II. Imaginary Spaces: Representations of Istanbul between Topography and Imagination

The present chapter revolves around representations of space, both real and imaginary, that display mechanisms of state-imposed repression and removal, but also prepare the ground for cultural encounters. The strongly comparative focus of this chapter begins to outline the difference between Turkish literature with an international readership and Turkish American literature, which originates and dwells in a diasporic dimension. The first section investigates representations of Istanbul in Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2007) and Pamuk's *The Black Book* (1990) and *The New Life* (1994). Both writers imagine the city as governed by dichotomous ideologies: imitation and truthfulness, Americanization and authenticity, integration and segregation. Each of these abstract concepts is, using Amy Mills' term, "emplaced" (Mills 384) and spatialized, so that the city itself emerges as a dual entity where strongly oppositional universes dwell side by side without ever meeting.

The Black Book stages a conflict between an "overground city," dominated by Westernization and amnesia, and an "underground city" where relics of a forgotten past are simultaneously banished and preserved (Pamuk 191). A similar opposition emerges from *The Bastard of Istanbul*, where two cafés – Café Kundera and Café Constantinopolis – respectively embody a city burdened by historical amnesia and one obsessed by the excruciating preservation of memory. The discussion of ethnicity in Shafak complicates the configuration of these dichotomous spaces: while Café Kundera hosts an exclusively Turkish crowd, Café Constantinopolis is an online forum moderated and frequented by diasporic members of the former Ottoman minorities. I argue that Shafak decisively tries to overcome the insolvable dualisms that populate Pamuk's prose, and the two authors' diverging representations of Istanbul are crucial to proving my point. Pamuk dismisses the possibility of a productive encounter between Istanbul's two selves and insists on the vacuity of the search for an urban as well as national identity, while in Shafak a reconciliation between the two cafés, and thus between the oppositional ideologies that divide the city, is possible and advisable. Pamuk laments the indelible marks left by Westernization on the city and the nation, while Shafak responds by minimizing the impact of Kemalism on the city's everyday life and presents its hybridity, not its Westernized outlook, as its

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indelible trait. In other words, Shafak is invested in loosening the polarizations that characterize cultural debates in Turkey, in order to bring to the surface the richness and diversity of the Turkish cultural heritage (see Helvacioğlu 514).

The second part of this chapter will dwell on 'romanticizations' of the Ottoman Empire. Once again, my study establishes a comparison between what I term 'Ottoman utopia' in Shafak's writing and Pamuk's postulate of an Ottoman 'Golden Age.' Both constructions idealize Turkey's imperial past as a utopian model of cultural wholeness and express the wish to undo the historical processes that have caused the demise of Ottoman society. In spite of the many affinities between representations of Turkey's imperial heritage in Pamuk and Shafak, I propose that Shafak's Ottoman utopia is ultimately very different from Pamuk's Golden Age in so far as it emerges as a primarily transnational and diasporic narrative. By contrasting Pamuk's and Shafak's diverging approaches I hope to demonstrate that the tropes that are common to contemporary Turkish literature – in this case the perception of Turkish culture as fraught with dichotomies and the celebration of the Ottoman past (see Göknar, especially 305, 308, 309) – also figure prominently in the Turkish American imaginary, but Turkish American literature weaves them into a transnational, diasporic, and global perspective. In this sense, Turkish American literature is neither completely detached from national literary practices, nor does it seamlessly fit into the Turkish national literary scenario. Thus, Turkish American literature presents itself as a pool of complex, travelling texts that eschew canonization.

The study of cultural dichotomies is central to both Turkish and Turkish American literature: Göknar, for example, characterizes modern Turkish literature as negotiating the binary opposition of religion versus state. "The Turkish literary canon," he argues, "contains frequent examples of this dual articulation, summarized by the antinomy of *din* (religion) and *devlet* (state)" (Göknar 308). Göknar identifies Pamuk's work as highly innovative in this respect, as "Pamuk's novels establish culturally productive relations between *din* and *devlet*" (Göknar 309). From Göknar's perspective, Pamuk emerges as an innovator who brought two extremes of Turkish culture into a "productive parity" (ibid.).

The study of Pamuk in comparison with Turkish American literature underscores that both Turkish and Turkish American literature understand contemporary Turkish society as highly dichotomous and strive to return unity to what they perceive as a culture of paradoxes. The "emplacedness" of dualisms in *The Black Book* and *The Bastard of Istanbul*, their physical manifestation in the form of two cities and two cafés, makes these dichotomous visions of Turkey even more prominent. These two novels, however, and the literary traditions they are

inscribed in, take different directions. If on the one hand Pamuk strives to over-come the dualism of religiosity and secularism, or East and West, on the other hand Turkish American literature focuses on annihilating the binary opposition between Turkey and the United States in particular. Not only does Turkish American literature renegotiate the significance of America in the construction of today's Turkey, it does so by presenting the Turkish and the American sensitivities as affine and intermingled. *The Bastard of Istanbul* shows that the dilemmas of modern Turkish citizens – torn between dwelling in a condition of state-sanctioned amnesia and developing an excruciating awareness of their past – are not so far removed from those of Armenian Americans, caught between assimilation and memory of a loss that is beyond healing.

The Unplaceability of Orhan Pamuk

Even though Orhan Pamuk's literary production does not qualify as Turkish American, it provides a crucial counterpart to Turkish American literature. The reasons why I deem appropriate to include Pamuk in this study are, first, the seemingly unplaceable status of his oeuvre, second, the politics of his texts, and third, the influence he might have had on Turkish American literature. Pamuk's career as a writer starts in the early Eighties with his first novel *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* (Mr. Cevdet and His Sons), published in 1982. His second novel, *Sessiz Ev* (*Silent House*; tr. 2012), followed in 1983. These two early works of Pamuk's are rooted in the Turkish literary tradition of social realism, which became prominent in the 1960s. The first English translation of *Silent House* appeared decades after its publication, while *Cevdet Bey* has yet to be translated into English. Pamuk's experimentation with postmodernism begins with *Beyaz Kale* (*The White Castle*), which was the first of Pamuk's novels to appear in English in 1990. *The Black Book*, which brought Pamuk international popularity and a great deal of controversy at home, was published in Turkish in 1990; a first English translation authored by Güneli Gün appeared in 1994, followed by a new one by Maureen Freely in 2006. In 1994, the publication of the Sufi novel *Yeni Hayat* (*The New Life*; tr. 1998) – released after Pamuk had become renowned for his support of Kurdish political rights – marked Pamuk's status as a prominent as much as con-troversial figure of Turkish literature. Pamuk's latest publications, constituting his best-known and most widely read works, include *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (*My Name is Red*, 1998; tr. 2001), *Kar*, (*Snow*, 2002; tr. 2004), the autobiography *İstanbul—Hatıralar ve Şehir* (*Istanbul: Memories and the City*, 2003; tr. 2005), *Masumiyet Müzesi* (*The Museum of Innocence*, 2008; tr. 2009), and *Kafamda Bir Tuhaflık* (*A Strangeness in my Mind*, 2014; tr. 2015). Pamuk also published collections of

essays and non-fiction, among which *Öteki Renkler* (*Other Colors* 1999; tr. 2007) and *The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist* (2011).

Like Turkish American literature, Pamuk's oeuvre defies classification. While some critics argue in favor of his prominent international status, others place Pamuk within the sphere of Turkish literature. Pamuk expert and translator Erdağ Göknar insists that, on the one hand, Pamuk needs to be positioned in a primarily national frame, as his work can be read as a response and an evolution of the tropes, politics, and concerns of the Turkish novel, although endowed with uncommon innovative strength. In Göknar's words, Pamuk's oeuvre "does demonstrate faithfulness to the modern Turkish novel even as it transgresses its traditions" ("Secular Blasphemies" 305). Additionally, Göknar points out that the erroneous belief that little or no knowledge of Turkish culture is needed to read Pamuk has resulted in "persistent misreadings," "half-formed interpretations," and "misconceptions" of his work (ibid.). Göknar goes as far as claiming that Pamuk's current literary career is haunted by a "post-Nobel fantasy of a 'return to origins'" and by the "attempt to resituate himself in the literary canon, as if to say, 'I am still one of you!'" (306).

Göknar, however, also recognizes that Pamuk's highly mobile biography and Westernized upbringing have contributed to the international character of his literary production. Born into a Westernized, upper-class Istanbul family,[34] Pamuk graduated from American-owned Robert College (now Bosphorus University), travelled extensively to the United States, and resided there for several years. In the fall of 1985, he took part in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. In that same year, he went to Columbia University as a visiting scholar (1985–1988). He carried out great part of the research for *The Black Book* during these New York years, which also marked the beginning of a long-lasting affiliation with Columbia. In 2006 Pamuk returned to Columbia as a visiting professor, and from 2006 and 2007 he worked there as a lecturer. From 2009 to 2010, he delivered a series of lectures called "The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist" (later collected into a book by the same title) as part of his duties as Harvard's Charles Eliot Norton Professor. Pamuk is currently the Robert Yik-Fong Tam Professor in the Humanities at Columbia. "Pamuk no longer

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34 Pamuk's paternal grandfather built the first railroads in Turkey in the first decades after the foundation of the Republic, when the country was being modernized. When Pamuk reached adulthood, the family wealth had significantly decreased. Zlatko Anguelov categorizes Orhan Pamuk's family as one "which followed the cultural trend of fascination with the West and America that secular Turkish bourgeoisie after Kemal Atatürk embraced almost by default" (Anguelov, "Orhan Pamuk" n.p.).

lives only in Istanbul," Göknar clarifies, "but in New York City, where he teaches a semester each fall at Columbia University" (323).

Whether Pamuk's Westernized socialization and his residence in the U.S. have impacted his writing, remains a controversial issue. Bulgarian American author Zlatko Anguelov dedicates an article to Pamuk's Iowa period and comments on the lack of reference to the American experience in Pamuk's writing.

> Little, if anything, is left in the archives of both Columbia University and the University of Iowa about these visits. Pamuk himself has never mentioned them in his writings, fictional or non-fictional. […] In none of [his stories] is there the slightest mention, not to say a lofty claim, of any intellectual or emotional interest in America, nor is there a hint of the reasons why the author was there. ("Orhan Pamuk" n.p.)

The second part of this statement is highly debatable, as Pamuk's work – especially *The Black Book* and *The New Life* – does show an interest in the United States. Although not as prominent as in Turkish American literature, forms of engagement with American culture and its impact on the newly born republic of Turkey are present in Pamuk's textual politics and will be returned to later in this chapter.

Other critics propose completely different readings of Pamuk's prolonged contact with the Westernized Istanbul élites, the English language, and, ultimately, the U.S. and its writing programs. These scholarly interventions portray Pamuk as a Western author in disguise, and construct a discourse of suspicion around his persona. Göknar himself admits that supposedly flawed readings of Pamuk's work have banished him "to the margins of Turkish national culture" and branded him a "native informant or an exotic exile in international circles" (306). Anguelov echoes Göknar and writes that, to the Anglo-American press, Pamuk became "somewhat of the Turkish native-informant" (Anguelov n.p.). In his essay "A Nobel Sensitivity," Horance Engdahl elaborates on this narrative of suspicion. According to Engdahl, Pamuk has been criticized by exponents of both Turkish conservative nationalists and Western postcolonial scholars. The former accuse him of being "too strongly influenced by Western values," and the latter argue that he was one of the non-Western authors to whom the Academy had awarded the Nobel Prize for their ostensible willingness to integrate their work in the Western canon while maintaining "an exotic guise," thus becoming agents of Western "cultural imperialism" (Engdahl 42). In his article "A Reading of the Turkish Novel," political scientist Kürşad Ertuğrul offers a comparison of three Turkish writers who, in his opinion, strive to define the modern condition in republican Turkey, namely, Orhan Pamuk, Ahmed Hamdi Tanpinar, and Oğuz Atay. While Ertuğrul applauds Tanpinar and Atay for their complex and ambivalent understandings of Turkish modernity, he positions Pamuk rather

categorically in a Western space. To Ertuğrul, Pamuk's idea of Turkish modernity is a "conventional" one that "coincides with Westernization" and in which individualization is synonymous with "the replication of Western individuality" (Ertuğrul 646). Moreover, this "full replication/emulation of 'Western individuality'" is achieved through a "total disavowal of the 'Eastern' way of existence" and "of the image of Turkish people's Eastern social and cultural life" (642). Ertuğrul's view may be reductive, but his article provides a useful example of the ways in which Pamuk has been discursively ejected from the Turkish literary context. As early as 1992, Pamuk's former translator Güneli Gün provided a striking commentary, claiming that Pamuk's work "translates into English like a charm […]. English is, in fact, the common language behind the various languages out of which the new world voice is being created – like world rock music – the destination of which is also the United States" (Gün 59, 62). Although Gün appears skeptical of theories that view Pamuk as a product of American creative writing programs,[35] she regards Pamuk's Turkish as designed to adhere to the structure of the English language, thus shortening the passage from the original to the English translation.

In a completely different register, other voices attack Pamuk's interest in the retrieval of Ottoman themes, casting it as a sign of political conservatism. "Because Pamuk reintroduces urban Ottoman, Sufi, and Islamic forms into the republican novel," Göknar observes, "his work is sometimes read as retrograde, regressive, or even orientalist by his contemporaries in Turkey" (Göknar, "Blasphemies" 310). A reference to Shafak is in order here, as she repeatedly hinted at the fact that she had to face similar accusations, especially due to her use of an Ottomanesque language. Shafak expresses concern over the effects of the Kemalist language reform in terms that evidently connect to a "disenchantment" (Göknar 310) of the

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35 In the same article Gün claims: "as John Updike somewhat biliously points out in his *New Yorker* essay on Pamuk and the Czech Ivan Klima (2 September 1991), it might be the Iowa International Writing Program that fosters a global voice. True, Pamuk has put in an almost obligatory stint at Iowa; but the global voice is more likely to be tied to world economics, I suspect, than to Midwestern schools playing host to world writers" (Gün 62). The article Gün references is Updike's review of *The White Castle*, entitled "Vagueness on Wheels, Dust on a Skirt" and published in the *New Yorker* in 1991. Here, Updike sees similarities between Pamuk and the Israeli Palestinian author Anton Shammas, who, like Pamuk, attended the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. Hence, Updike wonders: "Can it be that literary historians of the future will have to speak of 'the Iowa school' of global magic realism, and ponder the stylistic relation of Grant Wood's geometric landscapes to the exotic visions of Third World intellectuals?" See John Updike, "Vagueness on Wheels, Dust on a Skirt" (1991).

Turkish novel caused by Kemalism. "The novel, as the genre of Westernization and modernization, as the locus of transformation, gained unusual importance. […] The mainstream language of the Turkish novel became a *disenchanted* language and remained such" (Shafak, 2005: n.p., emphasis added). In an interview with Alison MacDonald, Shafak comments on the politicization of words in Turkey: "if you are open minded, if you are liberal, if you are a leftist you shouldn't be using those old words" ("Linguistic Cleansing" n.p.). In another interview she admits to having been "bitterly criticized for using Ottoman words in [her] writing" and at the same time "people took [the fact that she wrote in English] as a cultural betrayal" ("Critical Outtakes" n.p.). Understandably, her combined use of Ottoman words within English prose turned out to be highly controversial.

The fascination for Ottoman culture and the aspiration to integrate it into Turkish modernity is not the only contact zone between Pamuk's textual politics and those of Turkish American literature, as the comparison with Shafak has exemplified. Similar to Turkish American literature, the focus of much of Pamuk's work lies on transgressing the official narratives of Turkish identity enforced by Kemalism and challenging the uncompromising secularism of the republic. In doing so, Pamuk engages in what Göknar calls the "reenchantment" of the Turkish novel, "disenchanted" by Kemalist secularism and modernization (Göknar 310, 311). This practice leads to the construction of a composite Turkish identity that synthesizes "various unreconciled contexts" such as "secular nationalism, European Orientalism, Islamic mysticism (or Sufism),[36] and the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire" (305). The elements involved in the process of reenchantment are very close to the interests and concerns of Turkish American literature and to the narrative this study will contribute to identify. The emphasis of Turkish American literature on Sufism and the Ottoman cultural legacy, combined with an openness towards the impact of Westernization and Americanization on Turkey, results in the construction of modern Turkish identity as an "unreasonable synthesis" of "discordant parts,"[37] as Shafak describes it in her

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36 Göknar lays great emphasis on the theme of Sufism, indicating that its popularity in contemporary Turkish literature may be a result of Pamuk's work. "The recuperation of Sufism in literature is a topic that demands further study. Maligned during the era of Turkish modernism […] Sufism as a cultural influence has made a resurgence in Turkish literature since 1980 through the influence of Pamuk's work" (Göknar, "Blasphemies" 311). For an analysis of Sufism in Turkish American literature see chapter three in this volume ("Sufism in America and Turkey: A Transnational Dialogue").

37 "Turkey is a bit of a chimera – the fire-breathing she-monster in Greek mythology with a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail. Just like this mythological creature,

articles "Making Sense of Irrationality" and "Once the Sick Man, now the Chimera of Europe" (Shafak n.p.). The focus of Turkish American literature on the city of Istanbul as an ethnically and religiously composite space that resists superimposed monocultural narratives and at the same is able to absorb the impact of Westernization is affine to Pamuk's "complex contexts of Istanbul cosmopolitanism that synthesize internal and external influences" (305).

Göknar suggests that, from the Eighties on, Pamuk revolutionized the Turkish literary field in so far as he popularized a politicized posture that challenges and transgresses the ethnicist ideology of Kemalism, celebrating cosmopolitanism. Under the influence of Pamuk, themes of "cultural redefinition" that "make [a] […] political argument against secular modernity and the republican state" became ubiquitous in Turkish literature (Göknar 305). It is therefore important to acknowledge that Pamuk may have functioned as a trend-setter for Turkish American literature as well, which positions the same themes in a transnational perspective and magnifies their potential to provide the bases for intercultural encounters. This study analyzes some themes and tropes that appear in both Turkish American literature and Pamuk's texts with the aim to stress where Turkish American literature and Turkish literature with an international appeal differ. The last point is particularly useful to shift the focus of this analysis from the affinities between Pamuk and Turkish American literature to their differences.

The question that ensues from acknowledging the similarities that bind Turkish American literature with Turkish literature is whether Turkish American literature can indeed be addressed as an autonomous phenomenon – developing alongside and yet independently from literature in Turkish. As already mentioned, the tendency to deconstruct narratives of Westernization and secularism is not limited to Pamuk's oeuvre, but it is a recurring feature of Turkish literary modernity (Göknar, "Blasphemies" 304). In spite of the important common grounds Turkish and Turkish American literature share, due to their language and their binational quality Turkish American novels cannot be placed (or at least not exclusively) in the Turkish national literary arena. Responses to Kemalism and propositions of different models centered on cosmopolitanism and hybridity are widespread in Turkish literature, and they also emerge as an essential feature of Turkish American literature. The latter, however, designates America as the main interlocutor in the development of these new cultural models and strives to bring to light cultural affinities between the two countries. These

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Turkey consists of numerous discordant parts" (Shafak, "Once the Sick Man, Now the Chimera of Europe" n.p.).

