning or in our particular understanding, taking a different position from one's melancholic attachment to the Empire, involves emerging from the cocoon of a narcissistic group imaginary that allows one to perceive other people in their complexity. It calls for a traversal of the fantasy of alterity,

³⁷⁵ Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," *Critical Inquiry* 25 (1999): 716.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 713.

³⁷⁷ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 257.

³⁷⁸ Sigmund Freud, 2001[1929]. "Civilization and Its Discontents," In *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 64-149, vol. 21, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 2001[1929]). 216

³⁷⁹ Emmanuel Levinas' notion of "the ethics as first philosophy" crystallizes the point here. In a nutshell, Levinas tried to break with the perception of solitary subject/the ego who is endowed with unity, totality and overcoming. According to Levinas, this perception, having roots in Ancient Greek thought, contaminated the modern Western philosophy and permeated the way which the Other and difference are perceived. It gave rise to racism, xenophobia, and totalitarian regimes in Europe. Instead, with a Copernican gesture, Levinasian thinking decenters the presumably self-contained and transparent subject and locates the subjects' constitutive element elsewhere: the Other. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1987). In this radical gesture what makes the subject a human being is his/her unconditional responsibility toward the Other and his/her capacity to consider the effects of our affects, actions, desires on the Other(s). Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of the Psychic Space: A psychoanalytic theory of oppression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), xxii-xxiv). Seen from this perspective there is an important affinity between Levinas' notion of the Other and the kind of subjectivity and ethics that task of mourning involves.

which sees the Other as a threat intruding on an otherwise seamless national identity and social body. Moreover to make mourning part of public discourse and open up a space for a robust dialogue about the injuries of the past would be a key intervention. “Mourning without solidarity is the beginning of madness,” as Santner nicely puts it.³⁸⁰ Encountering the past traumas caused by wars and the festering wounds of the fall of the Empire cannot be undertaken in the solitude of Turkish subjectivity; the presence of the others or third party, and their stories and affects must be inscribed into the public record. Rather than fixing everything to merely onto a monolithic narrative such as the fantasy of the Ottoman tolerance, one can remember the past through Armenians, Greeks, Kurds and other minority perspectives on the Empire’s fall.

Otherwise we may find ourselves locked in a cycle of narcissistic remembering of Turkish ancestors and identity, minorities are perceived of the once victorious who became victims of minorities, of their own tolerance and hospitality. Therein, everything other than Turkishness becomes to be a problem to be solved – the Kurdish Problem, the Armenian Problem etc. The tempting fantasy of a once harmonious Empire has immense grip on its adherents and on political and public discourse; it posits that a paradise of multiculturalism and peace existed until the non-Muslims betrayed it. This fantasy has proven tempting and has seemingly lots of purchase power in the political and public discourse. To escape this narrative requires a transition in our fantasmatic imagination of the Other and necessitates a different stance towards the ethics of alterity. It that the defense mechanisms we deploy when we write and remember national histories be renounced and our desire to entertain our epic fantasies be resisted, that we instead confront the mundane ugliness of our own history. This transition involves the ability and will to not fully confuse the characters of past with those of the present. It asks for a readiness to distinguish the “Greeks,” “Armenians,” and “Arabs” of the past from today’s minorities and ethnic religious communities. This should not be understood as a call to forget history or become mute about it Turkish history. To this end, as I underscored above, the ability to hear, learn and read minority histories and their pain during the fall is important.

³⁸⁰ Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects*, 28.

To be clear, melancholic national identity and remembrance may well be productive in the aftermath of a loss. It is an open-ended process. In the contemporary literature on melancholy there are many scholars who underscore the melancholic agency's political potential. They find in Freud's understanding of melancholia "a persistent struggle with its lost objects, not simply a grasping and holding on to a fixed notion of the past but rather continuous engagement with loss and its remains."³⁸¹ This potential of the melancholic condition is seen as vital for politics for the marginalized, oppressed and colonized communities and minorities.³⁸²

I am aware this reading of melancholy. In it, having lost an object, whether loved one or an Empire, makes us constantly conjure up their image. Melancholic attachment to the past is not pathological in and of itself or normatively inferior. Productive and open-ended as this melancholic condition may be, it becomes troubling when all the images of the object are reduced to a single image, and all voices and narratives are reduced to one and the same. One ought not to too readily accept and glorify the melancholic attachment to the Empire and the Turkish-Muslim ancestors just because it engenders dynamism and constructive possibility, and because there is no ahistorical and universal ethical ground to normatively judge it.

A few ethical paths open to us to consider when we remember the sufferings and traumas of the fall and aftermath. One is to find the traces of minority stories. On this matter, Santner's reading stands out for its illuminating suggestions that it's possible to detect the sketches of past possibilities by examining not only what has happened in history, but also what could have come to pass.³⁸³ These instances would be, for him "the traces of knowledge denied, of deeds left undone, of eyes averted from pain, of shades drawn, of moments when it might have been possible to ask a question or to resist, but one didn't ask and one didn't resist."³⁸⁴ According to Santner, this notion of the subjectivity enables us to

³⁸¹ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 4.

³⁸² The Difference between melancholia and mourning and its implications of this divergence for social analysis have been the subject of much recent discussion, and this is not the place to rehearse those intricate debates. For a sophisticated attempt at this task, see Greg Forter, "Against Melancholia: Contemporary Mourning Theory, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and the Politics of Unfinished Grief," *Differences* 14, no.2 (2005).

