

Islamism and Islamic literature in Contemporary Turkey: From Epic to Novel  
Understandings of Islam

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores Islamism and Islamic identities through literary representations of Islamism in Turkey in the last two decades, a period in which Islamism came on the public agenda through novels, films, music and other artistic productions. My focus will be in particular on the Islamic novels of the 1980s and 1990s in order to elucidate Islamist actors' perceptions of 'self' and 'other' and of the social milieu in which they lived. I will note a change in emphasis in Islamic representations and discourse between the 1980s and 1990s. I will argue that with their didactic and pedagogical narratives detailing 'how Muslims should live in the modern world,' Islamic novels of 1980s provided Islamists with a means to disseminate ideas in popularized form and to develop life strategies that paved the way for assertive collective Islamic subjectivity. By contrast, in the 1990s more self-reflexive/self-exposing novels have emerged in Islamic circles that mirror the questioning of radical conceptions of the previous decade in Islamic circles. The new Islamic novels, with their self-reflexive forms and their narratives exploring the inner conflicts of Islamic actors in the face of changing social relations challenge the collective definitions of Islamic identity and signify novel practices and interpretations of Islam.

## KISA ÖZET

Bu çalışma Türkiye’de İslamcılığın romanlar, filmler ve diğer sanatsal ürünler yoluyla gündeme geldiği 1980’ler ve 1990’lardaki İslami kimlikleri İslami çevrelerde yazılan romanlar aracılığıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada İslami aktörlerin kendilerini, ‘öteki’ni ve yaşadıkları çevreyi edebiyat yoluyla anlamlandırma ve betimleme biçimlerini incelemek için özellikle 1980’ler ve 1990’lardaki İslami romanlar üzerinde durulacaktır. Çalışmanın temel tezi, İslami kimlik kurgusunda ve söylemde bu iki on yıl arasında önemli değişimler olduğudur. Bu bağlamda ‘modern dünyada bir Müslüman nasıl yaşamalı’ sorusunu didaktik ve pedagojik bir biçimde anlatan 1980’lerin romanları, İslamcı aktörlerin fikirlerini popüler bir formda yaymaları için önemli bir işlev görmüştür. Bu romanlar aynı zamanda kolektif bir İslami kimliğin doğmasına yol açacak hayat stratejisinin geliştirildiği anlatılar sunmaktadır. Buna karşın İslami çevrelerde 1990’larda bir önceki on yılın radikal söylemlerini sorgulayan eleştirel romanlar yazılmaya başlanmıştır. Bu romanlarda İslamcı karakterler değişen sosyal ortam ve hayat algıları ışığında kendi iç çatışmalarıyla, İslami idealler ve dünyevi arzular arasındaki bocalamalarıyla temsil edilmektedir. Yeni anlatılarıyla bu romanlar 1980’lerin kolektif İslami kimliği sorgulayan ve İslam’a yeni yorumlar getiren değişen İslami kimlikleri simgelemektedir.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore Islamism and Islamic identities in Turkey via an engagement with Islamic literary narratives of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>1</sup> It is particularly in the 1980s in Turkey that Islamism made its presence well and truly felt in both public space and in relationship to dominant political struggles, as its intellectual accounts took a polemical stance on the very legitimacy of the Kemalist modernizing project in the form of westernization and secularization and of established traditional Islam. Islamism also came on the public agenda through the demand of headscarved girls to attend universities and Islamic party politics as well as its cultural products such as films, music and novels.

Islamic groups can not be conceptualized in a monolithic form in Turkey in the context of the 1980s. Islamism as a political and social practice involved (still involves) diverse and multi-layered groups, from radical circles (who reject Islamic party politics and voice a revolutionary discourse of Islamism), to groups organized under a political party (different parties of *Milli Görüş* movement), members of religious sects (some of whom usually vote for right-wing parties) and Kurdish Muslims who condemn Turkish nationalism within Turkish Islamist groups.

However in the politicized context of the 1980s varied Islamic groups shared a common concern that Turkey (and Muslim world) was losing its Islamic essence due to westernization and secularization. As a solution to this

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the main arguments of this study were developed in international workshops on Islam and public space organized by Nilüfer Göle between 2000 and 2002. These workshops were part of a project exploring Islamic visibilities in three different societies or regions: Turkey, post-revolutionary Iran and Europe. This project has yielded an edited volume in which an article on Islamic novels that draws on the concerns of this study will appear. See Çayır (forthcoming) in N. Göle and L. Amman, eds. (forthcoming).

diagnosis, they often voiced an overlapping discourse with respect to their demand for the remoralization of public life according to Islamic principles. Islam in various Islamic texts of the period was reinterpreted in a way that it provided a comprehensive way of life as instructed in the Koran and exemplified by the Prophet and his friends. In this decade almost every aspect of life was filtered and reconstructed from an Islamist perspective – we see the publication of books titled “*The Woman in Islam*,” “*The Family in Islam*,” “*The Art of Living Islam*” or “*The Islamic state*.” Prominent revolutionary thinkers of the Middle East such as Sayyid Qutb, Ala-Mawdudi and Ali Shariati were translated into Turkish that provided Islamists with a revolutionary language and imaginary. In brief, Islamism as a social movement signified the reappropriation and reinterpretation of Islam by Islamic actors in the contemporary world as a belief system organizing both public and private domains. Upon this consideration the dominant discourse of Islamism in the 1980s searched for an alternative Islamic order and morality to Kemalist secular and Western frames of reference.

One of the important means through which Islamic writers developed their criticisms of the western-centric modernization, imagined an ideal Islamic order and negotiated an Islamic identity at an intersubjective level was literature, particularly a certain form of Islamic novel. The novel as a genre with an Islamic content emerged concomitantly with the rise of Islamist movements towards the end of 1970s in Turkey. Islamic literature, in the words of an Islamist novelist, refers to a category of literature that “derives from Islamic imaginary” (Eroğlu, 1982) with the aim of propagating an Islamic vision of the world. In these early years the writing of fiction was a novel phenomenon among Islamic circles: the appropriation of a literary genre that had long been construed as having a

‘destructive impact’ on communitarian morality (since it had been based on the exposition of individual private worlds and ‘immoral’ scenes (Meriç, 1994; 86)) signified an attitudinal change among Islamic actors. One motivating factor in the emergence of Islamic novels, as novelists state, was an emerging critical stance of Islamic writers towards what they call ‘Republican literature’, which was accused of “not represent[ing] us [Muslims] adequately” (Yardımlı, 2000; 169). Islamist novelists radically homogenized and simplified the literary narratives of the Republican period as causing “moral degeneracy” by importing the “westernization disease” leading to the decline of Islam by bad-mouthing and misrepresenting Muslims (see Miyasoğlu 1999). In the context of Islamic revitalization the novel was appropriated as a genre charged with representing the ‘real,’ with conveying Islamic messages and with combating ‘the negative effects of republican literature.’<sup>2</sup>

The earliest novels of Islamist writers were set mostly in rural or village contexts, and were structured according to a reversal of the narratives of mainstream social realist novels. Whereas in influential social realist novels (and cinema) *imam* or religious personalities of the village were represented as ‘bigots’ struggling against ‘enlightened teachers,’<sup>3</sup> in Islamic novels it was *pious* teachers that ‘saved’ the village, leading the peasants to salvation. Novelists conveyed their messages through the dialogue of pious characters who were represented positively in contradistinction to those of social realist literature.<sup>4</sup>

Besides these more standard village novels, a few ‘intellectual’ novels were also

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<sup>2</sup> On Islamist novelists’ conceptualization of literature see the collection of interviews by Yardımlı 2000.

<sup>3</sup> I refer particularly to the canonical village novels of Mahmut Makal and Fakir Baykurt. On representations of Islamic characters in village novels see Karpas 1971.

<sup>4</sup> For instance see as a prototype of these novels A. Günbay Yıldız’s *Yanık Buğdaylar* (2003, 35<sup>th</sup> ed., [1974]).



written with complex narratives focusing on the stories of pious characters in urban life and their interrogation of the problems of the modern age.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the vast majority of early 1980s Islamic novels can be categorized as '*salvation novels*', a self-description emerging from Islamic circles. Salvation novels formed a coherent genre with identical narrative structures. Many became best-sellers in Islamic circles with their easily read popular forms. Indeed, a number of these novels have presently reached their 40th or 50th edition and have been widely read in Islamic circles.<sup>6</sup>

What characterized salvation novels was their message-bearing narratives in which Islam was presented as the only solution to the 'moral degeneracy' of the modern world. The central plot of these novels was based on the struggle between Islamic and secular worldviews, the former represented by 'stable' Islamic characters, the latter by stereotypically 'degenerate' secularists. Nearly all salvation novels concluded the same way: confused or unfulfilled secular/modern characters attained enlightenment and/or contentment with the illuminating guidance of exemplary Islamic characters. The time frame and referential contexts of these novels were usually the 1980s and modern urban spaces such as universities or urban quarters. They regularly narrated the struggles of 'faithful' headscarved girls who were excluded from universities, or of young educated decent male characters who led 'depressed' girls living a modern way of life (characterized by the portrayal of drinking, flirting and being unveiled) to salvation, always represented by such girls' embracing the headscarf. Through the words of Islamic characters novelists conveyed their message about the role of women in Islam, the requirements of Islamic morality, the 'negative

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Mustafa Miyasoglu's *Kaybolmuş Günler* (1975) and *Dönemeç* (1980).

<sup>6</sup> For instance Günbay Yıldız's twenty novels have sold more than a half million copies (Yardım, 2000; 168).

effects' of westernization, the problems of the modern age and Islamic solutions to these problems.<sup>7</sup>

However, Islamic salvation stories do more than simply signify the oppositionary truth claims of Islamism. Their depiction of idealized Muslim characters studying in universities or performing modern professions represents another dimension of Islamic movements: Islamic actors' will to participate into public life. It should be noted that in its construction of oppositional claims of truth, Islamism was a "world-accommodating" movement rather than being a "world-rejecting" one (Toprak, 1995). In other words Islamism, rather than presaging an Islamist withdrawal from modern life, promoted Islamic mental strategies to selectively reappropriate religion and modern forms of life (Göle, 2002). In this vein the title of the books published by Islamists in the 1980s also involved "Islamization of Science," "Islamic Anthropology" or "Islamic Sociology." Accordingly, the revolutionary Islamic literature of the Middle East was not the only source of textual inspiration for Islamism. Islamism interacted with many critical European thinkers such as A. Toynbee, A. Carrel, I. Illich and C. Jung, whose works were translated into Turkish by Islamic publication houses to become best-selling authors in Islamic circles in the 1980s. The inclination of headscarved girls to attend university did not abate (indeed when the ban was strictly enforced many girls wore wigs or sought to study abroad) despite the call of some Islamic groups to leave school in the face of the headscarf ban. Islamist intellectuals' plea for a "revolt against industry and technology" (Toprak, 1993) was influential only at the rhetorical level and did not find an echo among Islamic groups who sponsored the training of their own engineers, journalists

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<sup>7</sup> Salvation novels are still being written and [re]published, although in fewer numbers compared to previous decades.

and economists as the 1980s moved into 1990s. As a result, Islam in the 1990s appeared more and more in the public agenda via debates over Islamic companies, Islamic hotels, Islamic beauty parlours or fashion shows that reflected the formation of an Islamist middle class and a pluralization of life experiences of Islamic actors.

Islamic actors' interaction with secular values, secular 'other' and their formation of new experiences has led to the emergence of new voices that challenged collective and oppositionary Islamic discourse of the 1980s. Although some Islamic groups still maintain a collectivist discourse, several self-critical Muslim actors have publicly taken a critical stance to their old revolutionary interpretation of Islam.<sup>8</sup> A younger generation of Muslim politicians has criticized older Islamic party politics and come to power with a new party (the Justice and Development Party, AKP) by declaring that "they have changed." Several actor-based studies of headscarved women also demonstrate the translation of modern secular values—such as demands to gender equality—into Muslim communities (Arat, 2001; Göle 1991 and 2000).

It is in this context that more self-reflexive narratives of Islamic actors, revealing aspects of conflicted inner selves, began to emerge. Islamic actors in these novels, which in this thesis I will call *self-reflexive and self-exposing* Islamic novels, are depicted as squeezed between their Islamist identities and religious ideals of the 1980s and their new life experiences in the context of the 1990s. Several women novelists imagined Islamist characters as educated but frustrated headscarved housewives, directing their criticisms towards the male

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance the recent interview with Mehmet Metiner, a prominent Kurdish intellectual of Islamic circles, who exposed his critical stance to his earlier revolutionary ideals in the 1980s and his and (his Muslim friends') changing perceptions of Islam and politics in the context of the 1990s. (*Radikal*, February 23-24, 2004).

actors of Islamism who had become 'insensitive to their situation' or 'exploited headscarved girls with low wages.'<sup>9</sup> Male characters on the other hand were allowed scope to explore the dilemmas of 'illicit' love, their unhappiness in Islamic marriages and their attendance in non-Islamic spaces like pubs. These new Muslim characters resisted the stereotypes of secularism and collective Islamism with their self-reflexive and self-exposing narratives. The very act of self-exposition and re-assessment of Islamist ideals violated collective definitions of Islamism.

Despite this internal diversity of Islamic groups and the changing narratives of Islamic identity, current intellectual and political polemics often work through totalizing the category of Islam(ism). The appearance of headscarved girls in urban spaces and university, Islamic actors' will to participate in public life through proliferating cultural, educational and commercial initiatives, and the transportation of Islamic demands into the political arena via party politics are often radically homogenized and treated as a threat to basic tenets of the secular republic by some secularist groups. The historicity lying behind such a perception of Islamic manifestations is the Kemalist project of modernization, which in its most radical form aimed to cut all ties with the old Islamic (Ottoman) order on the basis that Islam as a way of life promoted a backward and particularistic vision of the world in the face of contemporary Western civilization (see Mardin, 1989). In the new Turkish Republican political context Islam was simultaneously dis-established and re-established, leading to the marginalization of Islamic 'visibilities' and symbols as "residues of the old system" that have been and should be left behind (Göle,

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<sup>9</sup> For instance see stories of Cihan Aktaş (1991, 1995) and Halime Toros (1990).

1997b). Thus the rise of Islamist movements and the public assertion of religiosity in the context of the 1980s has been constructed and feared as “the intervention of an anachronistic predecessor” (Davison, 1997; 27) by many secularist groups whose narratives stress that overt manifestations of Islam should be construed as impediments to civilization and modernity.

There is not such a picture in Turkey that homogenous groups of Islamists clash with monolithic secular groups (see Toprak and Çarkoğlu, 2000). Several secular, liberal and leftist groups defend headscarved girls’ right to education or expression of Islamic demands via politics. Nevertheless influential secularist circles including many members of the mainstream media, military and civil bureaucracy and related NGOs still treat several manifestations of Islamism, especially the headscarf, as a challenge to secular democratic values, considering them “conscious steps” taken towards realizing an Islamic order.<sup>10</sup> These groups are skeptical about younger Muslim politicians who seem to bracket out their religious convictions when deliberating about politics. For many Kemalist critics, the moderate tone of Muslim politicians or headscarved actors is no more than cosmetic.

What underlies such essentialist interpretations of Islamism is a conviction that Islam possesses certain inherent characteristics (such as the imposition of headscarf on women) that are incompatible with democratic and secular values since they require believers to implement an Islamic rule of law in public life. This kind of reading assumes that Islamism is informed by prediscursive meaning structures that determine all subjective positioning. Accordingly the narrative variations of Islam among different Islamic groups are

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<sup>10</sup> For examples of such readings of Islam see Serter 1997; Tanyol 1999; Tuşalp 1994.

considered means to disguise real intentions and demands posited by these prediscursive or metalinguistic meaning structures.<sup>11</sup> Thus essentialist reading of Islamism focuses on the category of Islam, thereby constituting the Islamic self as a dependent variable. In other words, Islamic identity or subjectivity seems to have no reality independent of key concepts of Islamic *jihad* or Islamic order into which it has to fit. Such a reading then considers Islamic agency impossible since it is determined by the ontological primacy of Islam.<sup>12</sup> In the last instance an essentialist reading of Islamism denies the historicity and relationality of Islamist movements. Further, it disregards the intersubjective creation of social meanings, relational agency and Islamic social action.

In this study I will consider Islamism as a social and political practice that is subject to constant reevaluation by Islamic actors in the relational context of the last twenty years in Turkey. In my analysis I will explore Islamic meaning-making strategies and identities as constructed in fiction in the the 1980s and 1990s.

### Studying Islamism through Novels

The range of activities partly explicable under a broad banner of ‘Islamist politics’ – including headscarved girls, Islamic journals and pro-Islamic parties (the Virtue Party, the Welfare Party) – have come under the close scrutiny of

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of *Takiyye*, which has been taken from Shia Islam and adapted to describe the agenda of Islamic movements in Turkey by some secular groups in the 1990s, is often endorsed to signify the hidden intent of Islamic actors and thus to fix the meaning of Islam(isms). *Takiyye* is a tenet of Shia Muslims that refers to the concealment of their faith from non-Shias, especially from Sunni Muslims. Historically Shia Muslims have been in the minority and persecuted by some Sunnis since they have been considered as heretics. Thus *takiyye* has been used as a method of self-preservation for Shia Muslims (see Donzel, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> This interpretation, however, involves logical flows. On the one hand it denies the agency of Islamic actors, whom are presented as driven or fixed by their Islamic faith, and hence explains Islamic social action by invoking an ideological determinism. On the other hand it attributes a malignant form of agency to Islamic actors who are construed as capable of producing different narratives to disguise their real intentions in seeking to attain political power.

social sciences and the media in Turkey for the last twenty years. However, except for a few works that briefly analyzed selected Islamic novels,<sup>13</sup> Islamism in Turkey has not yet been studied through the production of its literature and novels.

In this study I will focus on the salvation novels of the 1980s and the self-reflexive novels of the 1990s in order to elucidate Islamic actors' perceptions of self, the other and the social milieu during these two decades. These novels, I contend, are valuable cultural texts for interrogating Islamic understandings of the period. One might object that this claim confuses the 'fictionality' of literature and 'factuality' of real contexts. However, following a Bakhtinian conceptualization of literature (2000; 300ff), I argue in the thesis that Islamic novels are not 'true' or 'fictional' *representations* of the 1980s and 1990s but are themselves material and discursive aspects of the context of this period. In other words, Islamic novels are not fictional creations of meaning but create particular views of reality. Underlying this is the contention that there is no literature outside of a given cultural context since the author (and readers) operate within a linguistic and cultural tradition – a field in a Bourdieuan sense (1995) – from which the texts' signs are derived and interpreted. This suggests that the novel is itself a construct, but one which is anchored in a historical and cultural context. It is the work of a narrator who imagines, observes and describes herself and her milieu from a particular cultural perspective (Evin, 1993; 95). In this sense

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<sup>13</sup> See Göle 1997a for an interpretation of a self-reflexive novel of the 1990s, *Mızraksız İlmihal*, in relation to changing Islamic identities of the period. Herkül Milas, in his study on *Türk Romanı ve 'Öteki': Ulusal Kimlikte Yunan İmajı* (2000), refers to some Islamic novels in terms of the representation of the 'other' in these novels. Adem Çalışkan (2002) in his unpublished PhD thesis presents an anthology of Islamic literature and V. Ertan Yılmaz (2000) in an unpublished masters thesis explores Islamic popular novels as sources of identity construction processes of Islamic actors. Lastly, H. Bülent Kahraman (2000), in an article reviewing the changing patterns of Turkish literature, alludes to the importance of Islamic literature in challenging the republican epistemology.

Islamic novelists, to use the analogy coined by Schutz, are like “the audiences in the theater” (Embree, 1998; 10). They are authors who have attended “the play” or the context of the 1980s and 1990s and reported afterwards what they have seen. Thus the analysis of Islamic novels involves the interrogation of Islamic representations of themselves and their surrounding world during the last two decades.

The thesis will argue that studying Islamism through Islamic literary narratives introduces issues of change, space, historicity and an analytical relationality that are excluded by the essentialist reading of Islamic identity. This is because what differentiates narrative from essentialist accounts is that narratives embed characters and events in time and space and order them according to a causal emplotment. In this study I will use the terms narrative and novel interchangeably in order to make use of narrative theory which conceives of narrative not only “as a mode of representation but also a mode of reasoning” (Richardson, 1990; 2). Underlying this is the contention that people produce meanings through narrative that allows them not merely to make sense of events but to partially constitute happenings as ‘events’ in the first place by locating themselves in temporal and sequential plots. This argument is made by a number of social theorists who argue that narrative is an important component of an adequate understanding of self and identity since identity is partially constructed through the relational telling of stories, individual or collective, that order one’s self in sequential plots (MacIntyre, 1985; Taylor 1992; Benhabib, 1996 and Nussbaum, 1992). By representing individuals as political agents who make choices or possess intentions and motives, the novel brings several aspects of human life to the fore for theoretical attention. It expands the scope of political



investigation by presenting the particularities—emotions, ethical choices—of individual lives that resist political theorizing (Nussbaum, 1992). Although it might be argued that the novel's individualistic perspective limits the usefulness of the novel for political analysis, the novel depicts individuals responding to other stories (again individual or collective), and portrays individuals in relationship to other actors and to their social settings (Whitebrook, 1996).

By drawing on the philosophical claim that there is an inherent relation between narrative, identity and politics, the thesis will argue that the Islamic novels of the 1980s and 1990s are not simply descriptive depictions but are representations that partially create the very realities to which they appeal. They are a means then through which Islamic readers, through their own 'writing' of their acts and practices in relation to the novels, make sense of themselves and their social milieu. Salvation novels in this regard represent the project of Islamic actors' to develop a coherent sense of self in the context of the 1980s, a decade when a radical and oppositionary discourse dominated Islamic circles. In this broader context, salvation novels appeared as an influential aspect of Islamic cultural criticism against westernization. Novelists engaged in a discursive struggle against secular narratives of civilization and attempted to renarrativize the history of Turkish modernization and the current social scene from their own refracted angle. Novelists sought to develop a positive image of Islam and the Islamic self by debating the meaning of modernity, civilization and secularism in the context of modern social relations. I argue that the narrative structures, the depiction of characters and the identical closure of salvation novels signify a strand of Islamism, *collective and epic* Islamism, which was dominant in the 1980s and maintains itself in the context of the 1990s. It is collective because it

speaks with a language of 'We,' invoking a 'them' and 'us' discourse, and epic (in the Bakhtinian sense) because it voices a collective 'epic absolute truth' derived from an 'epic past,' i.e. the period of *Asr-i Saadet* to impose a unitary and singular Islamic worldview upon others. Identical conclusions of salvation novels in which all characters are blessed with Islam represent collective Islamism's ideal for a total Islamization of society.

Cultural narratives or stories, as Taylor notes, "feed directly into our identity by signaling valued attributes and behaviours and giving explanation for our past and present" (1991; 4). Moreover stories provide us with an emotional repertoire since we learn our emotions from cultural stories (Nussbaum 1992; 287). In this regard, I consider salvation novels as cultural narratives which not only represented Muslims in a singular way but also contributed to the formation of gender roles, emotions and to the affirmation of Islamism's claims for authenticity via stories and role models derived from Islam's 'golden age'. With their didactic and pedagogical narratives detailing "how Muslims should live in the modern world," salvation novels provided Islamists with a means to disseminate ideas in popularized form and to develop life strategies that paved the way for an assertive Islamic identity. Moreover, through the mediated language and imagery of literature, salvation novels served as a means of communication in Islamic circles, binding Muslim actors living in different part of Turkey to the formation of a collectively imagined Islamic community.

By contrast, self-reflexive novels of the latter half of the 1990s diverged from the narratives of salvation fiction. While salvation novels depicted Muslims as a solid and homogenous collectivity and narrated the struggle and victory of Muslims against a 'decadent' secular order and its representatives, new novels of

the 1990s portrayed Muslim agents with internal conflicts and contrasting desires, torn between their religious ideals and more worldly concerns in the face of modern urban relations. Islamic characters appeared in these novels as those who are no longer so sure of the virtues of the collective Islamic identity to which they were once committed. Two exemplary novels on which I will focus later in the thesis portrayed a headscarved woman's exploration of new modes of activity and a new sense of Muslim self through her process of unveiling, and the sinful love of a married Islamist man. Islamist protagonists' self-scrutinizing and self-exposing narratives brought the experiences of Islamist actors in the 1980s and the 1990s to the fore. In other words, the conceptualizations, ideals, marriages and commitments of the 1980s Islamist movement were put under close literary examination via the mediating contexts of these self-reflexive novels in the light of the new experiences of Muslim actors in the changing context of the 1990s.

The novel with its narrative form in the 1990s provided Islamic actors with grounds for revising life histories and imposing new patterns on events in the face of changing social relations. New novels enabled Islamic actors to reevaluate the stories of an Islamic golden age and Islamist conceptions of the 1980s, paving the way for novel practices and interpretations of Islam. Importantly, these new self-reflexive novels do not signify the resignation from or disavowal of Islamic identities, but rather a search for a new, not Islamist, but Muslim self. In essence, Islamists' attempt to 'Islamicize the novel' during the 1980s has resulted in "the novelization of Islam' in the 1990s.

