

Troubled Gardens of Turkey and the World

This conclusive chapter shows how the Turkish American imagery explored within this volume resonates beyond the sphere of literary fiction produced by a restricted number of Turkish American writers and provides useful tools to interpret contemporary Turkey, as well as recent events of global significance. Here, I am going to look at how other Turkish American voices, such as journalist Elif Batuman and sociologist Fatma Muge Göçek, discuss one of the most controversial events in Turkey's recent history, the Gezi Park protests of June 2013. In hindsight, Erdoğan's response to the Gezi Park protests delivered a fatal blow to his international reputation. To put it with Batuman, after the Gezi events "the Western view of Erdoğan eventually soured" (Batuman, "Cover Story" n.p.). The protests in Taksim Square and Gezi Park began on May 31, 2013: their aim was to prevent the destruction of the park and the construction of a shopping mall. Erdoğan's government reacted with severity and what many considered excessive force, using water cannons and tear gas against the protesters. The demonstrations grew in violence and proportion and extended to other cities throughout the nation.

Batuman's and Göçek's columns in *Daily Zaman*¹¹⁰ and *The New Yorker* show that the categories, themes, and narratives that this study characterizes as Turkish American resurface in the Anglophone coverage of the Gezi Park events. Turkish American tropes can be encountered not only in fictional writing, but also in contemporary journalistic contributions, and continue to be part and parcel of Turkish public discourse. Today, like in the past, Turkish American narratives contribute ideas to the construction of a globalized Turkish identity and to debates on the evolution of the urban landscape, the biased quality of historiography, and the relationship with the United States.

Elif Batuman is a Turkish American journalist and novelist born in New York of Turkish parents. She holds a doctorate in comparative literature from Stanford University and has been collaborating with *The New Yorker* since 2010. Her debut novel, *The Possessed: Adventures with Russian Books and the People Who Read Them*, came out in the same year. She authored several columns on the Gezi Park events, but the most relevant text for the purposes of this chapter, titled "Istanbul's Troubled Gardens: The Flowers of Gezi Park," appeared in *The New*

110 A Turkish newspaper published in English and hosting articles by mostly Turkish, American, and English contributors.

Yorker on July 16, 2013. Batuman begins by explaining her views of the protests, the tragedy of the wounded, and the absurd intervention of government gardeners planting thousands of flowers while the protest raged to prove Erdoğan's point that "protesters destroyed things, while the real environmentalists planted flowers" ("Gardens" n.p.). Later on, Batuman shifts the focus from Gezi Park to another, parallel, park project being developed in a different side of town, where the government plans to destroy the *bostans* of Yedikule (Byzantine vegetable gardens) and replace them with a new park. Batuman insists on the historical value of the *bostans* and expresses concern over their unnecessary destruction.

The *bostans* [...] line the southern edge of the fifth-century walls that enclosed Byzantine Constantinople. The gardens may be as old as the walls. An edict in the Theodosian Code (422 A.D.) designates space in the walls' towers for storing produce and farming implements; a sixth-century Byzantine text mentions the cultivation there of "a large variety of green salads, endive, carrots, onions, and cabbage." [...] *Yedikule* means "seven towers," and refers to the four Byzantine and three Ottoman towers in the city walls; the train lets you off near the dungeons where Sultan Osman II met a terrible death. ("Gardens" n.p.)

Here Batuman claims that the *bostans* provide a direct link between modernity and a submerged pre-Ottoman and Ottoman past. She elaborates on this unique connection by adding that the gardens should be protected by UNESCO as intangible heritage.

"Intangible heritage" is a relatively recent category, and poses a tantalizing paradox: What if it's possible, by relinquishing our grip on physical objects, to arrive at a truer sense of historical place? A head of lettuce in Yedikule in 2013 isn't physically the same head of lettuce that grew there in 1013, but it's still a functional lettuce. [...] It's a marvelous and still underacknowledged gift to be able to [...] see, smell, and taste the actual living descendants of Byzantine lettuce. ("Gardens" n.p.)