³⁸³ Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects*, 152.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

play with boundaries of the self and the Other (instead of refusing them or reifying them), and to claim solidarity which the oppressed of history, past and present.³⁸⁵

Once we reframe our vision with these ethical concerns in mind, we can acknowledge the heteroglossia of alternative histories and ways of remembering the Ottoman past alongside the pedagogical national history and fantasy. By bracketing the story of the always-already victimized Turkish identity that is perpetually set forth in historical narrative, it is possible to encounter the stories of collective memory that attempt to register non-Muslim communities and their affects wrought by expulsions, loss of the loved ones, health and home.

4.6 Alternative Ways of Remembering the Ottoman Loss and Minorities

A rapidly flourishing terrain of collective memory work, puts the above-mentioned ethics of collective remembrance at its center. These works, while remembering the past, take issue with the old order, by acknowledging both its violence towards minorities in the past as well as the possibilities of resistance and solidarity with the oppressed in the present. One of the most recent and interesting recent works, *Speaking to One Another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey*, which involves anthropologists, academics and human right activists of contemporary Turkey is a good case in point.³⁸⁶ Its approach is to render audible the voice of local and individual narratives alongside official didactic discourse. Such collective memory work re-traces the past such as the events took place between the Armenians and Muslims of the Empire.³⁸⁷ This work attempts to register the tragedy of the past not only through not only the perspective of current day Turks but also through a multiplicity of voices including those of Ottoman Armenian, Greeks and Kurds.³⁸⁸ We can understand it as a significant departure point for creating a collective understanding for pursuing dialogue and inviting the presence of the third party [future generations on both side] by fostering a

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 162.

³⁸⁶ Leyla Neyzi, “Wish they hadn’t left”: Burden of Armenian Memory in Turkey,” in *Speaking to One Another* eds. Liz Ercevik Amado and Nouneh Dilanyan (Istanbul, dvv international, 2010).

³⁸⁷ Kelly Oliver, “Psychic Space and Social Melancholy,” 63.

³⁸⁸ See Tanıl Bora, “Geçmişle Hesaplaşma: Niçin ve Nasıl?,” [Encounter with the Past: Why and How?] and Nazan Üstündağ, “Siyaset and Travma,” [The Politics and Truama] in *Türkiye’de Süremekte olan Toplumsal Travma ile Baş Etmede İlk Adımlar* [First Steps Toward Encountering Ongoing Social Trauma in Turkey] (Ankara: Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, 2012).

space which has been curtailed and hindered by the rhetoric of official history. It is a work of mourning undertaken in the presence of the Others. Oral histories and interviews conducted with the grandchildren of the generations of people who experienced the events of 1915 open up a space to register the pain of the catastrophic experiences of Ottoman Others and thus enable us to register various perspectives by viewing their narratives from the ground. Moreover, this study constitutes

Another important intervention performed by collectively recounting memories and mourning is that these allow us to confront and come to terms with feelings such as regret and sin. This encounter in turn opens up a crucial space for contradictory and overwhelming affects such as self-reproach to be expressed. Within *Speaking to One Another*, Turkish interviewee Kamil's story reflects many of these ambivalent affects. He recalls what happened between Turks and Armenians ("gavurs"/"infidels") as narrated by his father and grandfather around 1915, when his father had been only a child. He reflects through his narrative the common nostalgic tendency among the contemporary dwellers of his small Anatolian town where to recall a past whence harmonious relations between Turkish and Armenian residents ruled. However, Kamil tells, for some reason, this companionship and neighborliness were deeply cut and destroyed. At some point, as the interviewer nicely underscores, Kamil turns towards the official rhetoric and uses its narratives to explain the causes of the rupture of the community which heavily affected not only the Armenians but also Turkish residents.

According to Kamil:

These guys [the Ottoman Armenians] were decent honest people. Only, crap came in between, somebody derailed them, somebody indoctrinated them and the two people became enemies. According to what my grandfather told me, they were cheerful people. Until when? Until these provocations happened.³⁸⁹

This narrative sounds all too familiar and comes as no surprise given our discussion on Ottoman peace and tolerance. What Kamil resorts to in explaining the loss resonates with

³⁸⁹ Leyla Neyzi, "Loneliness of Galileo: Granpa, Who are these Gavurs?" in *Speaking to One Another* eds. Liz Ercevik Amado and Nouneh Dilanyan (Istanbul, dvv international, 2010), 24.

what historians and scholars celebrating Ottoman tolerance and peace fantasy most often produce and circulate. Yet, in his narrative another voice and trace of memory emerges too. It shows that it may be possible to refuse to explain everything with reference to external forces and to perform a kind of subjectivity that can claim solidarity with the victims of the rise of Turkish nationalism.

According to Kamil:

You rip men from the land on which they have been living for thousands of years and send them away. I ask you, can such a cruel thing be accepted! It can't, right? [...] There is a mistake, an obvious mistake made by the Ottomans.³⁹⁰

Furthermore:

Look I noticed something interesting, these men were cultivated. And when they were gone, Turks froze in astonishment, like, 'who is going to construct our stairs, who is going to sew our clothes, who is going to do our work?' They did not know anything [...] If there was not this separation, if we were living with Armenians, maybe Akşehir would be rich, very successful in trade and industry... Maybe if they stayed here, Turkey would be a very advanced society. This is one of the points about which I'm sorry.³⁹¹

One can read a narcissistic tone in the rationale to retain these lost Armenian neighbors, whose departure impedes the development of commercial activities of the town. In other words, I read these sentences with caution. There are clearly other important affects and wishes present in this narrative: traces of solidarity with the victim, a reference to possible other "points about which I'm sorry" and gesture of going beyond calculating the interest of his town and pure utilitarianism.