## **On the Approach and Organization of the Study**

Working with literary data imposes on researchers distinct problems relating to the exemplary status or otherwise of novels (sampling), to reader responses, and to how best we might approach literary texts. One cannot, for instance, easily paraphrase novelists' words—as a survey researcher might do for her informants' sentences—since literary data rest on a deliberate and distinctive use of language. Similarly, focusing on a wide range of data to better generalize limits the explication of exemplary texts and literary language, while it also risks losing the aesthetic and creative dimension of literary texts. On the other hand drawing on selected novels allows the examination of literary data in depth but leaves readers and thesis writers with a mass of quotation marks and the insufficiency of sampling. Nevertheless, sociologists of literature (and literary critics) usually favour “depth over breadth” (Rogers, 1991; 16) by focusing on one novelist or a few novels.

In this study I have chosen to examine Islamic novels in depth by focusing on two salvation novels of the 1980s and two self-reflexive novels of the 1990s. The novels selected for discussion were chosen on the basis of their ‘canonical’ status among Muslim circles and because they appear to have become prototypes for the narrative structure of each. Moreover I have deliberately made a gender-sensitive sampling. Each of the two sets of novels involve a male and female novelist who mainly narrate the story of male and female characters respectively. Besides these novels, I refer to many other salvation and self-reflexive novels of the period to substantiate my analysis. In order to examine my selected fictions not only ‘in depth’ but also ‘in breadth’—

and thus to relate them to wider contexts—I have tried to situate my exemplary novels within the broader boundaries of Turkish and Islamic literary fields.

I will not attempt to present a literary analysis of Islamic novels by only drawing on a literary technical terminology. The novels of the period are relevant for me in as much as they involve signs, characters and narratives for understanding Islamic subjectivity of the 1980s and 1990s. In other words, this study aims at examining Islamic novels for sociological and political illumination (of the Islamic social movement) rather than judging them according to their aesthetic qualities. I consider Islamic novels to be what Eagleton calls the “signifying practices” of Islamic actors within a whole field of discursive experiences. Approaching literature not as an abstract and isolated field (the aesthetic field of art and the sublime) but as a practice of signification among other discursive practices transforms the literary object by settling it in a wider context (Eagleton, 1996; 177-78). Following this line of thought, I read Islamic novels as sites of discursive struggle of Islamic actors over the representation of Islam, Islamic identity, secularism, secular [mis]recognition of the Islamic self and modernity in an interactive and intersubjective fashion. My analysis, in this respect, extends beyond a text-centered approach to include literary texts’ relations with the social and political events partially constituting them. It also involves reading Islamic novels in intimate relation to other non-literary Islamic and non-Islamic texts of the period.

I examine novels mainly with a qualitative textual analysis. This includes considering the style, characterization and narrative structure of salvation and self-reflexive novels. These more formal qualities of novels are read as part of the content of Islamic representations of the period. In other words, characters or

the narrative form of novels were themselves claimed to represent the dominant Islamic perceptions and Islamic subjectivities of the 1980s and 1990s. Since I consider salvation novels to be a means of discursive struggle against secular narratives of universal civilization and civility, and self-reflexive novels as narratives that convene a debate amongst Islamic circles over the distinction or otherwise of Islamic identity, my analyses involve examining the struggle over meanings and conditions and consequences of telling a story in a particular way. My major concern is to search for how Islamic identity is narrated in novels, how Islamic actors tell stories about themselves and respond to stories told by others about themselves, how Islamic actors interact with other actors and contexts and finally to consider whom the story is told to and for what purpose. These are all pertinent questions to political and sociological processes of identity construction and vital in understanding Islamism and Islamic identities in the context of the 1980s and 1990s.

The first chapter of the study is devoted to theoretical considerations in order to relate literature to the field of social sciences. In this chapter I draw mainly on Terry Eagleton, Mikhail Bakhtin and Pierre Bourdieu who each construe literature as a social experience that is situated within and related to cultural contexts and to the fields of power that surround literary texts. I also refer to narrative theory, especially to the works of political philosophers such as Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Seyla Benhabib and Martha Nussbaum who note the importance of narrative and story in identity construction processes. The way these thinkers conceptualize the novel provides me with a ground to argue that Islamic novels of the 1980s and the 1990s bring Islamic experiences and perceptions to the fore for theoretical attention.

The second chapter aims to situate Islamic literature within the field of Turkish literature while relating the emerging salvation novels to the context of the 1980s. It tries to demonstrate how the literary field is construed by both Islamist and secularist writers as a space of struggle over narration. The chapter explores Islamist novelists' conceptualization of literature by drawing on published interviews with Islamist novelists and gives examples of the narratives of early salvation novels. It also addresses the politics of literary translation that reveal how struggle over narration is not only limited to novel writing but also extends into the field of translation.

Two exemplary salvation novels will be examined in the third chapter, constituting one of the central parts of the study. I will focus on their narrative structure in order to elucidate the context through which Islamist novelists emplot their characters, the stories they respond to and develop, and the conclusions they reach. I will specifically focus on the nature of the Islamic messages, on the representation of Islamic and secular identities and the gender dimension of the novels. I will argue that these novels, with their identical messages and narrative closure, are indicative of collective Islamism of the 1980s, the dominant strand of Islamist politics.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, aims to develop a more general understanding of salvation novels and to relate them to non-literary Islamic writings of the 1980s. This involves analysis of how these novels provided Islamists with a repertoire of action and emotion that paved the way for the emergence of assertive and collective Islamic subjectivities.

The other central part of the study is Chapter 5 in which the much more self-reflexive and self-doubting narratives of the 1990s are examined. These

novels will also be read in relation to the context of the 1990s that witnessed the rise of Islamic middle classes, the incorporation of Islamic actors into commercial and cultural life, and the emergence of self-critical Islamic voices over the excesses of Islamist politics rather than of Muslims lack of commitment. I will contend that with these narrative voices expose the 'inner' conflicts of Islamic characters that challenge the collective Islamic definitions of the previous decade while reflecting and expressing the changing perceptions of Muslim actors and the emergence of new Muslim subjectivities in the context of the 1990s. The thesis concludes by arguing that these changing Islamic narratives articulate with two currently coexisting and conflicting strands of Islamism.



## CHAPTER I

### LITERATURE, IDENTITY AND POLITICS

#### Clearing the Ground: Is Literature fact or fiction?

Exploring a social movement or a social identity through literature — Islamism and Islamic identity in the context of the present thesis—entails an interrogation of the very nature of fictional texts. It is crucial to clear the ground to understand the nature of literature and its relation to ‘non-fictional reality’ since literary texts have long been identified as the repository of rhetoric, subjectivity and fantasy. Employing literature—especially novels— for social scientific research necessarily involves a discussion of the relation between the ‘factual’ and ‘fictional’ implications of literary texts.

Literary texts are by definition regarded as fictional. The term ‘fiction’ carries a double connotation. A more negative meaning suggests that fiction is false, contrary to fact and concerned with the non-existent, while another understanding implies that fiction is constructed or imagined (Lamarque, 1994; 139). Literature has long been regarded in conformity with such connotations, and treated with some suspicion in the realm of social sciences. Notoriously it was, for instance, regarded as an obstacle to ‘true’ citizenship as enunciated in Plato’s *Republic*. What underlies Plato’s suspicion is a conviction that literature deals with image-making in a world of fiction. It, therefore, turns citizens’ mind from the good to the corrupt by blurring the distinction between the true and false (Plato, 1996).

This ‘ancient quarrel’ between literature and philosophy has contemporary disputants and literature has customarily been distinguished from

'fact' on the basis that it 'invents' or 'makes up' reality. In other words, literature appeals to fictional images, subjective feelings and emotions which cannot easily be incorporated into the rational epistemology of sciences (Mendus, 1996; 54). Underpinning this contention is the claim that literature stands as a separate domain from scientific writing, since the latter is objective, unambiguous and non-metaphoric, while the former is associated with imaginative and subjective language. This division has been shaped by a modernist scientific presumption positing that there are facts "out there" and that they can objectively be reflected by a "transparent" scientific writing (Eagleton, 1996; 2). This modernist vision of science, as Eagleton notes, from the 18th century onwards has shaped a great part of the intellectual world, producing a tacit knowledge on the scientific and non-scientific, organized by 'plain, objective' and 'fictional' languages respectively. In this division, literature has been consigned to the non-scientific realm since its utterances are inherently regarded as fictional.

To advocate the importance of literature in understanding and interpreting society entails questioning this assumed distinction between literature and science. In his ground breaking work *Literary Theory* Eagleton (1996) does so by asking "if literature is 'creative' or 'imaginary,' does this imply that history, philosophy and natural science are uncreative and unimaginative?" (1996; 2). He goes on to question the constructed boundary between literature conceived as a domain inherently connected to value-judgments on the one hand, and scientific accounts characterized by 'plain' and 'objective' language on the other. Scientific, objective and descriptive statements, Eagleton notes, often involve invisible value categories, without which people would have nothing to say to each other at all. He gives the example of a statement one may make to a foreign

visitor: "This cathedral was built in 1612." This seemingly 'value-free' sentence according to Eagleton presumes a number of value judgments such as "classification of buildings according to dates is valuable" and "this cathedral is worthy of mention" (Eagleton, 1996; 12). Based on this example, Eagleton argues that there are no statements, scientific or otherwise, that reflect 'reality' transparently without involving value-judgments. Indeed, the contention that 'facts' exist and are 'objectively representable' implies a belief in essences and carries its own political baggage.

Eagleton's contention that all statements involve value-judgments does not refer to a post-modernist stance based on a relative consideration of every field of knowledge. Rather as a Marxist critic, he makes the claim that the nature of any field of knowledge is determined relationally and institutionally within the context of relations of power in a given society (1996; 14). This is also valid for literature whose meaning is defined through social agency and valuation within the context of political and cultural institutions such as the education system, literary journals and the publishing market. This suggests that there is no essence of literature as it is bounded up by a fictional language. As Eagleton states, "some literature is fictional and some is not. Some literature is verbally self-regarding, while some highly wrought rhetoric is not literature. Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist" (1996; 9). Literature, in other words, does not refer to a fictional category that is historically invariant and aesthetically determined as 'good writing.' Indeed, literature as a value-laden category based on subjective feelings or value-free experience as a pure form of writing—as often regarded by academia—does not exist. This is because the

value and status of any field of knowledge derives not from its intrinsic properties but gain their meaning within the web of social relations operating in a specific socio-historical context.

What this contention implies is that literature exists not because of its intrinsic aesthetic properties, but through established cultural, political and institutional relations. This suggests that there is no literature isolatable from the context in which it arises and the way people comprehend and consume a given text. What gives literature its meaning or value, in other words, is its historically situated existence in a certain epoch. The case of Shakespeare illustrates the point:

“Shakespeare was not great literature that was discovered by the literary institution. He is great literature because the [literary] institution constitutes him as such. This does not mean that he is not ‘really’ great literature, because there is no such thing as literature, which is ‘really’ great or ‘really’ anything, independent of the way in which that writing is treated within a specific forms of social and institutional life” (Eagleton, 1996; 176).

The novel *Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie can be taken as another example. It might be thought—by the author and many readers—that it was a novel portraying the life of Mohammed and his epoch in a fictional language. It received, however, its meaning in a ‘real’ context of historic power relations involving Western and Islamic cultural, political and literary institutions.

It is therefore irrelevant to approach literature through the distinction ‘fact’ and ‘fiction,’ since there is no essence of literature as such. The category of ‘literature’ should be demystified in order to open up a new space to consider its

relation with social ideologies and its political implications.<sup>14</sup> Any study of literature, in other words, is also a study of the established value-judgments and cultural and political life of a certain era in which literature arises. This is because what is literature or non-literature, what is fictional or non-fictional, and what is claimed as valuable or not, is not defined outside the boundaries of what Bourdieu calls power relations operating in the cultural field. It is precisely this that makes literature open to sociological and political analysis.

### **Literature as a Cultural Field**

Bourdieu's arguments regarding how struggle over the formation of meaning and social status are displaced onto the cultural field has profoundly influenced the sociology of literature. Bourdieu's theory first and foremost emphasizes that the symbolic aspects of life are inseparably linked to the material conditions of existence. Social distinctions (and the power relations in them) are produced not only through material conditions but in all areas of cultural life including groups' preferences in music, art and literature, even in their 'tastes'. The production and consumption of cultural artefacts, he argues, contributes to the process of social reproduction. His basic concern in this regard emerges as the analysis of the role of culture in the reproduction of social relations of power.

In his analysis of the social relations of power, Bourdieu situates actors within the context of different fields (art, law or education) within which social action is organized. The organization of social life through different fields

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<sup>14</sup> Eagleton, in this vein, argues that 'pure' literary theory is an academic myth and claims that "history of modern literary theory is part of the political history of our epoch." (1996; 170).

suggests that competition in social life is not necessarily over material resources but also involves the struggle over cultural resources in the cultural field. In each field, agents occupying diverse available positions engage in a struggle to control the interests or resources which are specific to the field in question. Writing literature, for Bourdieu, can be conceptualized as a practice in the literary field, which is an “independent social universe with its own laws of functioning, its specific relations of force, its dominants and its dominated and so forth” (Bourdieu, 1995; 163). The autonomy of any field, however, does not deny its relation to other fields or to overall power relations. Rather, each field, he asserts, is relatively autonomous but structurally homologous with others.

The relationality of different fields emerges in the way that a specific form of capital acquired through struggle in one particular field can be converted into other fields. Cultural capital (or prestige), for instance, can be a means to attain material property (economic capital). A person’s place in a field, however, is not determined by his/her free will but is bound up with certain objective conditions. The possession of cultural capital, in this vein, is acquired through each individual’s characteristic set of dispositions for action, which he calls *habitus*. *Habitus* refers to a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions in a way that does not negate the strategic act of agents.<sup>15</sup> The notions of field and *habitus* suggest that agents do not act in isolation, but in concrete social situations governed by a set of social relations. What this implies for the literary field is that literary texts do not emerge as individual works but

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<sup>15</sup> *Habitus*, for Bourdieu, involves both processes of inculcation and appropriation: “Produced by the work of inculcation and appropriation that is needed in order for objective structures, the products of collective history, to be reproduced in the form of the durable, adjusted dispositions that are the condition of their functioning, the *habitus*, which is constituted in the course through which agents partake of the history objectified in institutions, is what makes it possible to inhabit institutions, to appropriate them practically, and so to keep them in activity, continuously pulling them from the state of dead letters, reviving the sense deposited in them, but at the same time imposing the revisions and transformations that reactivation entails (Bourdieu, 1990; 57).

are situated in a particular cultural field, embodying particular institutions, involving specific laws as well as strategic actions of artists.

Bourdieu's analysis of the cultural field, thus, involves not only a consideration of the social and historical conditions of the production of cultural artefacts, but also the strategies of producers based on their individual/class habitus. In this vein, analysis of a literary text's formation of meaning, its linguistic structure or the position of writer become meaningful when they are reinserted into the objective field of social relations in the literary field. This suggests that literature and its producer do not exist independently of a literary field that involves a complex set of institutional frameworks making sense of both literature and the producer. The meaning and social value of a literary work, as Bourdieu underlines in *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu, 1996), is not determined outside the habitus, nor of the institutions of a cultural field. Therefore the analysis of literary works should also involve analysis of the objective resources with which the artists start and the choices they make within the context of these objective conditions. Any study of literary texts, in other words, should draw on the consideration of the genesis of the producer's habitus, the position of the literary field within the field of power and the structure of literary field.

The 'situatedness' of literary texts demonstrates that there is no pure text outside the power relations operating in the literary field since this field is structured as a struggle between different positions. The structure of the literary field necessarily embeds agents competing for legitimacy in the field. The questions of 'Who can legitimately be called a writer?', 'What can legitimately be called a literature?' or 'Why is this work claimed great literature?' can be answered by invoking to the power relations operating in the literary field. In

sum, the meaning of literary activity is its meaning in the symbolic struggle in the literary field. The literary field is a site, in other words, of struggle over the definition of meaning. Literary works are “the tools and stakes of [that] struggle” (Bourdieu, 1995; 183). Bourdieu, here, concurs with Eagleton: “There is no such thing as literary work or tradition which is valuable in itself, regardless of what anyone might have said about it” (Eagleton, 1996; 10). Bourdieu, however, contributes to the understanding of literature by settling it in a specific field involving its own internal struggles for power and cultural capital, but also having specific relations with the overall field of power.

In the light of the approaches of Eagleton and Bourdieu, the debate revolving around whether literature is a ‘fact’ or ‘fiction’ can be once more delineated. It can be argued that the very distinction between ‘factual’ and ‘fictional’ nature of literature limits the conception of literature in terms of its situatedness in a historical/social context and involving power relations operating in cultural field. Following the arguments of Bourdieu and Eagleton, literature should be regarded as a “discursive practice” taking place within existing relations of domination in a cultural field and an overall field of power.

### **Literature as a Linguistic Human Activity**

A different way of relating literary texts to social, cultural and economic processes is constructed by Bakhtin. Bakhtin’s conceptualization of literature displays close parallelism to that of Eagleton and Bourdieu. Literature for Bakhtin “is inseparable part of culture and it cannot be understood outside the total context of the entire culture of a given epoch. It must not be severed from



the rest of culture, nor, as is frequently done, can it be correlated with socioeconomic factors, as it were, behind culture's back. These factors affect culture as a whole and only through it and in conjunction with it do they affect literature" (1996; 2). The originality of Bakhtin's approach to the situatedness of literature, however, lies in his theory of language as a cultural source that makes literature possible. This is because that literary text contains signs derived from a cultural context shared by social actors (authors, readers, and contestors) enunciated through language. This suggests that literature can also be approached from a perspective that stresses its nature as a human activity via language in a given social context. Literature, in this sense, should be conceptualized not according to its 'trueness,' but as a human practice that uses language in a peculiar way. Literary texts, in other words, are part of linguistic activity by which people produce representations that acquires their 'meaning' in interaction between text, context and the readers. The casting of thought in language, as Norton argues, brings the private and individual into the public and allows for the accommodation of individual experience and subjectivity within the concepts and categories of a political order and political system (Norton, 1988 cited in Whitebrook, 2001; 6). Therefore any search for literature as a linguistic activity offers new insights to explore literature in relation to social, economic and political processes.

Language has long been considered a passive medium to convey ideas. The so called 'linguistic turn' of the 20th century, however, has led to the recognition that meaning is produced by language rather than simply expressed in it. Saussure has been an important figure in this turn with his contention that language is not 'natural' in the sense that it fits the world of objects and ideas

through its sound patterns and structures, but is an arbitrary and conventional system (Saussure, 1966). As a conventional system, language operates not as a passive medium but as a source of thoughts and ideas. This suggests that one can have meanings not because it is expressible through language, but because one has a language to have them in. Language is a means creating values, and a great part of the constitution of subjects and objects. Language, in other words, is fundamental to all meaning.

Although Saussure makes the point that language is a sign system whose conventions are agreed upon by a particular society, he has been criticized for studying language as an abstract and unified system, in a way that disregards the sociality and historicity of the language. Bakhtinian theory of language, on the other hand, opens up new ways to reflect upon the embeddedness of language, and upon literature as a linguistic activity. Bakhtin argues that study of language as an abstract grammatical system contributes nothing new to the process of meaning formation, except some scientific abstractions. Language, for him, is not a mere and secondary means of expressing ideas. It can not be conceptualized outside the scope of real verbal interaction since a word or an utterance takes place between people who hold a particular place in a network of social relations. Verbal interaction, in other words, form the basis of any language which implies that language do not exist in isolation from but in the interaction between human beings. Language is, thus, inherently social and every word necessarily involves a "social atmosphere" (2000; 277) in which it takes its meaning. Put differently, words acquire their meaning and shape in a specific social environment at a particular time.

Words, Bakhtin notes, are not neutral and there are no words which belong to “no one.” As he states “All words have the ‘taste’ of a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word” (2000; 293). One cannot therefore easily make a word their private property, since it is half someone else’s. A word, in Bakhtin’s terms, is “populated with the intentions of others.” This refers to the fact that language is by nature heteroglot since language involves many voicedness by different social actors (professions, generations, age group etc.) in different historical epochs. Bakhtin, in this vein, conceives of language as a dynamic site which embeds various languages of social groups in a historical moment. This suggests that a word in language is always second hand, and that meaning is never singular and uncontested but plural and contested. Every word has a history behind it and the usage of any word positions the user with respect to the historicity lying behind it. If one, therefore, intends to expropriate any word for herself, she has necessarily to engage in a dialogue with other people. One has actually to struggle to adopt a word for her own expressive intentions. A word in this way takes its shape in a dialogic relation and “forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way” (Bakhtin, 2000; 279). Words (also texts) in other words are essentially intersubjective, and exist dialogically between the communicating subjects using them. The process of dialogism implies that the history of language involves dialogue, contradictions and conflicts that are social and political in nature.

The social, heteroglot and dialogic nature of language, as noted by Bakhtin, has certain implications for the novel whose basic material is words. The language of the novel, Bakhtin points out, is not unitary and singular but is present to the novelist as something heteroglot. Characters in the novel are always speaking human beings. The novel as a genre “requires speaking human beings bringing their own unique ideological discourse, their own language” (2000; 332). For Bakhtin, the fact that the novel involves a diversity of speeches, different voices and languages represented by different characters constitutes its fundamental condition and its distinguishing feature as a genre.<sup>16</sup>

The heteroglot nature of the novel implies that social heteroglossia—the many voicedness of social life—enters the novel in dialogue through the talk of characters. The novel appears as an artistic representation of these different voices: “The social and historical voices populating language, all its words and all its forms, which provide language with its particular concrete conceptualizations, are organized in the novel into a structured stylistic system that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of the epoch” (Bakhtin, 2000; 300). The novelistic word, thus, is inherently social since it involves a dialogical interrelation between various voices of the era. That is why Bakhtin identifies the novel as “the encyclopedia of the life of the era” or as “the maximally complete register of all social voices of the era” (2000; 430). His approach, as Kristeva notes, “situates the novel within history and society which are then seen as texts read by the writer and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them (1980; 65). As a kind of particular

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<sup>16</sup> Dialogizing background and the heteroglot nature of the novel, Bakhtin points out, is one of the most fundamental privileges of novelistic prose, a privilege available neither to epic, dramatic or poetic genres. In the epic, by contrast “there are no speaking persons in the epic who function as representatives of different languages—in the epic, the speaker is, in essence, solely the author alone, and discourse is a single, unitary authorial discourse.” (Bakhtin, 2000; 334)

linguistic activity, therefore, literature is not a 'true' or 'fictional' representation of an objective reality, but itself is a material part of that very reality. It is not a fictional creation of meaning but a creation of a particular view of reality.

The fact that language is more than an abstract system of vocabulary or grammar, and is always used in relation to certain situations, contexts and activities which give meaning to the matters expressed through language requires that language involves a shared sign system between people. Communication, in other words, is impossible in any utterance devoid of connection to shared sign systems. Any literary utterance, in this vein, even if fictional, has connections with known reality since otherwise any meaning is incomprehensible. This necessitates the recognition that literary texts are social creations— since there can therefore be no 'pure text' in itself outside social relations— produced on the basis of a common language between the author and the reader in a certain context.

The nature of language and literature that draws on a socially rooted sign system provides a way to understand literary texts in relation to the context and the readers. Since language by its very nature is socially rooted and the meaning that literature is supposed to generate, does not, to put it in Voloshinov's terms, "reside in the word or in the soul of the speaker or in the soul of the listener" (1971; 102-3). In the context of literature, this suggests that meaning cannot be generated solely by the author, the reader or the context in which they exist. Rather, literary text, context and reader are inextricably linked with each other in the formation of meaning.

To put this contention in more concrete literary terms, a novel is written by an author who is not an absolutely free agent but operates within certain

linguistic, literary and cultural tradition—or field in Bourdieuean sense—that limits her. A novel, in this sense, consists not only of a line of words as the message of a free agent, but is a constellation of ‘quotations’ resulting from various sources of context and culture. A novel, moreover, has an “implied reader” (Iser, 1993). It is addressed to a certain group of readers. An author thus has readers’ knowledge in mind leading to the creation of meaning.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that literary narratives are “contextual” in a way that they require readers to be familiar with their contents and forms of presentation (Lehtonen, 2000; 82). Text, context and the reader in other words are inextricably linked. To put it differently, meaning in the context of a literary narrative is generated within a dialogue between text, context and reader. This dialogue involves both a horizontal axis—since the word in the text belongs to both author and reader—and a vertical axis—since the word is derived from or oriented toward a diachronic cultural form (Kristeva, 1980; 66). Literature as a linguistic activity, in other words, does not mean creating mere textual objects, but contains a repertoire of signs synchronically and diachronically derived from a cultural/social context shared by author and reader.