Through the concept of intangible heritage, the gardens secure an ephemeral and yet very lively continuity between past and present Istanbul. In other words, the *bostans* make it possible for present-day Istanbulites to regain metaphorical entrance into the disavowed Ottoman past and thus can be configured, to put it with Ann Stoler as "ruins [...] that condense alternative senses of history" (*Imperial Debris* 9). Thanks to the image of endangered gardens, and the idea of the *bostans* as the remnant of a submerged Ottoman history, a connection can be drawn between Batuman's take on the Gezi Park protests and the trope of the garden analyzed in Chapter Four of this volume. Chapter Four ("Ottoman Nature: Natural Imagery, Gardens, Wells, and Cultural Memory in Republican Turkey") explores the function of natural symbolism and gardens in the work

of Elif Shafak and Alev Lytle Croutier. The first part connects floral and faunistic elements with the search for identity in post-imperial Turkey in Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* and *The Saint of Incipient Insanities*. Special emphasis is awarded to the preservation of collective memory in Turkish, Armenian, and Armenian American communities. The second part, mostly concerned with Croutier's novel *Seven Houses*, casts the disappearance of Ottoman gardens as a synecdoche for the erasure of Ottoman cultural memory in the country's passage from empire to republic.

In Batuman's article – as in Turkish American novels – the deplorable destruction of Istanbul's historical heritage is tantamount to the careless erasure of its Ottoman past, deemed unfit to participate in the government's vision of urban modernity. The strongest parallel can doubtlessly be established to Alev Lytle Croutier's *Seven Houses*, where the destruction of gardens is conjoined with a narrative of dispossession. The destruction of Maria's garden to allow for a road enlargement in *Seven Houses* evokes the Kemalist policies of confiscation and repurposing of land that belonged to the non-Muslim minorities of the empire. In Batuman's text, the narrative of dispossession shifts its focus from the sphere of ethnicity to that of class, as the new park project poses a severe threat to the community of farmers that depends on the *bostans* for a living.

They had worked at another *bostan* near the airport, but it had been paved over. Now they had to move again. The first woman said they had been given seven days' notice to vacate; her friend had heard rumors earlier – a month and a half ago. Both agreed that the bulldozers could come any day now. ("Gardens" n.p.)

A similar notion of dispossession emerges in Fatma Muge Göçek's article on Gezi Park "Where is Turkey Headed," where she proposes to read the Gezi events as conducive to a "Gezi syndrome" (Göçek n.p.). Göçek does not clarify the rationale behind her choice to connect the emotional aftermath of the demonstrations with the "Sèvres syndrome," possibly dismissing the link as immediate and obvious to her readers. Certainly, both syndromes engage with the idea of dispossession, intended as the disruption of the unperturbed identification between individuals and "the environment they live in" (Göçek n.p.). The phrase that, to Göçek, condenses the motives and atmosphere of the Gezi Park demonstration is a cry of dispossession: "How could they take my city away from me?" (Göçek n.p.).

Yet, for Batuman, the destruction of the *bostan* is primarily about the loss of public and private memory, and about the superimposition of a political vision on an existing landscape that is alive and redolent with history and meaning. Erdoğan's visions of modernity – the shopping mall at Gezi Park, the new

park project on the ruins of *bostans* – clash with and are pursued in spite of the city’s shared cultural past and the needs of the Istanbul population, and are therefore harshly condemned by the writers and her interviewees. Batuman sees the architectural interventions planned by Erdoğan’s government as contrary to the preservation of the city’s Ottoman past, which, considering that Erdoğan is a neo-Ottomanist leader, appears highly paradoxical. In addition to a cultural controversy, the bulldozing of Gezi Park and the *bostans* is, to Batuman, also an aesthetic dilemma, as Erdoğan appears deaf to the plea of Istanbul architects to join forces and reach a compromise between modernization and beauty:

architects and city planners [...] only wanted to open a conversation about the design of the park. [...] Couldn’t the *bostans* be used not to obstruct the park but to enhance it – to make it a thing of beauty and meaning? Didn’t they belong not to the Fatih municipality but to the whole city, and even the world? (“Gardens” n.p.)