If something else had happened, and these Armenians who were part of everyday life had not left, life could have unfolded differently. The Other here appears as someone who should have been saved and not as a problem to be solved. It is important to be able to remember this figure of the Armenian and register its role in our everyday life and mourn its absence. "What might have been but was not" is catalyst for us to face the sins, regrets and

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

self-reproaches of the past and maintain the dynamism of mourning.³⁹² It may trigger a reconfiguration and rearrangement in relations with the Armenians of today. It raises the question of what could be done to address the injuries of the survivors. It makes us question whether other social spaces can be created to mourn the losses and pains of the Armenian and other ethnic religious communities of the Empire. Collective mourning fosters possibilities for those minorities, both survivors and for their successors who consider moving back to their places of origin. Confiscated property could be returned and compensations could be made for losses could be provided by governments. Public commemorations could be arranged to undertake the task of mourning collectively rather than in solitude. The heartening news is that there are rapidly increasing numbers of examples of each of these forms at reconciliation in Turkey.

I concur with Santner that to remember lost opportunities is crucial and that oppressed histories must be brought to light of day as a means to reconcile our relationship with the Other. What I would like to add are comments on the study and remembrance of Turkish figures and moments of resistance. Of course, the point would not be find or create an innocent and benevolent Turkish character, or to keep the narcissistic Turkish core intact by doing so. The aim of introducing these minor histories is not to write yet another glorious history. However, emphasis must be placed on those who resisted orders and saved others rather than inciting injury during the disintegration of the Empire. It is important to bring these characters (who acted at the liminal line of self-other) into the public memory and collective remembrance. Commemoration of the Turkish ancestors who seized opportunities to protect the lives of Armenians, Greeks, or Jews must be brought to our attention. This is admittedly one of the most effective ways of studying minor(ity) histories and dealing with the traumas and injuries the past. Investigating the found opportunities for resistance nicely complements considering the lost opportunities for solidarity with the victim.

This point calls to mind the significant gesture of a founding member of pro-Kurdish opposition party, BDP, who moved that the Turkish parliament declare the official commemoration of April 24th, the anniversary of the Armenian genocide, as the “Day of

³⁹² Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects*, 152.

Mourning and Sharing the Pain of the Victims of 1915.” What this parliament member said later during a press conference is meaningful to think about how to approach the traumas and sorrows of the catastrophes of the fall of the Empire.

Such a thing happened on this soil. The Union and Progress Party created this massacre. The equivalent of this in all world languages is genocide. Their property assets and cultural assets were sacked as were their bodies. What should be done in this situation is to condemn the ones who participated in this crime of murder rather than using the defense of ‘our grandfathers did not do this’. To encounter the pains of the past is to share those pains. What must be done is therefore to establish the future with empathy (merhamet).³⁹³

What the member of parliament sought to emphasize is that commemoration of those army personnel, local governors, bureaucrats and others who found and seized opportunities for resistance is important for a dialogue with the Ottoman-cum-Turkish Others to be initiated and sustained. It is through the ancestors who somehow traversed the boundaries of Self-Other dichotomy and disobeyed orders that one can have solidarity with the victims of these catastrophes and their descendants. Though this shouldn’t be taken as the only viable practice of commemoration that must be done and repeated, ad infinitum. There is also the risk of turning ancestral figures of resistance into monuments of nationalism with which future generations can narcissistically identify. Thus these potentially monumentalized Turkish figures may lose their initial transformative potential. In summary, it’s important to recognize that we may not need to invoke these figures forever, though for now their remembrance and public acknowledgment may yield a new means of addressing the past. Remembrance of resisters to the status quo aids in creating feelings of solidarity with the victim as a part of Republican public culture. This constitutes an important step towards registering the injuries of the past in the presence of third parties, instead of mourning in solitude and isolation.

4.6.1 Turkish Nationalism’s Quest for the Other

It is possible to find reflections of ethics of collective mourning in certain historical novels. For instance Kemal Yalçın’s autobiographic novel, *Emanet Çeyiz: Mubadele İnsanları* (*The*

³⁹³ “24 Ni..san için yas günü teklifi,” [National day of mourning proposal for April 24th] *Agos*, April 25, 2012. <http://www.agos.com.tr/24-nisan-icin-ulusal-yas-gunu-teklifi-1319.html>.

Entrusted Dowry: Peoples of the Exchange) is a paradigmatic case.³⁹⁴ Winner of peace prizes in literature, the novel probes into the times of turmoil following the Empire's fall when population exchange caused suffering and losses. The novel tells the story of a dowry entrusted to a Turkish family by their Greek neighbors in a small Anatolian village. It is a story about Turkish ancestors who refuse to see their Greek neighbors as enemies. The protagonist, Kemal, narrate the story by relying on fragments of what his father had witnessed when he was eight years old in 1915. As a child, Kemal had worked in the fields where his father would tell him stories about the landscape and dwellers of these lands. During these retellings Kemal learns what Greek men, women and children in their village had experienced around 1915. He recounts sewing machines, pots, pans and bedding being ransacked, as well as women and children being put in one of the local barns. His father remembers the day their Greek neighbor brought her little girls' dowry to entrust it to his family and then walked away from the village.