The contextual nature of literary texts and the dialogical nature of meaning require literature to be considered as a linguistic activity inseparable from the wider social relations between authors and readers and the social conditions in which they are embedded (Eagleton, 1996; 176). The situatedness of the novel and its dialogic and heteroglot nature, in this sense, offers new

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<sup>17</sup> On the relation between author-text-reader axis, the reader is traditionally given a passive status, thought of as passive receivers of meaning. This derived mainly from author-centred criticism of literary texts which puts the reader in a marginal or excluded position. Recent approaches in the sociology of literature, however, has started to regard readers as creative agents rather than passive recipients of what authors write. Proponents of ‘reception aesthetics’ or ‘reader-response’ theories argues that reader never comes to a text as a blank state but instead place it against their “horizon of expectations” (See Iser 1993 and Webster 1990)

insights in exploring its social and political implications. The question now becomes not whether literature is fiction or not, but what it means for 'real' people in 'real' situations. This implies a methodology that approaches literary texts, novels in particular, in terms of their "concrete performance" (Eagleton, 1996; 179), peoples' responses to them, and their roles in the comprehension of non-fictional reality.

### **Concrete Performances of the Novel**

I have been arguing that there is no such thing as literature outside the web of social relations in which it acquires its meaning and that novelistic discourse is inherently social and dialogical. The novel, thus, often seems bound up with particular moments in history and society. It can be seen as a "language bespeaking society as much as spoken by society" (Zeraffa, 1973; 38). In this way, society (and thus history) enters the novel not in a transparently reflected but a refracted sense. A novel's thematization and representation of human life and society is not a "transparent reproduction" but a "symbolically coded reconstruction" of various material, social, political, economic and subjective aspects of life (Lehtonen, 2000; 13). A Novel does not reflect 'reality,' yet neither is it outside of it. It is an extension of life "not only horizontally, bringing the reader into contact with events or locations or persons or problems he or she has not otherwise met, but also...vertically, giving the reader experience that is deeper, sharper, and more precise than much of what takes place in life" (Nussbaum, 1992; 48). The interaction between novel and life does not take shape as a simple representational reflex of 'life' within the novel but involves a struggle for the configuration and reconstruction of them by creating a symbolic

dimension of its own. Literature, in this sense, does not only refigure society but also takes part in its formation. It is affected by processes operating in economic, political and cultural fields while simultaneously influencing these very processes.<sup>18</sup> The meanings generated by the novel as a literary genre, thus, have social influences, political consequences and cultural power.

The emergence of the novel as a genre itself demonstrates the relation between literature and socio-economic processes since its history is closely linked with the creation of an industrial economy and its middle classes. The novel emerged as a specific genre in response to a new kind of audience, literate, self-conscious in its manners and morals and aware of itself as a class distinct from other sections of society (Stevick, 1967). It arose in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a middle class cultural product depicting individuals freed from pre-industrial constraints of society. In an age when the ideology of individualism and a secular worldview were gaining currency with a developing middle class, the novel, writes Ian Watt in *The Rise of Novel*, “could only concentrate on personal relations once most writers and readers believed that individual human beings, not collectivities such as the church, or transcendent actors such as the Persons of the Trinity, were allotted the supreme role on the earthly stage” (Watt, 1995; 87). The basic narratives of early novels, imbued with the scenes depicting conflict between individual and society, were not in this regard arbitrary, but reflected the ideology of relevant actors that sought the freedom of individual over community.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Recent work in cultural studies suggests that during times of social upheaval, novels with ideological content increase, whereas utopian novels increase in times of economic crisis illustrates the relation between economic processes and literary texts. See, Griswold, 1993.

<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that all early novels championed dominant middle class values. Rather, early novels came to terms with the middle class in analyzing a middle class life style, as in Jane



The novel, throughout its history, has not only reflected upon the human capacity to transgress restrictions, but has also presented possibilities of action and options of agency. The narratives of various kinds of novel have displayed close links with social and cultural processes. The literature of nationalism, in this sense, provides rich evidence that there is a direct link between “nation and narration” (Bhabha, 1990). On the relation between the rise of the novel and nations, Timothy Brennan writes that,

“It was the *novel* that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. Socially, the novel joined the newspaper as the major vehicle of the national print media, helping to standardize language, encourage literacy, and remove mutual incomprehensibility. But it did much more than that. Its manner of presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation” (Brennan, 1990; 49).

Brennan’s reference in his last sentence is to Benedict Anderson who has shown that the national consciousness is something that is ‘imagined’ through political and cultural projects. The novel, as he notes, has played an important role in nation formation processes, as cultural artefacts interpreting experiences and presenting new subject positions. Anderson argues the time and space of the modern nation is embodied in the narrative culture of the realist novel that functioned for the legitimization of national identities (Anderson, 1991). Novels (in the form of national identity narratives) are special cases of “group defining

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Austen, or in assaulting the middle class, as in Flaubert, or in working out alternatives to middle class life, as in Conrad (See Stevick, 1967; 5).

story” (Feldman, 2001; 18) that provided a framework through which national ideologies and personal autobiographies gained shape and meaning.

Parallel to the literature of nationalism, recent work on social movements has paid attention to the ‘concrete performance’ of the novels in presenting subject positions for the actors.<sup>20</sup> In studies of various social movements, the novel (written by gay or feminist activists for instance) began to be treated not only as a representational form that solely remains in subjective emotional level, but as narrative involving a great role in identity construction processes.

It should first be noted that social movement theory has long understated the emotional factors generating collective identity and solidarity among group members. Underpinning this disinterest is a more widespread contrast constructed in modern science that considers emotions the opposite of rationality. Most emotions, however, as underlined by Jasper in his *The Art of Moral Protest*, are part of rational action, not opposed to it (1997; 110). This is because emotions, like moral values, are socially embedded. They do not arise naturally but are social constructs learned from an emotional repertoire. One can not study emotions without reference to given contexts. Emotions, thus, present with us clues about the responses of social actors pertaining to the outer world surrounding them. Novel in this sense is a genre reformulating, reframing and expressing emotions; as several researches demonstrate, it also plays an important role in stirring up emotions, reinforcing a sense of solidarity and “we-ness.”<sup>21</sup> Shared emotions, like anger towards outsiders or the common grievances expressed by novels, hold a key place in developing collective

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<sup>20</sup> On the creation subject positions by narratives see Somers and Gibson (1994).

<sup>21</sup> Bildungsroman, for instance, has played an important role in environmentalist movement in a way that it “served to outline possible ecological scenarios of development that a protagonist is expected to go through.” (Brockmeier and Harré, 2001; 43)

movement identities. Novels, in other words, serve an important task in expressing (formulating) emotions that in turn help to identify antagonists, create a collective consciousness and set ideological boundaries (Steward et.al, 2002; 125-30). Thus, they participate in a significant way in the formation of people's comprehension of non-fictional reality.

In brief, literature should be understood as a linguistic activity and the novel as a form that expresses emotions and understand reality i.e. that helps constitute individual's perception of self, other and social context. Novels in other words provide agents with a space in which emotions are transposed and perceptions are reconstructed and constituted as they organize events, characters and actions in a narrative form. The novel selects, combines and organizes certain events in a narrative form having a beginning and an end. The very process of the construction of narratives implies important points about people both collectively and individually since narratives are the central mechanisms through which emotions are expressed and identities are forged. Narrative theory as a way of looking at organization and structuring of (human experiences or) language into larger units (novels for instance), in this regard, is a helpful way of in understanding the functioning of literature.

### **Novel as a Narrative**

What distinguishes narrative from mere description is that it involves the arrangement of events, time and characters in a particular order. It goes beyond description to shape and order events through the eyes of a narrator. The narrator defines and connects the events, and thus imposes a structure to the world. As Somers and Gibson put it "narratives are constellations of relationships

(connected parts) embedded in time and space, constituted by causal emplotment... [and] chief characteristic of narrative is that it renders understanding only by connecting parts to a constructed configuration composed of symbolic, institutional and material practices" (1994; 59). Configuration of several dimensions of human experience through narratives implies that narratives are not the 'externalization' of some kind of 'internal' reality through giving it linguistic shape. Rather, narratives are forms inherent in human's ways of obtaining knowledge that structure experience about the world and the people themselves (Brokmeier and Harré, 2001). Narratives in other words are not only means of representation but operate as a "mode of cognition" (Lamarque, 1994; 150). The presence of narrative structure and technique in several scientific, historical and journalistic accounts as well as in literary fiction attests to the power of narrative as a form of cognition in human life.

Narratives can be taken as subtypes of discourse, the most general category of human linguistic activity. And literature is one of the categories of narrative. Narrative, however, is not identical to all forms of literature. Much lyric poetry, for instance, lacks the narrative form (Lamarque, 1994; 132). The novel on the other hand is a genre that conforms to the basic characteristics of a narrative. Time, structure, voice and a point of view as the basic dimensions of a narrative (Lamarque, 1994; 132) appear in some form in all novels. Indeed, the term novel in this regard is used synonymously with the term narrative in literary contexts. This suggests that the novel involves a narrative form through which it connects events and characters in a sequence of time. It turns events into episodes through emplotment. What distinguishes the novel, in other words, is its narrativizing of events and characters in a plot that evolves over time.

The novel as literary narrative, although sharing the same techniques with some journalistic and historical accounts, has several distinguishing characteristics that make it vital for understanding human experience in a socially diversified world. One of the distinctive features of the novel as a genre is that it involves characters as speaking persons. Human beings in the novel, as Bakhtin notes, are always speaking human beings. And these speaking persons bring their own language, points of views and value judgments. (2000; 300-20) Agreements, disagreements and conflicts voiced by individuals (characters) are “surface manifestations” (2000; 326) of those present in social life. The novel orchestrates these various voices present in a social and historical context. It displays the goals and intentions of human actors in a web of social relations. It involves value judgments about how the narrator knows the events of his/her narrative. It provides information on how actors contemplate their own and others’ lives and actions.

A Bakhtinian conceptualization of the novelistic discourse, in this way, assumes an analogy/correspondance between the constituent features of novels and the narrative construction of life. Put differently, the novel’s dialogical nature, orchestration of events and themes and arrangement of spatial and temporal material suggest a certain parallelism with the basic characteristics of the narrative construction of a life. This is because people make sense of the world by integrating events in a temporal and sequential plot. Human beings link events surrounding themselves narratively and organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes and stories. Human beings, in other words, “transform life into stories that produces beginnings and ends in the chain of

events” (Barthes, 1994; 5). People make sense of themselves and others and give shape and order to the world through narratives.

The primary characteristic of narrative, in this sense, is that it makes life comprehensible by connecting events and reconstructing them in a signification process. Narration provides people with a space to integrate events in a chain of cause and effect and thus make them understandable. Narrative, thus, appears as the form through which people understand who they are and how they act. It is the fundamental human experience that serves to shape and order the world and the essential genre for the characterization of human action (cf. MacIntyre, 1981). The narrative structure of actions, as Benhabib notes, is the central premise in situating the self:

“Narrativity, or the immersion of action in a web of human relationships, is the mode through which the self is individuated and acts are identified. Both the whatness of the act and whoness of the self are disclosed to agents capable of communicative understanding. Actions are identified narratively... To identify an action is to tell the story of its initiation, of its unfolding and its immersion in a web of relations constituted through the actions and narratives of others. Likewise, the whoness of the self is constituted by the story of a life” (1996; 127).

What this contention suggests is that narrative is one of the best ways to study human experience since it is the way humans understand their own lives.

Narrative can thus be considered not only as an organizing concept but as a methodological orientation to study social life and identities. As “accessible instances of narrative in practice,” novels can be read as “studies not only of

political or other real life situations but of the narrative self and the construction of narrative identity” (Whitebrook, 2001; 15). Turning to narratives-modern novels-allows analysis of the intimate relations between narrative, identity and politics.

### **Narrative, Identity and Politics**

Narrative has recently received much attention in the social sciences. Several social scientists appropriate narrative as the core of their theories based on the postulation that people make sense of the world through narrative, and that narrative is the means through which social and cultural life is formed (Taylor 1992; MacIntyre 1985; Rorty 1989; Nussbaum 1992). Underpinning these contentions is a claim that people understand their lives in the form of narrative that provides them with the means to order events with a beginning and an end and locate these events in a temporal and sequential plot. People, in this way, construct their identities through narratives since construction of a stable identity entails telling a story and thus ordering and imposing a pattern of one's self in the world. People, as Taylor argues, determine the direction of their lives inescapably in narrative form that allows them understand who they are and how they became so. As he puts it “...making sense of one's life as a story is also, like an orientation to the good, not an optional extra; ... our lives exist also in this space of questions which only a coherent narrative can answer. In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become and of where we are going” (1992; 47).

Similarly MacIntyre suggests that “we all live out narratives in our lives... because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives” (1985; 208-12). Human life for MacIntyre involves a narrative unity within which humans attempt to make rational choices concerning the conflicting demands of different practices. This contention implies that people are confused when they are not capable of integrating their experiences into an intelligible story. Making an intelligible story represents the quest for narrative unity which allows people to order events that otherwise seems inchoate. Narrative for MacIntyre in this sense is the basic condition and essential genre of human beings to be able to make sense of themselves in relation to other selves and surrounding contexts.

In the works of Taylor and MacIntyre, therefore, the idea of narrative emerges as an important component of an adequate understanding of self and identity. In their theories, narrative operates not as a metaphoric term but as an activity with direct relationship with political processes—specifically the processes of identity formation. In their postulations they draw on a particular definition of identity: Identity is a matter of telling stories about one’s self, others and the social milieu. Narrative in this sense is an act and a doing. It has political implications since narrating endows the agent with the quality of having point of view in relation to listeners in a certain public setting. It is therefore not only “a mode of representation but also a mode of reasoning” (Richardson, 1990; 2).

It should be noted that the term narrative as employed by MacIntyre and Taylor does not only include literary narratives. What MacIntyre refers to as narrative is the story-telling act that involves a beginning and an end to make sense of the world. He, thus, refers to something like autobiography more than



novels (Whitebrook, 1996; 35). Taylor, Rorty, Nussbaum and Whitebrook (who relate narrative with political processes), however, use the term narrative to refer to novels. In the light of their theories of narrative construction of identity, as Whitebrook suggests, the form of the novel and the way in which modern identity is constituted becomes inseparable (Whitebrook 1996; 35). Literary narratives, therefore, emerge not only as a linguistic but also as a mental form that can be used to describe and reconstruct human reality.

Such a conceptualization of literary narratives as a means to interrogate identity in social and political life implies a challenge to the traditional understanding of the relation between (political) philosophy and literary narratives. This is because political philosophy and literature have long been considered as two distinct and uncompromising domains of knowledge. The emotions that novelists appeal to and the imagination that literature has drawn on have often been seen as suspect anew of life in political philosophy.

The growing interest in the study of narratives as a specific mode of constructing and constituting reality, however, has been argued to symbolize a “narrative turn,” a “post-positivist movement,” or a “discursive turn” in political philosophy (Brockemeier and Carbough, 2001; Horton and Baumeister, 1996). This suggested “narrative turn” involves breaking down the boundaries between literature and philosophy to rethink them in dialogue. Philosophers such as Taylor, MacIntyre, Rorty and Nussbaum who are associated with the narrative turn argue that the incorporation of narrative into political inquiry and thus a rapprochement of philosophy with literature might revive political philosophy.

The potential of the novel to expand political theorizing lies in its basic narrative formation. The novel as a genre has the capacity to explore emotions

and motives and to demonstrate how choices are arrived at and the effects of those choices on individuals and communities (Whitebrook, 1996; 44). The novel, in this sense, brings certain aspects of human life to the fore for theoretical attention. Furthermore, by presenting choices and the consequences of those choices, as Whitebrook suggests, it offers political theory some insight into the Machivellian problem (Whitebrook, 1996; 33). This is because what the novel depicts, in the last instance, are individuals as political agents making choices within the context of particular political dilemmas. It expands political theory by dealing with particularities that often resist political theorizing.

In this vein, Nussbaum bestows on the novel a specific role not only in political but also in ethical theorizing. A true conception of ethical understanding, Nussbaum argues, should give priority not to abstract rules but to particular people and situations. This particularity finds its most adequate expression in literary narratives rather than abstract philosophical accounts. This is because "literary forms call forth certain specific sorts of practical activity in the reader that can be evoked in no other way...[and because] we need a story of a certain kind, with characters of a certain type in it, if our own sense of life and of value is to be called forth in the way most appropriate for practical reflection" (1992; 290). Such a conceptualization of literary forms leads Nussbaum to argue for the supplementing of abstract philosophical attempts at self-understanding with concrete narrative fictions.<sup>22</sup> She thus considers novels as valuable sources

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<sup>22</sup> Rorty goes further in his argument to replace philosophy with narrative since he argues the latter is a better guide to create solidarity (or Rorty's liberal utopia). For Rorty "solidarity is not discovered by reflection, but created. It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people. Such increased sensitivity makes it more difficult to marginalize people different from ourselves...This process of coming to see other human beings as 'one of us' rather than of 'them' is a matter of detailed description of what other people are like and of redescription of what we ourselves are like. This is a task not for theory, but for genres such as ethnography, the comic book, the docudrama and especially for the novel" (1989; xvi).

of information about the practical, “for novels, as a genre, directs us to attend to the concrete; they display before us a wealth of richly realized detail, presented as relevant for choice...[and] they speak to us: they ask us to imagine possible relations between our own situations and those of the protagonists, to identify with the characters and/or the situation, thereby perceiving those similarities and differences. In this way their structure suggests, as well, that much of moral relevance is universalizable” (1992; 95). Because the novel contains our attempts to imagine and assess possibilities for ourselves and to ask how we might choose to live, it is inseparable from philosophical content and integral to any adequate conception of ethical and political reasoning. The novel thus emerges as an important event in searching for the fundamental question of “how should one live?” It contributes to the understanding of ethical questions by giving expression to more complex and concrete features of human life and enunciating ethical concepts like duty, rights and obligations.

What the moral and political philosophers who employ narrative in their theories suggest is that novels involve debates and questions that are inextricably moral and political. They consider novels as narratives giving expression to people’s sense of life. They posit an interplay between narrative, identity, ethical questions and politics. Geoffrey Harpam, in his *Language, Literature and Ethics*, delineates this interplay succinctly:

“Literature...articulates goals, instructs people on how to picture and understand human situations, moralizes action by showing its ends, provides models of motivations and a set of character types and decisional models, structures an opportunity for the reader to test his

or her capacity for discovering and acknowledging the moral law, holds the mirror up to the community so that it can identify and judge itself, represents negotiations between the community and the individual, engenders a relation between author and reader, promotes explanatory models that help make sense of different situations and that shelter the subject from the threat of inchoate, fixes the past and so makes possible free action in the future, and models the ‘unity’ that might be desirable in a human life” (cited by Whitebrook, 1996; 39).

Harpam’s conceptualization of literature can be taken as a succinct résumé of Taylor’s, MacIntyre’s and Nussbaum’s approaches to literary narratives that are seen as embodying fundamental moral and political ideas relating theory and form through which people make sense of themselves and the world. In this regard, literary narratives emerge not as metalinguistic and ontological entity but as “modus operandi of specific discursive practices” (Brockmeier and Harre, 2001; 53). Literary narratives, in other words, are the forms inherent in getting knowledge, constructing identity, pursuing ethical and political questions, structuring action and ordering experience. To study literary narratives or novels, therefore, is to study the discursive practices of actors in relation to cultural texts and contexts.

Thus, Islamic novels, as the object of this study, can be construed as the discursive practices of Islamist actors who, in their words, appropriated the novel to narrate ‘real’ Islam to people (Miyasoğlu, 1999). Islamic literature and novels

emerged synchronously with the rise of Islamist movements in the end of the 1970s as a space of struggle over the formation of meaning and the representation of issues relating Islam and civilization against, what they call, secular narratives of the republican period. The novel, in this regard, appeared as a means for Islamists to make sense of themselves and the world in the 1980s and the 1990s. Hence in the Eagletonian and Bourdieuan sense, Islamic novels can be attributed meaning within the web of social relations operating in the specific socio-historical context of Turkey. In other words, analyzing Islamic novels entails an interrogation of the established cultural, political and institutional relations of power in the literary field and the broader political context of Turkey. I will now turn to this point.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TURKISH LITERARY FIELD: A SPACE OF STRUGGLE OVER ISLAM, SECULARISM AND MODERNITY

#### Literature, Politics and Islam in the Context of Turkish Modernization

The history of Turkish literature from the late Ottoman period to the present has proceeded hand in hand with Turkish Republican political history. Impossible as it is to explore a hundred years of the novel in Turkish literature as a space of struggle between various political ideologies in any detail here, in this section I will gesture to some of the main faultlines in the Turkish literary field in terms of the representation of Islam, civilization and modernity. My focus will be on the depiction of religion and modernity in several influential novels before the 1980s and the emergence of Islamic salvation novels.

In the Ottoman context the novel did not emerge in tandem with a developing bourgeoisie or with social and political changes instigated by them, as was the case for the Western novel.<sup>23</sup> The genre was imported from the West at the end of the nineteenth century with the gathering momentum of westernizing movements in the late Ottoman society. Early novelists such as Namık Kemal, Şemsettin Sami and Ahmet Mithat considered the novel to reveal a ‘civilizational problem’, praising the Western novel while treating traditional Ottoman narrative techniques as “unsuitable to the contemporary age” (Moran, 1983; 9-11). Here the novel was considered an “integral part of the modern civilization” and was adapted to the Turkish context “not as a literary form but as a requirement of contemporary civilization”<sup>24</sup> (Evin, 1993; 96).

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<sup>23</sup> On the origins and development of the Turkish novel see Ahmet Ö. Evin, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Namık Kemal states that “the Europeans have made so much progress in the way of the novel that it is possible to find in the language of each civilized nation thousands of stories from which moral, and even to a large extent educational benefits can be derived. Among them, especially

These early novelists were indeed political thinkers and reformers of their period—Namık Kemal and Şinasi, for instance, were important figures of the Young Ottoman movement.<sup>25</sup> Their literary narratives emerged as part of their political activities. As reformers seeking to synthesize traditional Islamic values with the material progress of Western civilization, they construed the novel as a means “to disseminate their ideas,” “to educate people” and thus to take the nation to civilization (Evin, 1983; 16-20). Accordingly the novels of the late nineteenth century involved themes derived from the social issues of the period. They sometimes gave voice to the problem of the traditional arranged marriage and took a stance in favour of free marriage choice.<sup>26</sup> The themes of free marriage choice and love signify the early novelists/reformers’ reconsideration of interaction between the sexes in a more liberal way than the traditional order in which arranged marriages prevailed. However, these novelists were also critical of undesirable—materialistic or individualistic—effects of westernization on Ottoman society. Despite the westernizing efforts of the late nineteenth century, as Jale Parla notes, the dominant cultural code was still based on a traditional cultural epistemology. The early novels in this vein were critical of the unveiledness of women, and the exposition of sexuality and worldly

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some novels by such famous writers as Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas are immortal works that are a source of pride for the civilization of our time... In our country, however, the novel is the most deficient among the types of literature produced. Perhaps not even three stories can be found that could be read with pleasure” (translated and cited by Evin, 1983; 16).

<sup>25</sup> On the Young Ottoman movement see Şerif Mardin, 2000.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the themes of love and free marriage choice in late nineteenth century Turkish literature in relation to changing family patterns see Alan Duben and Cem Behar, 1991, pp. 87-121. For an interrogation of the construction of femininity and masculinity in the early novels of the late Ottoman Empire see Sirman, 2000.

desires (Parla, 1993; 79-87).<sup>27</sup> The so-called “super-westernization” of some sections of society, represented by a degenerate-westernized social type, was ridiculed and criticized in these novels (Mardin, 1974). In brief, the Young Ottomans responded to the socio-political transformation of the Ottoman polity by employing literary narratives to suggest alternative changes.

Not only Young Ottoman thought but various synthesis or distillations of other ideologies were introduced via literature to Ottoman society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Beşir Fuat for instance was an influential materialist thinker of the period who saw the novel “as a branch of sociology.” Fuat employed literature to introduce the Turkish intelligentsia to Comtean positivism and social Darwinism in contradistinction to traditional vision of the world (Evin, 1983; 96). Indeed, literature proved a vital field in which concepts and ideologies were debated.<sup>28</sup> This example and others like it suggests that the Turkish literary field emerged as a space of struggle between various political ideologies.<sup>29</sup>

The literature of the period of nation-formation and nationalism in the first quarter of the twentieth century is not exempt from these close relations between literature and politics. In this period, the modernizing nationalist elite criticized and rejected Ottoman poetry (*divan edebiyatı*) since it was “difficult” and belonged to the “corrupt Ottoman court.” The literature of the new nation,

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<sup>27</sup> In a society where communitarian values of modesty prevailed, the novel’s expository quality of individual lives and love was sometimes considered dangerous for women by some novelists. For instance, according to Mehmet Celal, a novelist of the late Ottoman period, “since almost all novels narrate a love affair, they confuse women’s minds, who are weak and sensitive by their very nature” (cited by M. Fatih Andı, 1996; 42). Aijaz Ahmad mentions a similar attitude in another Muslim context. He states that during the formation of the Urdu novel, much of the debate revolved around issues of femininity in a very conservative way,” 1987; 20.