The passage stresses the possibility to shape the Istanbul landscape as a synthesis of antiquity and modernity, avoiding what Pamuk in *The Black Book* would configure as a ghostly modernity standing on the ruins of a submerged past, as explained in Chapter One (“Imaginary Spaces: Representations of Istanbul between Topography and Imagination”). When Batuman conducts her interview, in fact, part of the *bostans* have already been buried under “several feet of rubble” (ibid.).

When Batuman characterizes Erdoğan as a charismatic male leader shaping the urban landscape top-down, immune to counsel and cooperation, a comparison with Atatürk is inevitable in spite of their antipodal political orientations. Erdoğan, writes Batuman, “has successfully fashioned himself as an Ottoman-style ruler: tough, ambitious, grandiose [...] And yet, history is a multifaceted thing” (“Gardens” n.p.). The founder of Kemalism and the controversial neo-Ottomanist leader seem to share a similar interest in manipulating Turkey’s history and cityscapes; once more, Turkish American writing resorts to voices of women to resist this process. In fact, in the introduction to this volume I defined Turkish American literature as permeated by a deep dissatisfaction with the identitarian narratives of Kemalism. Still nowadays, Turkish American voices continue to question, revise, or dismantle hegemonic narratives that intend to dissociate the Turkish population from its cultural memory. Evidently, Erdoğan’s Gezi Park project was perceived as such an attempt. Turkish American literature has not lost its political impetus, but the objects of its critique may have shifted after Erdoğan’s turn to more authoritarian politics – which the Gezi Park events may have brought to the attention of the international community.

Batuman's conclusive remark on the "multifaceted" quality of history enables another inevitable parallel to Halide Edip's personal battle against practices of historiography and religion dominated by single male heroes and prophets, which she re-wrote as the outcome of the work of a constellation of male and female figures, mothers, and gentle leaders. Edip's subversive historiography has been addressed in Chapter Two ("Rewriting History, Rewriting Religion"), which dealt with rewritings of history and religion in the works of Edip and Shafak. Chapter Two has showed how these authors reclaim Turkish history and religion from the predominantly patriarchal visions of Kemalism and orthodoxy, 'rewriting' them into a matrifocal perspective. In both cases, the rewriting of history and religion is characterized by a systematic search for parallels between Islam and Christianity and is carried out in a markedly American perspective.

A similar attempt to shift the traditional focus of Turkish historiography can be found in Batuman's argument as well. Batuman quotes archeologist Alessandra Ricci as she comments on how Istanbul's citizens and scholars "are now being forged to associate the land walls of Istanbul with conquests, wars, assaults, triumphs [...] but in reality most of the life of the walls was about something else, and the *bostan* is a testimony of this" (Ricci in Batuman, "Gardens" n.p.). The passage connects immediately to Edip's concerns about the excessively warlike and 'masculine' perspective on historiography, and her craving for a different focus:

the book seemed to squeeze my heart in an iron band, tightening with the ugly passions and demonstrations of power of the famous heroes. I wondered all the time what the simple little children were doing when all this bloody and cruel struggle was going on in a country. [...] Whenever I see or read of a great military hero performing his deeds, and of history or literature recording them, I wonder [...] not about the children only, but about the simple grown up people as well. (*Memoirs* 118)

The life and necessities of children and "simple grown up people" voiced by Edip in 1926 echoes that "something else" life on the Istanbul walls was about according to Ricci.