After hearing the stories of his father's Greek neighbors, in his adult years, Kemal decides to find and return the dowry to whom it belongs. Eventually he learns that the former Greek residents had been part of a population exchange. He was told that his father's village had received many émigrés from the Vrasno and Kastro villages of Thessalonica, Greece so that these villages would be a good place for his guest to start. During his journey he encounters both Greeks sent away from Turkey and Anatolian Turkish Muslims in Greece. This novel opened a valuable space for acknowledgement of the affects of Greek minorities, the grief of the Other facing loneliness and poverty as result of the loss of family wealth and livelihood.³⁹⁵

Stories like *The Entrusted Dowry* that confront and register the traumas and grievances of the Others (be they Armenians or Greeks) during and after the collapse of the Empire, are strategically important for the legacy of current day Turkish nationalism. Stories of ancestors who helped the victims and protected them or their belongings are significant because they portray subjects of Ottoman alterity not as intruders and problems to be annihilated but as

³⁹⁴ Kemal Yalçın, *Emanet Çeyiz: Mübadele İnsanları: [The Entrusted Dowry: The People of Population Exchange]* Istanbul; Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2011),

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 21-155.

Others toward whom Muslim Turks should feel ethically responsible or at least connected. Meanwhile, as was mentioned above, this task of mourning the Ottoman loss may run certain risks and dangers. Such resistance stories can create mummified heroes and these emblems may well feed into the narcissistic national identity formation of future generations in Turkey. Unless critically approached, these stories could nurture the fantasy of an unblemished face of national identity and sustain the very self-centered character of nationalism that they try to overcome. They could permit the next generation to remember the past without questioning the old order by creating the fantasy that “Muslim Turks helped the enemy even when they themselves were the victims” and that Anatolian Muslims were equally victims of the same war conditions.

4.6.2 Saving the Lives of the Others

A good case in point to discuss the risk of over-valorizing these ancestors comes from an edited work entitled *Armenians in the Society of Tolerance*, aversion of the conference discussions and papers at the Art of Living Together symposium. A conference participant, Ömer Çakır, authored a chapter focusing on the life story of a heroic Turkish ancestor Faik Bey, a poet and experienced local governor, who comes to the town of Kütahya where he is ordered to deport and transport Armenians. According to Çakır’s narrative, Faik Bey resisted the order and the Armenian communities within his jurisdiction remained where they were. Even some Armenians fleeing from other large neighboring cities, such as Eskişehir and Adapazarı, took refuge in Kütahya as Faik Bey made sure that their accommodation and food supplies were safe. We also learn that ignoring the order did not occur in Kütahya alone. In other cities too, the order was suspended and according to his estimates “thousands of them” stayed in their place in cities such as Istanbul, İzmir, Konya as well as Adana, Ankara, Kayseri and Elazığ.³⁹⁶

What makes a hero like Faik Bey, more interesting for us, according to our scholar, is the letter he addressed to the clerk Sahak Efendi of the Armenian Church four years after the atrocities of 1915. In it, Faik Bey expresses his gratitude for the Church’s gestures of

³⁹⁶ Ibid. 480.

recognition, including the dedication of a religious ceremony to him. In the same letter Faik Bey also takes the occasion, as we are told, to address the Armenian people in general and share his concerns about recent history. Faik Bey firmly believes that the Turkish nation cannot be held responsible for the atrocities committed at the hands of a “mere few opportunist villains”. On the contrary, he finds both victims and sinners on both the Turkish and the Armenian side of the conflict.³⁹⁷ Faik Bey concludes his letter and makes a call to the Armenian community: “Please join us when we declare that the Armenian are victims as much as the Turks; and the Turks are victims and sinners as much as the Armenians.”³⁹⁸ If one wishes, one can read resistance within the stories like that of Faik Bey. Certainly, there is opposition in his refusal to follow orders from Istanbul. However, bearing psychoanalytically influenced social analysis in mind, one can detect a deeper resistance in Faik Bey and perhaps even in the author who narrates his story. The author trivializes the deportation of Armenians by magnifying the numbers of those who had not been deported, and failing to recognize the names of the cities and people who did face the genocide. Another strategy of resistance to facing and acknowledging the traumas of the Other comes when pain of Muslim Turks is correlated with the suffering and grief of Ottoman Armenians. It is a common rhetorical strategy to perceive whatever has been done under conditions of war as legitimate. By using the voice of war hero Faik Bey, it is as if the author wants to condemn contemporary Armenian society in Turkey and Armenia, by suggesting that they too were complicit. By restating Faik Bey’s words, resistance and denial are maintained and reenacted.

This can also be read as an example of what Santner was afraid of: public denial and silence. The recognition of wounds on both sides of an antagonism may be important in terms of acknowledgement of civil casualties. However, it sustains and reproduces the identification with the old order by attributing responsibility to rogue soldiers, conditions of war and collateral damage. This way of remembering the past would have us believe that it was as good as it could have been under the circumstances. It still sees the past through a nationalist and discriminatory group identification, not in a context of state authorized systemic oppression.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 485.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 484-5.

Despite these drawbacks, these cases and memories may generate reconciliation of relations and cure the wounds of the past as long they are shared and contested through dialogue. If we think of how recent the emergence of works on minority histories is in Turkey, all these attempts can be considered as progress towards a nuanced and valiant encounter with the past. However, we have not exhausted all the possibilities. We do not need to be concerned solely with the fall of the Empire every time we recall the history of the Empire and its minority communities: we ought not only study the dawn of the 20th century to make sense of what unfolds during the 21st. A flourishing body of historical work on Ottoman everyday life and institutions casts an eye towards minorities and local histories in the classical age, in an endeavor as important in understanding how the Empire governed its people. If someone wishes to escape the grip of the fantasy of Ottoman peace, (or its obverse, Ottoman despotism) there is plenty of sophisticated material on the classical age to be discovered.