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affinities are, perhaps paradoxically, not found in the Westernization policies of Kemalism – an ideology these novels mostly contest – but in projections and representations of the Ottoman Empire.

The first obvious difference between Turkish American literature and Turkish literature – including Pamuk – is the language and the market of publication. Although Pamuk is widely translated and counts on an international readership, his works are written and published in Turkish to be translated and distributed worldwide at a later stage. While Göknar insists that knowledge of the Turkish context is essential for an accurate understanding of Pamuk's work, Turkish American novels explicitly target international readerships. In her study on Re-Orientalism in South Asian literature in English, Lisa Lau has described diasporic writers as "perhaps those who play to the gallery and target a readership that, they comfortably suppose, has little or no knowledge of South Asian customs and cultures" (Lau, "Re-Orientalism" 582). I believe the same observations apply to Turkish American literature, as it aims to present the home culture to international readerships, at times hybridizing it with American elements.

This section has clarified that Pamuk's position within the Turkish literary field is contested and ambivalent. Turkish American literature inhabits an even more ambivalent space (Shafak has been addressed as a "so-called citizen of Turkey" by filmmaker Halit Refiğ)[38], and has been described here as a group of highly mobile texts travelling from a Turkish to an American cultural context and resisting affiliation. However, Pamuk has displayed a 'placement anxiety' that does not seem to be present in Turkish American literature. Göknar wrote about Pamuk's recent attempts for a reconciliation with the Turkish literary community, including a guest-editorship in 2007 at the Turkish daily newspaper *Radikal*, which he used to pay homage to such leftist writers as Nâzim Hikmet, Yaşar Kemal, and Sabahattin Ali. Göknar speaks of this moment in Pamuk's career as a "fantasy of a 'return to origins,'" an attempt to resituate himself in the Turkish literary canon and possibly an "apology" for having so profoundly transformed its discourses ("Blasphemies" 306). Another "gesture of reconciliation" bordering on an apology is, for Göknar, Pamuk's Nobel Prize Lecture, which he delivered in Turkish. Ultimately, Göknar points out that in the Turkish version of *Other Colors* (*Öteki Renkler*, 2008) Pamuk acknowledges his artistic indebtedness to a series of Turkish authors who are not mentioned in the English translation.

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38 From an eponymous article published on *Turkish Daily News* on December 2005: "Refiğ describes me as a 'fully fledged anti-Kemalist' and declared me a 'so-called citizen of Turkey.'"

Göknar reads this omission as evidence of a "profound anxiety," on Pamuk's part, of his own "influence and reception" (306).

By contrast, Turkish American literature exists in the interstice between the American and the Turkish literary traditions and adapts to this condition with varying degrees of comfort. The most helpful examples are Alev Lytle Croutier and Elif Shafak, as both of them explicitly locate their biographies and literary output in a space between cultures. When commenting on her work, Croutier is cautious about positioning it: "Having been an expatriate for more than 30 years," Croutier explains, "I haven't grown up with the changes that would have made me part of the Turkish literary machinery. I am a foreign writer to the Turks, and I'm a foreign writer to the Americans. I write in English and get translated into Turkish." Croutier regards her position as "odd […] and in a way difficult, because I don't belong anywhere" (Croutier in Anon., n.p.). While carefully eschewing all affiliations, she grounds her origins in a quasi-mythical Turkey, where she claims she could have a taste of the secretive life of the harem. At the same time, Croutier strongly dismisses the idea of going back to her home country and admits to feeling "oppressed at the thought" of it (ibid.). Croutier also differentiates her authorial status from Orhan Pamuk's, branding him as a national author, as opposed to her self-identification as an expatriate writer in a "unique" position and possibly closer to the canons of world authorship. "Writers who live [in Turkey], like Orhan Pamuk," Croutier explains, "look at it with a close-up lens, and I am looking at Turkey with a tele-photo lens" (ibid.). Thus, Croutier oscillates between self-narratives of distance from and proximity to her native country, simultaneously constructing herself as an insider and an outsider.

Elif Shafak frequently recurs to the 'threshold' metaphor to represent her own writing, thus setting her literary work apart from Turkish literature in Turkey. In her 2005 article "The Gathering Place of the Djinni," Shafak writes that thresholds are "very difficult […] to put into words when writing in Turkey and in Turkish" (Shafak n.p.), as the modern Turkish language as well as the Turkish context are unable or unwilling to come to terms with the notion of in-betweenness. This "zone that belongs to neither 'here' nor 'there,' neither 'inside' nor 'outside,' neither 'East' nor 'West'" is, to Shafak, "a space of ambiguity and in-betweendom that is most difficult for a writer to describe" (ibid.).[39] Her choice

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39   This claim appears very often in Shafak's writing. In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, for example, one character reflects on the impracticalities of being in between and wishes Turkey would do more to move beyond this unfortunate and unstable state of being – a position that is forcibly challenged by other characters. However, it is also important to remind readers that Turkey's peculiar position in between two continents has been

of English as a literary language emerges therefore as a strategy to properly communicate the importance of physical, literary, and metaphorical thresholds, as, in Shafak's understanding, English allows "more space for ambiguity and flexibility" (ibid.). The image of the threshold is crucial to Shafak's understanding and positioning of her own writing as neither Turkish nor English: "While my nationalist critics kept asking where would I now belong, 'either to Turkish or to English literature?' I believe their question is wrongly and rigidly formulated. I believe it is possible to be 'both… and…' instead of 'either… or…' in this world, or at least in the world of fiction" (ibid.). Eventually, she concludes that "writing fiction necessitates thresholds" (ibid.). Through this statement, Shafak makes an important claim to interstitial authorship which, rather than an occasion of discomfort, appears as a resource and a label both Shafak and Croutier wear with ease.

Orhan Pamuk: Overground and Underground Istanbul

Lisa Lau notes that "diasporic authors necessarily have different concerns from home authors, consequently different themes in their writings" ("Re-Orientalism" 589). The following section will lay emphasis on thematic overlaps and differences between Shafak and Pamuk, whom this study addresses as examples of "diasporic" and "home" authors respectively. Constructions of nostalgic, imaginary spaces proliferate in Orhan Pamuk's novels in the form of dreamlike city landscapes and concatenations of symbols. Göknar defines Pamuk as an author "in the writerly pursuit of new, imaginary spaces" (Göknar, "Ottoman Theme" 34): *The New Life* and *The Black Book* feature a similar yearning for a lost unity of sign and meaning, of language and culture. Osman, the narrator of *The New Life*, sees a woman reading a book, which he later purchases from a stall. This mysterious book narrates of a different world and a new life, but the reader of *The New Life* is left to wonder about its contents and nature. The narrative follows Osman's agitated search for the universe described in the book, leading him deeper and deeper into folly and self-deception.

The representations of imaginary Turkeys and imaginary Americas that constitute the focus of this chapter prove functional to the search of a post-Kemalist

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addressed by many Anglophone studies on Turkey as a kind of "Turkish Exceptionalism." A discussion of Turkish Exceptionalism appears in the introduction to this volume. See Lerna Yanık "Constructing Turkish 'Exceptionalism': Discourses of Liminality and Hybridity in Post-Cold War Turkish Foreign Policy" and "Turkish Exceptionalism and its Critics."

Turkish identity. This is one of the most evident concerns of *The Black Book*, which aims to subvert the polar notions of pre-republican 'authenticity' and hybridity as the two main directions dominating the search for this new Turkish identity. *The Black Book* critiques these concepts for their abstractness and impracticability and, at the same time, stages a series of imaginary scenarios showing Turkey as it would be if either of these principles were to be enacted.

In *The Black Book*, Istanbul appears as a 'double city.' While the surface succumbs to the succession of new names and empires – the Achaemenid, the Roman, the Eastern Roman, the Ottoman – the underground hosts the defeated civilizations, which gradually accumulate and compose a hybrid 'museum'[40] that gathers the "old, discarded objects that make us who we are" (188). During a visit to a mannequin shop, the guide explains to Galip and some English tourists that

> each incarnation of this city – Byzantium, Nova Roma, Anthusa, Cospoli, Istin-Poli – had beneath it in the underground passages in which the previous civilization had taken refuge. This had led to an extraordinary sort of double city […] with the underground city ultimately wreaking revenge on the overground city that had supplanted it. (191)

The Black Book suggests that the city on the surface has been taken over by yet another colonizing agent – in this case, European and American literature, films, and commodities. This has forced Turks into alienation and imitation of foreign cultural practices, whereas the underground city preserves the remnants of the former, collapsed civilization – the Ottoman Empire.

The overground city seems plagued by a general loss of meaning. In one of his columns, fictional Istanbul journalist Celâl[41] writes:

> I imagine the amazement of a man who discovers that all the things have a second meaning. I imagine a parallel universe, hidden inside the one we inhabit, and I imagine myself wandering intoxicated about its new and sparkling streets, as the objects around me open like flowers to reveal their interior selves. I imagine the amazement of a man who lost his memory. I imagine I've been abandoned in a ghost city I've never seen before, where everything, but everything – the neighborhoods that once where home to millions, the avenues, mosques, bridges and ships – is empty. (249)

The excerpt displays what Ian Almond understands as the "nostalgia for a lost present" that permeates Pamuk's work and *The Black Book* in particular: a futile longing for a vanished reality, in which the meaning of Turkishness resided

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40 For a discussion of the anti-museumizing function of underground structures in Pamuk, see Chapter Four of this volume: "Ottoman Nature: Natural imagery, Gardens, Wells, and Cultural Memory in Republican Turkey."

41 I derived the spelling of the name from Maureen Freely's 2006 translation.

(Almond 81). The "ghost city" is characterized by emptiness and meaninglessness, a condition caused by the loss of individual and cultural memory. A system in which the visible city is nothing but an envelope to a sparkling universe of meaning would be the object of Michel Foucault's skeptic considerations in "The Order of Discourse." In his essay, Foucault invites caution in locating, beneath a "system of rarefaction," "a vast unlimited discourse, continuous and silent, which is quelled and repressed […] and which we have the task of raising up by restoring the power of the speech to it" (Foucault 67). Foucault's point helps to acknowledge the narrator's naïve essentialism – which locates an 'authentic' cultural dimension beneath the visible modernity – and to recognize the Manichean division between the two worlds, or cities, as delusional, as "discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other and are sometimes juxtaposed with one another" (ibid.).

The loss of meaning should not be understood in metaphysical terms only, but also in very practical ones. Istanbul appears as a malfunctioning city where every piece of street furniture seems to have lost the memory of its function: "sallow streetlamps cast more shadows on the ground than light," "fountains […] had gone dry," on the squares all one sees are "empty pools, forgotten statues and broken clocks" (Pamuk 314–315). This loss of meaning and function is particularly remarkable when it affects buildings of specific cultural value such as mosques. Accompanied by an old acquaintance, Galip visits the Süleymaniye mosque, one of the most representative Istanbulite sites, only to become aware of its desolation, as the great significance it used to have for the city has become exhausted:

> this great edifice was as impenetrable as stone itself. It did not welcome a man, nor did it transport him to a better place. But if nothing signified nothing, than anything could signify anything. For a moment he thought he saw a flash of blue light, and then he heard the flutter of what sounded like the wings of a pigeon, but then it returned to its old stagnant silence, waiting for the illumination that never came. [The things around him] seemed to be crying out to him, to be crying *Give us meaning!* (Pamuk 198)

The picture emphasizes the non-existent interaction between citizens and urban structures, replaced by the impossibility of communication between individuals and what had once constituted their familiar environment. Confronted with one of the most poignant symbols of his culture, the mosque, the narrator fails to recognize this space as inspiring or culturally significant, except for a vague presentiment immediately driven away. The profound displacement experienced by Galip in the mosque is far away from the dazzling vision of objects opening like flowers to display their meaning, and rather unveils a city of emptiness, containing but the faintest remembrance of a glorious past of unity between objects and their meaning.

The Süleymaniye mosque passage discloses more important characteristics of the surface city, such as its vagueness and fluidity. What meets Galip's eyes as he sits on top of the minaret, is an uncertain, ectoplasmic arena of ongoing transformations:

> he could almost believe that he was looking at the surface of a planet that had yet to find its final shape. The domes of the city and these vast stretches of concrete, stone, tile, wood, and Plexiglas were coming apart, and in the cracks you could just see the underworld's molten glow – but not for long. Soon the city was sketching in its details; among the walls, chimneys and rooftops they could now see billboards, advertising banks and cigarettes, and as their giant letters emerged from the mist, the imam's tiny voice came bursting through the loudspeaker right next to him. (Pamuk 199)

Strangely enough, the vision of the city as a progressing construction site is not quite associated to a city in the making, but rather to one on the verge of vanishing. The indeterminacy of the urban landscape that presents itself to Galip is conveyed not only by the mist gradually thinning out, but also by the ongoing struggle between an old skyline (domes, roofs, and chimneys) and a modern one (billboards advertising banks and cigarettes). The feeling that Istanbul has yet to find its final shape does not exclusively depend on the fog impairing the narrator's sight, but especially on the competing forces of tradition and modernity, or, more precisely, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and its typical architecture and the skyline of a modern, Westernized city. In spite of the majestic dimensions of the Süleymaniye mosque, towering over the Bosphorus, the imam's voice coming from a loudspeaker seems "tiny." This suggests the disadvantaged position in which the Ottoman and Islamic legacies find themselves in the process of modernization.

If overground Istanbul stood for a dispossessed civilization, underground Istanbul is the imaginary keeper of cultural 'authenticity.' It is not by mere chance that repugnant accounts of what lies underneath visible surfaces are very frequent in *The Black Book*.[42] If the surface is dominated by imitation, the underground is where Turkish culture has evolved independently from the impositions, ruptures, and modifications operated by Westernization, Americanization, and Kemalism. The underground city hosts an alternative idea of Turkishness characterized by

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42 Besides the forgotten objects in "The Dark Airshaft," Pamuk's fascination with the underground emerges also in "When the Bosphorous Dried up" and "Do you Remember Me?" where the narrator describes what lies on the bottom of the Bosphorus and in the city's underground tunnels. My analysis of wells in Chapter Four ("Ottoman Nature") explores the important role underground structures – cellars, basements, wells, tunnels – play in the retrieval of Turkey's collective memory.

the stratification of all the cultural influences that had impacted Turkey through the ages: the early Persian colonization, the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic tradition, and, finally, the Western influence and the Republic. The underground city consists of large amounts of objects that have fallen from the upper world onto the lower, have been forgotten, and have gathered in the bowels of the city and on the bottom of the Bosphorus. The chaotic juxtaposition of all the cultural traditions that made Turks "what they are" – to use an expression that recurs frequently in *The Black Book* – indicate that Turkish culture is fundamentally hybrid. The image critiques the cultural selection operated by the Kemalists, who constructed a Turkish national identity based on American ideals and European nationalisms, overshadowing the Islamic and imperial legacy as they did not fit the Western ideal of a modern national state.

The overground city and the underground city represent oppositional discourses that "exclude or are unaware of each other" (Foucault 67). At the same time, Pamuk's representation of Istanbul as a dual space seems to find a correspondence in Shafak's *The Bastard*, where two cafés embody oppositional 'civilizations' that coexist in Istanbul without ever meeting. This parallel attests to Pamuk's role as a trend-setter in contemporary Turkish literature, but is also useful to underscore how Shafak's work draws from Pamuk's themes but ultimately deviates from them.

"Safe Spaces of the Like-Minded": Elif Shafak's Cafés

Through the representation of "Café Kundera" and "Café Constantinopolis," Elif Shafak's novel *The Bastard of Istanbul* investigates the ongoing search for Turkish identity, portrayed and synthesized by the author as a clash of opposites that needs to be overcome: East and West, Turkish majority and former imperial minorities, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, cultural homogenization and cultural pluralism. The walls of these cafés isolate groups of individuals who share rigid conceptions of identity, sheltering them from interaction with the quickly-evolving outside world. At one extreme, Café Kundera's Turkish customers appear preoccupied by Turkey's in-between condition and terrified by its internal divisions. Failing to understand the constructive potential of in-betweenness as a foundational value of Turkishness, they indulge in the perpetration of nationalistic narratives, including the denial of the Armenian genocide. At the other extreme, the Armenian American community meeting online at Café Constantinopolis is portrayed as static and impermeable to change. At Café Constantinopolis, the legitimate hope that Turkey will recognize the Armenian genocide and apologize officially is entangled with very radical positions against all Turks,

sometimes amounting to indiscriminate intolerance against an entire population. Eventually, the introduction of an element of Otherness in these "Safe Spaces of the Like-minded," to quote the title of a 2006 essay by Shafak, violates the until then impermeable membrane between the inside and the outside and helps pave the way towards the acknowledgement of Turkey's inherent hybridity: an idea that challenges nationalistic perspectives that have shaped the making of post-Ottoman identities, both national and diasporic.

Café Kundera hosts a variety of displaced personages the narrator identifies as Istanbul's "nihilists, pessimists, and anarchists," fascinated by the idea of extinction and leading lives of utter meaninglessness (811). The café's walls are covered in framed landscape pictures that encourage customers to indulge in escapist fantasies: in fact, customers seem to share the desire to leave the city and live a different life in a faraway place. The most salient trait of the café's guests is their dissatisfaction over contemporary society, accompanied by the uncompromising unwillingness to change things. Terrified by interaction with the outside world and by the liveliness of Istanbul, the guests of Café Kundera find refuge in the café and in their inconclusive conversations.

Café Constantinopolis is an online chat room that offers a virtual platform for the American descendents of former Ottoman minorities to reunite, discuss their common roots, and fantasize about an imaginary afterlife of the Ottoman Empire where Turks are discriminated or denied entrance. Café Constantinopolis presents the U.S. as the ideal place for diasporic Armenians, Jews, and Greeks to re-locate and preserve their traditions: thanks to American multiculturalism, Ottoman cosmopolitanism could outlive the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the revival of Ottoman cosmopolitanism embodied by Café Constantinopolis is an imperfect one, as it forcefully excludes the Turkish element.

Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopias" sheds powerful light on the function of these two cafés in the novel:

> there are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 3).