<sup>28</sup> For instance Ahmet Mithat accuses Beşir Fuat and his circle as “decadents” who, according to him, were atheist, materialist and alienated figures of the period. Berkes, 2002; 379.

<sup>29</sup> By referring to the political context in which the Turkish novel emerged, Murat Belge notes that “Turkish novelists are more political than their western colleagues,” 1994; 68.



for them, would be based on a “simple” Turkish vernacular, purified from Arabic and Persian terms (Hallbrook, 1994). According to the nationalist elite, the absence of the novel in Turkish culture (until the modernizing efforts) was due to the traditional Islamic structure of Ottoman society. In other words, the novel as a genre that exposes private lives, inner worlds and the loves of individuals could not develop in the Ottoman society since these revelations were considered ‘immoral’ by the Islamic traditional order.<sup>30</sup>

In the early republican period, Turkish literature developed in intimate contact with the official ideology for the narration of the nation. Many novels aimed to support and spread the modernizing efforts and the ideology of the nation state (see Köksal, 2003).<sup>31</sup> Some canonical novels of the period such as *Vurun Kahpeye* by Halide Edip (1999 [1926]) and *Yeşil Gece* by Reşat Nuri (1995 [1926]) depicted religion and religious figures extremely negatively and as sources of the backwardness of Anatolian people, in line with the secular narratives of Kemalist modernization. Religious personalities in these novels were portrayed as dishonest, intriguing, and lecherous characters who cooperated with enemies during the independence war. They instrumentalized religion for their own interests and deceived the ignorant masses with religious dogmas.<sup>32</sup> What is striking here is that these novelists depicted religious figures as social types rather than as particular individual characters, and generalized religion to

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<sup>30</sup> Ömer Seyfettin, a nationalist story-writer explains the absence of the novel as such: “Literature is an art of love and imagination. A great part of poetry deals with the love affair. But [exposing] love is forbidden in our tradition... Women can not even be seen because of their veil” 1989; 61.

<sup>31</sup> However, Köksal argues that the literature of the early republican period should not be construed in too much of a homogeneous way. Although what she calls an “official nationalist” literary stance dominated the cultural realm during the nation formation process, there were also two other literary stances, represented by “cultural nationalists” such as Yahya Kemal and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and “social realists” such as Suat Derviş and Hüsametdin Bozok. Köksal, 2003, pp. 209-212.

<sup>32</sup> On the representation of religion and religious personalities in Turkish literature see Ramazan Gülendam, 2002.

be the main source of narrow-mindedness and obscurantism. These examples can not be extended into all canonical literary works of the early republican period. Nevertheless the major theme of the republican novel until the 1950s was westernization and the conflict between the East and West as represented by opposed binary categories such as *ala turca/ala franga*, traditionalist/westernist, *mahalle/apartment* and *imam*, *hodja/teacher* (Moran, 1983; 324). It can be argued that the negative representation of religious figures in certain novels of the period still function, to use Charles Taylor's terminology (1991), as cultural narratives that feed directly into secularist imagery and secularist identities in their approach to religion.

In the post-1950s a certain type of village novel emerged portraying village life and its dramas via a social realist stance. These novels were written by writers who were mostly graduates of the village institutes founded in the 1940s. Many of these novels such as Mahmut Makal's *Bizim Köy* (1950) and Fakirt Baykurt's *Onuncu Köy* (1975) narrated the struggle of idealist teachers to modernize the village against forces of the status quo. The idealist teachers in these novels were depicted as the "representatives of civilization" seeking to alleviate the miserable conditions of the village and to transform the power relations subordinating ignorant villagers (see Karpas, 1971; 61-66). Once again, one major source of rural backwardness appeared to be religious figures who promoted superstition and maintained the status quo, in alliance with landlords, by a certain self-interested construction of Islam. Thus, as progressive characters, idealist teachers fought religious personalities in order to liberate villagers from bigotry.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> There are of course exceptions to these types of village novels such as the novels of Yaşar Kemal.

An alternative literary construction and use of Islam was produced by other literary figures such as Necip Fazıl and Sezai Karakoç, whose works stressed the importance of religious values in post-1950 period. Here poetry allowed a focus on supposedly essential conservative-Islamic or Turkish-Islamic values. Their stress on Islamic values differed from the Islamic literary stance that emerged in the 1970s. Novel with an Islamic content came out in the 1970s along with a new conceptualization of the novel by a generation of Islamist novelists.

### **The Appropriation of the Novel by Islamism in the Context of Modernity**

The emergence of an Islamic literature and Islamic novels embodying a clear Islamic stance occurred in tandem with the rise of Islamist movements at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Until this period the novel as a genre with a Western origin was severely criticized by Muslim circles in the name of its project to explore and expose private lives in detail. According to Cemil Meriç, for instance, the novel is a sign of “social sickness” since it emerged as a result of a class conflict in Western societies. The novel, according to him, is an “exposition (*ifşâ*)”: “[the Western novel] opens the roofs of houses and takes us to the bedroom.” While the nationalist novelists of the early republican period critically explained the absence of the novel in the Ottoman society by its Islamic social order that precluded the depiction of interaction between the sexes, Meriç argues that it did not exist in this religious [Ottoman] society because its order was far removed from the anarchy of the West and thus

did not constitute the conditions for novel writing (Meriç, 1994; 84-6). What lies at the core of his criticism, is the 'expository quality' of the novel that is thought to be in conflict with Islamic communitarian morality.

This critical stance toward the novel is maintained several prominent Islamic intellectuals of the 1980s such as Ali Bulaç in a different aspect.<sup>34</sup> Bulaç conceives of modern literature as a "trap" that misguides believers by keeping them away from the realities of current societies. With its focus on "artificiality and abstraction," literature for Bulaç constitutes one of the "dangers of modern experience." He does not deny the importance of literature but argues that an Islamic literature should be based on an Islamic vision of the world and reflect the realities of social life. For literature to achieve this, he contends, "we need first to develop an Islamic thought based on the Koran and Islamic history that will take us to unity (*tevhid*)" (Bulaç, 1995; 115-116). Bulaç, thus, advocates deferring literary endeavors until Muslims develop their own concepts.<sup>35</sup> His position signifies Islamists' intellectual search for a claim of truth during the 1980s that disregarded and paid no attention to the importance of artistic expressions of Islam.

Despite these criticisms of the novel, a group of Islamist novelists emerged in the 1970s such as Hekimoğlu İsmail, Ahmet Günbay Yıldız and Mustafa Miyasoğlu who conceived of the novel as an important means to narrate Islam to the masses. Hekimoğlu İsmail, the first novelist in Islamic circles with

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<sup>34</sup> Sometimes as a sharp critique, all literary products other than Koran, *hadis* (sayings of the Prophet) and *evliya menkıbeleri* (narrative of the merits and virtues of Islamic Saints) were rejected as an Islamic understanding. In one of the daily Islamic journal, a columnist writes, "If the Westerners had the stories of our Saints, they would never write novels. If Tolstoy, Dostoevski and Balzac knew Islamic Saints they would quit writing novels and become immediately their disciples... Today reading books of those who claim to be writer is futile and wrong, since it prevents us reading Koran, hadith and *evliya menkıbeleri*." Abdullah Altay, "Hangi Kitapları Okuyalım?" *Millî Gazete*, 6 Haziran 1995.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed analysis of Bulaç's thoughts in relation to literature see Meeker, 1991.

*Minyeli Abdullah* (2003 [1968]) which has presently reached its 75<sup>th</sup> edition with total sales of 275 000 copies, states his motivation for writing a novel in a recent interview:

“There were three important strains of thought during the 1960s: nationalists (*türkçüler*), religious people (*dindarlar*) and those who were against religion (*dine karşı olanlar*). The ideas of each were being propagated through books during those years...The books of religious people, however, consisted only of *ilmihals*. They were repeatedly publishing *ilmihals*. Yet *ilmihal* is a book that is read by people who have already adopted Islam. Actually, the most important thing was a concern with ‘how might we lead people to believe in Islam?’ I mean the way (*usul*) was wrong...we had to talk to the man in the street” (*Aksiyon*, 8 July 2002).

Thus, novel writing in the context of the Islamic revival of the 1970s referred to a new Islamic consciousness of a generation of Islamist novelists to disseminate their ideas in a popularized fashion through the narrative form of the novel. They stressed that their new literary activities were a result of a political process after 1960s in which Muslims in general gained some freedoms: “Islamic literature has developed under the repression of the existing order. This order treated us more intolerantly than socialists... [Yet] the 1961 Constitution that presented advantages to socialists, also allowed Muslims to gain freedom of expression in some matters” (Miyasoğlu, 1999; 42).<sup>36</sup> In this context of relative freedom, Miyasoğlu goes on to say that “Muslims rescued from repression, began to think and produce (ibid.). The Islamic literary stance in this sense is part of a broader Islamist movement, and it displays a close parallelism with Islamist intellectual discourse, specifically in its critical posture towards westernization and contemporary modern culture. This will be explored below.

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<sup>36</sup> For a similar comment on the possibilities opened up by the 1961 Constitution see editorial article in *Kitap Dergisi*, June 1989.

Islamist novelists are aware that the modern novel had a Western origin and its incorporation into an Islamic frame is not easy, since as a genre it did not exist in the Islamic tradition and it has ‘conflicting qualities with Islam.’ The new generation of novelists, however, stress that “the contents of the words are more important than [the words] themselves” (Miyasoğlu, 1999; 31). Even though the novel is a Western genre, in other words, it was conceived as a tool that could be employed for Islamic purposes with a new content. As Miyasoğlu argues, “in a time when everything is imported from the West and adapted to our life, it is futile to take a critical stance to the novel... We have the different narrative techniques of a genre. We have to make use of it and we have to endure some difficulties in order to develop a narrative that is most appropriate for our people” (1999; 146). He also presents an Islamic measure for the appropriation of the novel in an Islamic context:

“In our works in which we reflect Islam’s worldview, we can be like Westerners, in conformity to the Prophet’s saying that advocates ‘getting the arms of the enemies.’ In order to be different from them, our old culture provides us with rich examples. (*Milli Gazete*, 23 October 1979).

This quotation is indicative of Islamist novelists’ will to appropriate the novel to raise an Islamic consciousness and to combat the westernizing movements in contemporary Turkey. The novelist’s reference to “rich examples of our culture” as a source of Islamic narratives signifies early novelists’ ideal to develop an ‘original Islamic narrative’ based on Islamic history and traditional Ottoman narratives.<sup>37</sup> Novelists’ reference to Ottoman narratives differentiates Islamic literary discourse from radical Islamic stance which was critical of all

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<sup>37</sup> Miyasoğlu (1999) argues that in his novels he consciously uses figures from traditional narratives like *Aslı ile Kerem*. Such an endeavour, besides a search for developing an original narrative, signifies Islamist novelists’ aim to differentiate their narratives from those of the republican period.

Ottoman tradition in the name of a return to fundamentals, i.e., to the period of *Asr-ı Saadet*.

However, Islamist novelists' approach to literature reminds us of the broader Islamist movements' stance towards several products of modernity. Islamist movements that emerged towards the end of the 1970s in Turkey were not anti-modernist in nature. Rather Islamist agents sought to tailor some of the products of modernity with an 'Islamic garment.' The 1980s in this sense witnessed the endeavors of Islamists to develop an 'Islamic science,' 'Islamic sociology' or 'Islamic anthropology.'<sup>38</sup> Similarly the novel was regarded as a genre that could be appropriated and 'Islamicized.'

### **Emergence of Islamic Novels**

Upon the reconsideration of the novel as a tool that could be used for Islamic purposes several novels emerged that, in novelists' words, "derived from Muslim imagery" (Eroğlu, 1982; 218) during the 1970s.<sup>39</sup> There appeared few novels by Islamist novelists such as Rasim Özdenören and Mustafa Miyasoğlu who claim that they concern the aesthetic quality of literary texts. Miyasoğlu, for instance, in his *Kaybolmuş Günler* (1975) narrates the difficulties of pious Anatolian characters who migrated to big cities or in *Dönemeç* (1980) the struggle of pious intellectuals in Anatolia to defend Islam, as a political system, against socialism and liberalism. These novels are not easily read and do not

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<sup>38</sup> See for instance Davies, 1991 and Yunus, 1988.

<sup>39</sup> Another novelist, Mustafa Miyasoğlu defines Islamic literature as "the emergence of Islamic content with literary quality." The prefix 'Islamic' he argues shapes the conception of literature as it does in any spheres of life: "Islamic literature is a literature reflecting Islam's attitude towards humanity and things. The stance of a man of letter will naturally be like the stance of a Muslim towards contemporary life and the world. A contemporary Muslim artist, whether he talks about the past Islamic life or on the constraints of current life style, will naturally take an Islamic stance" (1999; 118).

involve simple plots and inconsistencies, as was the case for Islamic popular novels—as the object of this study—that dominated the 1980s.

The other group of Islamic novels in the 1970s was village novels written in response to social realist novels of the post-1950 period. The first Islamic village novel was *Yanık Buğdaylar* (2003 [1974]) by Ahmet Günbay Yıldız. He states the reason of his writing this novel as such: “In [social realist] village novels I read, I have seen that the village did not exist. I was a villager. These novels were not narrating us... Moreover there were indecent scenes in these novels. As if all villagers were indecent. I could not stand that. I wrote *Yanık Buğdaylar* to represent the village in a real sense” (Yardım, 2000; 169). This novel opens with an earthquake scene after which some villagers become rich by looting the whole village. They began to exploit villagers. They sell at high prices and employ at low wages. Men of the village gamble and drink in the village café. Conflicts within the village are sharpened when a member of the village, Dikçe, a pious character, who after graduating from teacher’s high school returns the village. Dikçe teaches people reading and writing, and narrates Islam. With his endeavors the café is transformed into a library and playing cards are burnt in the village square. At the end of the novel all characters are blessed with ‘true faith.’

This narrative signifies Islamist novelists’ discursive struggle over the representation of religion and a religious vision of the world in the context of village with Turkish social realist writers. The resemblance between the two kinds of narratives is remarkable. While social realist novels depicted religious characters of the village negatively and ‘civilized’ the village through ‘illuminating’ role of teachers, Islamist novelists employed an Islamist civilizing



project via pious teachers. They replaced ‘socialist/secular teacher’ with a pious one who raised Islamic consciousness instead of class consciousness. Therefore Islamist novelists, who claimed to develop an original narrative, indeed replicated secular narratives in an inverted version. They aimed to expropriate the representation of religion by engaging in a dialogue with other narratives of the period. Islamic novels in this sense emerged as a result of a dialogic relation between Islamists, socialists and secularists.

This is also valid for, what Islamic circles call salvation novels (*hidayet romanları*) that dominated the Islamic literary field in the 1980s. The prototype of these novels was the first two Islamic novels: *Minyeli Abdullah* (1968 [2003, 75<sup>th</sup> ed.] by Hekimoğlu İsmail and *Huzur Sokağı* (1970 [2003, 85<sup>th</sup> ed.]) by Şule Yüksel Şenler. In *Minyeli Abdullah*, Hekimoğlu İsmail (b. 1932)<sup>40</sup> narrates his Islamic views in a narrative form through his protagonist Abdullah. Abdullah lives in Minye (a province of ‘Westernizing’ Egypt) during the time of King Faruk when ‘Islamic activities’ are strictly monitored and suppressed by the regime. In the course of the novel, Abdullah is taken to jail and tortured because of his religious thoughts. The plot of the novel is constituted around his struggles and teachings. The author, through his protagonist, narrates his views on socialism and Westernization, and delineates his solutions point by point through the concepts of Islamic jihad, Islamic economy and social order. He takes his characters on journey to Muslim countries including the Balkans, Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, on each of which he makes an evaluation in the light of his Islamic worldview. Islamic principles and the way of jihad are presented

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<sup>40</sup> Hekimoğlu (b. 1932) is a pseudonym of the author whose real name is Ömer Okçu. He published his novel under this name since he was a military officer (*ast subay*) at that time. As he states in an interview, he grows up in a non-Islamic circle until his twenties. His adoption of the Islamic worldview occurs through his encounter with the writings of Said Nursi (*Aksiyon*, 1 July 2002). He is currently one of the important members of the Nur movement.

to the readers with long quotations from the Koran and the writings of Said Nursi. After its publication, the novel received a great deal of attention among Islamic circles and was later adopted for the cinema. *Minyeli Abdullah*, according to an Islamist literary critic “demonstrated that the Islamic way of life was not a utopia. It exemplified the transition from an individual to a collective Islamic life style” (Yardımcı, 2000; 126). This novel in this regard can be treated as an imaginary scenario of ‘what happened to Muslim people’ in this century and ‘how Muslims should react to events.’<sup>41</sup>

This first novel was followed by *Huzur Sokağı* of Şule Yüksel Şenler (b. 1937).<sup>42</sup> In *Huzur Sokağı*, she narrates the story of poor but pious Muslim people living in a ‘peaceful street’ (as the title of the novel refers to) in Istanbul. ‘The peaceful lives’ of the people is disturbed when a new apartment is built in the street. This apartment brings with it new people living a ‘luxurious and westernist’ life. The male protagonist of the novel, Bilal lives in this street and studies at the university where as a student living an Islamic life, he is in a constant conflict with other students. The author is very harsh in her portrayal of university youth, presented as immoral characters concerned with flirting, making-out, dancing and drinking. The female character, Feyza, who comes to the street with the new apartment and later falls in love with Bilal, is portrayed as one of the ‘decadent’ youth. The narrative of the novel revolves around Feyza’s adoption of headcovering and Islamic precepts, and her new struggles as a covered woman as well as Bilal’s endeavors to narrate Islam to his friends. As in *Minyeli Abdullah*, *Huzur Sokağı* uses Said Nursi’s writings to narrate Islamic

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<sup>41</sup> This scenario is first and foremost about Turkey since as the author makes explicit in an interview, “the location of the novel (Egypt) resembles Turkey and Minyeli Abdullah is a man like me” (in Yardımcı, 2000; 126).

<sup>42</sup> Şenler is known as the first woman who covered her head in ‘turban style’ while she was taking university education in 1965.

precepts through the speech of the characters. One striking point is sufficient to demonstrate the kinship of the two novels. Both novelists, at different places in the novels make their characters speak with the same sentences:

“Ey bu vatan gençleri! Frenkleri taklide çalışmayınız! Âyâ Avrupa’nın size ettikleri hadsiz zulüm ve adâvetten sonra, hangi akıl ile onların sefahat ve bâtil efkârlarına ittiba edip emniyet ediyorsunuz? Yok, yok! Sefihâne taklid edenler, ittiba değil, belki şuursuz olarak onların safına iltihak edip kendi kendinizi ve kardeşlerinizi idam ediyorsunuz! Agâh olunuz ki, siz ahlaksızcasına ittiba ettikçe, hamiyet davasında yalancılık ediyorsunuz! Çünkü şu surette ittibanız, mililyetinize karşı bir istihfâfdir ve millete bir istihzadır” (İsmail, 1986, 33th ed.; 173; Şenler, 2003, 83th ed.; 107)

This paragraph is a quote from Said Nursi’s *Gençlik Rehberi* (Guide to Youth). Hekimoğlu İsmail does not cite the source but employs it as Abdullah’s words in one of his speeches given in a conference. Yüksel Şenler in *Huzur Sokağı*, on the other hand, allows one of the young characters to read this paragraph by citing its source and then to question himself that results in his adoption of an Islamic way of life. Both novelists, besides several Koranic references interweave their narratives with quotations from Said Nursi in order to disseminate his ideas. The above paragraph also gives a clear indication of the content of salvation novels: they revolve around ‘the problems brought about by Westernization and the presentation of Islamic solutions.’ In both novels Islamic characters engage in a struggle with secular characters over the representation of Islam and the process of westernization. And they both end up with a ‘happy end’ represented by salvation of all characters.

These early attempts to narrativize an Islamic worldview and belief in a particular narrative form paved the way for the emergence of several Islamist novelists in the 1980s. Among this new generation of Islamist authors are Ahmet Günbay Yıldız, Şerife Katırcı Turhal, Raif Cilasun, Emine Şenlikoğlu, Şerif

Benekçi, Mehmet Zeren, Sevim Asımgil and several others. The novels published by these novelists in the 1980s were often reprinted numerous times and became best-sellers among Islamic circles. For example, twenty-five novels of Günbay Yıldız have sold over 500 000 copies in 25 years (Yardım, 2000; 170). These novelists, with their identical salvation narratives, formed a coherent Islamic literary stance that was conceptualized in Islamic circles as “*Tebliğ edebiyatı*,” “*Direnış edebiyatı*,” “*Kuran edebiyatı*” or “*Davet Edebiyatı*” (Çalışkan, 2002).

One outstanding characteristic of the new generation of Islamist novelists is that most of them were born between 1945-55 and have a rural origin. Almost half of them do not have a literary profession. The biographies of several others on the other hand display an interesting similarity: they studied literature and worked as high school teachers of literature. The targeted reader, according to the novelists themselves, is high school and university youth (*Radikal*, 5 November 1997). As Watt has shown, there is a close link between the rise of the novel and the growth of reading public (1995). The huge sale of Islamic novels, in this sense, suggests that the books themselves generated a book-buying public that numbered in the millions. It can be argued that the emergence of the Islamic novels coincided with the emergence of an urbanized and educated young population with Islamic concerns in the eighties, which also of course accounts for the strength of Islamist movements in the same decade.

What is common to Islamist novelists is their instrumentalist approach to literature. Literature, by these novelists, is not treated as an end itself, but as a means to develop an Islamic consciousness. A novel, according to Hekimoğlu İsmail cannot be devoid of any social context and responsibility. Today’s

problem, he argues “is the collapse of the family... We have to create a hero, as a believer and self-sacrificing volunteer who will scream the truth to all people” (Yardımcı, 2000; 133). Conveying Islamic messages is prioritized over the literary quality of the texts.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly most of them are not interested in any theory of novel or aesthetics. Günbay Yıldız as the most prolific author of salvation novels refuses to develop a theory and definition of the novel. In an interview, he replies to such a question by saying that “literary critics should tackle that. The most important thing for us is to give a message to people” (Yardımcı, 2000; 172). This stance is encapsulated in Hekimoğlu İsmail’s words: “Art for art’s sake or art for society, I do not care. I am a Muslim and everything is for Islam” (Yardımcı, 2000; 135). In keeping with such an understanding, the novels of these writers are amazingly quickly written with simple sentences, under-developed characters and plots, and sometimes with glaring inconsistencies. Artistic concerns therefore are minimized by these novelists for whom the fundamental aim of writing a novel is to convey the message of Islam to their readers.

In line with their appropriation of the novel as a means to narrate Islam, Islamist novelists are very careful to emphasize that what they write is not a product of the imagination. In replying a question asking ‘whether his novels are fiction or not’ Günbay Yıldız answers that: “[my novels] are the results of what I have seen in the society and of my investigations of lived lives. I mean, all are real.”<sup>44</sup> Accordingly they stress that their novels are not written for and can not be read as a means of entertainment. Ahmet Lütfü Kazancı, in the introduction

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<sup>43</sup> Even for those such as Miyasoğlu who states that they concern literary quality of texts, literature is construed as a tool to convey messages. Miyasoğlu, who argues that he does not write novels with a clear thesis, admits “but my protagonists have a message. This is because that I want to narrate a mentality (zihniyet). Sometimes several mentalities conflict and engage in a dialogue with each other. What determines my choice in these conflicts is my own worldview. Without doubt, I am writing with an Islamic worldview” (*Akit*, 26 June 1996).

<sup>44</sup> [www.users.pandora.be/avrupaturk/sohbet/ahmet.htm](http://www.users.pandora.be/avrupaturk/sohbet/ahmet.htm). (10 January 2004).

part of his novel *Kaynana* writes that “there does not exist even one word in this novel to entertain the reader.” He goes on to say that he himself does not dare to presume a literary concern while he was writing the novel, as he did not have a literary profession. He asserts that the only merit of his novel is to guide people (*Kitap Dergisi*, June 1989). These accounts suggest that the novel in Islamic circles do not exist because of its extrinsic aesthetic qualities but as, to use Eagleton’s term, “signifying practices” of Islamists within the political context of the 1980s, a period when Islamist movements came on the public agenda with an alternative claim of truth to secular narratives of civilization.

As part of a cultural politics of Islamism of the 1980s, the narrative of salvation novels are based on a negotiation between Islamic and secular/westernized orientations towards the world. These two different worldviews are inscribed into novels through ‘idealized’ Muslim and Westernized characters. Through these characters, Islamic novels relate a dialectical interplay of secular and Islamic lifeworlds. Muslim protagonists who feel themselves ‘alien’ and ‘victimized’ in the hegemonic secular lifeworld are made to retain their peacefulness, stability and assertiveness in the face of problems they confront throughout narrative. Westernized protagonists, mostly girls who are ‘deemed’ to live a deeply distressed life, on the other hand, are made to fall in love with pious Muslim characters. Their encounter, in the corridors of a university or in an urban quarter, provides novelists with the opportunity to explore the edifying mission of the novel. On the basis of their relations, novelists both teach and present an Islamic way of life to wretched westernized characters as the only remedy for their wretchedness.