4.7 Investigating Ottoman Institutions and Civilization: Some Remarks on Alternatives

Fortunately, there are some scholars whose works enable us to investigate Ottoman institutions, practices, and political and social subjectivities from a fresh perspective³⁹⁹ that offers a much more nuanced stance towards the past. For instance, Amy Singer and her work on Ottoman soup kitchens and imarets comes to mind immediately as she studies the social texture of everyday life in Ottoman cities from a perspective not immediately informed by Orientalist or Occidentalist historiography,⁴⁰⁰ but seeks to understand these subjectivities and practices in their own terms and all these waqfs as philanthropic institutions. She is more interested in how concepts such as poverty, the poor, and the needy for were themselves produced and enacted in given social contexts and institutions. Singer aims to unbind the investigation of Ottoman philanthropic institutions from hegemonic

³⁹⁹ On this topic the recent co-authored works of Engin Isin on Ottoman waqf and the enactment of citizenship through gift-giving practices and pious endowments, not without their own antagonisms of course, might come as revealing: Engin F. Isin and Alexandre Lefebvre, "The Gift of Law: Greek Euergetism and Ottoman Waqf," *European Journal of Social Theory* 8, no.1 (2005); Engin F. Isin and Ebru Üstündağ, "Wills, deeds, acts: women's civic gift-giving in Ottoman Istanbul," *Gender, Place and Culture* 15, no.5 (2008); and Cemal Kafadar, *Kim var imiş biz burada yok iken: Dört Osmanlı: Yeniçeri, Tüccar, Derviş ve Hatun [Who was here when were not here: Four Ottomans: Janissary, Merchant, Dervish and Lady]* (Istanbul: Metis, 2009).

⁴⁰⁰ Singer. Amy, "Soup and Sadaqa: Charity in Islamic Societies," *Historical Research* 79, 205 (2006): 306-324.

Orientalist perspective, which had even widely held by the state elites within Turkey who liked extremism and support for fundamentalism that threatened the secular Republic. Instead of reducing all the motivations and practices of these foundations to religious fundamentalism, she insists that while studying Ottoman history, “we must understand the social context in which they exist, how they serve interests associated with class, confession, gender, or national identities and why charity is a chosen medium for acting.”⁴⁰¹ At the same time as she avoids an Orientalist perspective, Singer also manages not to get caught up in a nostalgia for waqfs, such as Halil İnalçık shows in writing of the Ottoman Empire as an exemplary welfare state. While Singer agrees that “the welfare ethos and the responsibility for providing relief were rooted in the society at large and [that] it was the entire society, including the Sultan, which participated in providing social services”⁴⁰² she also sees problematic aspects in this comparison between Ottoman charitable institutions and contemporary social welfare. According to Singer:

Nor were the recipients chosen according to uniform criteria based on an assessment of economic need as in today’s welfare states. Rather, need was defined according to criteria that were economic for some and social for others. Some of the services provided by Ottoman philanthropy, like fountains and bridges, were available to the population at large, and might today be classified as public utilities rather than social services. Yet many of the facilities supported by Ottoman philanthropy were not available to everyone, nor were they intended to be. For example, people outside of the cities were largely excluded because of the way they lived; girls mostly did not attend schools (maktab and madrasa); libraries belonged to the literate; Christians and Jews obviously did not benefit from the mosques (on wonders whether they would even avail themselves of the shady urban parks created by mosque courtyards); and hospitals were too few in number and had too few beds to offer care to any but a small number of people.⁴⁰³

Investigating the Ottoman Empire and its institutions, as Singer does, has great merits since her historiography neither immediately nor unquestionably identifies with the Ottoman order using history to sustain a narcissistic group identity. It does not unquestionably disavow it, either. Instead, it allows for a constructive space to remember, study and encounter the Ottoman past. Singer’s project along with a few other works of historiography

⁴⁰¹ Singer, Amy. *Charity in Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 223.

⁴⁰² See also Engin F. Isin, “Beneficence and Difference: Ottoman Awqaf and ‘Other’ Subjects,” in *the Other Global City*, ed. Mayaram Shail (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 184.

constitute texts of great importance for studying the Ottoman heritage in modern Turkey from a critical lens and also for the benefit of a transnational/post-colonial audience. Having a perspective such as this may enable us to consider the possibilities of inclusion and exclusion in the past, present and future, not only for Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities but also for the other Others of contemporary Turkey. With the help of these historical re-readings, we could overturn the resistances that are still deeply embedded in contemporary official and public discourses of nationalism and, in particular, that affect how we deal the atrocities marking our histories.