Both cafés are doubtlessly "outside all places": Café Constantinopolis is an online platform and thus lacks a physical dimension, while Café Kundera, "a fictive place with fictive people as regulars" (76), exudes a fictional quality that

64

locates it outside the physical space of the city. Yet, they are both very real to their guests. The two protagonists, Asya and Armanoush – regular customers of Café Kundera and Café Constantinopolis respectively – think of their cafés as their "sanctuar[ies]" (86, 111). Armanoush openly compares it to a real bar: "Armanoush liked to imagine this forum as a dingy, smoky bar she habitually stopped by on her way home […] where you could forgo your true, humdrum Self at the entrance, like leaving a sopping raincoat in need of drying in the vestibule" (111). These spaces resemble utopias but ultimately deviate from this notion: Café Kundera's guests seem to be able to find meaning only among the Café's walls, but the place is pervaded by resignation and cynicism. The founding members of Café Constantinopolis aimed to provide the descendants of former Ottoman minorities in America with a safe space where they could celebrate their shared cultural memory, but their discussions exude rage and intolerance. Most importantly, both spaces appear to simultaneously "represent, contest, and invert" the culture that hosts them. Café Kundera is, in the narrator's words, "the negation of the whole city" (83). Café Constantinopolis is named after the city it represents, but by celebrating its pre-Republican manifestation it inverts its history. Moreover, recreating Ottoman cosmopolitanism without its Turkish component is an act of open contestation directed against the former colonial master and current Istanbul majority, the Muslim Turk.

The following section compares Pamuk's and Shafak's binary representations of Istanbul, starting from the assumption that Café Kundera is discursively similar to Pamuk's overground city, the same being true for Café Constantinopolis and the underground city. These spatial representations play a crucial role in the discussion of larger dichotomies I identified as prominent in depictions of Istanbul in *The Black Book* and *The Bastard*, namely, imitation and truthfulness, authenticity and Americanization, segregation and integration. The comparison between Pamuk and Shafak will demonstrate that while Pamuk's spaces remain dichotomous, eschewing occasions for reconciliation, in Shafak the two cafés eventually open up to the influence of the Other, foreshadowing the development of hybrid sensitivities.

Becoming Someone Else: Imitation and Truthfulness

The Black Book's surface city and Café Kundera in *The Bastard of Istanbul* are pervaded by feelings of uncertainty, displacement, and alienation that ensued from the abrupt change in identitarian narratives enforced by Kemalism. In her analysis of identity construction in Istanbul, Amy Mills notes that "in spite of the fact that the Turkish state has not historically been (nor is it today) a monolithic,

unchanging entity," Istanbulites perceive the state and state-authored narratives "to have a reality and coherence" (Mills 384). This creates a rupture between the centuries-old multicultural texture of everyday life in Istanbul and hegemonic identity discourses that privilege a less diversified Turkish-Muslim identity. This clash between urban and state narratives is at the basis of the displacement felt by Pamuk's Turkish characters – who are constantly under the impression that they should aspire to be someone else – and of the disharmony that permeates Café Kundera in *The Bastard of Istanbul*. The following section will compare the ways in which the two novels express the desire to 'become someone else,' focusing on how they "emplace" aspects of the search for Turkish identity through the construction of imaginary spaces.

In *The Black Book*, the surface city hosts a culture of imitation. For the Turkish characters, imitation goes hand in hand with cultural amnesia as if in a vicious circle: Turks imitate Western habits, clothing, and gestures because they conformed to new identitarian narratives that erased their Ottoman, Eastern culture, and vice versa, they have taken on imitating "the European models to which [they] were meant to aspire" so passionately that they cannot remember their original identity any longer (61). Amnesia and erasure, in fact, play a significant role in the construction of Turkey's modern self: "ideas of what it means to be Turkish," Mills explains, "are […] created through actions to remember and to forget particular histories" (Mills, 386).

The novels repeatedly connects imitation with life in the overground city. In the chapter called "Bedii Usta's Children," one shopkeeper explains that what drives Turkish fashion is the aspiration to resemble "new beautiful creature[s] from a distant unknown land":

> "[the customer] is not going to wear a coat he sees worn by someone who looks like the swarthy, bow-legged, mustachioed countryman he sees ten thousand times a day in our city's streets. He wants a coat worn by a new beautiful creature from a distant unknown land, so he can convince himself than he, too, can change, become someone new, just by putting on this coat […]." What brought them into his store was the dream of becoming "the others" who'd worn that dress. (61)

Political scientist Kürşad Ertuğrul observes that Pamuk's subject simultaneously casts the Western individual as an "ideal form" and target of envy (Ertuğrul 642). The constitution of Turkey's modern self in Pamuk, Ertuğrul continues, is possible "only through becoming 'someone else,'" a process that "coincides with a full replication/emulation of 'Western individuality'" (ibid.). By the same token, the realization of this modern self implies the "disavowal of the image of Turkish people's Eastern social and cultural life" (ibid.). In this chapter of the novel,

columnist Celâl writes of a mannequin atelier which went bankrupt because its creations were too representative of "the real Turk" (61) to be taken seriously in a culture systematically oriented towards Westernization. The passage explains the situation on the surface, which compelled Master Bedii to move his bankrupt atelier to a basement where he continued his profession "until the day he died" (ibid.). The translocation of the atelier to a basement comments on the relevance of underground structures, which receive what has been rejected by the Westernized culture on the surface. The desire to become "the others," "the European models," "a beautiful creature from a distant unknown land" (ibid.) is a peculiarity of overground Istanbul, where "everything was a copy of something else, where people were at once themselves and their own imitation" (165). The surface is populated by "amnesiac" citizens "long resigned to the certainty that their memories would never return to them," irremediably detached from what Celâl calls "inner essence," "innocence," and "true identity" (61).

Similar to Istanbul in *The Black Book*, Cafe Kundera in *The Bastard of Istanbul* is a space that visualizes the impact of the Western literary canon on Turkish everyday life and sensitivity.

> Cafe Kundera was a small coffee shop on a narrow, snaky street on the European side of Istanbul. […] How and why it was named after the famous author, nobody knew for sure – a lack of knowledge magnified by the fact that there was nothing, literally nothing, inside the place reminiscent of either Milan Kundera or any one of his novels. (Shafak, *The Bastard*, 75)

Turkish identity appears to be compromised by the constant comparison imposed on Turkish citizens between their own civilization and the West, by the imposition of European literature and culture as role models, and by the Kemalist predilection of Western aesthetics over the ones deriving from Turkey's imperial tradition. Milan Kundera, a naturalized French author of Czech origin, is a figure from the margins of Europe who became part of the Western literary canon. In the context of Shafak's Istanbul – Café Kundera in particular – this author symbolizes the aspiration to participate in the Western imagination and cultural world. Rumor has it, explains the narrator of *The Bastard of Istanbul*, that Kundera started to write about the little bar in Istanbul, eventually abandoning the project for more important commitments. "Ever since then, the customers and waiters in Café Kundera had been struggling with a sense of void, digging away at disconsolate futuristic scenarios, grimacing over Turkish coffee served in espresso cups, waiting for a purpose in some highbrow drama wherein they would play the leading role" (78). The "sense of void" that haunts Café Kundera's regulars, the perceived fictitiousness of their existence, and the contemplation of

"disconsolate futuristic scenarios" liken them to Pamuk's Istanbulites and indicate that they, too, aspire to other lives and other identities for themselves.

In another passage, Café Kundera is described as "a figment of [Kundera's] flawed imagination […] a fictive place with fictive people as regulars" (77). This image evokes strong connections to Pamuk's text. In *The Black Book*, an old journalist "came to identify with [the narrator of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*] so deeply that he came to believe he was Proust himself; […] he went from loving Proust's words to believing he himself had written them" (Pamuk 175). In *The Black Book*, the eagerness not merely to consume but also to *become* Western cultural products also affects a crowd emerging from a movie theatre:

> They were here, on this wretched street, but at the same time they were there, inside the story they'd so eagerly given themselves over. They had gone into the theater with minds sucked dry by pain and defeat, but now their minds were full again with this rich story that gave meaning to their memories and their melancholy. They can believe they are someone else! (Pamuk, *The Black Book* 222)

The passage reminds the reader of Café Kundera's guests, "waiting for a purpose in some highbrow drama" (Shafak 78), while Pamuk's film audience would "eagerly [give] themselves over" to a "rich story" that may fill their life with new meaning.

Although the walls of Café Kundera are physically present and delimit an existing space, they are rendered permeable and transparent by the numerous pictures covering them:

> on four sides there were hundreds of frames. The whole place gave the impression of being erected on frames instead of brick. In all the frames without exception shone the image of a road. Wide motorways in America, endless highways in Australia, busy autobahns in Germany, glitzy boulevards in Paris, crammed side streets in Rome, narrow paths in Machu Picchu, forgotten caravan routes in North Africa, and maps of the ancient trade routes along the Silk Road, following the footsteps of Marco Polo – there were road pictures from all around the world. (76)

The numberless photographs, paintings and sketches hanging on the café's walls represent landscapes from all over the world, with the West figuring prominently along with exotic locations. The peculiar furnishing puts the café itself and its customers in the ambivalent position of being present without actually being there: "customers would pick a frame, […] gaze on the chosen picture, little by little taking off to that faraway land, craving to be somewhere in there, anywhere but here" (77). Similar to Pamuk's film audience, "they were here, […] but at the same time they were there" (*Black Book* 222). The café meets the needs of those who long to disconnect from their own city, culture, and territory. If Pamuk's

characters are obsessed with being someone else, Café Kundera's regular customers harbor escapist fantasies and long to be *somewhere else*, leading a different life.

The futile search for the reason behind the café's name finds multiple correspondences in *The Black Book*. It recalls Galip's endless search for the meaning of things, which Ian Almond ultimately identifies as the search for national and, above all, individual identity. One of the most striking similarities is the apparently irretrievable connection between words and objects, causing characters to venture into pointless searches for meaning. For example, the discrepancy between the nicknames of Café Kundera's regulars and their professions contributes to exacerbate the "farcical disharmony" (201) of their condition. For example, a character ironically nicknamed the "Nonnationalist Scenarist of Ultranationalist movies" is "a nationalist by profession but a true nihilist by choice" (Shafak 79). The "Closeted-Gay Columnist" is infatuated with another regular client but "the thought of him naked sent shivers down his spine" (80). The "Exceptionally Untalented Poet" dispenses most banal and worn-out poetic images (81).

Some considerations on language formulated by the Armenian American protagonist Armanoush during her visit to Istanbul offer further evidence that, in the imaginary universe of Café Kundera, words, meanings and objects are drifting apart.

> They seemed to have no trouble switching from Turkish to English, […] she suspected that the facilitating factor might be less their confidence in their English than their lack of confidence in any language whatsoever. They acted and talked as if no matter what they said or how they said it, one could not really fully express the innermost self and, in the end, language was only a reeking carcass of hollow words rotten inside. (202)

Once again, after reading about the loss of meaning and the discrepancy between signifier and signified in Pamuk's text, in Shafak one encounters lack of harmony between a national language and its speakers. This concept is complicated, in this case, by the coexistence of two equally ineffective languages, Turkish and English: an overly familiar foreign language and a national language become unfamiliar. The fascination of Pamuk's characters for imitation, resulting in cultural amnesia, is reenacted within Café Kundera's walls. The familiarity binding Turks to English immediately relates to a context of Westernization, or more generally, of English-dominated globalization.

Pamuk's surface Istanbul and Shafak's Café Kundera do not only overlap but also significantly differ. First of all, the pessimism and fatalism pervading the atmosphere of Cafè Kundera is not as endemic as in *The Black Book*. Café Kundera does not epitomize an irreversible loss of identity and strategies of self-representation. There are in fact alternatives to this displaced, alienated model,

and, most importantly, Café Kundera is a limited space, not necessarily representative of the city's totality. Evidence comes with the representation of Café Kundera as isolated from the rest of the city, more precisely, "the negation of the whole city" (83):

> This place was out of time and space. Istanbul was in a constant hurry and yet at Café Kundera only lethargy prevailed. People outside the cafe stuck to one another to disguise their loneliness, pretending to be far more intimate than they really were, whereas in here it was the opposite, everyone pretending to be far more detached than they really were. This spot was the negation of the whole city. (83)

If Café Kundera is described as a space of immobility, comatose indolence, eternal recurrence, fixations, repetitions, and obsessions (84, 201), the city of Istanbul, by contrast, is a fluid, mobile entity: "a city boat," "twisted and multifaceted," a place of "chaos and splendor" (170, 246, 143). Café Kundera's guests are terrified by the roaring city outside the café's walls and express their fear through fierce self-criticism, portraying a profoundly divided city, or a city of conflicting identities:

> We cannot abandon this rabbit hole for fear of a traumatic encounter with our own culture. Western politicians presume there is a cultural gap between Eastern Civilization and Western Civilization. If it were that simple! The real civilization gap is between the Turks *and* the Turks. (81)

Considering that Café Kundera is a limited fraction of the city's multifaceted identity, the perspective on the search for Turkey's identity emerging from *The Bastard of Istanbul* is much brighter than the one dominating *The Black Book*. Café Kundera embodies the problems of post-Kemalist society highlighted by *The Black Book*'s surface Istanbul, namely alienation, imitation, amnesia, and the desire to be somewhere else (or somebody else). Yet, Shafak's Istanbul is a very lively, cosmopolitan universe that Kemalism could not completely conquer. Shafak's Istanbul – a city of contradictions that contains its own negation and a series of "cities within a city" (181) – exemplifies how "the role of place sometimes supersedes the role of the state in processes of national […] identity formation" (Mills 386). If on the one hand Pamuk's Istanbul has been completely overcome by amnesia and cultural displacement, Shafak's Istanbul, though partly affected by the same problems, offers strenuous resistance.

'Authenticity' and Americanization

There is no room for America in *The Black Book*'s construction of Turkish national identity, apart from the role of the neocolonial oppressor, an alien body repeatedly attacked but never truly subverted, imitated but never mimicked. The

70

text does problematize and eventually deconstruct the binary division it initially applies to Istanbul. *The Black Book*'s characters long to retrieve the city's pre-republican identity, but they tragically come to the realization that not only will Turkey never recover its primordial self, but that there was never such thing as a Turkish primordial self. By contrast, Shafak transcends the view of America as a destructive intruder; quite to the contrary, America becomes a fundamental component of Turkish identity.

The Black Book indicates that amnesiac and imitative behaviors in Turkey are the result of a "conspiracy" of foreign powers. The first mention of this conspiracy appears in a chapter titled "Do you Remember Me?" where Galip encounters Master Bedii's grandson: "[My grandfather] knew full well what a powerful conspiracy he was up against [...]. These historical powers did not want to give our people the chance to be themselves, and because they wanted to deprive us of the everyday activities and gestures that are our greatest treasure, they kicked my grandfather out of the shops in Beyoğlu" (189). The choice of the term "conspiracy" in reference to Western powers is highly problematic. On the one hand it evokes the late Kemalist mistrust of Europe and the United States for their unrelenting support of Ottoman minorities. In spite of the pro-Western ideology adopted by Kemalism, the Ottoman minorities and the United States were perceived as joined in an alliance against the cause of Turkish sovereignty on the former Ottoman territories, and therefore became the target of resentment and suspicion that have their roots in the "Sèvres syndrome."[43] On the other hand the hypothesis that *The Black Book* may support Kemalist ideology is highly unlikely: in both *The Black Book* and *The New Life* Kemalism is highlighted as one of the agents of Western imperialism and therefore severely criticized.

If *The New Life* principally attacks the uncontrolled diffusion of Western commodities and its impact on Turkey's national memory, in *The Black Book* the popularity of Western commodities – for instance the Western-looking fashion which drove Master Bedii's atelier to the underground – is merely a consequence

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43 See Taşpinar, "The Rise of Turkish Gaullism: Getting Turkish American Relationship Right" (2011). Taşpinar investigates the reasons behind the widespread anti-Americanism in Turkey today, and locates the origins of this phenomenon in the post-Sèvres years: "In the eyes of Ankara [...] Washington had become the protector patron of the Kurds. This perception went from bad to worse as Kurds became America's best friend in post-Saddam Iraq and began to pursue a maximalist territorial agenda with claims over Kirkuk. All this proved too much to digest for a Turkish public opinion that had always maintained a heavy dose of fear of disintegration – the Sèvres Syndrome – due to Western support for Kurdish and Armenian nationalism" (3–4).

of subtle and yet disruptive imperialistic methods. *The Black Book* concentrates on two modes of diffusion of Western products that greatly affect self-representation and national identity in the surface city: namely, American films and European novels.[44] An illuminating starting point is again provided by the chapter "Bedii Usta's Children," which has by now proven to be crucial in the discussion of surface versus underground Istanbul in *The Black Book*. In the following passage, Master Bedii's son recalls how him and his father gradually lost their customers and comes to the realization that cinema was ultimately responsible for Turkey's culture of imitation.

> Bedii Usta and his son could not at first figure out whom these people were imitating, whom they had taken as their models for change. Their stock of little everyday gestures was "life's great treasure," but slowly and inexorably, as if in obedience to a secret and invisible master, they were changing, disappearing, and a whole set of new gestures was taking their place. It was while the father and his son were working together on a line of child mannequins that they finally got to the bottom of the mystery. The son cried out, "It's because of those damn films!"(63)

Bedii Usta's son blames the Western film industry in 20th-century Turkey for the city's current confusion regarding its own identity. The "secret and invisible master[s]" mentioned in the passage are not the tangible populations of settlers brought to the colonies by Western imperial ventures up to the 20th century, but they are responsible for a more subtle invasion of Turkey by American commodities as well as values, policies, and "large size images" (Sözen in Raw 84). In the following passage the reader learns that, in Master Bedii's son's opinion, films are also the cause for Turkey's loss of sense of Self, for the introduction of "fake, new and ultimately meaningless ways of moving," and for plunging the Istanbul citizenry into a world of constant imitation: "each and everything they did was an imitation" (Pamuk 63).

The most immediate example of cinematographic imitation involves Belkıs, an acquaintance of Galip's, who combs "her hair back in the style of Ava Gardner in *55 Days in Peking* and paint[s] her lips with the same Supertechnirama red" (210). What appears as an innocent replica of an actress's style is later revealed by the narrator as a masquerade making the woman's face impenetrable and alienated – "He looked at Belkıs again, and it seemed as if she were wearing a mask.

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44 Edibe Sözen agrees that films and television were the main vehicles through which American "large size images" were able to spread. See Sözen's "The 'Large Size' Images in the Americanization Process" (1999).

If he took that mask by its Supertechnirama lips and pulled it off, he'd have no trouble reading the face underneath" (212).