These two social types, representing two 'incompatible ways of life,' are not allowed to get together until the process of the Islamization of the westernized character is complete. Their relation is never taken out of the boundaries of an Islamic imaginary. For instance, with regard to the representation of love affairs, Islamic narratives differentiate themselves from popular romances in their determination not to depict Muslim characters in non-Islamic spaces (such as pubs), non-Islamic relations (they are not portrayed alone in private spaces) or even with non-Islamic thoughts. Rather Islamist authors construct every scene to convey their messages and articulate their Islamic positions on current issues in a popularized form.<sup>45</sup> Westernized characters are made to learn and adopt ways of conduct, love and morality appropriate to Islamic life. Basic moral premises are presented to 'others' with simple analogies. Novelists transmit basic Islamic precepts and engage in a discursive struggle with secular idioms by interweaving their narratives with quotations from the Koran, religious books, and journalistic or academic texts.

A general focus of the message, in conformity with the more general politics of 1980s Islamism, revolves around the position of women. Almost all salvation novels—regardless of the gender of the author—involve dialogues that emphasize and exemplify the importance of women's modesty and chastity for an ideal Islamic order. Accordingly, the adoption of headscarf is promoted as the moment of 'fulfillment' for female subjects. Headcovering is presented as an 'emblem' saving women from being a source of *fitne* (disorder) and leading them to be keepers of Islamic order. On this basis, a rhetoric of domesticity

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<sup>45</sup> For instance in *Benim Çiçeklerim Ateşte Açar*, Günbay Yıldız makes pious professor warn his female student not to close the door when they meet in his office. The student can not understand at the beginning the meaning of this warning. She later learns that being alone with the other sex in private spaces (*halvet hali*) is unacceptable to Islamic morality. See Yıldız, 2000.

(especially the motherhood role of women) goes hand in hand with a will to attend university and to acquire certain professions. This will to modern professions, however, is legitimized only in so far as it provides women with the means to serve Islam for greater collective purposes.

Lastly, salvation novels adopt an identical narrative closure in which Muslim characters always win and secular characters are lead to salvation—this is why these novels are called salvation novels in Islamic circles. The main plot around Islam and westernization, the emplotted Islamic and secular characters and the relational context of salvation novels suggest that these narratives signify Islamists' endeavor to retell the story of westernization in Turkey in a different way. In this sense these novels symbolize the responses of Islamist novelists to secular narratives of civilization, as they argue represented by several novels of the republican period. In their legitimization of the appropriation of the novel, Islamist novelists take a critical stance towards, what they call the republican novel.

### **Islamic Novel Contra Republican Novel**

In their recounting of the history of literature in Turkey, the key measure of Islamist novelists appears to be the adoption or rejection of Western values. They praise the early novelists of the late Ottoman period such as Ahmet Mithat and Namık Kemal for their handling of the conflict between Ottoman tradition and Western values, especially for the way that they “humiliated imitators of a Western life style and exalted Ottoman and Islamic values.” (see Miyasoglu, 1999; Yardım, 2000). The second period of literary work, beginning with *Servet-i Fünun* and followed by the Republican literature in their periodization,



however, is represented as a rupture symbolized by the adoption of Western values by literary figures. They sometimes cite Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Yahya Kemal as positive literary figures in terms of their approach to religious manifestations. Except such few names, Islamist novelists have a monolithic perception of republican novelists on the basis of their adoption of western life style. Hurşit İlbeyi, for example, argues that “the novelists of the republican period have totally disregarded this conflict [between Islamic and Western values] and embraced and approved Western culture.” He takes Nuri Güntekin’s novel *Gökyüzü* (Sky) as an example and asserts that “the major theme of this novel is a revolt against God represented by ‘*Gökyüzü*’” (in Yardım, 2000; 287). The novels of the Republican period, in this vein, are accused by Islamists novelists as having negative effects on the society. This is because these novels “represent human types and familial relations that are totally alien to our society...[And the novel of the Republican period] caused degeneration in familial and social ethics since they encouraged sinful love and decadent social relations” (Miyasoğlu, 1999; 250). Miyasoğlu labels Republican novelists such as Halide Edip, Yakup Kadri and Nuri Güntekin, as “speakers of official ideology,” since they slander religious personalities in parallel with official historiography. Their novels, he argues, are “ideological and diseased” (Yardım, 2000; 218).

These novelists causing ‘moral degeneration’ not only consist of the ‘westernist Republican’ writers for Islamist novelists. Social realist novelists of the post-1950 period, too, are considered as a group that “exploited the tradition and values of Anatolian people for their own ideological agenda” (Yardım, 2000; 287), using novels as a means to propagate Marxism. Social realist novelists

indeed are regarded as having close links with the republican writers since “[in the conflict between the West and Islam] they have taken their place in the Western camp” (ibid.). Beşir Ayvazoğlu, a literary critic, similarly contends that “the only point that differentiates Marxists from non-marxists is their anti-capitalist stance. Both are in a deep agreement on all other issues because their cultural base depends on cultural sources imported from the West” (Ayvazoğlu, 1982; 222-3). Islamist novelists thus homogenize all other actors in the literary field on the basis that they adopt and disseminate Western values, leading to the ‘moral degeneration’ of society.

As their emphasis on ‘the negative effect of the republican novel on society’ reveals, Islamist novelists attribute to the novel an important role not only in representing but also in constituting reality. Şerif Benekçi regards novels as tools that are “more disruptive (*sarsıcı*) and more re-orienting (*yönlendirici*) than revolutions” (Yardım, 2000; 255). In a parallel vein Günbay Yıldız considers literature as “the most important means to construct and demolish a nation.” He goes on to say that since “several circles have made use of literature in the service of indecency, our society and family structure have been shaken, and bars (*meyhaneler*), jails and gambling saloons are full. In order to stop this, we have to take action on behalf of our cultural tradition and use literature to strengthen the family and decrease dissoluteness” (Yardım, 2000; 170).

As mentioned above, literature as a pure artistic form does not exist for the Islamist novelists. It appears as a conscious political activity and the criticism it imparts derives from their political agenda. Actually all criticisms, as Eagleton argues, are in this sense political. They differ from each other on the basis of their values, beliefs and goals. Feminist criticism, for instance, focuses on the

relations between writing and sexuality while social realism considers the relation between the text and ideology (1996; 184-5). The values and goals, in this sense, held by Islamists shape their criticism toward other literary works. The content of Islamists' criticisms indicates their values and beliefs. When the criticisms of Islamist novelists are taken into consideration, what constitutes the Islamic literary stance is a preoccupation with 'moral and social degeneration' brought about by secular and socialist novels. Islamist novelists emphasize the 'ideological and practical effects' of these novels in forming an 'indecent' way of life. Aware of the transformative capacity of novels, Islamist novelists aim to employ literature for disseminating Islamic belief and modeling, and constructing Islamic social relations. Islamic novels thus emerge as an alternative to and critique of 'secular Republican literature,' whose themes and concepts are represented as the 'real source of moral degeneration.'

The literary field in this vein is regarded by Islamist novelists as the most important site for a counter-hegemonic struggle. They assert that the "current degeneration" caused by Republican literature can only be cured by a "real" literature. As Islamist novelist Galip Boztoprak succinctly summarizes, "we are struggling against the novel with the novel. Novel contra novel. Where the child falls can also be raised up (*çocuk düştüğü yerden kalkar*). Against the novel, we protect ourselves with the novel. We are restoring the destruction brought by novels with the novel" (Boztoprak, 1982; 231). As this account demonstrates, the novel means much more than an expression of the literary imagination for Islamist authors. It appears as a means for 'cultural war' in the Turkish political and literary field.

Interestingly, alongside this radical simplification and rejection of 'Republican' literature, Islamist novelists also feel that they are marginalized and do not possess cultural capital in the literary field. They claim that the literary almanacs published by "the westernist circles" do not consciously mention Islamic artistic works. With this "blindness" Miyasoğlu argues "they [the westernists] try to prove that we did nothing in those years and even that we did not exist...They call their works 'Turkish literature' yet they only mention westernist literature" (Miyasoğlu, 1999; 160). This feeling of exclusion led Islamist novelists, as part of their literary activities, to publish an alternative almanac in 1982, the *Suffe Kültür Sanat Yıllığı*, in order to form "the first collective voice of truth and God (*Hak*) in artistic and cultural life" (Miyasoğlu, 1999; 65). This almanac (*Suffe Yıllığı*), published annually between 1982 and 1988, was intended to provide a space in which "writers sharing the same belief" (ibid.) could be introduced to each other and discuss literary topics.<sup>46</sup> *Suffe Yıllığı* was, then, an important attempt by Islamist novelists to publicize their thoughts on certain topics each year and to explore the category of 'Islamic literature.' *Suffe Yıllığı* not only consisted of articles relating to work published in Turkish but also covered literary works from other Muslim countries. With titles like 'Afghan Literature,' 'Egyptian Literature' or 'Fraternal Literature' (*Kardeş Edebiyatlar*), Islamists attempted to form connections with other literary works of the *Umma* in accordance with the bounded universalism of Islamic discourse. Each edition of this almanac consisted of articles evaluating the Islamic literary

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<sup>46</sup> Although it is claimed that this almanac involves a collection of the works of writers "sharing the same belief," many authors of salvation novels of the period are not cited in the *Suffe Yıllığı*. As I will show in the fourth chapter, salvation novels were first clearly criticized in the pages of this almanac in 1988, on the basis that they do not have any aesthetic concern. Thus despite Islamist novelists' collective voice on the function of literature, this almanac represents the cleavages among Islamist novelists over the content and the literary quality of Islamic novels.

works of the year and proposals to determine the agenda of the coming year. Yet typically, Islamist novelists who contend that 'they are excluded' from the literary almanacs of the republicans are equally excluding in relation to novelists outside the Islamic circles.<sup>47</sup> In brief, these almanacs represented Islamists' attempt to institutionalize an Islamic literary discourse as a tool of 'cultural battle' against a secular 'republican literature.'

### **Islamic Politics of Literary Translation**

Not only writing of novels but also the translation of literary works from other languages is treated by Islamic circles as an activity of struggle. Indeed, the act of translation in itself can not be understood removed from political choices and orientations, not only for Islamists but also for secularists and socialists. In her study on translation activities in the Republican period, Gürçağlar succinctly demonstrates how translation during the early years of the Turkish Republic is consciously used as a means for "culture planning" (Gürçağlar, 2001). She argues that especially in translations between the years 1940-46 commissioned by the state-sponsored Translation Bureau, the choice of works and their preferred terms are supported by the Republican elite as part of the modernization efforts of the Republican regime. The translation of several Western classic philosophical and literary texts in this period was part of a conscious politics that emphasized on the establishment of a humanist cultural tradition in Turkey.

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<sup>47</sup> A critic for instance after evaluating the Islamic novels of 1986-88 writes that "several more novels have been written during these two years. Yet these are not so important from our perspective. For instance Atilla İlhan in his last novel, *O Karanlıkta Biz*, writes about his experience in the Turkish Communist Party and his struggles within it" (Ağar, 1987-1988; 79).

Translation involves politics not only in the selection process of the works, but also with deliberate mis-translations, conscious omissions, or additions by the translators. Several striking examples in Turkish literature demonstrate that the choices of translation represent and constitute a 'cultural battleground' for different groups, particularly between secularists and Islamists. The most interesting is the translation politics surrounding Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, a well-known book in world children's literature, which has been translated into Turkish by at least 12 different publishing houses in different years (Neydim, 1998; 34-41). In this short story, the asteroid known as B 612 where the Little Prince lives is first seen by a Turkish astronomer in 1909. This astronomer presents his discovery to the International Astronomical Congress. Yet nobody believes what he says since he was in a traditional Turkish costume. Saint Exupéry then writes,

"Fortunately, however, for the reputation of Asteroid B-612 a *Turkish dictator* made a law that his subjects, under pain of death, should change to European costume. So in 1920 the astronomer gave his demonstration all over again, dressed with impressive style and elegance. And this time everybody accepted his report" (1971 [1943]; 14-15).<sup>48</sup> (emphasis mine)

Saint Exupéry, as a writer addressing children, concludes his words with "Grown-ups are like that." What he wants to point out, as Neydim argues commenting on this quotation, is the way that 'how one is dressed is important in adults' world (Neydim, 1998; 39). His use of an example from 'the East' may be taken as an exotic-oriental reference for Western readers. It can be argued that he

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<sup>48</sup> This is taken from an English translation by Katherine Woods in 1971. Of course, the politics of translation also applies to this text, but that is not my concern here. The original sentences in French are as follows: "Heureusement pour la réputation de l'astéroïde B 612 un dictateur turc imposa a son peuple, sous peine de mort, de s'habiller a l'Européenne. L'astronome refit sa démonstration en 1920, dans un habit très élégant. Et cette fois-ci tout le monde fut de son avis" (Saint-Exupéry, 1971; 16)

does not derive his reference from historical ‘facts’ since the Kemalist dress code was legislated in 1925 not in 1920 as mentioned in the text. And of course the writer is not concerned with historical accuracies since in the last instance he writes in fictional prose. However the phrase “a Turkish dictator” in the paragraph encourages the reception of this text in the Turkish context not as a literary fiction but as a ‘history book,’ which allows translators from different circles to engage in a discursive struggle. Translators have accordingly treated the text more in the light of their ideological orientation rather in keeping with the ‘plain’ meaning of the text.<sup>49</sup>

Some translators prefer to translate “a Turkish dictator” with more ‘neutral’ expressions like “*dediği dedik bir Türk önderi*” or “*bir Türk yönetici*”:

“Bereket versin, Asteroid B 612’nin onurunu korumak için bir dediği dedik Türk önderi tutmuş bir yasa koymuş: Herkes bundan böyle Avrupalılar gibi giyinecek, uymayanlar ölüm cezasına çarptırılacak. 1920 yılında aynı gökbilimci bu kez çok şık giysiler içinde kurultaya gelmiş. Tabii bütün üyeler görüşüne katılmışlar” (çev. Tomris Uyar, Can yayınları, n.d.).

Similarly,

“Asteroid B 612’nin şöhreti için, şükür ki bir Türk yönetici halkının Avrupa giysileri giymeleriyle ilgili bir kanun yaptı. Böylece 1920’de astronom delillerini etkili bir biçim ve kibarlıkta giyinmiş olarak yeniden verdi. O zaman herkes onun raporunu kabul etti.” (çev. Emine Erendor, Barış Dağıtım, 1984).

A translator in another translation omits entirely the sentences involving “a Turkish dictator”:

“Ama 1920 yılında aynı gökbilimci Avrupalı gibi giyinmiş olarak tezini tekrar ileri sürdüğü vakit, herkes kendisine inanmıştı.” (çev. Filiz Borak, İnkılap Kitabevi, n.d.).

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<sup>49</sup> On different translations of *The Little Prince*, I draw on Neydim (1998) who compares these quotations in terms of the inadequacy of mis-translation in children’s literature.

In some translations, translators make a specific intervention in the text and inscribe “a Turkish dictator” as a ‘glorious leader’ in order to praise the dress code. One translator even identifies this leader as Atatürk:

“Her ne ise çok iyi bir rastlantı olarak büyük ve değerli kumandan Atatürk bütün Türklerin Avrupalılar gibi giyinmelerini sağladı. Böylelikle daha sonraları Türk astronomu Avrupalılar gibi giyindi ve düşüncesini tekrarladı ve B 612 asteroidinin gerçek olduğu kabul edildi.” (çev. Emel Tanver, Düşünen Adam yayınları, 1994)

“Asteroid B 612’nin talihi varmış ki, büyük bir şef Türkleri Avrupalılar gibi giyinmeye zorladı. Astronom açıklamasını çok şık bir giysi ile 1920’de bir kez daha tekrarladı. Ve bu sefer herkes ona hak verdi” (çev. Aygören Dirim, Esin yayınevi, 1989).

Most strikingly perhaps, an Islamist translator extends these original four lines into a huge paragraph by adding sentences in accordance with his ideological agenda:

“Astığı astık kestiği kestik korkunç bir önder geçmiş Türklerin başına. Halkı yasa zoruyla Batılılar (Avrupalı ve Amerikalı) gibi giyinmeye mecbur etmiş. Buna karşı çıkanları öldürtmüş. Fötr şapka giymeyenlere işkence ettirmiş. Kravat takmayan öğrencileri okuldan, memurları dairelerinden attırmış. Sokağa başını örterek çıkan kadınların örtülerini, genç-ihthiyar demeden polis ve jandarma eliyle, zorla açtırmış...bütün bunlardan sonra B-612’ciğin Türkler tarafından keşfedildiği kabul edilmiş. Türk gökbilimcinin 1920 yılında, ayağında pantolonu, sırtında smokini, sadece kulaklarının üst kısmında kalmış bilyantınli saçları ve boynunda papyonuyla bir Batılı gibi giyinmiş olarak yaptığı konuşmak ve kendinin değil Batılıların harfleriyle hazırladığı belgeler, alkışlarla karşılanmış... İşte (Batılı ve onlara benzemeye çalışan) büyükler böyledir.” (Haz. Muharrem Ekışçeli, Nehir Yayınları, 1996)<sup>50</sup> (This edition was collected on a court order.)

This is a remarkable example demonstrating how Islamists’ literary concerns extend into the field of translation. In addition to several ‘ideological additions,’ the translator, in accordance to general anti-westernist stance of the Islamic literature, transforms the phrase “grown-ups” in the original text into

<sup>50</sup> For other examples of translation see Neydim 1998.



“westernist and those who imitate them,” to employ the story for his own social purpose. These different examples of translation, moreover, demonstrate how certain literary fictions have been transformed into a space of struggle as they gains a new meaning among competing actors in the Turkish context. Contrary to the time frame of the original text, secularists consciously mis-translate the text to praise Atatürk as a leader and his reforms. Islamist translation on the other hand more clearly intrudes in the text and rewrites it to insert Islamic agenda.

This insertion of an ideological agenda is also visible in the translation of several western classics by Islamic publishing houses in the 1980s. Timaş, as a major publishing house of Islamic novels, has also been publishing Western classics since 1982. Between 1982-2001 it published 29 western classics like Don Quixote, Misérables and Robinson Crusoe. İsmail Demirci, the editor of Timaş, claims that they introduced these Western classics to Islamic reading public. Yet a close analysis of these classics demonstrates that translations were not made with complete fidelity to the original text during the 1980s.<sup>51</sup> Similarly to *The Little Prince* case, these classics involve several additions and modifications in line with the ‘Islamic sensitivity’ of the translators. Indeed Demirci as an editor argues that they have a right to modify the classics since these classics, as he puts it, “are not sacred texts of the West” (*Yeni Şafak*, 28 July 2001). Even more explicitly, Ali Çankırılı, translator of several classics, notes that

“While translating, I can not disregard my people’s cultural values. Let’s think of Monte Christo. Except for his drinking, all qualities of the protagonist comply with Islam. If, in the name of the fidelity to the text, I make the protagonist drink, I devalue him in the eye of my readers. His drinking actually is just background, not the major

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<sup>51</sup> The editor notes that as a result of criticisms they received from their readers, they do not anymore make conscious mis-translations in western classics (*Yeni Şafak*, 28 July 2001).

theme. While translating I either omit that sentence or make him drink water. This does not mean I deform the original text” (ibid.).

As a result of his approach characters in novels speak with Islamic phrases like “*helalleşelim*,” “*Allah rahatlık versin*” or “*fi sebilillah*.” This process has led to the ‘invention’ of a ‘Muslim’ Cervantes, Hugo or Defoe in the Islamic literary sphere. In other words, Islamists who did not outrightly reject Western writers, appropriated them in an ‘Islamicized’ fashion, as parallel with their instrumental-use of the novel as a Western genre. This process of the Islamization of Western classics derives from the socially committed position of Islamist actors seeking the realization of Islamic ideals in every sphere of life, which also forms the basis of all Islamic novels.

### CHAPTER III

#### SALVATION NOVELS OF THE 1980s: ISLAMIC IDEAL FOR A TOTAL ISLAMIZATION OF SOCIETY

The emergence of Islamic novels in the 1980s represents the appropriation of a modern literary genre by Islamists. Novel writing, as has been noted in the previous chapter, is considered by Islamist novelists as an activity that should derive from and aim at the propagation of an Islamic vision of the world. This 'Islamic vision' refers to a new interpretation of Islamism and Islamic identity that was produced in tandem with the rise of Islamist movements in the context of the 1980s. This newly emerging Islamism involved a sharp critique of both a more established traditional understanding of Islam and the Kemalist project of modernization.

Literary Islamism in this vein appeared as part of a general Islamic discourse with new Islamic novels characterized by a critical posture towards what Islamist authors called the 'westernist (*bâtıcı*) novels' of the republican period. Islamist novelists had monolithic but productive perception of the republican novel as based on a misrepresentation of religious signs and a promotion of a westernist life style. They argued that the novels of the republican period involved narratives that "misrepresented" religious personalities and "prioritized an assault on belief" (Yardımcı, 2000; 175). Therefore the issues at stake in their conflict with 'westernist novels' revolve around these novels' representations of issues concerning religious (Islamic) belief, identity and morality. Islamic novels by contrast are claimed to make such 'misrepresentations' explicit and narrate 'true Islam.' Viewed this way, literary Islamism signifies the endeavour of Islamists to develop a discursive strategy to combat 'the negative effects' produced by secular narratives. Hence Islamic

novels can be construed, to use Eagleton's term, as "signifying practices" of within a whole field of discursive experiences.

Islamic novels not only challenge 'secular/westernist' narratives but also involve the construction of a positive and assertive understanding of Muslimness along with their message-conveying contents. Islamic literary narratives embody a repertoire of instructions and norms about 'what is to be done and not to be done' in life. The novel writing, as stated by an Islamist novelist, is a response to the basic human query about "why do we live and where are we going?" (*Radikal*, November, 6, 1997). Therefore the novel in Islamic circles emerged, in the sense theorized by Nussbaum, as a crucial act in searching for the fundamental question of "how should one live?" (Nussbaum, 1992; 95). As answers to this query, Islamic novels display the value judgements, goals and intentions of Islamist actors writing (and reading) with an Islamic imaginary.

Islamic novels, like any other literary narrative, can not be construed as abstract imaginary significations of isolated authors. As Bakhtin notes (2000), the literature (and language) draws on a socially rooted sign system between the author and the reader deriving from a shared context. This suggests that literary text, context and reader are inextricably linked with each other in the formation of meaning. Islamic novels, in this regard, are social creations containing a selection of signs and issues from a variety of social, historical and political processes in contemporary Turkey as referential fields for the texts, in accordance with Islamist novelists' claim to represent 'reality' and their usage of real time frames. To put it differently, Islamist novelists' conception of literature as a space of struggle against secular narratives allows Islamists to engage in a dialogue with their 'opponents' over Islam, civilization, modernization,

westernization, secularism and conceptions of morality in specific reference to Turkey's current context. In this regard, Islamic novels provide information about how Islamist actors contemplate their lives and actions as well as their perception of the 'other' and surrounding events. In this chapter, I will interrogate Islamists' presentation of the self and perception of the 'other' by drawing mainly on two Islamic novels of the 80s, one by a female, the other by a male writer, but I will also give references to several other narratives on certain issues to sustain my arguments. Before going into detail, it will be useful to give a short summary of the selected novels.

### ***Müslüman Kadının Adı Var and Boşluk as Exemplary Novels***

In *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var* (1999 [1988]), Şerife Katırcı Turhal<sup>52</sup> narrates a story about a girl, Dilara, who newly finishes the faculty of medicine with honors and later becomes a doctor in Ankara. At the beginning of the novel, Dilara is portrayed as a very beautiful and successful "modern" girl with "modern" friends", all raised in Ankara with the "necessities of modernity" (*çağdaşlığın icapları*) such as dancing and flirting (p. 11). Yet Dilara is presented as a character who expresses some criticism of this modern life style. She begins to feel herself worthless in an environment where women are perceived as "commodities of males" (p. 10).

The novel consists of two parts: In the first part, Dilara, as a new graduate waiting for the graduation ceremony, goes to Kayseri, where her professor father lives, to spend her summer holiday. In Kayseri, during a walk with her father, they witness a traffic accident in which the pious male character of the novel,

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<sup>52</sup> Şerife Katırcı Turhal (b.1955) is a high school graduate with four novels. Her other books include *Aslında Aşk Var*, *Kayıp Aranıyor* and *Adı Müslüman*. For more information on her see [www.serifekatirci.com](http://www.serifekatirci.com).

İbrahim, and his child survive while his wife dies. Dilara and her father take the man and the child to their house and let them recover for a few weeks. During this period, Dilara is heavily influenced by İbrahim's reading of Koran and his Islamic views on life and death. As is common in all Islamic novels, the female protagonist is made to fall in love with this pious character. Her dialogue with İbrahim on religious issues leads Dilara to reflect upon and investigate Islam. During her search for books on Islam, she encounters a pious bookseller in Kayseri. This bookseller and his wife appear as important figures in teaching Dilara basic Islamic precepts. At the end of the summer Dilara adopts the Islamic way of life, symbolized by her headscarf.