Conclusion

As I write this dissertation and investigating postcolonial criticisms of derivative nationalisms, Turkey continues to go through transformations, especially some beginning over the last decade, that demonstrate many of the same symptoms that scholars of postcolonial studies have noted. Since the turn of the millennium, Turkey has witnessed the rehabilitation of its identity and society through the state policies of the ruling party, the AKP. The historiographic ideas in this dissertation were, formulated and written during this period of AKP rule. I wanted to critically engage with the use of this Ottoman legacy which I saw being used both by historians and politicians to legitimate Ottoman-Turkish nativism. My dissertation bears witness to how the “moderate” pro-Islamic political movements in Turkey shifted their democratic stance to a conservative and nationalist agenda all the while being transposed by a nostalgic for the Ottoman past. Their tightening grip on political and state power led to with events such as the Gezi Park revolts, began in May 2013. These revolts were sparked when it was proposed that Taksim Park be redeveloped into an Ottoman-style barrack containing a massive shopping center at a site that had once the Armenian Cemetery of Istanbul and that during the Republican years had been the main site of public protests and secular cultural activities. The public reaction to the government endorsed plan to privatize of public space was triggered massive unrest, not only in Istanbul but also many other Turkish cities. The excessive police violence, civilian injuries and casualties, as well as mass arrests eventually caused tension with the EU mentioned at the very beginning of this dissertation. Yet, above and beyond the call of current events, this dissertation bears witness to how the appropriation of the Ottoman past and especially the Millet system to form a new, post-imperial/post-colonial nation has run into pitfalls and aporias.

Observers of the last few decades in Turkey should heed the prophetic prognosis laid out by Fanon and the other postcolonial scholars discussed in the third chapter regarding the fate of derivative third world nationalisms and their tainted response to Western hegemony. Marxists criticized, such reactionary nationalisms on the grounds that the state and the

people remained within the capitalist system and exploitative relations were maintained if not escalated. Moreover, within derivative nationalisms the political party and/or national leader who are in charge of revival of national culture for the “rehabilitation” of the nation are often deeply criticized. Postcolonial thinkers warn us against nativist intellectuals’ use of the past that had preceded Western intrusion. It must be said that there are contextual differences between the Jamaica and Algeria of the 1960s and Turkey at the beginning of the new millennium that must be addressed. Turkey’s struggle is not waged directly against occupying forces or the legacy of colonial empires such as those of France or England. When there have been such movements to liberate the Turkish nation and the people from an intrusive force, these have been mobilized against particular elements of an internally colonized nation: the urban elite and middle classes who base their lifestyle on Western values. During the first couple of decades of the twentieth century, first round of this cleansing targeted the non-Muslim communities of Asia Minor, including but not limited to Anatolian non-Muslims. Some 70 years after the founding of the secular Turkish Republican state, the second round took the form of a nascent class struggle, in which the AKP strove to mobilize the “silent masses” and “blacks” of Turkey, the people who live in Anatolian towns the periphery of the big cities, saying they had been Orientalized and othered by the “oppressive” and “alienating” discourse of Republican elites.

Of course, I am aware the class topology and antagonisms of Turkey are much more heterogeneous than this brief sketch can depict. However, the state plainly presenting the people as such in its discourse to “the national subject” The official state discourse claims that these natives, the authentic Turks, those “silent masses”, began to regain positions of power in business, public office and in the departments of universities. Since the mid 1990s the dream of once again conquering Istanbul was realized. After the AKP’s electoral successes in the early 2000s, it utilized state institutions in an attempt to return society to a Turkish-Muslim essence, which it claimed had been interrupted by those westernized secular elites. AKP policies additionally endeavored to repair the reputation of the Turkish state and nation both domestically and internationally by becoming a regional broker of power. In particular, membership in the EU and closer relations with the state of Israel promised ample opportunities of class mobility and unprecedented financial gains for the emerging Muslim bourgeoisie. Sadly, in recent Turkish history and its political trajectory, I detect all

the symptoms of a derivative and anti-colonial nationalism where politicians and historians form an image of Turkishness vis-à-vis its Western Other, attempt to forcibly insert themselves into global affairs, and take an uncompromising position against what they perceive as domestic threats such as those posed by maligned Istanbul's secular masses, including but not limited to the elites. As this marks the sad recurrence of the same pitfalls endemic to post-colonial nationalism across the globe, it is hard not to give into the pessimism of the intellect felt by postcolonial thinkers when their warnings went unheeded, as Fanon's had been vis-à-vis Algeria. In this dissertation I have cast light on the role of Turkish historians and Ottoman historiographers in creating and perpetuating such the nativist fantasies of an "authentic" and pure Turkish Muslim culture.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, the recently flourishing Ottoman historiography of officially-sanctioned Turkish historians is a way of reacting to the Western/European hegemony. It is almost impossible to find a book on Ottoman tolerance and peace in which Turkish historians do not resentfully reference their Western counterparts. From the perspective of the nativist Turkish historian, it was European social and political thinkers were the ones who perverted and misunderstood the Ottoman past. Seeing it as a paradigmatic case of Orientalist Despotism, wherein the rule of the Sultan and his supposedly automaton-like soldiers and subjects appear antithetical to Western societies' supposed tolerance, democracy, rule of law and respect for minorities. This image of the Turk and the Sultan had been deeply inscribed not only in Western political thought but also in the public and popular unconscious in Europe. From the mechanical Turk, the automaton chess player piece who was showcased in Europe and the States, as appears in Walter Benjamin's famous thesis one,⁴⁰⁴ to the image of the "snapping Turk," the mute villain adorned in a fez and curled shoes in the Beatles' animated 1968 film, *The Yellow Submarine*, the image of Oriental despotism and Turkish barbarism is indeed alive and well. *The Economist's* recent sensationalized cover design, which photoshopped the Turkish Prime Minister's head onto the painting of an Ottoman Sultan,⁴⁰⁵ again indicate that Orientalist

⁴⁰⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 253.