Films appear in other parts of the text as the cause of unsettling and schizophrenic behaviors. One of the most touching scenes involves a man who sees himself in a film in which he had played an extra. He is delighted by the realization that the man on the screen, although being himself, looks like somebody else, somebody who represents an ideal the man aspires to. The man lingers in this "dreamlike substitution" (171), eventually spending his entire life trying to "catch another glimpse of himself," namely of an unreal, cinematographic self. His delusion is justified by the nature of the culture in which he lives, where it is extremely common "for a man to pass himself off as someone else" (ibid.).[45]

In *The Bastard*, the U.S. appears as the ideal destination that allows Turkish characters to escape the present, rid themselves of the burden of the past, or shed their national identity. This is evident in the experience of two male characters in the novel: Mustafa, Asya's father, and Barsam, Armanoush's father. Mustafa is the only male member of the Kazancı family, which is burdened by a curse that kills its male representatives ahead of their time. As the only man in the family, Mustafa is overly admired and cherished by his female relatives, who bestow their undivided attention upon him. Nevertheless, he feels excluded from the "dark and complicated world" that the women of his family share and this situation causes him to grow into a "narcissistic and insecure" adult (45). When Mustafa reaches puberty, he gives vent to his unexpressed, uncomprehended sexual desire by raping his sister Zeliha and fathering Asya. A few years later, Mustafa decides to run away from his family and from what his shameful past by moving to the United States.

Initially, Mustafa's perception of America coalesces with his frustrated sexuality: "terrified that he would be rejected […] he turned to yearning for the female body from a distance. This year he had looked angrily at the photos of top models in glossy American magazines, as if to absorb the excruciating fact that no woman this perfect will ever desire him" (44). Mustafa embodies the ambivalent relationship with the West that emerged as a result of Turkish nationalism, within which the West is, to put it with Banu Helvacioğlu, "both the

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45 The use of the term "to pass" recalls the phenomenon of 'passing,' which applies to people of color with extremely light skin who pass as members of the white majority and hope for their blackness to remain undetected. Even in the Turkish context, the term is not completely devoid of racial implications. In fact, in this case a Turkish citizen of unspecified ethnicity attempts to pass as one of the probably white(r) actors in an international film production.

enemy and the object of desire" (Helvacioğlu, "Allahu Ekber" 518). "The same logic," Helvacioğlu continues, "manifests itself in objects of desire and in objects of hatred such as 'women' in patriarchal discourse" (ibid.). In Mustafa's experience, sexual desire and the fascination for America are irremediably entangled. Indicatively, he does not long for local beauties but for top models in American magazines: the longing for a female body, articulated "from a distance," corresponds to the longing for the culture within which these bodies are positioned and imagined, namely, the United States. For Mustafa, the impossibility to possess the object of desire results in the excruciating awareness of the impossibility to own, possess, and participate in American culture. Mustafa creates an evident parallel with Turkish characters in *The Black Book*, who desperately strive to partake in the culture portrayed by American films and Western novels, which remains unattainable.

Mustafa's choice to move to the United States, however, is mostly motivated by the desire to annihilate his past: "Mustafa knew," the narrator explains, "he had to make it in America not because he wanted to attain a better future but because he had to dispose of his past" (45). In fact, America offers Mustafa a significant help in disposing of the past, facilitating his transition into another life. America, for Mustafa, is a space where his past can be un-written, where he can 'become someone else': "a foreigner with no ancestors, a man with no boyhood," with "no native soil to return to, or […] memories to recall" (284). His goal is to assimilate completely and cancel every trace of his Turkishness: "One day, Mustafa thought, I will speak in such a way that no one […] will […] believe, even for a minute, that they are talking to a foreigner" (45). In Arizona, Mustafa marries an American woman (Rose, Armanoush's mother) and makes America "his home […] a home with its backdoor closed to the past" (284). It is legitimate to argue that Mustafa is a product of Kemalism: the perfect example of the "nation of forgetters" that evolved as a consequence of the nationalist project in Turkey (Helvacioğlu 505). Through the figure of Mustafa, Shafak suggests that the enforcement of a "voluntary amnesia" or a "historical amnesia" (ibid.) unleashed by the Kemalist regime impacted not only national history but individual histories as well, influencing how single citizens perceive their own past. Armanoush's Armenian American father, Barsam, finds himself in a comparable situation. "All he really wanted was to be like them, nothing more, nothing less, to be American and to get rid of his Armenian dark skin […] he wanted to be just as white as them. […] Barsam Tchakhmakhchian couldn't help but feel guilty for rapidly unlearning what little Armenian he had learned as a child" (278). Like Mustafa, Barsam is aware of his diversity and ashamed of it.

74

Similar to the inhabitants of Pamuk's overground city, Mustafa and Barsam strive to find their identity through a process of erasure and imitation. By trying to erase their past and imitating American accent, ways, and habits, they hope to unburden themselves of their own personal and national histories and 'become someone else.' It is not by mere coincidence that characters in *The Bastard* who cannot reconcile their heritage and their present are the fathers of the two female protagonists: Asya and Armanoush.

Differently from their fathers, Asya and Armanoush operate a successful synthesis of Turkishness and Americanness that is based neither on erasure nor on imitation. When she comments on the Turkish version of "The Apprentice,"[46] Asya accuses the show of being a "baseless Turkish imitation of America" and adds that "you should amalgamate the technical material borrowed from the West with the particular features of the culture you address. That's what I call a Donald Trump ingeniously alla turca" (153). Asya vehemently attacks the culture of imitation Turkey has produced and suggests it should be replaced by a concept of amalgamation.

The case of Armanoush is even more significant as it inverts the trope of the journey to America as a trajectory of forgetting. Instead of travelling to America to forget her roots, Armanoush feels she needs to leave America to discover them. "Plurality means the state of being more than one. But that was not the case with me. I've never been able to become an Armenian in the first place," Armanoush confesses to the other members of Café Constantinopolis, "I need to find my identity. You know what I've been secretly contemplating? Going to visit my family's house in Turkey" (116). Contrary to her father Barsam, who longs to be American "like everybody else" (278), Armanoush takes the journey to Turkey for the sake of becoming plural. While Mustafa travels to America to erase his past and Barsam wishes he could rid himself of his "Armenian dark skin" (278), Armanoush travels into the past to fully understand her Armenianness: "to be able to become an Armenian American [...] I need to find my Armenianness first. If this requires a voyage into the past, so be it" (118).

In her 2006 article "The De-feminization of Turkish Culture," Shafak announces that "Turkish society and culture have gradually and systematically de-feminized over the last ten decades." The process, Shafak adds, "has reached a climax during the 1930s and 1940s and did not lose its impetus until quite

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46 "The Apprentice" is a U.S. reality show hosted by Donald Trump and broadcast on NBC. The show began in 2004 and has been running for several seasons. Adaptations of "The Apprentice" have been aired worldwide. The Turkish version of "The Apprentice" is titled "Çırak" and hosted by Tuncay Özilhan, the CEO of Anadolu Group.

recently" (Shafak n.p.). Shafak also claims that the 1980s and 1990s reversed the process and, today, "a re-feminization of Turkish culture is well under-way" (ibid.). In her article, Shafak does not go into details as to what this process of re-feminization entails, but surely *The Bastard* contributes to this discourse. The novel suggests that the construction of Turkish identity may now be in the hands of women and hybrid subjects that substitute imitation with amalgamation and amnesia with the awareness of one's own past. Asya and Armanoush's experience also demonstrates that Turkey's dichotomous selves can and should be amalgamated to obtain a more complex understanding of the homeland, one that integrates a plurality of histories and voices.

Integration and Segregation: Shall the Twain Meet?

In both *The New Life* and *The Black Book*, the alienated Turkish civilization nurtures the hope for revenge. *The New Life* openly refers to the West as the object of such revenge:

> Today we are altogether defeated […]. The West has swallowed us up, trampled on us in passing. They have invaded us down to our soup, our candy, our underpants; they have finished us off. But someday, someday perhaps a thousand years from now, we will avenge ourselves; we will bring an end to this conspiracy by taking them out of our soup, our chewing gum, our souls. (Pamuk, *The New Life* 291)

The vagueness of this imperialist opponent, the inscrutable nature of this "conspiracy," and the hopelessly theoretical quality ("maybe in a thousand years") of such revenge, sharpens the feeling that this character might be raging against windmills. In spite of its visionary vehemence, the revenge of the conquered Turkish civilization, deprived of its "soul," still emerges as the vain effort of a helpless civilization, manifesting itself in all its fragility and decay.

The revenge of the underground civilization in the *The Black Book* is by no means more convincing. Differently from *The New Life*, *The Black Book* portrays the effects of a reversal that would bring the underground city to the surface again: this implies that the underground, as a set of removed cultural traditions, would be reintegrated into the collective consciousness. The first revenge scenario is described by Master Bedii's grandson in the basement atelier, who, in one of the previous quotes, prophesized that the underground city would ultimately "[wreak] revenge on the overground city that had supplanted it" (*The Black Book* 191). The effects would be the following:

> on a warm summer day, when all of overground Istanbul was roasting in the sun, dozing amid flies, piles of garbage, and clouds of dust, the skeletons that had been waiting so patiently in these dark and mildewed passages would start to twitch and come to life, and

there would follow a great celebration, a blessing of life and death that took them beyond time, history and the rule of law. […] Galip […] could already imagine the mannequins and the skeletons dancing, and the music fading into silence, and the silence giving way to the clack of copulating bones. (193)

This projection of vengeance, described by the guide as his and his father's "greatest dream" (ibid.) evokes the resurrection of Turkey's submerged heritage, embodied by the skeletons of the ancestors that have been accumulating in the underground passages through the centuries. Nevertheless, the reawakening of an oppressed civilization, against all possible expectations, could not be less appealing. The perspective of an underground renaissance, conducing to the reintegration of Turkey's variegated cultural traditions and the demise of the imitative culture derived from Western imperialism, is portrayed in the novel as a summer apocalypse of dancing and copulating skeletons.

The image of a dried-up Bosphorus – the second revenge scenario – appears in the second chapter of the book, when the dualism between surface and underground Istanbul has not been sketched in its entirety. What can already be perceived at this stage is the revelation of an underground (underwater, in this case) universe that has been gathering all kinds of cultural testimonies, all kinds of objects belonging to various dominations and historical periods that have been amassed side by side for centuries.

On the one hand, the scenario is enthusiastically described as the beginning of a "new civilization" (Pamuk, *Black Book* 17) where the Ottoman and Islamic heritage, the Republic, and the products of Western contamination coexist. American transatlantic liners lie next to old city ferries, and ancient galleons (17), Byzantine treasures next to knives, forks and soda bottles, skeletons gape "in deference to unknown gods of prehistory" (17) next to dervish lodges and mosques. The privileged[47] memento in this unseemly 'museum' is a Cadillac a local gangster and his lover committed suicide on by driving into the water, surrounded by skeletons of Crusaders. On the other hand, the view is an extremely discomforting "doomsday chaos" (17) similar to the vision of dancing skeletons. The potentially empowering vision of a coexistence of Turkey's various cultural components – so alien to the modern republican ideologists and so dear to Shafak – is depicted instead in apocalyptic terms: "what is beyond doubt is that the heavenly place we once knew as the Bosphorus will soon become a pitch-black bog, glistening with muddy shipwrecks baring their shiny teeth like ghosts" (16).

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47   "Among the drying Bosphorus's revealed artifacts, [Celâl] *privileges* an immense car, a 'Black Cadillac […]'" (Komins 377, emphasis added).

The centrality of the American element in this remarkable passage of the novel has been addressed by Benton Jay Komins in his 2002 essay "Cosmopolitanism Depopulated: The Cultures of Integration, Concealment, and Evacuation in Istanbul." Komins suggests that the Cadillac story, reported in one of Celâl's columns, is the only element that manages to stir Celâl's feeling, whereas he writes about remnants of the Ottoman and pre-Ottoman imperial antiquity with indifference. "In a way, history collapses around this Hollywood image of ultraluxe cars, Bonnie and Clyde-like adventure, and quite fatal romance," writes Komins, while "the residue of Byzantium, the Crusader Kingdom, the Ottoman empire, and even the Republic" are mentioned in passing and abandoned "on the swampy bed of the Bosphorus as meaningless souvenirs of the city's past" (Komins 379).

The two dystopian situations in which underground Istanbul takes its revenge on the surface civilization offer a relevant contribution to the search for Turkey's identity. The solution to this dichotomy seems to be the ultimate reconciliation of the two sides of the city. Yet, it is my contention that *The Black Book* challenges the myth of the balancing of the extremes by representing such reunion as no solution at all. Initially the novel seemed to express the urge for the recognition of Turkish identity as a hybrid composition, integrating all the cultural elements that determined its history. Yet, if the emergence of a hybrid, cumulative Turkishness could at first seem to offer a solution to Istanbul's (and Turkey's) culture of imitation, the text ultimately shows that, were this solution to be finally enacted, the result would be far worse than the problem itself: a pitch-black, doomsday chaos of dancing skeletons.

If the text ultimately dismisses an integrative vision of Turkish culture, it equally deconstructs the idea of cultural authenticity. Two quotes illustrate how Galip and Celâl try to reconstruct an age of cultural integrity.

> Once upon a time, they all lived together, and their lives had had meaning, but then, for some unknown reasons, they had lost their meaning, just as they'd also lost their memories. (194)

Celâl introduces this idyllic situation in which "they all lived together" with a formulaic incipit, "once upon a time," which immediately locates this scenario outside history, in an undefined, fairytale timelessness suggesting the a-historical nature of this fabled age of integrity. The refusal to identify the historical events that may have determined Turkey's collective memory loss, and the lack of interest in doing so, betrays a dogmatic social trauma from which no way out can be found. In this second quote, instead, the narrator refers to a poem celebrating the 17th century as an Edenic époque.

> In the poem's distant golden age, action and meaning where one and the same. Heaven was on earth, and the things we kept in our houses were one with our dreams. Those were happy, happy days when everything we held in our hands – out tools, our cups, our daggers, our pens – was but an extension of our soul. (301)

Not only does the scenario describe the unity between men and their language, language and meaning, but also between heaven and earth. This blatant romanticization of the Ottoman Empire and the ironic undertones of the passage betray a fundamental skepticism towards the myth of Ottoman classical age as a Golden Age. At this point, the text deconstructs the two main ideas on which the underground civilization is based: authenticity and hybridity, invalidating the two major paths towards the assessment of a modern Turkish identity beyond the mystifications of Kemalism and Americanization.

Having abandoned these two options, the text retreats into the fatalism and sadness so aptly described by Ian Almond: "the sadness inherent in *The Black Book* is not simply of having lost one's national identity to the cultural and economic centers of North America and Europe, but rather the melancholy impossibility of ever having an authentic identity at all" (Almond 84). By declaring the loss of Turkish memory and identity as definitive, Pamuk's text expresses a very pessimistic assessment of Turkey's identity in a globalized context. *The Black Book* does not try to relocate Turkey in a transnational perspective (a concern that permeates, instead, *The Bastard*) nor does it make an effort to constructively integrate the Western cultural element in modern Turkish culture. The book laments the overwhelming impact Western aesthetics, especially American movies, had on the Istanbulites' self-perception, without trying to subvert it. Ultimately, Galip's concern is not merely finding his missing wife and brother-in-law; what has been truly lost in *The Black Book* is the identity of the Self and the nation. As Almond remarks: "this loss of identity is […] not just the death of the self, but of the collectivity to which it belongs" (82). Almond also points out that national identity has been lost "to something else," namely "to the cultural and economic centers of North America and Europe" (84).

In contrast to the *The Black Book*, encounters between antithetical worlds in *The Bastard* yield very productive results. When a member of Café Constantinopolis enters the safe space of Café Kundera and vice versa, they initiate a debate that will lead the characters to question the validity of their assumptions and eventually open up to the perspective of the Other. Thus, in *The Bastard*, the two oppositional city spaces converge and mingle, enabling change and integration. Differently from Pamuk, the reconciliation of antipodal understandings of Turkishness is not only possible, but strongly encouraged. While *The Black Book*

eventually dismisses all the possibilities of identity re-construction it proposes, leaving skepticism as the only option, Shafak addresses the themes of integration and coexistence with serene confidence.

In-betweenness, synthesis, and integration are ubiquitous themes in Shafak's novels. Many of her characters live suspended between two or more realities, unable or unwilling to elect one of these as their prior space of belonging. In one of her newspaper articles Shafak asks her readers:

> Who exactly are the Turks? Are we a Western society and if so, why do the Europeans treat us like a different species? Are we Middle Easterners and if so, why do we feel so aloof to their ways? Are we the symbol of "in-between-dom" and if so, in today's increasingly polarized world is it possible to take up one's abode in a threshold? (Shafak, "Making Sense of Irrationality" n.p.)

Shafak's predilection for these themes should not be regarded as particularly idiosyncratic, as the celebration of in-betweennes is deeply rooted in neo-Ottomanist rhetoric. According to Lerna Yanık, discourses of liminality and hybridity have concurred to create a sense of national exceptionalism from the post-Cold War period until today. Among the most prominent advocates of this discourse, Yanık mentions prominent neo-Ottomanist leaders such as Turgut Özal, Ahmet Davutoğlu, and Abdullah Gül. Yanık argues that, from its origins, neo-Ottomanism has capitalized on "hybrid representations of geography and history," grounding Turkey's identity in its liminality, in "the state of 'being neither here nor there' or 'being betwixt and between […] positions'" (Yanık 80–81). The emphasis on "liminality" and the "hybridization of […] the Turkish past, especially its multiethnic and multireligious past" contributed to the creation of what Yanık's article addresses as "Turkish Exceptionalism" (ibid.).

Interestingly enough, Café Kundera's regulars feel that in-betweenness is a completely unprofitable situation. The café's guests discuss two kinds of in-betweenness – geographical and political – and address both in a critical manner:

> "We are stuck. We are stuck between the East and the West. Between the past and the future. On the one hand there are secular modernists, so proud of the regime they constructed, you cannot breathe a critical word. […] On the other hand there are the conventional traditionalists, so infatuated with the Ottoman past, you cannot breathe a critical word. […] Sandwiched between the two sides, we march two steps forward and one step backward." (82)

> "Yeah, we should all line up along the Bosphorus bridge and puff as hard as we can to shove this city in the direction of the West, if it doesn't work, we'll try the other way, see if we can veer it to the East." He chuckled. "It's no good to be in between. International politics does not appreciate ambiguity." (145)

Not willing to adhere to a particular political current, nor to choose between the East and the West, the "nihilists, pessimists and anarchists" of Café Kundera see themselves as doomed to extinction (82). Taking into account that other novels by Shafak celebrate the condition of in-betweenness as a legitimate place of belonging,[48] Café Kundera constitutes a dissonant note. Café Kundera's guests fail to understand the constructive potential of in-betweenness, and fail to see its qualities as a foundational value of Turkishness. For them, in-betweenness is rather a condition from which one must urgently move away, as it would lead towards extinction and self-annihilation. This does not come as a surprise when one considers that Café Kundera is a strictly mono-ethnic space that shows very little openness to cultural diversity, as will become clear during Armanoush's visit. Florian Sedlmeier argues, in fact, that "in-between positions have been perceived as precarious because the idea of mixture is inextricably bound up with a discourse of contamination," or even with the "tragedy of not-belonging" (Sedlmeier 9). The dominant discourse in Café Kundera is, therefore, clearly one of cultural segregation and fixity.