Yet, the analogies between Batuman's and Edip's texts do not end here, as the two share the focus on feminine perspectives. Batuman, like Edip but less vocally, invokes a transition from the male-singular form to the feminine-plural in Turkey's public discourse and history by connoting the *bostans* as almost entirely feminine spaces, as her interviewees in "Troubled Gardens" are all women. During her visit, Batuman starts a conversation with two elderly women in headscarves, and later on with two more women and a young girl. As they sort grape leaves, they tell the journalist to call them "the wronged women who work in the *bostan*" [...] Or no – just 'the wronged women'" ("Gardens" n.p.). Thus, Batuman's

excerpt voices a desire for the reconfiguration of historiographical practices at large, one that is strongly reminiscent of the hopes and concerns expressed in Edip's memoirs. Batuman contrasts Erdoğan's intransigent efforts to pursue his own visions with the practical needs of the *bostan* women, not with the intent to deepen the sense of clashing interests but urging a negotiation.

Unsurprisingly, Batuman shares the Turkish American concern with heterogeneity and the hope that such unnecessary polarities as between governmental policies and citizens' needs, progress and antiquity, modernization and collective memory may be reconciled in Istanbul's cultural landscape. This is illustrated by a conclusive foray into Ottoman history, which Batuman projects as an example of tolerance and a viable model for the city's future:

it's possible to envision an altogether different Ottoman politics: one valuing adaptability, compromise, and a highly developed aesthetic sense. [...] When the Ottomans conquered Constantinople, they didn't destroy the Hagia Sofia but converted it into a mosque. [...] Then, drawing both on the knowledge he had gained from the Hagia Sofia and on his own particular talent, Mimar Sinan went on to build some of the most beautiful mosques the world had ever seen. ("Gardens" n.p.)

The passage contains an example of Ottoman utopia: one of the most prominent features of Shafak's writing. Shafak's Ottoman utopia, analyzed in Chapter One, casts the Ottoman past as a model of peaceful coexistence inspired by the paradigms of American multiculturalism and devoid of interethnic and interreligious conflicts. This construct also draws on the representation of the Ottoman Empire as a 'gentle empire' which allowed its subject populations to maintain their cultural identity, establishing a regime of ante-litteram multiculturalism in the conquered territories. The combination of cultural pluralism and a gentle domination is strongly reminiscent of American exceptionalist discourses, and resurface in Turkish American representations of the Ottoman Empire. In her article, Batuman locates the Ottoman utopia and the myth of gentle imperialism in the architectural sphere. The conquest of Hagia Sofia is thoroughly divested of brutality and regarded as the starting point of a civilization where colonizers and colonized (as well as their architectural traditions) could coexist and interact on almost equal grounds. Here, Batuman constructs her own Ottoman utopia by "replacing the tensions of the past and the present with seamless and beautiful images" (Mills 458).

A discussion of gardens and their cultural symbolism, so essential to Turkish American literature as well as to Batuman's "Troubled Gardens," can be found in Göçek as well, who dwells on the concept of environmentalism as one of the underlying values of the Gezi Park protests. In "Where is Turkey Headed," published

in *Zaman* on June 16, 2013, Göçek contrasts the interests of a consumption-oriented, neo-liberal democracy embodied by the figure of Erdoğan, “where only consumers seem to be equal,” with the concern for environmentalism: the “new vision” of the “educated youth” (Göçek n.p.). The preoccupation of the Turkish youth with the environment translates into their opposition to the erosion of nature (or urban green in the case of Gezi Park) as well as to the eradication of their urban landscape. The “environment in which they live” is also configured as an emotional space loaded with personal and collective memories. The Istanbulites resist the disruption of this emotional landscape for the sake of a political vision, Erdoğan’s, which is “no longer in sync” with Turkey’s vision (ibid.); much as Kemal’s was, in earlier Turkish American texts, not in sync with the multifarious identity and complex history of the territory on which it developed.