The second part of the novel narrates the "difficult days" (p. 81) of Dilara who returns back to Ankara to get her diploma as an Islamist female. When she arrives in Ankara, she goes to the dormitory she normally stays in. Her friends can not recognize her and are surprised by her new headscarved outlook. Her close friends do not reject her, but some of her friends take a critical stance and keep away from her because of her Islamic garment. The Directress of the dormitory expels her from the dormitory since her "headscarf is not suitable for an official institution" (p. 83). Dilara meets a Muslim woman while she is in a park thinking desperately about what she would do. Dilara is invited by this woman to her house where she spends "peaceful days" (p. 97) practicing an Islamic way of life in detail until the graduation ceremony. At the graduation ceremony, however, despite being a student who graduated with high honors, she is not allowed to get her diploma on the stage while wearing her Islamic outfit. She defends her Islamic life style against her professors who try to convince her that "her style of life was contrary to the contemporary age" (p. 113-115). Then,

as a self-assertive Islamic character, she begins to work as a pediatrician in a hospital where she narrates Islam to her patients. The novel closes with Dilara being assigned to Mecca as a doctor during the *hac* as well as with a marriage proposal from İbrahim. Both of them are considered by her as “rewards” (p. 149) for her patience and insistence on maintaining the Islamic way of life.

The second novel I will draw on, *Boşluk* by Ahmet Günbay Yıldız (2003, 29<sup>th</sup> ed.) tells the story of a male character, Cihan with a central plot revolving around his Islamization process. Cihan, as a young boy beginning to learn Islam from some of his friends, is frowned upon by his “civilized and modern” family and sent to Europe to study medicine. After his return to Turkey as a doctor, he turns into a character humiliating his pious cousin Tuba, since he finds her Islamic way of life “primitive” and “uncivilized” (p. 50-54). He not only humiliates Muslim characters but is depicted as displaying condescending attitudes towards the poor villagers that come to his office, where he refuses to examine them. Cihan is portrayed as a doctor examining the “hypochondriac people of high society” (p. 57). Over time, he makes money and “searches for peace in materialism” (p. 78). However without delving into the detailed psychology of himself as it is usual in Islamic novels, Cihan begins to question himself and sink into a state of meaninglessness. He realizes that materialism does not bring happiness (p. 79).

Cihan then proposes marriage to his pious cousin Tuba who works as a primary school teacher. However, he is refused by her since he does not live an Islamic way of life. Sometime later he marries Ebru who is depicted as a “modern and civilized woman,” with worldly desires such as attending parties

where she dances with other males (p. 105). This marriage does not last long since Cihan still finds his life meaningless. At this moment of crisis he recalls an old pious friend of his, and doctor Vedat comes into the scene, employed by the author to present his Islamic views framed through the 'Islamization process' of Cihan. At the end of the process, Cihan turns into an assertive Muslim character propagating Islam to his environment. His new identity, however, disturbs some people who 'slander' him by saying that he in fact "wants Islamic order (*seriat*)" (p. 203). Then he is taken to court, and as a result is sent to exile to a small province. The last coincidence of the novel emerges in this province: While Cihan is working there as a 'Muslim doctor' praised by the local people, he learns that his cousin Tuba is also working in one of the schools of the province. Cihan convinces her that he has changed and this time they marry. The novel, as it is usual in all salvation novels, closes with a happy end.

Both novels, one narrating first the Islamization and then the stigmatization and exclusion of a young female university student, and the other focusing on the process of conversion to an Islamic way of life by a male character, can be taken as representative of Islamic novels of the 1980s. The stories of Dilara and Cihan involve various dialogues, signs, and representations that are often replicated by Islamic novels of the period. As is common in all Islamic novels, their stories open up with scenes in which pious and secular characters engage in a discursive struggle over the meaning of civilization.

### **First Encounter: 'Civilizational Clash' Between Muslims and 'Others'**

The narrative structure of Islamic novels is organized around two competing value systems: Islamic and other (secular/westernist). In line with the



dominant Islamic discourse of the 1980s, Islam is presented as the source of a value system that is totally distinct from secular/westernist visions of the world. These two different value systems engage in a competitive dialogue via pious and westernized characters in novels. Indeed, it is hard to identify these characters in novels as true “characters” in novelistic terms, since Islamist novelists do not enter deeply into the ambiguous emotions of characters in order to develop psychologically complex characters. Rather, they portray a stereotypical type representing the basic qualities of two social categories, Islamic and secular/westernist. Therefore the dialogue between Islamic and other value systems is conducted via idealized social types representing two competing worldviews. These social types are represented as ‘stable and strong’ Muslim characters on the one hand, and ‘degenerate’ westernized characters on the other. The central plot of Islamic novels revolves around the Islamization of these westernized characters who discover a solution to their problems in the message of Islam, conveyed to them by stable pious characters.

Cihan in *Boşluk* and Dilara in *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var* typify these westernized characters. Through the mouths of these characters and their close circles the authors give voice to a discourse of modernity and civilization that has a problematic relation with religion. This discourse is spelled out through the encounter of westernized and pious characters. When Cihan returns from Europe as a doctor and meets with family members for dinner and drinks, he asks about his pious cousin Ebru:

--Why is Tuba not with us?

His uncle replies:

--She keeps away from alcohol and those who drink alcohol.

(...)

--Has she still not changed?

-- Unfortunately civilization is not contagious. She still has primitive people's mind within such a family. A teacher's character should not be like this. (p. 54)

**the original text:**

--Tuba niçin aramızda değil?

--O içkiden ve içen insanlardan kaçır.

(...)

--Hala değişmedi mi?

--Ne yazık ki medeniyet bulaşıcı değil. Böyle bir ailenin arasında hala ilkel insanların kafasını taşıyor. Bir öğretmenin şahsiyeti bu olmamalıymış (p. 54).

When Cihan meets Ebru, he is surprised because she has begun to wear a headscarf. He shouts at her:

Are you kidding? We are a family that has attained European civilization. How can you do that? (p. 87)

**the original text:**

Alay mı ediyorsun sen?...Biz Avrupa medeniyetine ulaşmış bir aileyiz. Nasıl yaparsın bunu? (p. 87).

These quotations are indicative of Islamist novelists' portrayal of the appropriation of civilization by their secular opponents. Secular characters who identify themselves as "civilized" are usually depicted in scenes in which men and women freely socialize (sometimes flirt) and drink alcohol. These characteristics are assumed to constitute the basis of a "civilized way of life" of secular characters who construe civilization as westernization or Europeanization. Their approach to religion and religious manifestations are made explicit when they encounter Islamic characters, especially those who wear headscarf. The headcovering or a critical stance towards alcohol, as in the case of Tuba, is taken by westernized characters as a feature of "primitive" people conflicting with the European civilization. Thus, Islamic characters are situated and gained meaning in the context of Islamists' portrayal of a westernized vision

of the world that considers religious belief and symbols as retrograde manifestations that must be left behind.

In our second novel, the protagonist of *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, Dilara, receives a similar response from her professors in the faculty when she returns to Ankara wearing her new Islamic garments. The author has his professors think in the following way:

How could this be. This dress in the twenty-first century? It is contrary to the contemporary age and civilization. Above all, a doctor's veiling in secular Turkish Republic... (p. 104)

**the original text:**

Olacak şey miydi bu. Yirminci asırda bu kıyafet? Çağdaşlığa, medeniliğe aykırı, hele laik Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ülkesinde bir doktorun örtünmesi...(p. 104).

One of her professors tries to convince her to unveil in a way that exemplifies Islamists' representation of secular narratives of civilization:

We have to be modern now! Look, Europe has been rapidly advancing in science and technology. We have to catch up with their civilization. We cannot waste our time with rules made fifteen hundred years ago (p. 115).

**the original text:**

Artık çağdaş olmamız gerek! Bakın Avrupa, bilimde, teknikte hızla ilerliyor. Onların medeniyetine yetişmemiz gerekiyor. Böyle bin beş yüz yıl öncesinin hükümleriyle vakit geçiremeyiz (p. 115).

These expressions that revolve around the identification of civilization that excludes religious manifestations constitute the major framing device of nearly all Islamic salvation novels of the 1980s. The term civilization, as any term in a Bakhtinian sense, derives its meaning from and has a socially charged life and a history within the contemporary context of Turkey. Islamist novelists, by making

westernized characters speak with secular idioms, give voice to a historicity lying behind the concept of civilization in Turkey from their own perspective. What lies at the core of Islamic narratives is a conviction that Islam and Muslim characters have been silenced and excluded from modern public life by westernized agents' conception of civilization. Therefore they contest the meaning of civilization that is, to use Bakhtin's words, "populated with the intention of others" (Bakhtin, 2000; 293). Islamist novelists make westernized characters' 'intentions' explicit by making them speak a secular language that promotes the idea that 'Islam does not belong to the contemporary age.'

Westernized characters are often positioned against Islamic figures along with a claim that associates civilization with Europeanization or westernization. Through such a frame Islamist authors demonstrate how the equation of civilization with Westernization (in the form of de-Islamization) has reproduced negative representations of Muslim actors. This is made salient in the stigmatization of Muslim visibilities, as in the case of Tuba and Dilara, who are presented as "backward," "primitive," and "contrary to the age" at "conflicting with modern civilization" by westernized professors, family members and friends. Islamist novelists, by employing these 'stigmatizing concepts,' struggle against secular narratives of civilization and the negative representations that they construct of Muslims in contemporary Turkey (I will address Islamists' contestation of identity later).

What is important here is that Islamist novelists challenge secular narratives of civilization and aim to cope with the negative representations of Muslims through contesting the meaning of civilization and modernity. In other words, they struggle for positive representations of Muslim social identities by

situating them within the battlefield on civilization. The self, as Whitebrook suggests, does not construct a story in isolation (Whitebrook, 2001). People construct identities by locating themselves within “a repertoire of emplotted stories” (Somers and Gibson, 1994; 38-9). And during this emplotment, various time frames, contexts, events and dialogic relationships contributing to the construction of a narrative may be interrelated in a number of ways. Islamist novelists of the 1980s, however, emplot their narratives within a ‘civilizational discourse’ in the political/cultural context of contemporary Turkey. Emplotment of Islamic novels within the dominant secular narratives of civilization is indicative of the “mental strategies” of the contemporary Islamist movement that is “modernity-oriented” (Göle, 2000; 94) framed by a will to participate in modern urban contexts. In other words, the constitution of the central plot of Islamic novels via a discourse of civilization, in which Islamic and westernized characters engage in conflict signify that Islamic novels are narratives of “the intimate encounter of Islam with modernity” (Göle, 2002) in the context of Turkey during the 1980s.

The situatedness of Islamic narratives within the contemporary context of Turkey allows Islamist novelists to present their criticisms of secular narratives of civilization. In this sense, Islamic literary discourse can be apprehended as an attempt to retell the story of civilization in Turkey in a particular way. To achieve this end, it seeks to ‘defamiliarize the familiar world’ and to disturb the ‘habitualization’ brought about by secular narratives of civilization. This suggests that Islamist novelists intend for the reader to reexamine the assumptions, conventions and stigmatizations brought about by the secular framing of civilization and modernity. In other words, they aim to make people

see the narratives of civilization differently and anew. What they show, first of all, is that the process of modernization has taken Turkey not to the level of contemporary civilization, but to ‘moral degeneration’ and ‘social disintegration.’ This was because, as an Islamist novelist writes, “irreligion has been injected into Turkish society in the name of contemporaneity and modernity [Dinsizlik, Türk toplumuna çağdaşlık ve modernlik adına şırınga edilmiş]” (Asımgil, 1993; 70). Islamist writers, as third person narrators, often intervene into their texts to present their views on the current situation brought about by the process of modernization in the form of westernization. For example Katırcı Turhal, in *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, depicts contemporary Turkey in a scene when Dilara, with her headscarf, is not allowed to get her diploma:

That day, while they made a spiritual massacre and many innocent people were put through hard conditions, thousands of girls on the streets escaped their homes with hopes of becoming actresses, and ended up in brothels, because of the defective education they received.

The number of call-girls has been increasing dramatically, and newspapers, which are behind the promotion of prostitution, announce that many of these girls are university students, as if they are proud of it.

The young generation commits murders and robberies without hesitation, since they do not have the fear of God inside them. Because of the spiritual void, thousands of youngsters commit suicide in such a variety of ways...

And bars, pavilions and Atari saloons, customers of gambling machines have been in rapid increase. So many families fall into ruins, so many children inhabit the streets. A jailhouse has been erected opposite each school building (p. 130).

**the original text:**

O gün orada manevi bir katliam işlenirken, kıyafetlerinden ötürü, pak-temiz vatan evladı zorlanırken, sokakta binlerce kız, verilen yanlış terbiye sonucu evlerden kaçıyor, artist olma umuduyla genel evlere düşüyordu.

Tele-kızlar çiğ gibi büyüyor, çoğunun üniversiteli olduğunu yine fuhuşu körükleyen gazeteler, sanki iftiharla ilan ediyorlardı.

Genç nesil Allah korkusunu hissetmediği için gözünü kırpmadan cinayetler işliyor, soygunlar yapıyordu. Manevi boşluk sonucu binlerce genç canına kıyıyordu ölümün her çeşidiyle...

Ve barlar, pavyonlar, atari salonları, kumar makinalarının müşterisi hızla çoğalıyordu. Ve nice ocaklar sönüyor, sokakları çocuklar dolduruyordu. Her okula karşı bir hapishane inşa ediliyordu...

This quotation is representative of Islamist novelists' critical depiction and perception of current Turkish society. Secular modernization, they write, led to "an age in which not civilization but de-civilization has been dominant"; to a society where "obscene posters have proliferated" (Boşluk, 286), and to "a mentality that rewards the bosses of brothels since they pay high taxes [genelev işleten kadın tüccarlarını fazla vergi verdi diye ödüllendiren zihniyet]" (M. Kadının Adı Var, 131). What lies at the core of Islamist novelists' criticism toward secular conception of civilization is that its mentality has led to 'disastrous moral dissipation' especially for youth. As the above quotation makes explicit, this was because youth grown up with 'modern values' that exclude a religious idiom. Moreover this mentality, as Islamist novelists commonly emphasize in their narratives, has led to a social context in which youth fall into meaninglessness and aimlessness.

Cihan and Dilara, the two protagonists of the novels, are types living in such modern social contexts. The social milieu in Ankara, in which Dilara and her university friends grow up, is depicted thus:

All of them have grown up in the most privileged districts of Ankara, where relationships between genders are free from traditional bonds. They have enjoyed love, flirtation, being or having a mistress and unfaithfulness, all of which are included in what modernity requires (p. 11)  
(...)

...concerning their family life, even the word Islam was not heard at all at home, let alone observing Islamic commands. Their life consists of eating-drinking, dressing as the fashion prescribes,

drinking alcohol, gambling, flirtation and having a good time whenever they can (p. 88).

**the original text:**

Hepsi de Ankara'nın en sosyetik muhitlerinde, kadın-erkek ilişkilerinin en serbest kucağında yetişmiş, taa çocukluklarından bu yana aşk, metres, flört, ihanet gibi, çağdaşlığın icapları arasında yoğrularak büyümüşlerdi.

(...)

...aile yaşantılarında değil İslam'ın emirleri, islam kelimesinin adı bile geçmezdi. Onların hayatları yemek-içmek, modanın emrine göre giyinmek, içki-kumar-flört ve nerede sabah orda akşam eğlenmek...

Characters living such a modern way of life, uninformed about Islam, allow Islamist novelists to construct a social category of 'the other' around the concept of modernity. 'Modern characters' belonging to this social category are portrayed as those who are ignorant about, and often hostile to Islam, due to their western-centric conceptions of modernity and civilization. They are made to live according to the "necessities of modernity," represented as drinking, flirting, dancing, and enjoying 'immoral' love affairs. Islamists, thus, envision a form of secular collective identity institutionalized by the secularization/modernization process. The wearing of mini-skirts, alcohol consumption, attending parties where men and women freely socialize and flirt, and condescending attitudes toward Muslim characters are portrayed as characterizing such a collective identity. These characteristics are commonly employed as the attributes of characters who identify themselves as 'modern' in salvation novels of the 1980s.

These modern characters, however, are represented as persons who do not have full control over their existence and way of living. Rather they are depicted as 'imitators of Western modernity'. To put this in one of the Islamist novelists' own terms, these modern characters are those who "think of civilization as



imitating the West, deviating from their religion” and as a result “lose their essence, even their humanity.”<sup>53</sup>

Ebru, whom Cihan marries while living a modern way of life, exemplifies one of these modern characters. Novelists depict scenes in which modern characters are made to act according to the “necessities of modernity.”<sup>54</sup> For instance, while Ebru and Cihan are dancing in a party, a man comes and offers to change partners. Cihan, as a character who has begun to adopt a critical attitude towards his environment, gets jealous of her and angry with that offer. Ebru criticizes Cihan and addresses him as such: “[but] you are a civilized man.” In response to Cihan’s jealousy, Ebru is made to take recourse to civilization: “I think you have contradicted European vision. This is civilization, whether you want it or not! [Bence Avrupa görüşüne ters düştün...İstesen de istemesen de medeniyet bu]” (Boşluk, p. 106-7).

In a similar way, Dilara of *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var* addresses her professors, who do not allow her to attend the graduation ceremony with her headscarf, of being ‘imitators of Western civilization’:

You, who commit injustice by insisting on modern dress code, are you going to pronounce people old-fashioned, people whose dressing does not properly cover their bodies, if the Jewish designer Pierre Cardin, which creates such modern costumes of the world, designs a couture that properly covers the body? Does this nation deserve to be so base, is it apt for this nation to imitate others blindly? (p. 129).

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2 Raif Cilasun, *Bir Annenin Feryadı*, coverstory, without date.

<sup>54</sup> Authors often caricature modern characters to depict a decadent personality promoted by modern civilization. For example Günbay Yıldız portrays Ebru as such: “Ebru became one of the typical moms of the twentieth century... Although Şahin [her child] has reached his first year, his mother did not suckle him with the excuse that her breasts would be deformed... She did not change his diaper with the excuse that her fingernail polish would be damaged... She became a mom who hated her kid...a mom who is indifferent to any hardship of her kid...”

**the original text:** Ebru yirminci asrın tipik bir annesi olmuştu...Şahin, bir yaşını doldurmasına rağmen, annesi göğsüm bozulur diye, çocuğunu emzirmede...Ojelerim bozulur düşüncesiyle altını değiştirmede...Kendi çocuğundan tiksinen bir anne oldu...Çocuğunun her meşakkatinden uzak, ilgisiz bir anne...] (Boşluk, p. 113)

**the original text:**

Çağdaş kıyafet diye tutturup haksızlıkta bulunan sizler, dünyanın bu çağdaş kıyafetlerini belirleyen Yahudi modacı Pierre Cardin, kapalı bir kıyafeti moda diye piyasaya sürerse, o zaman açık kıyafetlileri mi çağdışı ilan edeceksiniz? Bu millet bu kadar şahsiyetsizliğe, körü körüne taklide layık mıdır?

Thus what characterizes ‘the other’ of Muslim identity is their blind imitation of the West. The characters depicted as ‘modern’ are not allowed to have self-consciousness on their life style choices. Rather they are employed by the novelists as objects of Islamic pedagogy, in legitimizing the Islamic ideology as the only alternative to secular narratives of civilization. In the identification of opponents, Katırcı Turhal often cites Jews that symbolizes the generic category of the other of Muslim identity. The term Jews is used to include the Western powers that support Zionist ideology as well as materialism that, as commonly stressed by Islamic movements, made Muslims to lose their essence and alienate their religion. This rhetoric of conspiracy leads Islamist novelists to construct modern characters— the category of ‘the other’ — as ‘alienated subjects’ of the process of westernization. They are in this sense are perceived as the victims of this process. Therefore, Islamists call out to them: “You are not the victim of Islam but de-Islamization” (Şenlikoğlu, 1993; 17).

Islamist novelists have a deep conviction that the modern subjects are doomed to unhappiness in a social context from which Islam has been excluded. In contrast, Islamic narratives claim that what the age and modern people need is the true message of Islam. Cihan’s and Dilara’s trajectory, as two modern but wretched characters as a result of their modern way of life, exemplify Islam’s solution to modern problems.

## Construction of Islamic Identity

Islamist novelists presuppose that the modern conception of civilization has led to a 'corrupt order' since it excludes religious morality, promotes an egoism and seduces youth with its stress on the free interaction of the sexes. Cihan and Dilara represent two young characters living in a 'corrupt milieu' where Islam is not lived, talked about or practiced. They are portrayed by their authors as falling into meaninglessness, because of 'imitative and decadent' relations governing their circles. Their realization of the worthlessness of the modern way of life becomes the beginning of their process of Islamization.

The process of Islamization of westernized characters begins when their feeling of meaninglessness arises in a context where they meet Muslim characters. In almost all novels of the period, this encounter is connected with the experience of love. Westernized characters are made to fall in love with Muslim characters, with whom they are taken to a 'journey' to adopt an Islamic life. Dilara falls in love with the pious teacher İbrahim, who stays in her house after a traffic accident, while Cihan—inconsistently in terms of his position in the novel—proposes marriage to his devout cousin Tuba. Their love triggers their curiosity about 'another way of life' which is alien to them. Westernized characters, however, are not allowed to be together with Islamic characters until their process of Muslimization or construction of Islamic identity is complete. In the process of learning an Islamic way of life, novelists present Islamic ideas about how to think, behave, pray and even how to love.

Dilara is said to be drawn to İbrahim "not because of physical appearance, but because of character." This Muslim man, the novelist writes "was kind, polite and cultured young. At the same time he was a conscious Muslim practicing

God's orders. He had initiated a new epoch in a young girl's [Dilara's] life by giving her the Koran as a gift" (p.50). Dilara is made to qualify her love in contradistinction to that of modern people: "My love is totally different from theirs. Their love depends on sexuality" (p. 70). Around an Islamic politics of differentiation marked by a language of 'us' and 'them,' Dilara is made to identify her love as "metaphysical love (ilahi bir sevgi)." The novelist through Dilara's mind presents what is required for 'real love' in Islamic frame:

I love his personality... It is the holy book that binds me to him... I have heard it from him for the first time, and I was affected... Are not these enough to bear love? ... What if I get to know him closely, if I enter into his life in which he punctually observes Islam. Who knows, how much would I love him? (p. 70).

**the original text:**

Ben onun kişiliğini seviyorum... Beni ona bağlayan o kutsal kitap... İlk defa ondan duyup etkilendim... Bunlar bir sevgi için yetmez mi?... Ya onu yakından tanısam, onun İslam'ı harfiyen uygulanmış hayatına girsem, ne kadar severim kim bilir?

To know Ibrahim more closely, and to 'satisfy her soul' Dilara decides to learn about Islam. Similarly, Cihan, as a result of his unhappiness with the modern way of life, decides to find one of his old pious friends, doctor Vedat. The edifying mission of the novels is worked out through dialogues between these two characters and pious figures. The bookseller Dilara meets in Kayseri when searching for religious books appears as one of the 'teaching figures' of the novel. He advocates Dilara start reading Islamic history. Dilara's response signifies her first step in acquiring Islamic consciousness: "So far we have read European history. From now on forth let us read Islamic history [Şimdiye kadar Avrupa tarihini okuduk, bundan sonra da İslam tarihini karıştıralım bakalım]" (p. 35).

As Dilara reads Islamic books, she begins to question her upbringing, education and ignorance about Islam:

Why did not they teach them a bit of spiritual knowledge additionally in those schools where she was taught knowledge of the material world for many years? Or was it not necessary? ...Or was religious education something meant for only a specific group? Or could not religion be reconciled with science? (p. 29).

**The original text:**

Yıllarca okuduğu okullarda, madde ilminin yanında neden bir nebze de mana ilmi vermediler? Lazım değil miydi yoksa?...Yoksa yalnız bir zümreye mi mahsustu dini eğitim? Yoksa ilimle din bir arada olamaz mıydı?"

Dilara then engages in dialogue with Muslim characters to find answers to her questions. These questions and dialogues are designed in the novels to present readers with basic Islamic precepts. *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, in this sense, is more didactic than *Boşluk*. Katırcı Turhal makes Dilara ask several basic questions to the pious bookseller such as "Why do we always turn to the direction of Ka'ba [to perform prescribed prayers]?" or "Why do we confirm our intention as we elevate our hands, when we perform prescribed prayers? [Namaz kılarken neden ellerimizi kaldırıp niyet ediyoruz?]" (p. 40-41).

Similarly in *Boşluk* the dialogue of Cihan and the pious Vedat revolves around 'why one should believe?' serves the same end. These dialogues provide novelists with a means not only to present basic Islamic knowledge but also to clarify and speculate on certain issues like morality, polygamy, and the status of women in Islam.