By portraying Café Kundera's guests as preoccupied by Turkey's in-betweenness, Shafak condemns some of the discourses circulating in Turkey focused on binary distinctions and fear of diversity. Similarly, she highlights the stark contrast between such discourses and the fluid quality of the city of Istanbul, as the following quote, drawn from one of Shafak's newspaper articles, demonstrates:

> East and West are often used as if they were mutually exclusive categories – static and eternal. There is, however, one city where you quickly learn to mistrust the two concepts. In Istanbul, you understand, perhaps not intellectually but intuitively, that East and West are ultimately imaginary ideas, ones that can be de-imagined and re-imagined. (Shafak, "Pulled by two Tides" n.p.)

The frustration expressed by Café Kundera's customers at the country's unsafe position between the East and the West and at its internal clashes and binary divisions creates a stark contrast between the café and the city around it, qualifying Café Kundera as indeed the "negation of the whole city" (Shafak 83).

Asya Kazancı, the Turkish protagonist, is the only *habituée* of Café Kundera who fully understands the Café's status as a dissonant and yet crucial component of the chimeric Turkish society. Asya herself embodies many of the aforementioned problems affecting Turkish identity and self-perception, deserving her

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48 In *The Saint of Incipient Insanities*, for example, the protagonist commits suicide on the Bosphorus Bridge to anchor her identity between two continents. *The Forty Rules of Love* speaks of placelessness in celebratory tones.

place among the café's regulars. But she also has the capacity to mediate between the different components of Turkish identity. At first sight, Asya displays all the features of the post-Kemalist Turkish citizen, affected by the consequences of the ruptures enforced by Kemalism. She is a perfect example for the effects of collective amnesia, as she is detached from and uninterested in her own family history as well as her country's. Asya confronts Armanoush on the meaning of history: "what's the use of [history]? Why should I know anything about the past? Memories are too much of a burden" (179). Asya's detachment from her cultural roots is a product of Westernization, as another conversation with Armanoush confirms: "[Asya:] 'We are Western.' [Armanoush:] 'No you're not Western. Turks are Middle Eastern but somehow in constant denial'" (178).

Yet, Asya perceives the constructive potential of Café Kundera and what it symbolizes, discerning how the Café is only a part of a more complex, multifarious whole:

> Nothing was done in harmony, and yet in that dissonance there lay an unusual cadence. This is what Asya liked most about the café: its comatose indolence and farcical disharmony. (84)

> The group was a self-regulating organism wherein individual differences were displayed but could never take over, as the organism had a life outside and beyond the personalities composing it. Among them Asya Kazançi found inner peace. Café Kundera was her sanctuary. [...] No one forced you to change since human beings where thought to be essentially imperfect and uncorrectable. (Shafak 87)

The instability and disharmony that characterize the café are reminiscent of the fluidity that is proper to Istanbul. If in the first place Asya had defined Café Kundera as the "negation of the whole city" (83), but she also sees the place as a "self-regulating organism wherein individual differences were displayed but could never take over" (ibid.). This last observation establishes a strong connection to other popular constructions of the city of Istanbul as a living entity formed by heterogeneous components (minorities, diverse architectural styles and influences) forming an organic whole.[49] Café Kundera is therefore the negation of the city and, at the same time, it replicates the city's structure very closely.

One feature of Café Kundera Asya distances herself from is the display of Turkish nationalism, converging mainly in the denial of the Armenian genocide.

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49   See Amy Mills's "Narratives in City Landscapes: Cultural Identity in Istanbul" (2005) and "The Place of Locality for Identity in the Nation" (2008). See also Maurice Cerasi's "The Formation of Ottoman House Types: A Comparative Study in Interaction with Neighboring Cultures" (1998).

82

The Non Nationalist Scenarist of Ultranationalist Movies denies the genocide in front of Asya's Armenian American cousin Armanoush, triggering Asya's vehement response. The presence of the Other – an Armenian American – disturbs the dynamics of unchallenged sameness permeating the café, causing great unrest. By doing so, Asya exposes the generalized intolerance – if not plain racism – that still permeates the café and triggers a profound change that will turn it into a more integrative space. The Scenarist accuses Armenians of having been carried away by collective hysteria, and of having interiorized narratives that have been repeated and handed down until they became their reality.

> "There is such a thing as collective hysteria. […] It is a scientifically known fact that collectivities are capable of manipulating their individual member's beliefs, thoughts, and even bodily reactions. You keep hearing a certain story over and over again, and the next thing you know you have internalized the narrative. From that moment on it ceases to be someone else's story. It's not even a story anymore, but reality, *your* reality!" (211, italics in the original)

Asya promptly turns these two accusations against the Scenarist: "Let me tell you what hysteria is. All those scripts you've penned thus far […] and once you make it into a TV show and make millions internalize your awful message, it becomes collective hysteria" (211). Asya exposes Turkish nationalism as inconsistent and ephemeral. The Scenarist's opinion about his own scripts shifts in the course of this episode: first he describes them as "historical movies" backed up by "meticulous research" (210), but later he speaks of the same movies as "crap," "just for entertainment" (212). Thus, nationalism emerges as an ideology disowned by its own perpetrators.

The Bastard blames Turkish nationalism for its indifference towards Turkey's past and the ensuing culture of imitation, and it does so more explicitly than *The Black Book*. What is particularly unacceptable for Asya is the way Turkish nationalism manipulates history through a series of narratives.

> "What do we know about 1915? […] I bet you've read nothing! But you're so convinced. Aren't we just swallowing what's given to us? Capsules of information. Capsules of misinformation. Every day we swallow a handful." (210)

The Scenarist's dismissal of the so-called "premodern era and its premodern tragedies" (211) as not relevant, even damaging, for the image of republican Turkey reminds Asya of her family. The way Asya's aunts encourage the removal of unpleasant moments from the history of their family offers a parallel with the erasure of the Armenian genocide from official Turkish historiography:

> "my family is a bunch of clean freaks. Brushing away the dirt and dust of memories! They always talk about the past, but it's a cleansed version of the past. That's the Kazancıs'

> technique of copying with problems; if something's nagging you, well, close your eyes, count to ten, wish it never happened, and the next thing you know, it has never happened, hurray! Every day we swallow another capsule of mendacity." (147)

The unspeakable event that triggered this form of ostracism is the rape of Zeliha by her own brother Mustafa. This deed is never addressed in Asya's household for fear of the consequences and, as a result, Asya ignores who her father is. Thus, Asya's ignorance about her past, and her aunts' compliance with it, find a direct correspondence in the rupture between Turkey's republican present and its Ottoman past, suppressed by Kemalism for the fear it could threaten Turkey's self-perception as a Westernized democracy.

In this respect, Café Kundera emerges as a site where the manipulation of history operated by Turkish nationalism and, at a smaller scale, by single individuals and families is exposed and challenged. When the confrontation with the Scenarist occurs, Asya has already come to know her Armenian American cousin Armanoush and her story. Made more confident by her interaction with the imperial Other – the Armenian – Asya is ready to expose hegemonic narratives developed during the Kemalist age as inconsistent and ephemeral, disrupting them in favor of more integrative visions of history, privileging the experiences of the former imperial Other and the relevance of individual narratives. The novel suggests that the new Turkish generations need to elaborate different historical models integrating Turkey's heterogeneous, often contradictory, tendencies. Ultimately, Café Kundera is the arena where nationalist historiography is revised through the agency of characters who are able to see Turkish society as a complex, multilayered construction.

If Café Kundera appears to be in many ways comparable to Pamuk's overground Istanbul, Café Costantinopolis is reminiscent of underground Istanbul – where elements that were ejected from the nationalist projects have reaggregated and formed an alternative civilization. An analysis of Café Constantinopolis appears relevant at this point because the café directly addresses the themes of segregation and integration. In the first place, the section reflects on Armanoush's inner conflict between assimilation into mainstream American culture and adhesion to her father's Armenian tradition. Secondly, Asya's irruption in the anti-Turkish environment of Café Constantinopolis triggers a crisis and a renegotiation of essentialist notions of identity that had until then disabled all chances of dialogue between Turks and Armenians.

> Café Constantinopolis was a chat room, or as regulars called it, a cybercafé, initially designed by a bunch of Greek Americans, Sephardim Americans, and Armenian Americans who, other than being New Yorkers, had one fundamental thing in common: They all were the grandchildren of families once based in Istanbul. (112)

84

This initial description anticipates the strong claim of rootedness and belonging advanced by Café Constantinopolis's guests. The name itself, whose meaning is, unlike Café Kundera's, very explicit, evokes nostalgia and loyalty for a city whose 'original' form has been resuscitated in a virtual café bearing its name. The cybercafé is therefore an "imaginary community," not only because its members share a mythicized idea of common origins and no face-to-face connection, but especially because the geographical reality it is affiliated with no longer exists and has not existed in a long time. In fact, by referring to their city of origins with the name it bore until 1923, the founders of the online community made a clear statement: they expelled the Turkish-Republican element from the city's identity.[50] By discriminating against Turkish users in forum discussions and against Turks in general, Café Constantinopolis reconstructs an imaginary Istanbul from which the Turkish and Republican elements have been expunged.

In spite of their antipodal functions in the text, Café Constantinopolis has much in common with Café Kundera. I have already alluded to its importance for the Armenian protagonist, Armanoush, who, similarly to Asya and Café Kundera, considers it her "sanctuary" (87). Café Constantinopolis is a space where Armanoush, a young Armenian American woman born to a family that was decimated by the genocide, negotiates her identity, constantly oscillating between Armenianness and Americanness.

Initially, Armanoush's inner fluctuation between these two cultural poles is one between two irreconcilable extremes allowing no possible mediation. Armanoush's Armenianness is often associated with a "beastly inner self," "a cryptic being in deep slumber" residing in the young woman's most intimate dimension (114). The interaction with Café Constantinopolis's regulars, especially with an Armenian American man called Baron Baghdassarian, awakens Armanoush's ethnic self: "[Baron Baghdassarian] poked that creature with the spear of his words, prodding it until it woke up with a roar and came to light" (115).

By contrast, Armanoush finds the perspective of integrating as a "normal" (116) U.S. citizen to be much more tranquilizing. First of all, her integration would please her American mother, Rose, made "hysterically anti-Armenian" (119) by her unhappy marriage to Armanoush's Armenian father. Secondly, it would pave the way

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50 The fictional Café Constantinopolis in *The Bastard of Istanbul* is modeled on an existing Armenian American online community called "Armenian Forum" (forum.hyeclub.com). Shafak doubtlessly consulted the forum as a source on Armenian American identitarian discourses, as the similarities between ideas and terminology employed by Shafak and the forum users (sometimes completely identical) prove.

to an uncomplicated relationship with an American boy, Matt, very much encouraged by her mother. Unfortunately, for Café Constantinopolis's regulars, assimilating to Americanness would amount to a betrayal of her Armenian origins. In this respect, one of the café's members compares the children of expatriates in the United States to the Janissaries under the Ottoman Empire:

> the Janissaries were Christian children captured and converted by the Ottoman state with a chance to climb the social ladder at the expense of despising their own people and forgetting their own past. The Janissary's paradox is as relevant today for every minority as it was yesterday. You the child of expatriates! […] [A]re you going to accept the role of the Janissaries? Will you abandon your community to make peace with the Turks and let them whitewash the past so that, as they say, we can all move *forward*? (114)

The condition of the modern 'Janissaries' presents the awareness of one's roots as incompatible with Americanness. "Accepting the role of the Jannissaries," in fact, has two separate implications. First, it implies "mak[ing] peace with the Turks" and allow a conclusive settlement on the debate on the genocide. Second, it refers more directly to the condition of Armenian Americans, who, by assimilating to American mainstream culture, perpetuate the Janissary mentality.

> The Janissary's paradox is being torn between two clashing states of existence. On the one hand the remnants of the past pile up – a womb of tenderness and sorrow, a sense of injustice and discrimination. On the other hand glimmers the promised future – a shelter decorated with the trimmings and trapping of success, a sense of safety like you have never had before, the comfort of joining the majority and finally being deemed normal. (116)

Café Constantinopolis is therefore a space where Armanoush's conflicting and mutually exclusive personalities are laid bare: on the one hand the urgency to maintain the ties to her father's tradition and act in order to prevent the Armenian genocide from being forgotten, on the other hand the desire to assimilate to the American majority for reasons of personal fulfillment and tranquility.

Like Café Kundera and its regular customers, the Armenian American community of Café Constantinopolis is static, impermeable to change, and at times nationalistic and intolerant. The idea that immigrant communities adhere to an ossified notion of national identity recurs frequently in Shafak's work, especially in *The Bastard of Istanbul*. When the guests of Café Kundera hear that Armanoush is Armenian American, they cannot contain their surprise, as "Armenian Armenian was no problem – similar culture, similar problems – but Armenians American meant someone who despised the Turks" (208). Shafak suggests that, since Armenian Americans do not inhabit the same territory nor share a physical space with the Turks, they base their prejudice about Turks on "stories they've

heard from their grandparents or else from one another. And those stories are so terribly heartbreaking (254).[51]

Shafak's journalistic articles provide further evidence that this assumption is very much part of her understanding and conceptualization of diasporic or immigrant communities:

> Turks living in Europe can be far more nationalist, conservative, reactionary and religious than Turks in Turkey. […] The inflexibility of some Turkish immigrant communities in Europe is related less to their "Turkishness" than to "immigrant psychology." […] Back home here, within the daily routine of politics, things change and they change fast. "Change" is the underlying motto. Not so much for the immigrant abroad, though. The bigger the need to resist change, the deeper the withdrawal into cocoons – *ghettoes of glass*. (Shafak, "The Return of the Ghetto" n.p.)

Whether we consider Shafak's portrayal of Turkish immigrants in her newspaper article "The Return of the Ghetto" or her depiction of Armenian American identity in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, diasporic communities emerge as static and conservative as they are not exposed to the constant changes and developments in their native countries.

At Café Constantinopolis, the legitimate hope that Turkey will recognize the Armenian genocide and apologize officially is entangled with very radical positions against the Turks, sometimes amounting to indiscriminate intolerance against an entire population. The community's radical point of view on Turks emerges most clearly when Armanoush describes her stepfather's family as "ordinary Turks":

> "what are you going to talk about with ordinary Turks? […] Look, even the well-educated are either nationalist or ignorant. Do you think ordinary people would be interested in accepting historical truths? Do you think they're going to say: *Oh yeah, we are sorry we deported and massacred you guys and then contentedly denied it all.*" (118, italics in the text)[52]

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51 The alleged difference between national and diasporic communities will be discussed again in Chapter Four ("Ottoman Nature") with regard to the character of Aram, botanic symbolism in *The Bastard*, and Appiah's concept of rooted cosmopolitanism.

52 This stereotypical vision of the Turk as barbaric and loathsome, unscathed by individual cases of agreeable Turks, finds confirmation in the online forum Shafak used as a reference for Café Constantinopolis. "There is no such thing as the 'best Turk,' a Turk is a Turk […] Nonetheless, what do you think you are going to accomplish by interacting with 'polite' Turks? […] Most […] are just a bunch of primitive beasts, therefore, the so called 'good' Turk is irrelevant" (Posted by "Armenian" in response to "To All Hai Dat Champions and Armenian Turk Lovers" on 24 May 2005).

The perspectives provided by Café Constantinopolis's community dehumanize Turks and depict Turkey as a reality at war with Armenians. In fact, when Armanoush manifests her intentions to travel to Istanbul and look for her grandmother's house, one of the guests comments: "Wow, you will be our war reporter" (119). Accordingly, Turkey is imagined as a country Armenians could not easily enter, or would do it at the risk of their own safety:

> "Wait wait wait", Lady Peacock/Siramark typed in panic. "What the hell do you think you're doing? Are you planning to go to Turkey on your own, did you take leave of your senses? […] How far do you think you can go with that name on your passport? Why don't you instead directly walk into a police headquarters in Istanbul and get yourself nicely arrested?" (117)

What Shafak posits as the most problematic aspect of the Armenian American online community is a negative identity of the kind James Clifford explores in his 1994 essay "Diasporas." Clifford argues that Jews in America are an example of those "peoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss" (Clifford 307). Armenian Americans in *The Bastard* find themselves in a comparable situation. In Shafak, the common hatred against the Turk and the memory of the genocide seem to provide the basis of the unity among the members of the Armenian American community, as they equalize their "common history and culture" with their "common enemy":

> every week they would choose a specific topic of discussion. Though the themes varied greatly, they all tended to revolve around their common history and culture – "common" oftentimes meaning "common enemy": the Turks. Nothing brought people together more swiftly and strongly – though transiently and shakily – than a shared enemy. (113)

The transient nature of this bond is the center of the critique formulated in *The Bastard*, as the Armenian American online community seem indifferent to the value of their shared Armenian tradition and cultural memory – so much so that the "common enemy" emerges as their primary source of community bonding. The exclusively strong connection between identity and a common enemy, paradoxically enough, results in the annihilation of the efforts made by the Armenian and the international community to encourage the Turkish government to officially acknowledge the Armenian genocide. In fact, when Asya intervenes in Café Constantinopolis to apologize for "her father's crime" (262), the members of the community will try their best to invalidate her apologies, encouraging a conclusive comment by Baron Baghdassarian: "Some among the Armenians in the diaspora would never want the Turks to recognize the genocide. If they do so, they'll pull the rug out from under our feet and take the strongest bond that

unites us" (263). Earlier in the novel, another Armenian member of the café had affirmed that "for most Armenians in the diaspora, Hai Dat[53] is the sole psychological anchor that we have in order to sustain an identity" (117).[54]

In *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Café Kundera and Café Constantinopolis share a similar function: they both isolate critical aspects of a post-Ottoman identity. They represent "[s]afe spaces of the like-minded" (Shafak "Safe Spaces" n.p.), as Shafak herself would call them, as they group individuals who share an essentialist, fundamentalist vision of identity. "The desire for a safe and sterile space of existence," Shafak argues in her article "Safe Spaces of the Like-Minded," "is a flawed approach" (ibid.) in so far as the resistance to diversity leads the guests of the two cafés to a dichotomous vision of the world as divided into fundamentally opposite entities (East and West, Armenians and Turks, minority and majority). The novel shows, instead, that these entities can coexist within the same social model.