This volume has attempted to describe Turkish American literature as the site of a privileged cultural dialogue between Turkey and the United States; in the course of this study, my aim has been to reflect on this dialogue and highlight the transnational framework around Turkish American literature. Both Göçek’s and Batuman’s articles stress the global resonance of the protests, defining Gezi Park as a transnational event, and they do so by mostly highlighting the affinity with the “Occupy Wall Street” movement in the United States. It is possible to read the transnational resonance of the Gezi Park protests through a dichotomy of anxiety and solidarity: two categories that appear as two sides of the same coin.

Anxiety of foreign interference seems to be a prominent theme in the Turkish and international coverage of the Gezi Park events. This is indicated by the proliferation of articles featuring conspiracy theories.¹¹¹ In “Fear of Foreign Agents in Gezi,” Laura Moth speaks of a broad concern about foreign involvement in the protests that not only affected the Prime Minister’s rhetoric but was also voiced by the population (“I’ve seen wariness of foreign involvement among friends and acquaintances”) and took the form of “outright hostility” in online coverage and commentaries (Moth n.p.).

Elements of anxiety of foreign interference appear, albeit moderately, in Batuman’s and Göçek’s articles as well, and there is enough evidence to characterize foreign interference as primarily Western and American. On the one hand, Batuman’s “Occupy Gezi: Police against Protesters in Istanbul” (2013) features

111 *Zaman* offers a vast array of articles centered on conspiracy theories and anxiety regarding foreign involvement. To quote a few examples: Laura Moth’s “Fear of Foreign Agents in Gezi,” Aydın Albayrak’s “Foreign Conspiracy Discourse May also be Used before 2014 Elections,” and İhsan Dağı’s “What Is behind the Veil of Conspiracy Theories.”

an indirect connection between unrestrained consumerism and American imperialism. First, she voices the Istanbulites' shared frustration about the diffusion of shopping malls at the expense of historical buildings: "again and again, people have protested the destruction of some historical building or the construction of some new shopping center. Again and again, the historical building has been destroyed, and the shopping center constructed" ("Occupy Gezi" n.p.). Later on, one of her interviewees concludes his intervention with an utterly decontextualized but spontaneous "American imperialism to hell!" ("Occupy Gezi" n.p.). The man's exclamation betrays the conviction that the proliferation of shopping malls and the vanishing of the city heritage, as well as the Gezi Park events, might be a consequence of American cultural imperialism. On the other hand, Göçek's "consumption-oriented," "neo-liberal democracy" where "only consumers seem to be equal" is reminiscent of the American capitalist model (Göçek n.p.).

A counterpart to the discourse on anxiety in the Gezi Park debate is the transatlantic solidarity with the "Occupy Wall Street" Movement in the United States. Batuman and Göçek locate Gezi Park in a transnational perspective by establishing a connection with the American context, which is per se a legitimate parallel, since the Gezi Park movement adopted "the Occupy mantle" and decisively labeled itself as a global phenomenon, becoming "Occupy Gezi" (Moth n.p.).¹¹² Batuman emphasizes the resonance the Turkish protests had in the American public discourse, which reacted by adopting the terminology and gestures of the Gezi protesters.

Erdoğan dismissed the protesters as [...] a handful of *çapulcu* ("looters" or "marauders") [...]. An English variant, chapulling, appeared in Wikipedia. Noam Chomsky released a video message indicating that he, too, was a *çapulcu*. By that point, Gezi Park had become a vast, confounding, utopian encampment, where thousands convened every day and hundreds slept every night, where the People's Çapulcu Barber gave free haircuts, the Çapulcu Library distributed free books, and the ideals of nationalism, Communism, socialism, feminism, and Kurdish self-determination seemed to coexist peacefully under slogans like "Everyday I'm Chapulling." ("Occupy Gezi" n.p.)