⁴⁰⁵ "Democrat or sultan?," *The Economist*, June 08, 2013, accessed June 16, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21579004-recep-tayyip-erdogan-should-heed-turkeys-street-protesters-not-dismiss-them-democrat-or-sultan>.

images continuously inform Western perception. It is to this image and perception that the nativist and nationalist Turkish historians and state authorities are reacting. It is this perception of the Ottoman and the Turk that they strive to rewrite. And yet, they do so at a cost, as they fall victim to Occidentalism of another sort.

In terms of how to deal with the Orientalist perception of the Turk, I underscored the significance of recent Ottoman historiography. Seen from the perspective of critical scholarship opened up by Fanon's generation and further elaborated by contemporary postcolonial scholars in the Indian subcontinent, the Caribbean and elsewhere, it becomes clear that Turkish historians are attempting to undo the stereotypes and reverse the binary between Turkey and Europe by one-upmanship. They suggest an alternative reading in which the Ottoman Empire was not ruled by a despotic Sultan so much as a harmonious accommodation of non-Muslim communities in particular and minorities in general. In this narrative, the Sultan emerges as the ruler who extended autonomy and hospitality to –the people of the Book – his Armenian, Greek and Jewish subjects. One of the main tenets of my work has been to call attention to the contemporary political functions of this idyllic image, rather than to discuss whether the Empire had been indeed tolerant or multicultural. This fascination with the Ottoman Golden Age as a genuine birthing ground of multiculturalism and (as the most beautiful example of the art of living together) has more to say about contemporary Turkish society than the past, as it provides a mirror for its current tensions and antagonisms.

Contemporary global liberal governance literature, which covers the West and emerging powers in the Global South, increasingly emphasizes tolerance and respect for both the individual and minority/group rights. These expectations and requirements are reflected in the EU-Turkey accession debates. As articulated at the end of the first chapter, the EU commission's report on Turkey's recent progress concludes "Turkey needs to improve its respect for minority rights."⁴⁰⁶ This conclusion, whether accepted or rejected, constitutes a significant injunction for Turkish state authorities. As I point out in this dissertation, Turkish

⁴⁰⁶ European Commission, *Turkey 2012 Progress Report* (Brussels, 2012), 32, accessed Feb 12, 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/strategy-and-progress-report/index_en.htm.

historians' responded to this injection by appropriating a peacefully multicultural Ottoman history as evidence. They shout together in protest: "but we were already multicultural!"

Having developed in reaction to the Western perception of the Turk, the Oriental despot, and Ottoman-cum-Turkish history, this recast history has serious pitfalls. Nietzsche already cautioned us against the dangers of using history to create a unified national culture. His warnings about Monumental History are most pertinent for the Turkish case, as the Ottoman Sultans have been acclaimed as the heroic figures of Turkish-Ottoman history and monumentalized for present purposes. The planned third bridge over the Bosphorus is to be named after, one of the key rulers of the Ottoman Golden Age, Yavuz Sultan Selim. The MiniaTurk theme park, built in Istanbul by the Turkish state, intentionally connects different places and symbolic architectural monuments from the ex-Ottoman lands (the Balkans, the Middle East), constituting another case of monumental fascination with the Ottoman past by new elites. The recently opened Museum of Conquest reenacts the moment of the siege and capture of Constantinople for its visitors with the light effects. All of these, I believe, are a part of broader investment in a monumental mode of remembering Ottoman history. Nietzsche's warning regarding the Antiquarian mode, too, is salient as popular, academic and political imagination and discourse supporting displays of Ottoman-Turkish grandeur make it hard to see and hear anything else about that past. Oversaturation of the Ottoman Classical Age and Millet system as well as the imagined Turkish-Ottoman essence reifies culture and limits the breadth of national consciousness. Nietzsche and Fanon would rightly advise us to be wary of such abuses of history.

The classical era, as was shown in Chapter Two, constitutes an idyllic period in which both Muslim-Turkish rulers and non-Muslim minorities enjoyed great prosperity and harmony – at least this is what the historiography of Ottoman tolerance would have us believe. For this particular reason I contend throughout this dissertation that the literature on Ottoman tolerance must be seen as an important social fantasy that offers its adherents affective harmony and equilibrium. We closely examined, especially in chapter two, the ways in which Turkish historians produce an image of paradise under the rule of the Turkish-Muslim ancestors. As much as the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance produces and promises this social harmony, it explains why we are deprived of it today. This is why the notion of fantasy is

significant in my understanding of the use of Ottoman historiography. These narratives are important scenarios that give an account for why Turkey was and is lacking unity. By producing a harmonious classical age and then reiterating why such loss has occurred, historians only enhance the fantasy's grip, coordinating the affective ties of the national subjects and their group psychology. Thus historiography detailing the harmoniousness of precoloniality is not only an epistemological attempt to symbolically rewrite Turkish identity. It equally regards the ontological situation and struggle of the adherents of this fantasy, becoming a crucial social script with which Turkish intellectuals and statesmen produce an image of a harmonious future.

One of the greatest perils of appropriating history as the Ottoman historians do is that the story of the West and Western hegemony is written so that heroes and victims become inverted. Turkish historians' narratives rewrite monstrous image of the West where Jews were subjected to discrimination, expulsion and ultimately a Holocaust. Not only within the boundaries of their homelands but also throughout the world, and throughout history, Western civilization has been the cause of suffering. It was as a result of Western imperialist greed, Turkish intellectuals remind us, that the harmonious coexistence of the Ottoman Empire was destroyed. Then too, we are told that non-Muslim communities of the Empire were equally complicit in the destruction of its social fabric, as they collaborated with the Western imperialists. As far as the fantasy goes, these communities that had enjoyed the fruits of Ottoman tolerance and peace, and were therefore able to retain their culture and ethnicity for centuries, were those who ultimately betrayed the Empire when it needed unity and loyalty the most.