Café Kundera's and Café Constantinopolis's intransigent positions are eventually redeemed by the penetration of an alien element in their "safe and sterile space of existence" (Shafak, "Safe Spaces" n.p.): an Armenian American in an exclusively Turkish space, and a Turk in a fundamentally anti-Turkish one. This echoes Shafak's words in "Safe Spaces": "if we are to develop intellectually, spiritually and culturally it can only be with and through 'Others'" (n.p.).

Asya's effort to start a dialogue and acknowledge the legitimacy of the Armenian cause will provoke deep unsettlement and eventually trigger a negotiation of guilt:

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53 Or 'Hai Tad': the Armenian cause.

54 From "Forum.hyeclub.com": "I do not want the government of Turkey to 'ever' recognize the Armenian genocide. If it does so, I am confident that the entire Armenian population of the Diaspora will disappear into the pages of history within two or three generations. Unfortunately, for most of our brethren the 'Hai Dat' is the only 'psychological anchor' they have that maintains their Armenian identity" ("Armenian" on 8 December 2004). The same post inspired the Scenarist's point of view on the genocide. The Scenarist says "look, I am very sorry for your family, I offer you my condolences. But you have to understand it was a time of war. People died on both sides. Do you have any idea how many Turks have died in the hands of Armenian rebels? […] Times were different back then. It was not even a Turkish state back then, it was the Ottoman Empire" (208). These lines resemble a passage from the abovementioned thread on 8 December 2004: "There was a major war and many people died on both sides. Turks suffered just as much as Armenians […] please allow me to say – I am very sorry that all that stuff happened to you people. I am really, really sorry, but we Turks are different now. Times are different now."

> "Tell me what can I do as an ordinary Turk in this day and age to ease your pain?" Now that was a question hitherto no Turk had asked the Armenians in Café Constantinopolis. […] Until today Café Constantinopolis' encounter with the Turks had basically been a fuming exchange of slander and soliloquy. This time the tone was radically different. (261, 262)

Asya talks the members of Café Constantinopolis into acknowledging the difference between individual and state responsibilities, and between the Turkish perpetrators of the genocide and present-day Turks. Moreover, Asya forces the Armenian American online community to admit that some of them are not interested in an official recognition of the genocide by the Turkish government, otherwise they would "pull the rug out from under [their] feet" (263) and thus compromise the most powerful common denominator of Armenian identity.

Asya's endeavors obviously do not result in any conclusive solution to the conflicts between Turks and Armenians, but expose contradictory, problematic aspects of the question, pointing out that both sides are flawed. On the one hand, in fact, the Armenian American online community relies excessively on genocide and cultural hatred against the Turks as founding elements of Armenian identity.[55] On the other hand, present-day Turks display a tendency towards selective memory and denial of the country's 'unwanted' tradition, and rely on historical narratives the novel presents as biased and propagandistic.

The confrontation with the Armenian genocide forces Asya to identify with the Armenian perception of time, where past and present are continuously intermingled. Asya, who this far had categorically refused to accept the past as part of her own self, is thus forced to accept the crucial role of the family and national history in the shaping of an individual's identity. Thus, on an individual level, she addresses one of the problems that affect her nation deeply: national amnesia. The suffering caused by the detachment from her family history will be the decisive element furthering the dialogue between the two communities:

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55 The novel includes a list of elements that make someone 'Armenian,' compiled by an Armenian American member of Café Constantinopolis. The list is meant as a "self-scoring test that measured the degree of one's 'Armenianness'," but contains a series of references to Armenian cultural practices. For example, "you can't help feeling sad when you dance to 'Lorke Lorke,' even if the melody is bouncy and you don't understand the lyrics" or "the sound of a duduk sends shivers down your spine and you cannot help wondering how a flute made from an apricot tree can cry so sadly" (114–115). The long list demonstrates that Armenian Americans do have a solid cultural heritage, and their fear of losing group cohesion in case Turkey recognized the Armenian genocide appears therefore as unfounded.

90

> Yes, perhaps it is exactly my being without a past that will eventually help me to sympathize with your attachment to history. I can recognize the significance of continuity in human memory. I can do that… and I do apologize for the sufferings my ancestors have caused your ancestors. (263)

To conclude this section on segregation and integration, in *The Bastard of Istanbul* the introduction of an element of Otherness into "safe spaces of the like-minded" helps to challenge essentialist and nationalist understanding of post-Ottoman identity and paves the way towards a hybrid concept of identity. In the case of Armenian Americans, the perspectives that must be overcome include, first, the concept of negative identity, based on a common enemy rather than on a common past; second, a binary mentality creating an irreconcilable distance between "an imaginary us and an imaginary them" (Shafak, "Peddlers" n.p.). In the Turkish case, instead, nationalism is linked to amnesia, imitation, and over-dependence on Western canons of representation. Turkey's "historical amnesia" (Helvacioğlu 504) erased the Armenian genocide as part of a past that needs to be ejected from the national self.

In this context, the comparison between Pamuk's and Shafak's representations of Istanbul reveals a fundamental difference of perspective: on the one hand *The Black Book* laments the loss of a pre-republican Golden Age that resulted in "emplaced" (Mills 384) Manichean divisions. On the other hand, *The Bastard* does the opposite by representing loci of cultural essentialism entering a deep crisis and opening up to more fruitful and constructive models of cultural hybridity.

The Ottoman Utopia

The following section resorts to the construct of utopia to address Shafak's romanticization of the Ottoman Empire. With the term 'Ottoman utopia,' I describe literary (mis-)constructions that overemphasize certain positive aspects of Ottoman society – such as tolerance, multiculturalism, and fruitful exchange among ethnic groups – while downplaying others that would cast a shadow on projections of the Ottoman Empire as a utopian space of peaceful coexistence and intercultural harmony. The Ottoman utopia can productively be read as part of the "post-empire imaginaries" outlined by Barbara Buchenau and Virginia Richter in the eponymous volume *Post-Empire Imaginaries? Anglophone Literature, History, and the Demise of Empire*. Buchenau and Richter recognize that empires as geopolitical phenomena are a thing of the past, but claim that "as a concept, empire is alive and kicking, precisely in the sense of 'post-empire': standing to historical empires in relation of historical succession and, simultaneously, of supplement and simulation" (xix). This leads to a proliferation of post-empire imaginaries

91

that market the empire as "a time of tranquility, order, and elegance, now lost forever," "an image of totality which is placed in an irrecoverable position of alterity" and "an illusory vision of completeness" (ibid.). This does evoke the perfect and irretrievable islands of the utopian tradition, but also applies to Shafak's and Pamuk's projections of the classical age of the Ottoman empire as a utopia and a golden age respectively.

Like all utopian formations, the Ottoman utopia bears a political message: it embodies a critique of Kemalism and, at the same time, it resurrects and advocates Ottoman multiculturalism as one of the ideals that should guide the future of Turkey. The following pages will focus on literary manifestations of the Ottoman utopia in Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* and her journalistic articles, and compare these with representations of an Ottoman 'Golden Age' in Pamuk's *The Black Book*. The two constructs share numerous affinities but ultimately serve different purposes and display different perceptions of Turkey's post-Ottoman identity. Shafak's Ottoman utopia conveys a vision of Turkey as predisposed to host a diversified society thanks to centuries of Ottoman cosmopolitanism and as potentially able to harmonize its different ethnic components. By contrast, Pamuk's Golden Age not only laments the loss of cultural integrity but also disables all chances to imagine and conceive such integrity. This chapter will end with a reading of the Ottoman utopia through the lens of postcolonial theory: Stuart Hall's reflections on cultural identity will provide a framework to theorize the discrepancy between Pamuk's and Shafak's approaches, defining the latter as most typical of diasporic writing.

Romanticizations of the Ottoman Empire are not limited to Shafak's work and the term 'Ottoman utopia' can also be employed to delineate a larger phenomenon. Edward Said reluctantly admitted to Ari Shavit of *Ha'aretz Magazine* that "in a funny sort of way, it worked rather well under the Ottoman Empire, with its millet system. What they had then seems a lot more humane than what we have now" (Said 447). In her 2005 article "Narratives in City Landscapes: Cultural Identity in Istanbul," geographer Amy Mills addresses the ways in which Kemalism imagined narratives of national identity that disavowed the country's imperial history and developed independently from it. She adds, however, that contemporary debates revolve around the resurrection of minority history in the form of new counter-narratives locating the essence of the city, an "imaginary 'real' Istanbul" (458), in its tradition of cosmopolitanism. In Mills' words, "narratives of minority history and of European history are being resurrected in the city with images of tolerance and harmonious multiculturalism" (446). These counter-narratives construct an idealized Ottoman Empire, as they "employ a

nostalgic language of history to narrate a particular place identity, replacing the tensions of the past and the present with seamless and beautiful images" (458).

Architect Maurice Cerasi describes the Ottoman Empire as one which did not bring a preexistent culture to the invaded territories and therefore imposed none (Cerasi 134), thus minimizing the disruptive potential of its imperialistic enterprise. Cerasi exalts the Ottoman Empire's adoption of "syncretism as a basic cultural attitude" (133) which, "even when in conflict, [gave to all] the sense of belonging to a common culture in daily life" (134). The notion of "Ottoman syncretism" as the integration of heterogeneous artistic contributions from different sources and regions presents Ottoman aesthetics as driven by a principle of amalgamation, suggesting an equally tolerant political establishment.

Other voices confute Ottoman romanticizations of this kind. Even in the classical age of the empire, the *Pax Ottomana* consisted of immutable religious and ethnic differences among subjects, and an unbridgeable imperial distance between the center and the tribute-paying peripheries, between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects – a category that was accepted and tolerated and yet kept in an invariably subordinate position (Makdisi 771). In "Ottoman Orientalism," Ussama Makdisi explains that non-Muslim subjects were constantly addressed with derogatory terms such as "vermin" and "mice," the very names of minorities were used in a derogatory manner and as synonymous with "scoundrel" or "infidel." This was a common practice even in historical and official documents (Makdisi 775). Referring to the Ottoman Empire as a space of "tolerance and harmonious multiculturalism" (Mills 446) promoting a policy of egalitarianism is therefore, if not incorrect, certainly reductive.

Utopia and Empire

Utopia is a both a construct and a literary genre (Ricoeur, *Lectures* 15). The term originated with Thomas More's text *Utopia* (1516), which depicts a fictional journey to an island that hosts a perfect society. The name of the island derives from its fictional ruler and founder, king Utopus. Utopian society is based on the sharing of goods and private property is not allowed. Utopians lead frugal and industrious lives, dress simply, and hold slaves. Riding the wave of enthusiasm and curiosity about the first voyages to America, More locates the island in the New World. Thus, the novel locates its narrative within a plausible geographical and historical context. The protagonist, Raphael, is a member of Vespucci's crew embarking on a new journey and reaching Utopia's shore. The unfortunate loss of the coordinates that describe Utopia's location exclude the possibility of further journeys to the island: thus, Utopia is destined to remain unreachable. More's

influential book has given rise to a substantial production of utopian writing that describes perfect imaginary societies. Early representatives of the utopian genre include Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1602), Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), and Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (1666). Utopian fiction has continued uninterruptedly to this day, when the genre has entered the domain of science fiction. The same is true for the equally popular counterpart of utopian fiction: dystopian fiction, which represents life in utterly undesirable, often post-apocalyptic societies. Similar to utopias, dystopias are also profoundly political.

Utopia as a construct remains central to cultural debates worldwide: it is primarily the representation of a perfect society and it expresses the desire for social improvement. Ernst Bloch defines utopias as "dreams of a better life" that manifest the aspiration to the "greatest possible realization of social happiness" (Bloch 3). Another fundamental function of utopia is social criticism. Zygmunt Bauman affirms that "any utopianism worth the name must engage in a significant polemic with the dominant culture" (Bauman 47). Paul Ricoeur describes utopia as "an empty place from which to look at ourselves," from which "an exterior glance is cast on our reality" (Ricoeur 15, 16). He sees the utopian imagination as a "process of subversion" through which we put our cultural system "at a distance" and derive the ability to look at it from the outside, from the privileged position of a "nowhere" (17). In short, utopias allow the society that produces them to reflect upon itself, elaborate a critique of the status quo, and propose solutions, visionary as they may be.

Nowadays, pessimism is very prominent in utopian scholarship. "Today the word 'utopia' does not have a good sound to it," Bloch states in a conversation with Theodor Adorno, "is has been depreciated and is used primarily in a negative sense to mean 'utopian'" (Bloch 1). Ricoeur identifies a tendency to read utopia as "schizophrenic": escaping society on the one hand, avoiding any kind of concrete action on the other (Ricoeur 2). "Escape," Ricoeur stresses, is the "pathology of utopia" (17). More recently, Bill Ashcroft has agreed to understand utopia as an inconclusive form of protest. Starting from the assumption that "to achieve utopia is to fail to realize the possibilities of utopia," Ashcroft concludes that "all realized utopias are degenerate" (Ashcroft, "Critical Utopias" 413). Besides being addressed as little more than an escapist fantasy, utopia has been exposed as a potential repository of narratives of nostalgia (Ashcroft 421; Ricoeur 17). As the following section will clarify, the case of Shafak's Ottoman utopia is particularly problematic as it critiques nationalism by evoking an idealized imperial society. The nostalgia for an Arcadian or paradise-like past that informs the Ottoman

94

utopia is therefore fraught with imperial nostalgia. Ultimately, utopia remains a space outside of history, a productive nowhere enabling the possibility of social criticism. If the utopian genre began by depicting impossible societies that were far removed from us in terms of space, the nowhere of utopia is now often twice removed. Contemporary utopias in fact are usually future-oriented, as with sci-fi fiction, and the Ottoman utopia presented in this chapter offers, instead, a 'retrospective' example that locates utopia in the past.

Ashcroft[56] contributes a significant further layer to the scholarly debate on utopia, as he connects utopianism with the postcolonial, identifying the utopian as a "deep and growing aspect of postcolonial literature" (Ashcroft, "The Ambiguous Necessity of Utopia" 9). Ashcroft begins by exposing the imperial project in Thomas More's novel: King Utopus invaded and conquered the land of Abraxa, taught "civil gentleness" to "the rude and wild people" who resided there, and renamed the place after himself (More 123). *Utopia* was written in the wake of Europe's imperial venture in the New World: the acquisition of Newfoundland in 1583, a few decades after the publication of the book, will mark the rise of the British Empire. For this reason, Ashcroft identifies the notion of utopia as infused, from its origins, with a "deep colonial impulse" and suggests that More unveiled "the ideology of the colonial […] that lay deep within the English psyche" (Ashcroft, "Critical Utopias" 414). To Ashcroft, influential literary works written in colonial times such as William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610–11) and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) constitute "imperial utopias" due to the strong utopian impetus they present (Ashcroft, "Ambiguous Necessity" 415). However, the utopian instinct is also a crucial aspect of postcolonial rewritings of the same texts and of the postcolonial literary experience in general, as "without utopian thinking liberation is impossible" (Ashcroft, "Necessity" 8). In short, in Ashcroft's analysis the utopian has accompanied the colonial and imperial experiences from their beginnings to their postcolonial aftermaths.

It is possible to productively read Shafak's Ottoman utopia through the lens of Ashcroft's conceptualizations. In Shafak, one often reads of the denaturation of Turkish culture operated by Kemalism, of the introduction of a Western type of ethnocentric nationalism at the expense of Ottoman 'multiculturalism' and 'cosmopolitanism,' of state-enforced national amnesia, and of the alienation that resulted from the imposition of a Western mindset. It can be concluded that the impact of Kemalism in Turkey – at least for Shafak – is not very different from

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56 The articles by Ashcroft included in this sessions are "Critical Utopias" (2007), "The Ambiguous Necessity of Utopia" (2009), and "Spaces of Utopia" (2012).

that of Western colonization elsewhere. If we identify Kemalism as a colonial agent in Shafak's conceptual framework, the Ottoman utopia seems to have much in common with Ashcroft's postcolonial utopias. The compatibility between Ashcroft's model and Shafak's text confirms that the study of Turkish American literature adds further complexity to the postcolonial paradigm. By the same token, applying postcolonial theory to the narratives surrounding Turkey's postimperial present proves to be a fruitful endeavor.

A first correspondence between Ashcroft and Shafak can be found in the resistance postcolonial utopias offer to the concept of nation. Postcolonial utopian thought, writes Ashcroft, "gains much of its character from its problematic relationship with the concept of nation" and "transcends the disappointment and entrapment of the nation-state" (Ashcroft, "Spaces of Utopia" 4). Shafak's utopian vision is invested in demonstrating that the monocultural Kemalist model grates against the multicultural vocation of Ottoman society. This becomes obvious in the passages analyzed in this chapter. For example, in "Life in the Islands," Shafak addresses Turkey's trajectory from "a multilingual, multiethnic, multireligious empire towards a secular, modern nation-state" as "a major transformation unheard of in other regional contexts," but she lingers on the "flipside[s] of this story," namely the "loss of cosmopolitanism" and "collective amnesia" (Shafak, "Islands" n.p.). The utopia of cosmopolitanism embodied by the islands around Istanbul expresses the necessity to move away from this condition and "celebrate, once again, multiculturalism" (ibid.).

Like the postcolonial utopias described by Ashcroft, Shafak's utopia is a combination of time and space, as it appears to be articulated through narratives of memory as well as through narratives of place. With regards to time and memory, Ashcroft's concept of the "myth of return" or "fantasy of unhappening" ("Critical Utopias" 421) is of utmost significance in the reading of Shafak. It expresses "the tendency for postcolonial resistance to gain its energy from a utopian vision located not in the future but in the past": through the myth of return "the past in general and memory in particular become central in postcolonial utopianism" as they are "deployed in literature to reconceive a utopian present" (420, 422). As examples for this practice, he mentions Pharaonic Egyptian culture in contemporary African literature and the redeployment of Hindu Myths in Indian writing (423). Shafak's utopian vision strongly relies on Ottoman history: it retrieves the model of a past society and proposes it as a possible future for the nation. Yet, Shafak complicates Ashcroft's myth of return: similar to Ashcroft's postcolonial utopias, Shafak's is also characterized by "a nostalgic memory of the precolonial and a recovery of forgotten history"

(Ashcroft, "Necessity" 9), but in her case the precolonial coincides with the imperial. The risk of "Arcadian nostalgia" that is intrinsic to the myth of return is, in Shafak, even more problematic as it coincides with imperial nostalgia.