What novelists do so far is to connect events—Dilara's and Cihan's love, their search to learn more about Islam etc.—in the form of narrative and to reconstruct them in a signification process. Each event signifies the issues at stake in the construction of a coherent Islamic identity. To achieve this, Dilara's

love for İbrahim, her questioning of the modern way of life and Cihan's attempts to find answers to his feelings of worthlessness are refracted in a narrative form that emerges, in the sense that Richardson uses the term, not only as "a mode of representation but also a mode of reasoning" (Richardson, 1990; 2). Dilara and Cihan appear as agents who need to make choices within the context of particular dilemmas to develop a narrative unity in the construction of a coherent Islamic identity. In their quest for narrative identity, characters are led to make choices between "metaphysical" and "material love," "European and Islamic history" and "Islamic and modern way of life." Answers that characters [Islamist novelists] develop to these dilemmas constitute sequential plots of Islamic narratives through which Islamic identities are formed. In this regard, narrative, as Taylor (1992) and MacIntyre use it (1985), provides Islamists with a means to order and pattern the construction of a coherent Islamic self within the modern world.

The theme of the West emerges as an important topic within the representation of an Islamic self. In accordance with the dominant Islamic discourse of the 1980s, Islamist authors in salvation novels engage in a struggle over the representation of the West. They generally create a homogeneous West in contradistinction to the Islamic world. However it can be argued that there are two layers of this representation of the West. In some novels authors gesture to a Western conspiracy, so that the West is presented as the source of all evil. In more oppositionary narratives like *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, the West or Europeans are depicted as eternal enemies of Muslims:

... The grandchildren of those who divided our country into seven regions before the War of Independence, and who jailed Muslims into mosques, here are those Europeans. Now, they pretend to be our

friends, and our fellow men take them to be our friends... [These Europeans] have always attacked this noble nation, sometimes by crusades, sometimes by cultural imperialism, immorality and the illness of fashion (p. 120).

**The original text:**

...İstiklal Savaşından önce yurdumuzu yedi parçaya bölüp paylaştılar... Müslümanları camilere tıkıp yakanların torunları, işte o Avrupalılar. Ama şimdi bize dost görünenler ve bizimkiler tarafından dost sanılanlar...[Bu Avrupalılar] Ne yazık ki her devirde kah Haçlı seferleriyle kah kültür emperyalizmiyle, ahlaksızlıkla, moda illetiyle bu necip millete saldırmışlardır (p. 120).

In several other novels, on the other hand, the material development of the West, its style of urbanization or discipline is praised.<sup>55</sup> Authors sometimes refer to the spiritual dimension of the West and argue that it is 'us' who 'misunderstood and appropriated it' only in the form of a secular and irreligious civilization. In *Boşluk*, Cihan who is sent to Europe to become an "intellectual (aydın)," yet returns to Turkey as a 'degenerate' man, signifies a character that has misunderstood the West. This fact is spelled out in his dialogue with doctor Vedat who asks him,

- Were there not venerable fathers where you come from?
- There were.
- Did those illuminated people, among whom you got your education, urge you to follow the religion they follow?
- They did.
- And then?
- I rejected.
- (...)
- What did [those people] used to do on Sundays or Saturdays?
- They used to go to certain places called Church or Synagogue.
- What do they use to do there?
- Probably, worship. Those days, we used to invite their daughters to parties, but they would not attend...
- Have you ever asked why?
- They used to say simply "it is our holy day."
- So, Europe is different.
- Why?

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<sup>55</sup> For such a representation of the West see the novels of Ali Erkan Kavaklı.

--As far as we are concerned, they call the people who worship "backward." But they observe things that their religious beliefs require (p. 163).

**The original text:**

--Senin geldiğin yerlerde muhterem pederler yok mu?

--Var.

--Aralarında tahsil gördüğün aydın kafalar, sana mensup oldukları dini teklif ettiler mi?

--Etiler

--Sonra?

--Reddettim.

(...)

--[O insanlar] Pazar ya da Cumartesi günleri ne yaparlardı?

--Kiliseye ya Havra denen yerlere giderlerdi.

--Neler yaparlardı oralarda?

--Herhalde ibadet. O gün kızlarını eğlenceye davet ederdik, katılmazlardı...

--Hiç sebep sorduğun oldu mu?

--Kutsal günümüz der, geçerlerdi.

--Demek Avrupa değişik.

--Neden?

--Bizde ibadet edenlerin adını "gerici" koydular. Kendileri inançlarının gerektirdiğini yapıyorlar.

Moreover the author, through the mouth of doctor Vedat, refers to and quotes from several Western thinkers such as Carl Young and Alexsi Carel (sic! read Carl Jung and Alexis Carrel, misspellings original) to emphasize the importance of belief in human life. Such a representation of Europe, however, is again complemented with reference to a Western conspiracy. This is made explicit at the end of the dialogue by Vedat: "aaah Europe. It is Europe which prescribed us irreligiosity while preserving its own church. [aaah Avrupa. Bize dinsizlik reçetesini yazıp kilisesini koruyan Avrupa]" Therefore, the blame is again put on the West and the Westernizing agents in Turkey.

At the end of this discussion, Cihan is transformed and declares that: ". "I BELIEVE... GOD EXISTS. THIS UNIVERSE IS NOT ON ITS OWN. I WILL NOT LEAVE AND ABANDON THIS WELL SET-UP ORDER TO CHANCE"



(capitals original) [İNANDIM...ALLAH VAR. BU KAINAT SAHİPSİZ  
DEĞİL. KURULUP BIRAKILMIŞ BU DÜZENİ TESADÜFLERE  
BIRAKMAYACAĞIM.” He is transformed into a character who would spend  
the rest of his life conveying the message of Islam to humanity.

For male characters in novels, it seems to be enough to announce that ‘they  
believed.’ After their transformation they are not generally made to undergo any  
physical alteration such as wearing a beard. On the other hand Dilara, who turns  
into a devout character and begins to perform daily practices (praying), still lacks  
an important dimension to be a true believer. Dilara is made aware of this  
dimension when she goes to a mosque with her ‘teacher’ bookseller. While the  
bookseller enters the mosque, she realizes that she can not since she is not  
covered. Then she feels guiltily: “I can not here enter into God’s home without  
veiling. How can I dare to enter paradise if I die in this situation! [Ben burada  
daha örtüsüz Allah’ın evine giremiyorum. Ya şu vaziyette ölürsem cennete  
girmeye nasıl yüzüm olacak!]]” (p. 40). This self-questioning is deepened by a  
Prophet’s saying told Dilara by the bookseller’s wife: “If one imitates a nation,  
she belongs to it [Kim bir millete benzemeye özenirse, o onlardan sayılır].”<sup>56</sup>

The old woman continues:

Which Muslim woman wants to be examined in the other world  
together with Jews by uncovering her head and being similar to  
them... We have to take not Europe’s but *Asr-ı Saadet*’s (the age of  
happiness) women as models (p. 78).

**the original text:**

Hangi Müslüman kadın başını açarak, benzediği yahudilerle beraber  
haşrolmak ister?...Bizler Avrupa’nın kadınlarını değil, asr-ı saadetin  
hanımlarını örnek almalıyız.

<sup>56</sup> This saying is often replicated in several Islamic literary and non-literary texts of the 1980s to  
sustain an Islamist politics of differentiation.

Dilara's life altering moment arises when she is made to hear a 'metaphysical voice' while she prays to God to reach fulfillment. This voice addresses her:

Look my daughter, look at this apple! It has a hull. Whatever living being, whatever fruit, whatever animal you take, all have shells on them. The shell of women is their clothes. Your veiling yourself will protect you from all kinds of danger (p. 47).

**the original text:**

Bak kızım, şu elmaya bak! Bunun kabuğu var. Kainatta hangi canlıya, hangi meyveye, hangi hayvana bakarsan bak hepsinin üzerinde bir kabuk vardır. Kadının kabuğu da örtüsüdür. Seni her türlü tehlikeden koruyacak tesettüründür.

As a result of this 'metaphysical moment' Dilara finds the commitment to acquire a full Islamic identity and asks herself: "How can a woman adopt Islamic way without veiling? [Tesettürsüz bir kadın nasıl İslam'ın yoluna girebilir?]" (p. 48). Therefore she discovers veiling as a cornerstone of Islamic female identity. At the end of this process, she adopts Islamic headcovering, as was the case for the pious character Tuba of *Boşluk*. Female characters after veiling are depicted as transformed: Dilara's "face is enlightened, an attribute that others do not have [yüzüne herkese has olmayan bir nur gelir]" (p. 48) and Tuba "becomes like an angel [melekleşir]" (p. 87).

One of the striking characteristics of salvation novels is that the female protagonist who is veiled in the course of the narrative commonly comes from a rich family or 'high society.'<sup>57</sup> In this sense Islamic novels challenge secular

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<sup>57</sup> Islamist novelists' preference to choose 'modern,' unveiled girls and their construction of an ideal female identity by making them adopt veiling is sometimes criticized by veiled girls themselves through readers' letters. For instance a veiled girl writes to novelist İsmail Fatih Ceylan in the following way: "In novels written by Muslims, unveiled girls (*açık kızlar*) are always depicted as beautiful, attractive and good-looking. Muslim men, who are affected by novels, now find unveiled girls more attractive... Why do you depict an unveiled girl as first attractive, and then by making her adopt veiling, promote her as an innocent person? You mean

narratives that posit that headcovered girls are generally rural-originated, and lower class. The Islamization of rich, urbanite and cultured girls asserts that the proposed Islamic way of life does not signify 'backwardness' in any sense. Rather novelists employ a progressive language. The Muslim woman is presented as modern, forward-looking, yet moral and authentic. Several research on headcovered woman also demonstrate that they are quite careful not to be labeled as backward or narrow-minded. By contrast, headscarved woman try to revise socio-cultural patterns which register modernity in a way which would not violate basic Islamic rules (Saktanber, 1994).

As will later be shown in the legitimization of Dilara's will to attend university, the novelist of *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var* asserts that the headscarf does not constitute an obstacle to attending modern urban spaces and to studying modern science. Thus the 'modern' emerges in Islamic narratives not merely compatible to Islam but also desirable for Islamic subjects. Not only in literary discourse but also in several accounts of Islamists, the headscarved girls appear as, what Göle calls "modern *mahrem*" (Göle, 1991), signifying veiled girls' aims to selectively appropriate the products of modernity.

However the headscarf commonly emerges in all salvation novels of the 1980s as a requirement for woman to become a true believer and to come into contact with the modern. Headcovering in line with the dominant Islamic discourse of the period appears as "the most powerful meta-political icon" (Göle, 2002) differentiating Islamic identity from secular/westernized characters. It is

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to imply that unveiled girls are beautiful and that veiled girls are less valuable? No, there are many beautiful girls among those veiled. I think you find unveiled girls charming because veiled girls do not expose their beauty. Okay, let's say, Muslim men acquire merit in God's sight because they veil unveiled girls. But what will be the situation of veiled girls? Please do not portray [unveiled] girls as beautiful so as to mislead young boys." (Ceylan, 2002; 222). The reader then comments that Muslim men are not interested in veiled girls, but rather they chase unveiled girls because of Islamist novelists' depiction of them as beautiful.

represented as a *sine qua non* of Islamic identity. In one of the influential novels of the 1980s entitled *Müslüman Savaşçı* (Tekin, 1998) for instance, the Muslim character Abdullah, who falls in love with the daughter of a tyrant landlord Selma, writes her a letter and invites her to become a Muslim. Selma asks herself “Am I not a Muslim? What does it mean to be a Muslim?” An old man she consults warns her “you will cover your head. If you do not, everything is futile” (Tekin, 1998; 145). What marks the narrative construction of Islamic identity, therefore, is the veiled woman. Women, not only in literary but also in all non-literary Islamic texts of the 1980s, function as the “boundary marker of Islamic difference” (Göle, 2000; 101). Islamic veiling appears as a curtain identifying insider and outsider categories. Furthermore, veiling in Islamic discourse and Islamic narratives does not simply refer to women’s religiosity but also, as it is presented in novels, appears as a signifier of communitarian morality as the basis of ideal Islamic society. There is therefore a certain gender dimension of literary Islamism that needs to be addressed.

### **Collective Islamic Morality on the Basis of Gender**

One point that should be elaborated about the Islamic literary sphere is that with few exceptions almost all authors of salvation novels are male actors of Islamism. This conforms to the context of the 1980s where the voice of males dominated Islamic discourse of the period. The intellectual terrain was dominated by men who wrote books (even or perhaps especially on the position of women in Islam), gave lectures and discussed religious issues in public spaces. All of the few outstanding female Islamists, on the other hand, were active in the literary field as novelists or story-writers. Islamist women novelists

(such as Emine Şenlikoğlu, Mecbure İnal, Şerife Katırcı Turhal) reflect upon social and political matters and transmit their messages through literary narratives rather than 'intellectual' books in the 1980s.

Indeed, novels written by Islamist women do not differ from, but rather share a common discourse with those of males since they also voice a 'metapolitical narrative' of Islamism and problematize common social and moral issues. Emine Şenlikoğlu states: "I write my novels to give particular messages...Being male or female makes no difference for me...As far as belief is concerned, there should be no discrimination between men and women" (Çakır, 2000; 110). It can be argued that Islamic novels, framed on the basis of a critique of secular narratives, (re)presented collective Islamic identity through a collective discourse. This collective discourse that emphasized collective harmony did not portray different and conflictual representations between the genders. Within such a collective vision, what was common to all Islamic novels of the period was that the 'woman question' was the cornerstone of their agenda.

As noted above, women's headcovering and visibility have been the fundamental marker of Islamic difference and identity in the modern context of Turkey. Similarly it was the construction of main plots of novels around the 'woman's issue' that characterized Islamic literary narratives. Even in novels like *Boşluk* which revolves around the problems of a male character, author writes scenes around women characters who at one point wear the headscarf, adopt an Islamic way of life and give voice to a collective Islamic discourse. Many other novels such as *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, on the other hand, are directly based on women characters and concern themselves with women's roles

in social life. Women are central to Islamist politics not only because of their visibility but also of their 'preassigned' roles in 'ensuring' collective morality.

Women's role as the backbone of communitarian morality is worked out through their adoption of Islamic veiling. Dress in Muslim contexts as in all cultures is not only a means of bodily protection. It is as Giddens notes "a means of symbolic display, a way of giving external form to narratives of self-identity" (1991; 62). Veiling, however, in an Islamist frame, does more than provide an external form for self-identity. It is considered as one of the indispensable components of 'moral issue.' Dilara's explanation of her veiling to her friends in Ankara mirrors such a framing of Islamic veiling. In response to one of her friends' question, "Why should young girls not older cover their heads?" she says,

This is because all kinds of molestation occur to young women... Why do not young men flirt with old women? Why is it young girls and young women who end up in brothels? Even if they [old women] doll themselves up, or dress up immodestly, nobody cares about it. There are so many points bearing wisdom in every command of God. *Veiling reduces prostitution and instigation. It protects women from dangers* (p. 88) (emphasis mine).

**the original text:**

Çünkü her türlü tecavüz genç bayanlara olur da onun için... Neden sokakta ninelerle flört etmiyor gençler. Neden genel evlere hep genç kızlar, genç kadınlar düşüyor... Onlar [yaşlılar] süslenseler de, açılıp saçılırsalar da kimse dönüp bakmaz. Allah'ın her emrinde binbir hikmet vardır. *Örtü, fuhuşu-fitneyi azaltır. Kadınları tehlikelerden korur* (vurgu bana ait).

Dilara gives voice to the dominant Islamist discourse of the 1980s that frames women's visibility on the basis of communitarian morality. Notions of communitarian morality provide Islamists a habitus around which not only collective identities are shaped but also an ideal Islamic society is built.

Women's headcovering and conduct in such a frame are thought to constitute the

basis of communitarian morality. This is because the position of women in an Islamic vision of the world expresses what an ideal Islamic society both fears and needs: the fear of *fitne* (disorder) and the need for order. It is generally women in their 'modern (unveiled) outlook' and 'degeneracy' that arise as the source of *fitne* not only in Islamic novels but also in general Islamic discourse. In other words, *fitne* arises when women do not respect the boundaries of Islamic moral conduct provided with Islamic veiling. Veiling, as in the accounts of Dilara, is framed as the basis of Islamic moral codes and communitarian morality. The veiling of women, in other words, is represented as a major moral component against *fitne* (disorder) and degeneracy.

Communitarian morality, which revolves around gender issues—i.e. women's headcovering and modesty—is central to Islamist politics' desire to differentiate itself from its conception of modernist liberal politics (Göle, 1997a; 63). The centrality of the position of women for ensuring communitarian morality also explains why policies and measures pertaining to gender relations are often the first to be introduced by Islamic regimes or demanded by oppositionary Islamist movements (Taraki, 1995; 644). What is interesting regarding the position of Islamist women is that in several academic works, Islamist women are represented as the passive and submissive agents of Islamist movements (Saktanber, 1994; 103). In the case of *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, however, it is an Islamist woman novelist who similarly—to Islamist male's account—posits Islamic headcovering and Islamic framing of women as the basis of communitarian morality. She not only frames women in this way, but also conveys messages about the necessity of women's modesty and chastity for an ideal Islamic society. Therefore, it can be argued that it is the collective

Islamic subjectivity in the 1980s that gave voice to Islamic discourse in a way that disallowed internally any politics of gender. Put it differently, collective Islamism of the 1980s disregarded all particularities and differentiations regarding gender, class or ethnicity lines within the Islamist movement. Muslim agents shared a common discourse based on the collective representations of Islamism.

In their representation of women via an Islamic frame, novelists such as Katırcı Turhal engage in a discursive struggle against a secular framing of women represented by feminist discourse. The title of Katırcı Turhal's novel, in this sense, signifies a challenge to a well-known book, *Kadının Adı Yok* (The Woman has No Name), by liberal feminist Duygu Asena (1987), (See Figure 1 and 2). This book was one of the major works of women who as "defiant daughters" of the older Kemalist generation, challenged the patriarchal framing of women by Kemalist circles and demanded substantive equality while expressing their will to control their own sexuality in the 1980s (Arat, 1997 and 2000). As Islamists take every opportunity to criticize the basic tenets of secular civilization and convey their Islamic messages, the title of Katırcı Turhal, *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var* (The Muslim Woman Has Name) signifies Islamists' criticisms of secular and feminist conceptions of women. Katırcı Turhal presents her criticisms throughout her novel:

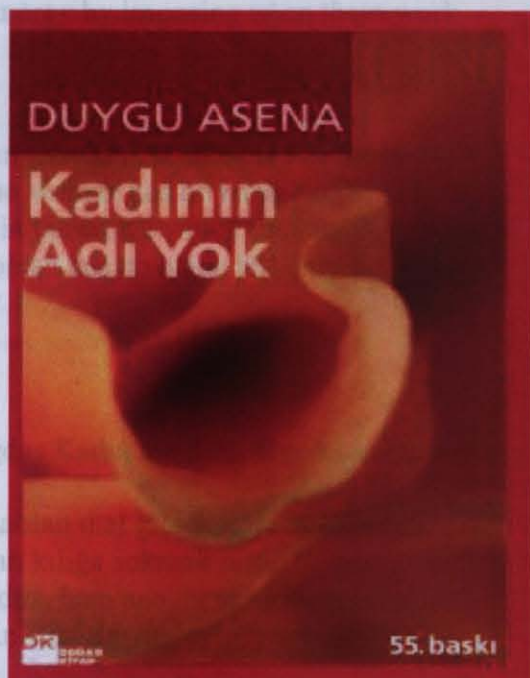
Now I ask those who deceive women in the name of Modern Turkish Rights of Women:

Does protection of women mean to display them like products that are shown to customers?

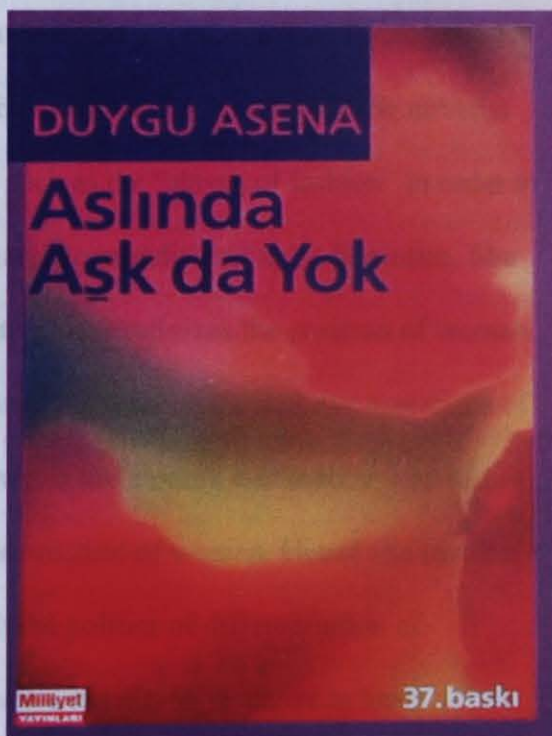
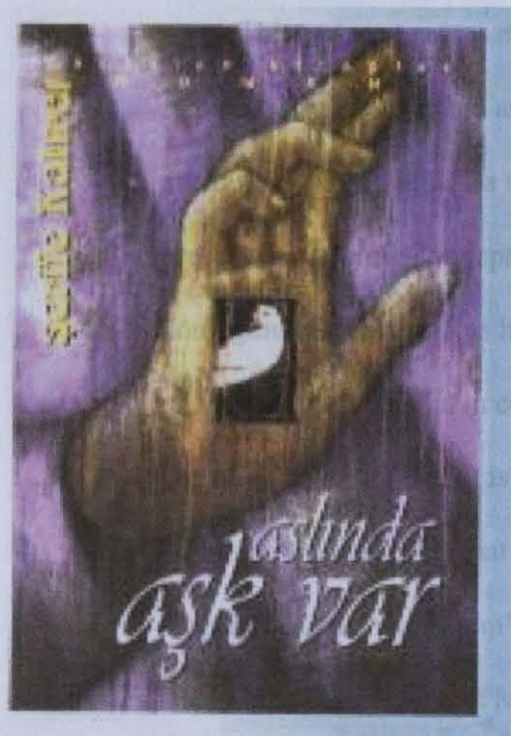
Does it mean to push them to assume so many appearances, so they are slaves of fashion?

Does it mean to abuse them day and night as mother, wife, and business women all at once in the name of freedom of women? Does





**Figure 1** Negotiation of Islamic identity at an intersubjective level: Şerife Katırcı's *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var* vs. Duygu Asena's *Kadının Adı Yok*, (cover pages)



**Figure 2** Şerife Katırcı's other novel, *Aslında Aşk Var* in response to Duygu Asena's *Aslında Aşk Yok*. (cover pages)

it mean to make them lose their energy by imposing upon them work proper for men?

(...)

Those who want to protect women should first take care of these problems. Those who say that “the woman has no name” refer only to the woman who is annihilated in the world which they have produced. Those who say that woman has no name tell only their own story (p. 160).

**the original text:**

Şimdi soruyorum. Türkiye’li Çağdaş Kadın Hakları, diye kadınları aldatanlara:

Kadını korumak, [onları] açıkta satılan mal gibi sergilemek midir?

Her an modanın esaretinde kılıktan kılığa sokmak mıdır?

Kadına özgürlük deyip, gece gündüz, hem ana, hem eş, hem iş kadını yaparak sömürmek midir? Erkeğin işini de yükleyip, zamanından önce yıpratmak mıdır?

(...)

Kadını korumak isteyenler önce bunları halletmelidirler. “kadının adı yok” diyenler, kendi ürettikleri dünya yaşamında, yok edilen kadını anlatmaktadır. Kadının adı yok diyenler, ancak kendilerini tarif etmişlerdir” (p. 160).

This passage represents a renarrativization of homogeneously perceived feminist discourse within an Islamist frame by a woman novelist. The novelist attributes several qualities to feminists such as the “slaves of fashion” in order to present her Islamic conception of woman in contradistinction to feminism. She homogenizes feminists as her opponents and narrativizes the position of woman in feminist movements in compliance with the dominant collective assertions of Islamism of the 1980s. It is claimed that it is the modern and secular way of life promoted by feminism that led to the destruction of women. Hence she invokes a language of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in line with the politics of differentiation of Islamism. She constructs Muslim woman’s identity in response to her perception of feminist opponents. The following sentences represent the way feminism is perceived by Islamist actors of the period:

Faithful women know that feminists who compete with men for superiority are chasing after illusions; faithful women are not interested in such unreasonable games. Those who claim superiority are those who are wretched people, ignorant of God's laws (p. 157-8).

**the original text:**

Mümin kadınlar, erkeklerle üstünlük yarışına giren feministlerin boş kürek salladıklarını bilir; böyle akılsız oyunlara icabet etmezler. Erkeklerle üstünlük iddiasında olanlar, Allah'ın kanunlarından habersiz biçarelerdir.