This social fantasy is crucial to investigate because it continues to inform state authorities' and nativist intellectuals' perception of the Other in contemporary Turkey. It is a potent social fantasy, widely employed. If we revisit the introduction of this dissertation, the Gezi protests and the reaction of state authorities to these events, we can draw a full circle. Just as the Imperialist great powers of the 19th century are depicted as acting as guardians to minorities, the EU and its policies are depicted as acting to police the Turkish state. The former "collaborators" and "backstabbers" who caused the downfall of the Empire are fleshed out in today's immanent threats. As long as the nationalist fantasy of Turkish nativist

intellectuals and statesmen persists, the Other continues to be an issue of threat and source of paranoid anxiety. When it comes to justify reforms in Turkey, Western countries may be acknowledged as a reference point and standard. However, the very same Western countries can be accused of wearing a mask of concern about rights violations in other countries, while using these violations as grounds to begin wars and pursue capitalist imperialist projects. Even as in the 19th century, the warnings of the European states are understood as an intervention in the internal affairs of Turkey and part of a broader attempt to prevent Turkey's ascendancy as a "regional power". Expressing a hysterical relationship with the EU, Turkey was prompting to legislate the extension some cultural rights to the non-Muslim communities, by only taking these rights only go so far: the government remains mutely to formulate and implement policies to prevent hate speech and racism in the media. Behind this ambivalent stance towards the Other, as I have pointed out in this thesis, is the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance.

Coming to accept that our relationship with the Other is mediated by the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance takes to the discussions of the ethics of collective memory in chapter four. The major question was to what degree one can mobilize historically and renounce the fantasy of Ottoman tolerance in explaining the past. The crossroad that I would like to propose in this thesis was that we can entertain a different remembrance of Ottoman history, one is informed by neither the fantasy of Oriental Ottoman Despotism nor of unfettered Ottoman tolerance. The former disavows the Ottoman past and ancestors as the antithesis of everything modern and democratic while the latter unquestionably identifies the ancestors as models of tolerance. There is an alternative and it involves different ethics of relating to the Other. It requires the subjects of Turkish nationalism to renounce the fantasy of a guilt-free, culturally and racially uniform Turkish identity. It involves a shift in our understanding of the Other as one to be silenced, to one whose story must be heard. Achieving distance from the nationalist fantasy also involves renouncing the temptation to imperiously rule the Other by creating systems which supply or deny rights and freedoms.

I believe these are essential steps and gestures towards establishing national consciousness without nationalism as formulated by Fanon. Turkey, as the successor of the Ottoman Empire, constitutes a province in modern nation formation and it is going through

challenges in creating a national consciousness. To be able to create a healthy national consciousness we must open up a space where minorities can articulate their historical traumas and mourn their losses and injuries inflicted during and after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In this respect, the critical space opened up by the Gezi Park events was a meaningful one in which silenced collective memories and traumas could be recalled and mourned. Though it is crucial to foster this social space it is difficult because the state and politicians are preoccupied with restoration and revival of the old glory and cannot tolerate the suspension of time and “order” that the protests create.

In terms of alternative practices of remembrance and historiography, I proposed in this thesis the inclusion of the accounts of the silenced, the Other, and in general micro-histories into the collective public discourse. These practices of remembrance enable us to encounter those possibilities available to prevent the catastrophes and tragedies of the fall but were not acted upon. Rather than conceiving of the Ottoman-Turkish ancestor and his heirs as the only victims of the events that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries, and thus enjoying a melancholic stance, it is ethically necessary to establish solidarity with all the victims of the fall. This newfound perspective would allow us to investigate history and Ottoman institutions with an eye towards the political and social subjectivities which Ottoman society engendered. This perspective makes it possible to study Ottoman history without reading it as either a dark age of despotism or a harmonious age of tolerance; it occasions a critical opportunity to think about how to remedy the exclusions and injuries of the past in the present.

A year ago, ancestors and descendants of various groups of minorities who had been living in Turkish-Ottoman territories now inherited by the successor Turkish state, came together in the small Anatolian city of Bolu. Therein Circassians, Georgians, Assyrians, Armenians, Abkhassians, Zazas and Kirmanc people gathered to discuss solutions for the prevention of racist state policies as exemplified by narratives of official history and proposed means of respecting difference and minority cultures. At the end of the forum, delegates and participants shared memories of injuries inflicted by the Ottoman state and Turkish authorities, as well those caused by other modern nation states. They shared ideas about how to heal those injuries today and in future. After having shared their grief, they stated that “we

conversed with each other and had no difficulty having dialogue. We therefore became convinced that we could have a real exchange”. Delegates concluded their forum with a question concerning the readiness of all Turks for substantive change in social consciousness of history: “Minorities stand together ready to critically address the past, “what about you?”⁴⁰⁷ This is an urgent question for modern Turkey which should speak to every one of us. Are we ready to entertain a different mode of remembering our pasts?

⁴⁰⁷ Özcan Sapan, “Biz Ötekiler konuştuk, anlaşabiliriz, ya siz?,” [We ‘the Others’ conversed with each other and can have a real exchange, what about you?] *Bianet* February 16, 2012, accessed March 8, 2012, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/136183-biz-otekiler-konustuk-anlasabiliriz-ya-siz>