Ashcroft comments on the role space plays in postcolonial utopianism and in the myth of return. "The return to the past," Ashcroft explains, "comes not from the atavistic desire to retrace the path of history, but from an overwhelming concern with place […]. Utopia becomes […] an attempt to reconceive a place in the present, a place transformed by the infusion of the past" (Ashcroft, "Critical Utopias" 423–4). For Ashcroft, postcolonial utopia features a combination of past and present, of place and time. Shafak's Ottoman utopia is a fitting example for the spatial quality of the myth of return: in Shafak's utopia, the transfusion of the past into the present is articulated in spatial terms and invariably connected to a specific place. The cosmopolitan lifestyle that is the remnant of Ottoman times is "confined to particular spots and those only," namely, the islands and the ferry to the islands, which embody "an ages-old, deeply-rooted cosmopolitan culture and a way of life that Istanbul used to retain once but has long lost" ("Islands": n.p.). When Shafak wishes for the "captivating fabric of life present in the islands" to "recuperate and cascade all over the country," she not only advocates the re-establishment of a past societal model, but also the juxtaposition of a space – the islands – upon another – the country. Consequently, the Ottoman utopia is a strongly "emplaced" phenomenon (Mills 384), even in its American manifestation. Only in the United States can the dispersed minorities of the Ottoman Empire, forced into a diasporic existence, reaggregate, thrive, and communicate in a new lingua franca. Café Constantinopolis itself emerges as a "fantasy of unhappening." The gesture of retrieving the name Istanbul had before 1923 is highly symbolic, as it returns the city to its pre-Republican state, salvaging its multiethnic past and yet removing part of its history. Thus, the fact that Café Constantinopolis is an online platform does not disturb its "emplacedness." On the contrary, it adds further complexity to the discussion of place and exposes the café's imperfect Ottomanism as, ultimately, a fantasy.

Ottoman Utopia and Neo-Ottomanism[57]

Elif Shafak's notion of Ottoman utopia is embedded in the Turkish political context of the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. *The Bastard of Istanbul* and most of her journalistic production for *Turkish Daily News*, where

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57 See also Furlanetto, "'Imagine a Country where We Are All Equal': Imperial Nostalgia and Ottoman Utopia in Contemporary Turkish Literature" (2015).

the discussion of Ottoman utopia is concentrated, appeared between 2005 and 2007. In 2003, the election of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan coincided with a conspicuous political triumph of the neo-Ottomanist doctrine. Neo-Ottomanism consists of a set of political strategies and a state philosophy that invoke a definitive departure from Kemalism. The term has been used to define the political orientation of Erdoğan's AKP, but a first shift to neo-Ottoman ideas was initiated by Turgut Özal's presidency in the 1990s. The neo-Ottomanist vision implies a re-evaluation of Turkey's imperial past and intends to mitigate the nation's inner conflicts which involve, for example, the claims of former imperial minorities. Instead of repudiating the empire as an age of backwardness and religious obscurantism, neo-Ottomanism treasures its legacy. If Kemalism insisted on assimilating former imperial minorities under the category of 'Turkishness,' neo-Ottomanism advocates a more multicultural notion of citizenship. Neo-Ottomanism aims to balance the extremities of Kemalism on many fronts. If Kemalism had been "over-obsessed with a Western trajectory" (Taşpinar, "The Rise of Turkish Gaullism 2), neo-Ottomanism re-habilitates the imperial and Islamic legacies, and promotes diplomatic relationships with former imperial territories as well as with the United States and Europe.

Being modeled on political neo-Ottomanism, the Ottoman utopia is by no means a reactionary, imperialistic fantasy. As Ömer Taşpinar clarifies, the "neo-Ottoman paradigm […] does not pursue a neo-imperialist policy aimed at resurrecting the Ottoman Empire. Instead of imperial nostalgia, neo-Ottomanism is essentially about projecting Turkey's 'soft power' – a bridge between East and West, a Muslim nation, a secular state, a democratic political system, and a capitalistic economic force" (Taşpinar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies" 3). In the same way, Shafak's texts do not look at the empire as a form of government that could be, or should be, resurrected, but idealize the imperial society as an alternative culture to Kemalism.

Ottoman romanticizations – including Shafak's – nevertheless display an Orientalist quality. One of the common features of Ottoman romanticizations, including Erdoğan's neo-Ottomanism, is the wish to restore the Ottoman model of tolerance and multiculturalism after the nationalistic experience of Kemalism, which is often considered a deviation from Turkey's 'real' multicultural vocation. This process of dissociating a brilliant past from the degenerate present, Ussama Makdisi argues, is at the heart of European Orientalism (Makdisi 782). This finds confirmation in Edward Said, according to whom the Orientalist differentiates between a "good Orient," a long-gone classical period, and a "bad Orient," lingering in present day Asia (Said, *Orientalism* 99). This combination of criticism

towards contemporary society and use of the past as a source of inspiration for future developments meets Said's description of the Orientalist mission, according to which the "good Orient" needs to be recreated by scholars and posited as the true classical Orient that could be used to judge and rule the modern Orient (Said 92). This Orientalist mission is very much part of Shafak's Ottoman utopia, which condemns Turkey's modernity as an unfortunate, deviant development and points at the classical age of the Empire as the manifestation of Turkey's true vocation to multiculturalism.

Although there are certainly numerous contact points between the politics of neo-Ottomanism and Shafak's Ottoman utopia, one of the fundamental differences involves the role of the United States. On the one hand, political neo-Ottomanism – Erdoğan's understanding of it in particular – "others the US and presents the Ottoman Empire as an ideal" (Wigen 6). Erdoğan's rise to power in 2003 coincided with a diffused disenchantment with the United States, due to its policies in Iraq (ibid.); parallel to the Iraq conflict, anti-Americanism became rampant throughout the country. At the same time, neo-Ottomanism constructed Turkey as the ideal mediator between the West and the Middle Eastern powers, and the guarantor of democratization and religious moderation (see Wigen 7). Taşpinar remarks that, ironic as it may seem, AKP policies also exacerbated the Kemalists' disenchantment with the West: the Bush government's appreciative evaluation of Turkey as a model Islamic republic delivered the final blow to the relationship between the Turkish nationalists and America. Narratives of U.S. multiculturalism are otherwise deeply ingrained in Ottoman romanticizations in Shafak's texts and beyond. In "Ottomanism vs. Kemalism: Collective Memory and Cultural Pluralism in 1990s Turkey," political scientist Yilmaz Çolak establishes a connection between the 19th-century idea of Ottomanism and the melting pot narrative. According to Çolak, 19th-century Ottomanism "served to create a consciousness of being Ottoman through melting various groups into one pot" (Çolak 593), whereas neo-Ottomanism, in his words, had been constructed "as a myth of the melting pot" (ibid.).[58]

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58 Maurice Cerasi identifies a potential connection between the Ottoman Empire and the American cultural narrative of the melting pot *ex negativo*: "All of this was not the outcome of a melting pot. It was rather a process of deliberate selection which adopted or rejected foreign and native factors according to their suitability for the *weltanschauung* of urban society in general" (Cerasi 149). In spite of the negative nature of the comparison, describing how the syncretism of the Ottoman model should rather *not* be equated to a melting pot, Cerasi's observation establishes a connection between the two.

Shafak's Ottoman utopia is not simply the projection of a perfect community, lost in the passage from empire to national state. Shafak sees the Ottoman utopia as a productive social solution that has its roots in the past, but can be successfully re-enacted in the future. In fact, it shows evident similarities to Alison Blunt's concept of productive nostalgia as "longing for home that was embodied and enacted in practice rather than solely in the imagination, […] oriented towards the future as well as towards the past, and to a sense of place that was both proximate and distant" (Blunt 719). Both Blunt's productive nostalgia and Shafak's Ottoman utopia express not only the longing for a lost world, but also for the retrieval of that lost world and its practical re-enactment. In fact, like other utopian formations, the Ottoman utopia has a political function: it projects a vision of a better society that questions the salient traits of the existing one. It formulates a critique of the persisting legacy of Kemalism, the major political and doctrinal system in Turkey since 1923, and indicates a fully viable alternative model, drawn from Turkey's imperial past. The neo-Ottomanist influence on Ottoman utopia emerges clearly in their shared opposition to Kemalism. If Kemalism categorically dismissed Turkey's imperial legacy and ignored the claims of former imperial minorities, neo-Ottomanism and Shafak's Ottoman utopia promote a re-evaluation of the nation's Islamic past. In spite of its nostalgic and a-historical nature, Ottoman utopia is not merely a literary reverie: my findings so far have shown its political value, determined by its adherence to the neo-Ottoman doctrine and its critique of Kemalism. This last function in particular shows how Shafak's representation of the Ottoman Empire transcends the nostalgic longing for an imaginary Golden Age and claims its legitimate position in the tradition of utopian thought.

"Hrant Dink's Dream"

My analysis will now turn to texts where Shafak's Ottoman utopia constructs the Ottoman past as a paradigm that may be re-introduced in the present, both in the private lives of citizens and in the future of the nation as an alternative to Kemalism. The utopias of cosmopolitanism presented in *The Bastard of Istanbul* and the journalistic article "Hrant Dink's Dream" resonate with American paradigms of multiculturalism: America emerges as a space where Ottoman cosmopolitanism can be effectively re-enacted, but at the same time American multiculturalism should not represent a refuge for Turks or exponents of the minorities who disapprove of the consequences of nationalism in Turkey. As the experience of Aram in *The Bastard* demonstrates, the Ottoman utopia can and should urgently be implanted in Turkey.

100

In *The Bastard of Istanbul* two Armenian characters, Hovhannes Stamboulian and Aram, express their preference for cosmopolitanism over nationalism and confirm their trust in the Ottoman model:

> Hovhannes Stamboulian believed that under the present circumstances Ottomanism was the best option for Armenians, not radical ideas. Turks and Greeks and Armenians had lived together for centuries and still could find a way to coexist under one umbrella. […] "We need to work together, Jews and Christian and Muslims. Centuries and centuries under the same imperial roof. We have been living together all this time, albeit on unequal ground. Now we can make it fair and just for all, transform this empire together." (232)

> [Aram:] "Armenian Istanbulites belong to Istanbul, just like the Turkish, Kurdish, Greek and Jewish Istanbulites do. We have first managed and then badly failed to live together. We cannot fail again." (254)

Shafak's journalistic articles for *Turkish Daily News* mirror the cosmopolitan ideal advocated in her novel as they voice claims and concerns of Armenians in Turkey. "Hrant Dink's Dream" is a particularly powerful tribute to the late Armenian journalist, his opposition to Turkish nationalism, and his struggle for official recognition of the Armenian genocide. Dink was assassinated in Istanbul in 2007 by a Turkish ultranationalist, and his murder resonated strongly in Shafak's writing. Like Shafak, Dink strongly believed in a possible reconciliation between Armenians and the Turkish state, equally condemning extremisms from both sides.

The article provides one of the most elaborate representations of Ottoman utopia and deserves to be quoted at length.

> Imagine an exquisite dinner scene in Istanbul […]. Inside the room, the variety of the food served reflects the multicultural roots of today's Turkish cuisine: Albanian meatballs, Greek seafood, Kurdish spices, Armenian pastries, Turkish pilaf. People drink and eat and laugh and from time to time they toast friends long departed. Then somebody starts to sing a song. Other guests join in and before you know it a string of songs follow, most of them sad but none disheartening. The songs switch almost effortlessly from Armenian to Kurdish, from Turkish to Greek. Where one stops another one picks up. Imagine, in short, a cosmopolitan setting where everyone is welcome no matter what their ethnicity, race or religion. Imagine a country where we are all equal, friendly and free […]. [Hrant Dink] made us believe that we, the citizens of modern Turkey, as the grandchildren of the multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual Ottoman Empire, could and should live together without assimilating differences or erasing the memory of the past. […] Imagine a moment in time when there is no chauvinism, xenophobia or racism. A moment when we are all united in a common spirit. It wasn't a dream. We thousands of *Istanbullular* saw it happen. (Shafak, "Dream" n.p.)

This symbolic communal meal at a table where Turks and imperial minorities celebrate their common heritage through the sharing of food and singing is in fact more than a "dream." Peaceful coexistence and the treasuring of common roots are presented as a possible everyday practice for Turks, realizable both in the present and in the future, as the same dynamics that made coexistence possible during the Ottoman Empire can be re-enacted by contemporary Istanbulites: "the grandchildren of the multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual Ottoman Empire." The text suggests that cosmopolitanism and tolerance are embedded in Turkey's past and can therefore be revived. In other words, the solution for Turkey's modern problems – the relationships with former imperial minorities, cultural amnesia, fundamentalisms of all kinds – lies in the imperial past, when diversity was allegedly respected and appreciated. With the statement "we […] saw it happen," Shafak suggests that coexistence is indeed possible, because it supposedly represented the normality of everyday life in the empire. Thus, the Ottoman utopia re-evaluates the notion of the imperial, shifting the emphasis from oppression to peaceful coexistence.

Even though it is not explicitly included in the dinner scene, the United States plays a fundamental role in this discussion of the Ottoman utopia. In the first place, Shafak's Ottoman utopia is indebted to the American cultural narrative of the melting pot, which celebrates the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups within the same national territory as one organic, although internally diversified, culture. *The Bastard of Istanbul* proposes a vision of America as a place where the Ottoman Golden Age can be recreated. The novel suggests that the United States, due to its constitutional multiculturalism, encouraged the re-settlement of former imperial minorities – Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and others – who were compelled to leave their homeland after the empire had collapsed, and Turkey had turned into a modern republic invested in a nationalist project that did not fully include them. Once in the United States, the dispossessed imperial minorities recreated the fruitful interaction that characterized their life in the Ottoman territories, re-aggregating into ethnic communities, renewing and intensifying their dislike of the former imperial conqueror, the Turk, and embarking on their own nationalist projects (see Shafak, "The Return of the Ghetto" n.p.).

With Café Constantinopolis, *The Bastard* suggests that an 'Ottoman' revival is nowadays fully functioning in the United States. At the same time, Turks and former imperial minorities should urgently work together towards the actuation of an Ottoman utopia *in Turkey*. The following comparison between passages from *The Bastard* and "Hrant Dink's Dream" indicates how Aram is in fact a Hrant

102

Dink-figure: an allusion, perhaps even a tribute, to the Armenian journalist and his struggle for the rights of minorities.

> "If they are oppressing you here, you can always come to America. There are many Armenian communities there who would be more than happy to help you and your family." Aram did not laugh this time. Instead he gave her a warm smile, warm but somewhat tired. "Why would I want to do that, dear Armanoush? This city is my city. I was born and raised in Istanbul. My family history goes back at least five hundred years. (*The Bastard* 254)

> After a lifetime's experience [Dink] could have drawn the conclusion that this country was no place for a minority and gone abroad, where he would most probably be safer and much more comfortable. But he did just the opposite. He had uttermost faith in his fellow citizens and believed that through dialogue and empathy even the most ossified chauvinisms would melt away. (Shafak, "Dream" n.p.)

The Ottoman utopia in Shafak's writing applies to both the American context – where imperial minorities have found a fertile soil to re-enact Ottoman multiculturalism – and to the Turkish one, in need of an alternative political model. In Shafak's view, Café Constantinopolis and Armanoush's confidence in American multiculturalism should serve as an example for Turkey – once the cradle of Ottoman coexistence – to unlock its own potential for multiculturalism. Its capacity to link the United States and Turkey makes the Ottoman utopia a transnational narrative.

Life in the Islands and in the Villages

Another article from *Turkish Daily News*, "Life in the Islands" (2006), expands the theme of the Ottoman utopia. The fact that Thomas More's Utopia is also an island is indeed relevant in the analysis of how Shafak's idealizations of the Ottoman Empire connect to the tradition of utopia in literature: the islands around Istanbul represent for Shafak a space where a 'perfect society' – the Ottoman way of life – has survived. This perfect society consists of a sophisticated culture of multilingualism that can be seen and heard in the plurality of languages spoken by the inhabitants.

> The islands [Büyükada, Heybeliada, Burgaz and Kınalı] embody an ages-old, deeply-rooted cosmopolitan culture and a way of life that Istanbul too used to retain once but has long lost. There, you will encounter a variety of people, a motley cluster of individuals from all walks of life, and hear a variety of languages and idioms, being spoken all at once. Greek and Jewish, Armenian and French, English and Ladino will intermingle with Turkish. Every now and then you will hear a sentence that had started in Turkish to be completed in Jewish. Sometimes a talk in Turkish will be replete with Armenian expressions. You will hear them all. You will happen upon mothers who speak French with

their children, Turkish with their husbands. You will see women who enthusiastically, unreservedly and almost endlessly gossip in one particular language, but then choose another language when they want to "get serious." […] You will pass by mosques and synagogues and churches. (Shafak, "Islands" n.p.)

Similar to More's Utopia, an island whose coordinates have been lost and can therefore never be reached again, the sophisticated culture of which the islands were once only one example has been lost in Turkey's passage from empire to republic, bringing about a homogenization of Ottoman culture as essentially 'Turkish' and secular.

> And you will lament the gradual loss of this astonishingly, gracefully intense and vivid cosmopolitan culture, once present in almost every nook and cranny in Istanbul and Turkey, but now confined to particular spots and those only. Turkey has lost countless minorities in its recent history – so many non-Muslim families have left this country, step by step. Though they are gone, from each and every family something remains behind – remnants of a past not that far away. [Turkey] has moved away from being a multilingual, multiethnic, multireligious empire towards a secular, modern nation-state. ("Islands" n.p.)

Ultimately, the islands embody what remains of an Ottoman Golden Age that succumbed to the introduction of Kemalist doctrine, which strove to create a society where all spoke Turkish and identified as Turkish citizens.

In spite of the dramatic tone with which Shafak comments on the loss of "this astonishingly, gracefully intense and vivid cosmopolitan culture," she envisions cosmopolitanism as a cultural model that has not been irremediably lost, and therefore can and must be pursued for the future of Turkey. This bears another connection to the utopian imaginary: according to Louis Marin's interpretation of More's *Utopia*, "the travel [to Utopia] cannot be repeated, but [Utopia] as an ideology, as an ideological representation, demands to be repeated" (Marin 416). In Shafak, the Ottoman Empire is a thing of the past, but the cultural practices that characterized its classical age need to be retrieved. A perfect embodiment of the Ottoman utopia, the islands stand for both a lost Golden Age and a glorious vision of the future.