Batuman's account depicts Gezi Park as a diverse space capable of bringing Turkish nationalists and Kurdish activists, communists and socialists together: a "utopian" scenario mediated by the equalizing awareness of being "looters," the

112 The Gezi Park protest was not the first to "adopt the Occupy mantle." In 2011, a group of students of the Bosphorus University occupied the campus Starbucks for three days to protest against the price of food and beverages on campus. The protest quickly came to be known as "Occupy Starbucks." See for example "University Students Occupy Starbucks Shop," an article posted on *Hürriyet Daily News* on December 8, 2011.

English language, and Noam Chomsky's blessing. Göçek positions the Gezi protests in the horizon of "new social movements," but does not expand on which movements qualify as part of this category. Yet, she extensively elaborates on the similarities between "Occupy Gezi" and "Occupy Wall Street."

Another prominent voice joining the transnational debate on "Occupy Gezi" is Elif Shafak's, who wrote a piece for *The Guardian* entitled "The View from Taksim Square: Why is Turkey now in Turmoil?". Shafak's article touches upon some of the issues expressed so far: she comments on the Gezi Park controversy as yet another event that "widen[ed] the gap between the rulers and the ruled," and expresses preoccupation with the "stubbornly male-dominated" character of Turkish politics ("The View" n.p.). Most significantly, "The View from Taksim Square" seems to reassure foreign observers about the 'Western' nature of "Occupy Gezi" by distancing it from another event which acquired immense global resonance: the "Arab Spring."

Shafak disapprovingly points at the precarious condition of Turkey's 'exceptional' status as the 'model' Muslim democracy – a denomination that keeps reoccurring in American political discourse from Bernard Lewis down to George W. Bush – blaming the AKP government for endangering the country's reputation:

There was a lot of talk about Turkey, with its overwhelmingly Muslim population and secular democracy, being a role model for the rest of the Muslim world. That spirit of optimism deteriorated dramatically. However, it can be revived once again if the government learns from its mistakes. ("The View" n.p.)

At the same time, Shafak discourages comparisons with the extremist exploits of the "Arab Spring" in what seems like an effort to reassure Western audiences that Turkey remains the exceptional model democracy of the Middle East.

Calling the recent events a "Turkish spring" or a "Turkish summer," as some commentators were quick to do, is not the right approach. It is true that Turkey has lots of things in common with many countries in the Middle East, but it is also very different. With its long tradition of modernity, pluralism, secularism and democracy – however flawed and immature it might be – Turkey has the inner mechanisms to balance its own excesses of power. ("The View" n.p.)

Inviting caution when it comes to comparing different national struggles for democracy and basic human rights is legitimate. What is striking about Shafak's text, however, is her investment in restoring Turkey's reputation as the most Western of the Muslim states, "one that boasts a long tradition of modernity, pluralism, secularism and democracy," thus attempting to re-establish the narrative

of Turkish 'exceptionalism'¹¹³ so dear to American discourses on the Middle East. Besides, the text betrays a certain resentment at the quickness with which commentators have drawn parallels between Gezi Park and the "Arab Spring." In fact, the article's subheading wonders whether it is "fair to label this protest a "Turkish Spring."

This leads to the conclusion that the Turkish American perception of "Occupy Gezi" is understandably invested in the declension of the protests in a global, transnational perspective. After all, the analyzed articles appeared in Anglophone newspapers directed at international readerships. Yet, the connection between the Gezi Park protests and the American sphere is decisively preponderant: affinities with the "Occupy" movement are prominent and more deeply felt, but parallels with the "Arab Spring" are ignored or discouraged. Turkish American voices are eager to construct Turkey as a global agent, yet a certain imbalance can be noticed in their transnationalizing efforts. Turkey's transnational identity is in fact characterized by a strong bond with the United States, which appears to be kept center stage not only in the realm of fiction, but also in non-fictional texts that propose readings of Turkey's modernity and current public discourses.