An analogous romanticization of the Ottoman Empire, or of a pre-Republican Turkey, can be found in Orhan Pamuk's *The Black Book*, where the protagonist, Galip, fantasizes about 17th-century Hurufi villages.[59] Not unlike Shafak's islands, Hurufi villages in Pamuk are an exception to the status quo. Fleeing the disorders

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59 Hurufism is a version of Sufism (14th and 15th centuries) that envisions the Koran as a Kabalistic system of letters. The name comes from the Arabic "hurufi," meaning letter.

created by the celâli revolutions[60] of the early 17th century, the Hurufi adepts "settled in remote villages that the peasants had abandoned, fleeing from the wrath of pashas, judges, bandits, and imams" (301). The Hurufi continued their "happy and meaningful life" (301) in rural areas far removed from the city, where they developed their capacity to read culture and interpret the meaning of things. Galip describes that "distant golden age" of the villages as a time in which

> action and meaning were one and the same. Heaven was on earth, and the things we kept in our houses were at one with our dreams. Those were the happy, happy days when everything we held in our hands – our tools, our cups, our daggers, our pens – was but an extension of our soul. A poet could say *tree* and everyone who heard him would conjure up the same perfect tree – could see the word and the tree it signified, and the garden the tree signified, and the life the garden signified […]. For words were so close to the things they described that […] poetry mixed with life and words with the objects they signified. […] Those were the days when faces, like everything else in the world, were so laden with meaning that even the illiterate – even the man who could not tell an alpha from a piece of fruit, an from a hat, or an alif from a stick – could read them with ease. (301)

The scenario depicted in the passage describes a Golden Age in opposition to the "dark moment in recent history that some call 'the road to democracy'" (307). Such description of Turkey's present appears only a few pages after the description of "those happy, distant, timeless days" (301) that constitute Pamuk's Golden Age – once again creating a contrast between an idealized past and a degenerate present. The representation of Hurufism – banished by the Kemalist regime – as a Golden Age, and of modern-day Turkey as a dark chapter of Turkish history echoes the political function of the Ottoman utopia present in Shafak's texts. Yet, Pamuk's Golden Age lacks the productive quality of Shafak's utopia. While Shafak posits Ottoman multiculturalism as an experience that can and should be repeated, Pamuk's Golden Age is merely a fantasy and a eulogy over a past that is irretrievable. The dreamy, nostalgic tone of the passage causes the reader to doubt the reliability of the narrator and the historicity of the narrated facts. Hyperboles ("everything else in the world," "everyone") and statements such as "heaven was on earth," "those were the happy, happy days" dismiss the account as

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60 Pamuk probably refers to the series of Anatolian revolts against the Ottoman state that followed the death of Sultan Suleyman I in 1566. Ottoman historians named the revolts after "a certain Sheik Celâl" (Ágoston and Masters 127). Significantly enough, one of the causes of the revolts is believed to be "the influx of cheap silver from the Americas," which destabilized the market and brought a generalized unrest (ibid.). The reference to the celâli revolts may thus offer an indirect critique of the flow of American products into Turkey and its aftermath.

105

excessively emotional. Hence, Pamuk's construction does not partake as much as Shafak's in the utopian tradition.

Furthermore, the emotions connected to the two romanticizations of the Ottoman Empire are very different. Indeed, *The Black Book* was published at the dawn of a dark decade and seems to be a preamble to the Nineties' pessimism. In the words of Ömer Taşpinar, "during the 'lost decade' of the 1990s, the Turkish economy was plagued by recession, an average inflation rate of 70 percent, structural budget deficits, chronic financial crisis and constant political instability" (Taşpinar, "Three Strategic Visions" 4). Moreover, the feeling that Turkey was not receiving the respect it deserved from the West generated a "narrative of frustration vis-à-vis Europe and America" (Taşpinar 5) clearly recognizable in Pamuk's *The Black Book* and *The New Life*. Elif Shafak's Ottoman utopia, instead, is rooted in the cultural openness and "unprecedented sense of self-confidence" of Erdoğan's neo-Ottomanism (Taşpinar 4).

In spite of the different socio-political environments in which they are generated, Pamuk's and Shafak's Ottoman utopias do reveal shared traits. Both texts are permeated by "the longing for a lost presence" (Almond 81). Both authors locate their utopia in one specific expression of Ottoman or pre-Republican culture. Shafak chooses the life on the islands as a symbol of the lost culture of cosmopolitanism, whereas Pamuk locates his utopia in a vision of Hurufi villages which, besides Islamic mysticism, also bring to mind a pastoral environment, a most appropriate frame for a Golden Age. Besides, both utopian constructions question Kemalist narratives. The severance of signifier and signified and the estrangement of a people from their language and culture in modern Turkey brings to mind the Kemalist ideology and reforms in general and the 1928 language reform in particular. With the language reform, Kemalism banished words of Persian and Arabic origin as well as terms deriving from religion and folklore in order to 'turkify' the language, and switched from the Arabic alphabet to the Latin one. Similar to Shafak's islands, the linguistic dimension is central in Pamuk's age of Hurufism, since the empire's citizens could once fully identify with their alphabet, language and literature, which mirrored and contained the meaning of their everyday lives. In light of Turkey's adaptation to Western models and aesthetics in *The Black Book*, the Hurufi passage exposes the gradual but irreparable alteration of Ottoman culture in the process of Westernization.

The two novels and their Ottoman romanticizations share the implication that a fundamental part of Turkish culture has been lost in the passage from empire to republic. In Shafak, the coming of the republic brought about the loss of cosmopolitanism, while, in *The Black Book*, the republican age caused the loss

of the unity of signifier and signified. Almond describes the use of Islam in *The Black Book* as "an all-purpose social glue" (Almond 82), and in Pamuk's golden age, Hurufism is indeed the glue binding together signifier and signified. Hurufi poetry in particular seems to best express this sense of unity and, as a result, also the identification between the Anatolian ethnic groups and their culture:

> on warm moonlit summer nights, when travelers dipped buckets into wells, they pulled out not just ice-cold water but pailfuls of mysterious signs and stars, and they would stay up all night, reciting verses that illuminated the meaning of signs and the signs of meaning. (302)

The reported passage makes readers aware of the importance of wells as repositories of the forgotten Ottoman culture, which seem to originate and thrive underground. In this case, a fruitful exchange between the underground and the surface is facilitated by the upward and downward movement of the bucket, making sure that the signs and symbols contained in the depth of the Turkish soil can be brought to the surface. The constant dialogue between the culture on the surface and that "vast, unlimited discourse, continuous, and silent" (Foucault 67) that flows beneath it like water seems to be what makes it possible for Ottoman citizens to effortlessly articulate their cultural identity.

Islamic mysticism is indeed crucial in the construction of an Ottoman utopia as a critique of Kemalism. Erdağ Göknar states that Sufism "allows the reenchantment […] of a literature disenchanted by the secular masterplot" ("Blasphemies" 311). For this reason, Göknar continues, Sufism provides "a useful counternarrative to the dialectical logic of modernization, and Pamuk makes innovative use of this tradition in constructing his novels" (ibid.). Islam in general, but especially Islamic heterodoxies like Sufism and Hurufism, were also among the aspects of Turkish culture targeted by Kemalist revisionism. *The Black Book* brings together the banishing of Sufi orders with the language and alphabet reform in a single lamentation. The following quotation refers to the burning of Sufi adepts during the reign of Sultan Beyazid II, but a reference to the introduction of the Latin alphabet transfers the event symbolically to the 20th century:

> when he studied the sinuous flames licking up against their bodies, he could easily make out the *alifs* and *lams* that made up the first four letters of the word *Allah*; but stranger still – as these men were consumed by the flames of the Arab alphabet, the tears falling from their eyes resembled the O's, U's, and C's [sic] in the Latin alphabet. This was the first time Galip had come across a Hurufi response to the 1928 Alphabet Revolution, when the country moved from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet. (300)

The violence of this scene reminds one of the dramatic terms in which Shafak refers to the Kemalist language reform of 1928 as "linguistic cleansing" (Shafak,

107

"Linguistic Cleansing" n.p.) resonating with 'ethnic cleansing' projects of nationalist regimes.

Yet, a dense irony permeates Pamuk's description of the age of Hurufism. It becomes gradually clearer to the reader (before it does to Galip) that in spite of the abundance of signifiers, there is no mystic signified, the novel's treasure hunt does not lead anywhere, and the essentialist notion of culture Galip pursues so devotedly is in fact a delusion. In Foucault's terminology, Galip eventually realizes that not only can he not decipher the "legible face" of its culture, but that his culture never had a "legible face" (Foucault 67). This is not only due to the interventions of Kemalism on a preexisting culture, allegedly so profound to make Turkey's 'real' identity irretrievable, but also to the fact that, according to *The Black Book*, Turkey had never enjoyed a period of cultural wholeness like the one portrayed in the Golden Age of Hurufism. The irony is also contained in the blatant romanticization of the Ottoman Empire and the credulous ingenuity of the protagonist, so eager to be sucked into an a-historical rendition of Turkey's pre-Republican past. In light of these last observations it is possible to conclude that irony, invalidating Pamuk's Golden Age and completely absent in Shafak's Ottoman utopia, is one of the elements that mostly differentiate the two romanticizations of the Ottoman era.

Up to this point, it can be argued that neo-Ottomanism influenced both utopian constructions. This finds confirmation in Göknar's definition of this political phenomenon and its literary reverberation, identified as a specifically Turkish expression of international postmodernism, which, in a Turkish context, might be alternatively and perhaps more suitably defined as "post-Kemalism, post-socialism, and, most importantly, neo-Ottomanism" ("Ottoman Theme" 35). More precisely, Göknar explains, literary manifestations of neo-Ottomanism reflect aspects of post-national or transnational aesthetics such as the "reassessment and reappropriation of disregarded cultural history and identity […]. In an authoritarian political context, the limits of nationalism were discursively transcended, historical and cultural borders were crossed" (ibid.). Both romanticizations question the narratives of Kemalism: they both appropriate themes, words, cultural manifestations of the imperial period to point at the failures of modernization, and they embrace the Ottoman and Islamic heritage repudiated by Kemalism.

Yet, as I mentioned, the two romanticizations were generated in two contingent and yet widely different periods of Turkey's history: the early 1990s and the early 2000s. The former are remembered as a decade of economic and social instability pervaded by pessimism and lack of confidence, but one that witnessed a growing interest in the rediscovery of the Ottoman history and Ottomanesque

language (Göknar, "Ottoman Theme" 35). Correspondingly, the novel portrays the irreparable fragmentation of Turkish identity and the demise of an organic idea of culture, featuring the complete identification of language and meaning, individuals and culture. A decade later, Shafak's texts, written in a period of economic stability and pervaded by neo-Ottomanist confidence, open up to the aesthetics of globalization and post-nationalism and offer a more optimistic representation of the search for Turkey's post-Kemalist identity. In fact, transcending the Kemalist rigid dynamics of inclusion/exclusion of cultural elements in Turkey's identity, Shafak's Ottoman utopia proposes a hybrid notion of Turkishness, considering modern Turkey as the result of all the cultural influences that followed one another. A renewed Ottoman model is therefore, in Shafak's texts, an appropriate societal option for a globalized period where nationalist paradigms are about to be overcome. If on the one hand the Ottoman model implied the inclusion of imperial minorities in a wider idea of Ottoman citizenship, accepting each group's cultural contribution to the making of a wider 'imperial' identity, on the other hand the neo-Ottomanist paradigm opens up to more recent cultural influences as well, "embracing the West as much as the Islamic world" (Taşpinar, "Three Strategic Visions" 2). On this point, Pamuk's and Shafak's utopias differ greatly.

In *The Black Book*, there is no room for the United States in the (attempted) definition of Turkish identity, quite the opposite: the United States is part of the problem. The novel suggests that American cultural imperialism and the Kemalist obsession with replicating Western models has supplanted Turkey's 'original' culture and aesthetics, and produced an unbridgeable fracture between Turks and their cultural heritage. In the words of Benton Jay Komins, "Pamuk uses globalized culture, in an overly determined American guise, as a critique of the Turkish experience" and equates post-Kemalist Turkey with a "pax Americana" (Komins 15), a term that echoes and mocks the concept of Pax Ottomana. There is therefore no connection between Ottoman past and globalized present on the ground of cosmopolitanism and tolerance, let alone the kind of continuity Shafak hypothesizes. Shafak reserves a completely different treatment for the Unites States and their influence on Turkey's present. American themes and narratives are woven into the texture of her own Ottoman utopia. In this sense, differently from Pamuk's, Shafak's utopia can be considered a transnational narrative, engaging in a parallel dialogue with two national dimensions, the Turkish and the American.

Two Approaches to Cultural Identity

Pamuk's and Shafak's dissonant representations of post-Ottoman Turkish identity are reminiscent of the two different ways of thinking about cultural identity theorized by Stuart Hall in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1989), which addresses the retrieval of an 'African' identity in the Caribbean islands. I suggest that Hall's theories can be brought to bear on Shafak's and Pamuk's work, as both writers perceive Turkey's Republican age as an agent which separated the population from its cultural heritage by imposing alien ethics and aesthetics imported from the West. In this sense, debates regarding identity in modern Turkey are, to an extent, comparable with those of postcolonial contexts.

According to Hall, in postcolonial and diasporic contexts identity may be regarded as "a sort of collective 'one true self,' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' […]. This 'oneness,' underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence." The task of the diasporic individual is therefore to "discover, excavate, bring to light" this identity (Hall 223). This image of an 'archeological' research implying the removal of superficial strata is very much part of Shafak's and Pamuk's methodology. On the one hand Pamuk constructs an imaginary 'authentic' Istanbul under the city's surface, where the nation's cultural heritages – a series of conquered and forgotten civilizations – had deposited. On the other hand, this excavation is crucial to what one perceives to be Shafak's purpose as a writer, as she appears invested in the rehabilitation of the Ottoman and Islamic legacies. Shafak herself clarifies her partaking in this 'archeological' process of uncovering in her 2005 interview with *New Perspectives Quarterly*, which also hints at Pamuk's involvement in the same mission:

> NPQ: That's something that also concerns Pamuk's work. "Whatever is suppressed," he told me once, "always comes back." In the same way you are the one who always comes back to capture the forgotten past through your novels. Are you in the same boat with Pamuk?
> Shafak: Yes, definitely, but I do it in two ways. I do it both with the content of my novels, in other words with the stories I deal with, and also I do it with my style. I do not only try to *unearth the stories that have been buried under the ground by the Kemalists*. I also try to unearth the words that have been kicked out of Turkish language. I bring them back. (Shafak n.p., emphasis added)

The spaces constructed by the two writers and analyzed in this chapter also connect to Frantz Fanon's advocacy of a "passionate research […] directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, *some very beautiful and splendid era* whose existence

110

rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others" (Fanon 170, emphasis added). This idea informs Shafak's Ottoman utopia and, in particular, Pamuk's Golden Age of Hurufism, whose splendor creates a stark contrast with the miserable existence affecting the city on the surface, prey of amnesia and self-contempt.

Pamuk's approach to the search of Turkey's identity appears pessimistic in comparison to Shafak's more optimistic perspective, opening up Turkey's borders to a global sensitivity instead of collapsing under the weight of irreversible Westernization. In fact, the archeological process that hopes to retrieve an intact cultural essence by simply removing unnecessary strata implies the same strategy employed by the designers of Turkish nationalism, namely, the elimination of unwanted cultural heritages. In this case the removal would concern Kemalism and Westernization, in other words "the dark moment in recent history that some call the road to democracy" (Pamuk 307), as opposed to the Golden Age of Hurufism and to the 'authentic' Istanbul resting underground. By retrieving Istanbul's pre-Republican name, Café Constantinopolis in *The Bastard* enacts a comparable process of historical selection and removal. Shafak, however, presents the café as a flawed model of cosmopolitanism and re-orients it towards more integrative solutions.

Paradoxically, Hall indicates an archeological process intended exclusively as subtraction of alien cultural strata, without the creation of new meaning, as a symptom of "collu[sion] with the West which, precisely appropriates and normalizes [the colony] by freezing it into some timeless zone of primitive, unchanging past" (Hall 231). This view is supported by Said in *Orientalism*, where he describes the Orientalist scholar's perception of his work as "having *uncovered, brought to light, rescued* a vast amount of obscure matter" (*Orientalism* 127, emphasis in the text). The flaw in Galip's search of a holistic Turkish identity – and of Hall's first notion of cultural identity – might therefore be located in the unconscious compliance with the West and its "imperializing eye" (Hall 234), but also in the lack of a constructive project that may counterbalance the bitter realization that Turkey cannot retrieve its 'original' identity.

What allows the diasporic writer to transcend this archeological delusion is the capacity of integrating recent historical transformations into the vision of a cumulative, multilayered identity. In other words, one could alternatively consider national identity as a result of all the cultural influences, although traumatic, that followed one another through the course of history – including imperial occupation or, in Turkey's case, Kemalism. In fact, Hall's second approach to cultural identity "recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also

crucial points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'" (Hall 225). In Pamuk's novel, Galip's obsessive search for Turkey's true self is mostly concerned with "what we really are" rather than with "what we have become." According to Hall, integrating historical transformations instead of removing them is a decisive aspect in the production of *diasporic* identity. For diasporic subjects, Hall adds, cultural identity is determined precisely by "the ruptures and discontinuities" and "the mixes of colours" (ibid.).

These two fundamental elements of diasporic identity – cumulative integration of diverse cultural influences and emphasis on heterogeneity – can be found in Shafak's imaginary spaces. In the first place, Shafak's Ottoman utopia consists of a construction of an Ottoman Golden Age hybridized with elements coming from the American and Western traditions. Moreover, the Ottoman utopia, informed by the notion of productive nostalgia – "a longing oriented towards the future as well as towards the past" (Blunt 719) – can be successfully juxtaposed to Hall's representation of diasporic cultural identity, in this second sense, as something that "belongs to the future as much as to the past" (Hall 225). Secondly, Hall's understanding of national uniqueness as depending precisely on the heterogeneity of its tradition, on its "ruptures and discontinuities," is reminiscent of Elif Shafak's appeal to Turkish citizens to "stay happily situated in this unreasonable synthesis of ours" (Shafak, "Chimera" n.p.).

Even though both perspectives on cultural identity are part of the postcolonial experience, they are not equally significant. If the first perspective "play[s] a critical role in the postcolonial struggle" (Hall 223), the second is much more complete, realistic, and challenging, since "it is only from this second position that we can properly understand the traumatic character of the 'colonial experience'" (225). The first perspective, struggling to retrieve a fictive primordial culture located in an imaginary Golden Age, contains the risk of colluding with the Western gaze on the colony/the Orient. The second perspective, however, comes to terms with the irreversibility of history and of Western influence, and yet resists its "imperializing gaze" (234).

Nevertheless, another element allowing the transition from mourning the loss of meaning to the production of a hybrid, transnational identity for Turkey is the diasporic experience. Even though *The Black Book* is very much concerned with the perception of the United States and the West in Turkey, it does not address diasporic experiences. Shafak, instead, whose literary production straddles the United States and Istanbul, can more easily share Hall's second view of cultural identity as inclusive and cumulative, rather than exclusive and subtractive.

112

Shafak's diasporic experience makes her aware of "a necessary heterogeneity and diversity" and allows her to champion "a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference" (Hall 235). This becomes manifest in Shafak's imaginary cafés, those spaces of the like-minded that can be redeemed through the penetration of the colonial Other: an Armenian in a Turkish café and a Turk in an Armenian one.