Through the analysis of a series of narratives that recur in Turkish American texts – garden and natural symbolism, imaginary representations of Istanbul, matrifocal historiography, and Sufism – this study showed that Turkish American literature can be presented as a cohesive corpus of texts that reveal conspicuous similarities on the level of discourse (e.g., multiculturalism), symbols (e.g., gardens, wells...), and politics (e.g., Ottoman nostalgia and the critique of Kemalism). Moreover, the Turkish American imaginary is not limited to the realm of the novel, but extends through different genres, including journalistic writing and autobiography. The 'traveling' nature of these texts eschews direct canonization: they fit imperfectly in the framework of 'ethnic' or 'migrant' writing in the U.S. and cannot be categorized as Turkish literature either. Comparisons with texts written in Turkish such as Orhan Pamuk's demonstrated that the politics of Turkish American texts are those of diasporic literature, and the language in which they are written places them beyond the national borders – although not exclusively. Cross-readings with American canonic authors such as Whitman, Emerson, and Barth have been useful to measure the proximity of Turkish American texts to the American sphere. The comparison with Pamuk, instead, has been essential to locate Turkish American literature outside the national

113 For a discussion of 'Turkish Exceptionalism' see the introduction to this volume.

sphere. While Pamuk's work crossed the national borders and now dwells in the world literature arena, Turkish American texts originated in an Anglophone literary context and may or may not return to the homeland. In spite of her English prose and Ottomanesque language, Shafak remains, to this point, Turkey's best-selling female author. The cases of Gün and Edip are more complicated, as their work was regarded with hostility within Turkey. Turkish American literature thus emerges as a hardly canonizable phenomenon, and yet not as an isolated, self-referential one. These conclusive observations showed that the narratives explored in this volume still permeate the way in which Turkish American voices comment on topical debates in Turkey. It also became clear that, in their coverage of Turkey's recent and less recent history, Turkish American writers read the homeland through the lens of American conceptual frameworks and interpret it for American and international readers. The effort to construct Turkey as a transnation was and remains a central feature of Turkish American literature.

It will be interesting to observe the futures of Turkish American literature. The rise of Erdoğan's AKP party in the early 2000s seemed to sanction the triumph of neo-Ottomanism over the Kemalists' obsessively Western trajectory, yet – and so much is not in doubt considering the historical conjuncture Turkey finds itself in – this did not result in a “country where we are all equal, friendly, and free” (Shafak, “Hrant Dink's Dream” n.p.). In the meantime, the Erdoğan presidency opened the doors to religious radicalization and made an abrupt departure from the “model democracy” paradigm the West had enthusiastically saluted; Shafak's claim that Turkey has the “inner mechanisms to balance its own excesses of power” (“A View” n.p.) resonates eerily in the aftermath of the failed coup d'état of 2016. At least for the time being, Erdoğan's authoritarianism has put the Turkish American aspirations on hold, and it seems unlikely that they will remain entirely unchanged. Will Turkish American literature re-evaluate Kemal's secularism, his mistrust of religion in the *res publica*, and his attachment to Western values? Which paradigm will it try to “revive,” Ottomanism or the “model democracy”?¹¹⁴ Will it shed the skin of political literature to rise as literature of protest? Will it revisit its positions or radicalize them? The fate of the Ottoman utopia is perhaps one of the most poignant questions. In her 2015 article, “Cover Story: The Head Scarf, Modern Turkey, and Me,” Batuman affirms that “in the AKP-sympathetic world view, the Ottomans [...] enjoyed a *vogue* as models of enlightened Muslim multiculturalism” (Batuman n.p., emphasis added). With these words, Batuman puts the Ottoman utopia into perspective, acknowledges its status as a “vogue”

114 Cf. Shafak, “A View” and “Islands.”

determined by a specific political moment, and perhaps gestures at the possible ending of the romance with the Pax Ottomana. Considering the speed at which global dynamics seem to be shifting, it is this book's fate not to be exhaustive and welcome new studies on Turkish American literature that may address different political configurations in Turkey as well as in the United States and Europe.