Thus the author gives voice to a discourse of Islamism of the 1980s on the role and status of women in Islam which has been shaped in response to, what Islamist writers call the "modern egalitarianism" of Western modernity (see Hatemi, 1988). Specifically on the women question, Islamist writings of the 1980s by both male and female actors share a common essentializing position to, in their words, "equity feminism," (Abedin, 1996) which according to Islamists, inevitably creates the hostility and antagonism as a necessary co-condition among sexes. In feminism, according to Islamists, men and women are locked into adversarial positions and matched against each other in a "perennial gender structure" (Abedin, 1996; 75). Feminism is sometimes identified as a "new brand of male chauvinism" since it puts a high value on the roles of providing financial support or success in career which have traditionally been filled by male members of society, while devaluing, on the other hand, the domestic roles of women. Thus egalitarian feminism according to Islamic writers denies the differentiation of male and female roles and demands a move towards a "unisex society" (Faruqi 1983) in which the empowerment of women could only be supplied on a battlefield against male's territoriality.

Islamist writers of the 1980s argue that Islam handles women's position by replacing the element of 'power' with 'responsibility' in gender relations within

a framework of “mutual responsibilities.” They claim that men and women should be defined with their distinct functions in a way that generate harmony and interdependence not conflict. In other words, men and women in collectivist discourse of Islamism are put in a complementary position that is regarded as the backbone of a ‘healthy’ (Islamic) society (see Hatemi, 1988, Dilipak, 1995).

Such a positioning is promoted not only by intellectual works but also by literary narratives of the period. Against a ‘feminist’ claim that ‘*The Woman Has No Name*,’ Katırcı Turhal replies out that ‘*The Muslim Woman Has a Name*’ in a complementary and harmonious position with men:

Muslim women have always been there, since the creation of mankind for the first time. And they have always taken their places alongside their men.

They have always stood shoulder to shoulder with men; they have struggled for the cause they believed.

Our noble Lord who says that ‘we created you as a pair of man and woman’ described faithful women alongside faithful men as following: ‘Faithful men are supporters of faithful women, and faithful women are supporters of faithful men.’

God has identified their duties in the best manner, in accordance with their creation.

A faithful woman knows the limits drawn by God, and she does not compete for superiority with her husband who is made superior to her by creation in some respects. Man and woman are halves of a whole. Neither can a man be without a woman, nor can a woman be without a man (p. 157).

#### **The original text:**

Müslüman kadını, insanoğlunun ilk yaradışından bu yana vardır. Ve daima erkeğinin yanında olmuştur.

Her devirde, her çağda erkekle omuz omuza olmuş; inandıkları dava uğrunda çaba harcamışlardır.

‘Sizi erkek ve diğiden yarattık’ diyen Yüce Rabbi’ miz, Mümin kadını erkeğinin yanında şöyle vasıflandırmıştır: ‘Mümin erkekler, Mümin kadınların, Mümin kadınlar da Mümin erkeklerin yardımcılarıdır.’

Allah onları en güzel şekilde yaratılışlarına uygun vazifelendirmiştir. Mümin kadın, Allah’ın çizdiği sınırı bilir ve bazı yönlerde üstün yaratılmış erkeğiyle üstünlük yarışına girmez. Erkek ve kadın bir bütünün yarısıdır. Kadın erkeksiz, erkek de kadınsız olamaz.

Islamists assert that ‘full equality’ between men and women will be reached only when the issue is resignified as one of humanity. That men and women are equal in their humanity is recognized by Islam which places on them equal rewards in matters of faith. In terms of social roles and obligations, however, Islamists claim a division of labour to be the functional basis of an ideal society. In this division, because of differences of nature, it is asserted that males in some matters are “primus inter pares” (first among equals) (Hatemi, 1988; 32). In the above quotation, Katırcı Turhal gives voice to such a dominant Islamist discourse and replies to modern egalitarianism via social functions produced by natural-physiological and temperamental differences between sexes. In this functional division of labour, what is primarily valued is the domestic role of women as mothers who would raise a ‘faithful generation.’ This line of argument paves the way for authenticating claims that involve that the position and role of woman is elevated in ‘real Islam’:

“In Islam woman is held with high esteem. Woman is one half of a whole the other half of which is man...if today no scholar of high caliber emerges from Muslims, this is because there are no mothers who breed such scholars.

(...)

Muslim women are respectable ladies of warm and pure homes. Women may demand a fee in return to the housework they take care. They also have the right to demand a servant. Of course if a Muslim woman does not ask for it, she will be given a greater reward by God (pp. 145-147).

**the original text:**

“İslam’da kadın değerlidir. Kadın erkeği tamamlayan, bir bütünün yarısıdır.

... [bugün] dünya çapında alimler çıkmıyorsa, bu evlatları yetiştirecek annelerin yetişmemesindendir.

(...)

Müslüman kadın sıcak temiz yuvasının hanımefendisidir. Kadın isterse evinde yaptığı işlerden dolayı ücret isteyebilir. Veya hizmet

edecek birini talep etme hakkına sahiptir. İstemezse daha büyük mükafat vardır Allah katında.

In *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, this promotion of domestic roles and the simultaneous rhetorical support given to Dilara to be a doctor may seem at first glance conflicting. Islamist discourse of the 1980s, however, at a rhetorical level involves assertions regarding the public roles of woman: ‘a woman can do anything she likes, including earning money. The money she earns belong to her alone.’ (see Dilipak and Hatemi ibid.) Furthermore, some occupations like doctor are especially claimed as positions that need to be acquired by women. This is caused by moral concerns since ‘women need women doctors’ in an Islamist framework.

What is salient in Islamism of the 1980s is the collective ideals that shape any individualistic or worldly demand. Accordingly, education and occupation were framed within a collectivist discourse of Islamism in a way that made them merely means for attaining greater Islamic ideals. Literary narratives construct gender positions in every detail within such a framework. As an outstanding example, Katırcı Turhal towards the end of her novel addresses young girls as such: “You, young girls... You will demolish idols of dowry. You should be bride of Islam, not bride of a piece of cloth. [Siz genç kızlar...çeyiz putlarını yıkacaksınız. Sizler bez parçasının değil, İslam’ın gelini olmalısınız]” (p. 151). One therefore has to become a ‘bride of Islam,’ ‘a mother of Islam’ and ‘a doctor of Islam’ to cure, as Islamism asserts, a morally degenerate society to pave the way for an ideal Islamic one.

Dilara and Cihan become ‘doctors for Islam’<sup>58</sup> via process of acquiring a collective Islamic consciousness. The construction of social identity, however, requires more than the mere adoption of particular religious idioms. As theorists of social identity point out, social identity is never unilateral. It is not enough, in other words, to assert an identity. It must also be validated or not by other actors at an intersubjective level. Identity formation always involves a dynamic between “how we have been represented and how that bears on how we represent ourselves” (Hall&Du Gay, 1996; 4). This suggests that identities are continually negotiated and challenged at an intersubjective level. Cihan who declares that ‘he believed,’ and Dilara who becomes a true believer with her Islamic veiling are now transformed into activists engaging in a struggle with their opponents in their process of constructing an identity.

### **Islamic Identity in the Path to Collective Salvation**

Dilara adopts Islamic veiling in Kayseri where she spent her summer holiday. “Difficult days” however begin for her when she decides to return to Ankara to get her diploma. She is made aware of this difficulty by thinking that “it was easy to live Islam here [in Kayseri], but now I will go to a different context. [burada çok kolaydı İslam’ı yaşamak ama şimdi bambaşka bir ortama gideceğim]” (p. 77). Negotiation of her Islamic identity takes place in a big city, Ankara. This signifies an important dimension of Islamist movements which represent the introduction of Muslim agency willing to exist in modern urban contexts and to participate in modern spaces. Accordingly, in contrast to several

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<sup>58</sup> The Muslim characters in salvation novels are often portrayed as doctors. Similarly, in intellectual Islamic writings of the 1980s, a Muslim who truly understand the message of Islam is defined as “doctor of humanity” (Ünal, 1986; 8). The analogy is striking in both political and literary Islamism in both of which Muslims are depicted as “doctors” that signify Islamists’ will to cure what they call the “morally degenerate society.”

Islamic village novels of the pre-1980 period, salvation novels of the 1980s narrate the struggle of Muslim characters in modern urban spaces. Large sections of the novels in this context are constituted by narratives spelling out the sorrowful stories of headscarved students who are not allowed to attend universities.<sup>59</sup> They narrate the tears and sufferings of Muslim characters, mostly headscarved girls, who are excluded from public life since the practices they perform and veiling they adopt are regarded as contrary to civilization. Dilara is expelled from the dormitory and is not allowed to receive her diploma in the graduation ceremony, while Cihan is sent into exile in another city accused of “struggling for sharia” (p. 203) on the other, typify such stigmatized Muslim characters.

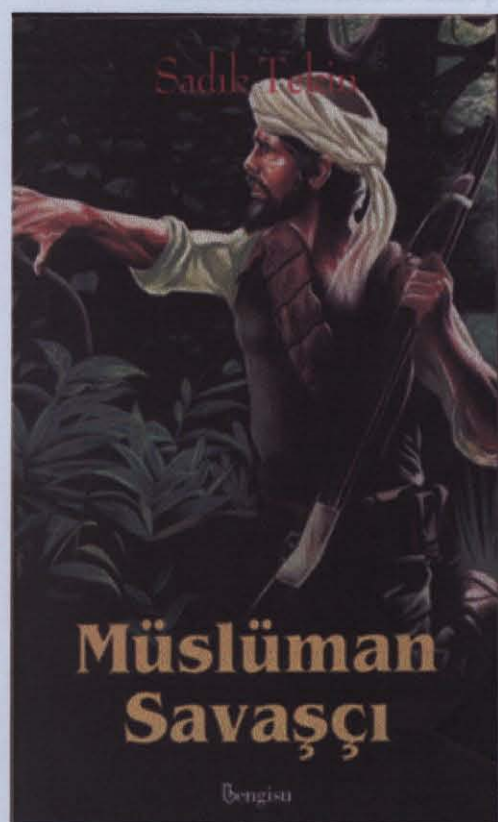
Islamist novelists challenge the stigmatizing representations of Islamic identity and develop a positive identity through self-stereotyping. The first dimension of self-stereotyping appears in the presentation of Muslims as victims. The titles of novels represent this situation: *Kurban* (Victim), *Özyurdunda Garipsin* (You are a Stranger in Your own Land), *Senin İçin Ağlayacağım* (I will Cry for You), *Şimdi Ağlamak Vakti* (Now It is Time to Cry), *Bacımın Gözyaşları Ne Zaman Dinecek* (When will the Tears of My Sister End), *Dinmeyen Gözyaşları* (Unceasing Tears), *Dokunmayın Bacıma* (Do not Touch My Sister), *İşitilmeyen Feryat* (Unheard Cry) etc. (See Figure 1 and 2).

Dilara is depicted as one of the victims of the age. She exemplifies Islamic identities who, as has been demonstrated by various ethnographic studies of the period, feel that they were not treated as “equal” under “secular-democracy” (see Navaro-Yashin, 2002 and Houston, 2001). Dilara, as one of

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<sup>59</sup> See especially Mehmet Zeren 1996.





**Figure 3** Sadık Tekin's *Müslüman Savaşçı*, a salvation novel of the 1980s (cover page)



**Figure 4** Mehmet Zeren's *Öz Yurdunda Garipsin*, a salvation novel narrating the stories of headscarved girls (cover page)

<sup>60</sup> Based on her fieldwork conducted between 1989 and 1991, Sakantopur similarly argues that the dichotomy between the public and private is a key feature of Muslim women's identity in their daily lives (Sakantopur, 2002).

these Muslim agents, is depicted as having little space to realize her potential since headcovering is banned not only in schools but also in all official institutions. The novelist portrays Muslim women in this context of stigmatization "as negroes in America or second class citizen due to the etiquette on their heads" (p. 101).

What is striking here is that Dilara, in the foreword of the novel, is introduced to readers as one of the thousands of girls with the same experience: "Dilara's disappointment as an honors degree student is lived and is still being lived by hundreds of thousands of girls in our country" (p. 6). Introducing their novels in a few pages, novelists often state that the 'current story narrates the experiences of many believers or many veiled girls.' In this sense Islamic novels are collective stories relaying a Muslim agent's story by narrativizing the experiences of the social category to which s/he belongs. Novels address Muslims by stating: 'this is your story and you are not alone.' Therefore they seek to emotionally bind Muslims who have the same experience so that they can overcome the sense of isolation and alienation of repressive secular life. As collective stories, to use Richardson's terms, Islamic novels link separate Muslim selves into a "shared consciousness" and provide the basis for "collective action" (Richardson 1990; 9).

Nevertheless, representation of collective Muslim identity does not remain at an apologetic level centred around a discourse of victimness. Muslim characters in salvation novels are turned into self-assertive personalities speaking with a language of pride backed by an Islamic collective idiom.<sup>60</sup> Dilara, as an 'awakened' and 'conscious' Muslim, begins to speak in a collective tone that

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<sup>60</sup> Based on her fieldwork conducted between 1989-1993 in Ankara on Muslim women, Saktanber similarly argues that the dichotomy between injury and pride shapes the definitive feature of Muslim women's identity in their daily narratives (see Saktanber, 2002).

endorses a politics of differentiation in her Ankara days. When she first encounters her classmates with her new identity, she could not decide whether to greet them in “their language” or as a “Muslim (Müslümanca).” Then she reminds herself:

No compromise Dilara. Either all or nothing...If you do not want to be a quasi-Muslim, then put Islam into practice completely. They spoiled Islam by discarding this and that aspect of it. Even your greeting is useless, if it is not in a manner proper to a Muslim... (p. 102)

**The original text:**

Taviz yok Dilara. Ya hep ya hiç...yarım Müslüman olmak istemiyorsan tam uygula İslam'ı. Zaten ondan kırparak, bundan kırparak kuşa çevirmişler İslam'ı. Selamın dahi Müslüman'ca olmazsa neye yarar...

Dilara, who decides to live Islam in every detail of her life, is made to engage in a discursive struggle with her friends and professors over the meaning of ‘being modern’ and the position of religion in a contemporary age. Her friends and professors are made to voice an oppositionary discourse that labels her Islamic veiling as “backward” or “not suitable for this age” (p. 103). Dilara, in discussion with one of her friends wearing a mini-skirts, questions the meaning of ‘contemporary’ (*çağdaş*) and asserts that “indeed your [her opponents] style of dress seems to belong to the Middle Ages” (p. 103). The authorial voice intervenes by declaring Dilara to be “more contemporaneous” than these “semi-naked” girls:

Since it was the fashion, a few years ago, once she [Dilara] wore a mini-skirt and put an overcoat on, nobody objected. What they did not like was the fact that she dressed up according to what God prescribed, but not the fact that she followed what fashion prescribed. Indeed, the modern age and things like that were simply excuses. If whether one is civilized is decided on the basis of dressing manners, then she would be more modern. This is because those who get out half-naked were simply imitating people whom

primary school books describe to be the people of the Stone Age...So, *are not those who walk around half-naked more backwards?* (p.98), (emphasis mine).

**the original text:**

Birkaç yıl önce, moda olduğu için, uzun pardesü ve içine mini etek giymişti de kimse sesini çıkarmamıştı. Onların sevmediği modanın değil de Allah'ın emrine göre giyinmesiydi. Yoksa çağ falan bahaneydi. Eğer medeniyet, çağlara göre giyilen kıyafetlere göre belirleniyorsa, kendisi daha çağdaştı. Çünkü şu anda yarı çıplak gezenler, ilk okul kitaplarında mağara devri diye tanıttıkları taş çağını taklit ediyorlardı...*öyleyse yarı çıplak gezenler, soyunanlar daha gerici değiller miydi?* (vurgu bana ait).

This passage exemplifies Islamists' endeavour not only to challenge secular narratives but also to make the terms of modernity and civilization their own. This aim necessarily brings Muslims into a contradictory situation with westernist agents since the meaning of these terms is determined by their previous context of use. Discursive struggle over the meaning of modernity stands as one important aspect of the construction of a collective Islamic identity. This is because identity as Whitebrook suggests "is primarily a matter of the stories people tell others about themselves, plus stories others tell those persons and/or other stories in which those persons are involved" (2001; 4). This suggests that Islamists through novels tell their stories to others and at the same time challenge the story of others in which Muslims are identified as non-modern. In this negotiation of identity, Muslims try to reconstruct past events in a new way. They tell new stories about the modernization process of Turkey and reinterpret events in ways that support the new narrative. What lies at the core of this reinterpretation is that Islam is not incompatible with the contemporary age. It is argued that it is secular conception of civilization and a loss of faith in Islam that brought about an underdeveloped and morally degenerate society.

This discourse is complemented by an assertive claim for authenticity that is also a common feature of Islamist movements. Dilara's complaints about her professors, who are depicted as "being similar to Middle Age's priests who were against science [tıpkı orta çağın bilime karşı papazları gibi]" (p. 101), is a mirror image of claims to authenticity:

"We would leave the West way behind us, if we ceased imitating the West and read the works of Muslim scholars. Why do we have no scholar who is respected around the world? Let me give you a few examples of your forefathers of whom you are embarrassed, so that you may acknowledge that I am right. It is Biruni, who is a Muslim scholar, who proved that the world revolves six hundred years before Galileo, and who counted the diameter of the world seven hundred years before Newton.

The person who drew the map of the moon for the first time is Ali Kuşçu, another Muslim scholar. It is Harzemi who has blazed a trail in Mathematics... Those who, for the first time, made cancer surgery and who discovered the cure of leprosy and that the plague is contagious are Muslim scholars... (p. 117).

**the original text:**

"Batıyı taklit etmekten vazgeçip de kendi İslam alimlerimizin kitaplarını okusaydık, batıyı çoktan geride bırakmıştık. Neden dünya çapında bir alim yetiştiremiyoruz? Sizin utandığınız atalarınızdan birkaç örnek vereyim de belki hak verirsiniz. Dünyanın döndüğünü Galile'den 600 yıl önce ispat eden, Newton'dan 700 sene önce dünyanın çapını hesaplayan bir İslam alimi Biruni'dir. Ayın ilk haritasını çıkaran Ali Kuşçu isimli Müslüman alimdir. Matematikte çığır açan Harzemi'dir.... İlk kanser ameliyatını, cüzzam tedavisini, vebanın bulaşıcı olduğunu bulan hep İslam alimleridir...

What is striking here is that in their claims to authenticity Islamist actors still compete with the West within a shared framework regarding science. Islamist actors invoke Islamic historical figures and present them as models for the present and the future. Islamic claims to authenticity, as Al-Ahmed notes, involves "references to past events" that imply that they are "repeatable" since they are still "somehow alive at the core of the invariant historical subject" (Al-

Azmeh, 1993; 56)<sup>61</sup>. This claim to authenticity characterizes the fundamentalist nature of Islamism that suggests that Islam's virtues derive from its fundamentals. The employment of authentic language provides Islamists with a sense of strength and pride as well as a 'firm ground' to challenge collectively the secular narratives of civilization.

The Islamic discourse on authenticity, therefore, endows "Muslims with a collective identity that works critically against both traditional subjugation of Muslim identity and monocivilizational impositions of Western modernity" (Göle, 2000; 93). Islamic subjects, along with their will to 'revive the past as a model for the present and the future,' question the boundaries of a secular/westernist project of modernity. In other words, Muslim actors challenge secular impositions and boundaries with their aspirations to attend modern institutions and urban spaces with their Islamic values, practices and outlook. Dilara in this sense represents a category of veiled girls who make their way into the spaces of modernity and strive to acquire a public visibility. She defiantly objects to her stigmatization and exclusion: "As if God does not exist in state buildings. If you are veiled, either you would stay at home or you would do lower grade jobs like being a doorkeeper or maidservant [Haşa, devletin binalarında sanki Allah yok...Örtülüysen ya evinde oturacaksın, ya da ayak işlerine bakacaksın, hizmetçilik, kapıcılık gibi...]" (p.101). Therefore what characterizes Islamic identity is not a withdrawal but a will to participate in the modern world collectively and critically (Göle, 2000; 98). Dilara is depicted as

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<sup>61</sup> Such claims to authenticity are so common to Islamic discourse of the 1980s that they also extend into the literary sphere. Accordingly it is claimed that the origin of Don Quixote belongs to Andalusian philosopher Seyyit Hamit bin Engeli. And Daniel Defoe pilfered the story of Robinson Crusoe from Hayy ibn-i Yakzan that was written long before Crusoe (*Yeni Şafak*, 28 July 2001).

one of those critical Muslim agents by the authorial voice, who warns her opponents that these Muslims will increase in numbers in the struggle for Islam:

They should know this well...Dilaras, Ayşes, Fatmas will increase in numbers. They will become legion...and the girls of this country, who were silent and did not see Islam's light, will awaken from their sleep one by one...(p. 147)

**the original text:**

Ama şunu iyi bilmeliler...Dilara'lar, Ayşe'ler, Fatma'lar çoğalacaktır. Onlar baskı uygulandıkça yoğunlaşacaklar, uyuyan, İslam'ın nurunu göremeyen bu memleketin kızları bir bir uyanacaklar asırlık gaflet uykusundan...

The author is so convinced in her claim that "pious girls will increase in number" that she argues that Islamic veiling and studying universities do not conflict. She conveys her message to young girls as such:

Veiling is one of God's definite commands. Seeking knowledge is also obligatory. Can a Muslim exercise discretion between these two commands of God? A Muslim should struggle to observe both of them, this is what *Jihad* is." (p.78).

**the original text:**

Örtü Allah'ın farz kıldığı emirlerdendir. İlim de farzdır. Müslüman Allah'ın emirlerinin arasında tercih yapabilir mi? O ikisini de yaşamak istemeli ve bu uğurda mücadele etmeli, işte bu cihat'dır" (p. 78).

And later she announces with a collective language that "... girls were resolute. They wanted to observe both of God's commands:

SCIENCE (İLİM) AND VEILING [...kızlar azimliydiler. Onlar Allah'ın her iki emrini de yaşamak istiyorlardı: İLİM VE TESETTÜR]" (p. 147).

This passage is indicative of Islamists' challenge toward the secular narratives of civilization that are accused of endorsing an inherent conflict between science and religion. Islamists ventriloquize the Kemalists conception

of civilization via professors who are depicted as secular civilizers,<sup>62</sup> engaging with them in a discursive struggle for a collective representation of Muslim agency. In rejecting the stigmatizing representations that secularists have of Muslims, conscious Muslim characters in novels argue that their beliefs and visibilities are not an obstacle to the study of *ilim*. Their preference for *ilim*, rather than *bilim* as the term for science signifies their intention to appropriate modern science in Islamic terms. The term *ilim* derives from Arabic and has Islamic connotations, in contrast to *bilim* that refers to modern secular science as adopted by secular circles. This term signifies Islamist agents' attempt to discredit secularism, the ideology of which aligns itself with faith in reason (Toprak, 1993; 247). What Islamists do, in other words, is to draw a limit to secular rationality in their search for a harmony between faith and science.

This example also illustrates that Islamic novels engage in struggle over every detail with secular idioms. Islamic novels in this sense are narratives of conflict. A narrative of conflict serves a double function for social movements: It allows the members of a social movement to identify an 'opponent,' while simultaneously aiding members to establish a shared identity and a sense of 'we-ness' among themselves (Steward et al., 2002; 125). Islamic novels as narratives of conflict serve both to identify 'opponents,' while their discourse of 'we-ness' plays a significant role in constructing ideological boundaries for the Islamic collective identity. The 'opponent' of Islamic identity, in various kinds of writings of Islamists, emerges as secular intellectuals—such as the professors of Dilara—and all those who “base their reflections on appeals to science and

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<sup>62</sup> One of the professors who takes a critical stance to veiled girls is made to talk as such: “[As I see these veiled girls] I say ‘let me gather these and give them a lecture on our religion... (bu başörtülülere gördükçe... diyorum, şunları bir toplayıp bir, dinimiz hakkında bir konferans vereyim...)’ (p. 113).



reason alone” by excluding the category of faith and suffer from the “symptomatic illness” of Westernization (Meeker, 1991; 192). “We-ness” or collective Muslim identity on the other hand is represented by conscious Muslim characters, as Dilara and Cihan, who reappropriate religion and revive it via the claim to authenticity and the universality of Islamic values.<sup>63</sup>

Conscious Islamic identities towards the end of novels are transformed into activists yearning for the Islamization of society, in compliance with the dominant discourse of the Islamism in the 1980s that carried the ideal of transforming society as a whole. In *Boşluk* Cihan is turned into an activist who gives lectures to the masses on Islam, modernity and other ideologies. This is a general strategy of Islamist authors, who towards the end of the novels depict Muslim protagonists as ‘conferencing characters’ to convey their messages more directly to readers. Similarly the authorial voice is heard more as omniscient narrators by the end of novels. Conversation disappears at the end of the novels and characters (authors) convey messages to people across several pages. The following is a passage from Cihan’s lecture titled ‘*Boşluk*’ in which he is made to talk about current youth that have fallen into “meaninglessness” because of “this de-civilized age.” After his diagnosis, he presents the solution:

If they tried a scientifically approved educational system which also respects religion, if respectable figures constructed ideas of nationality and fatherland, and if ruined foundations were replaced by new ones, then the youth would be a stronghold and would protect itself from anarchy.

Unfortunately, some young people, seeking to serve the country, are not even aware of the fact that they pursue the same cause as the betrayers, since they are unbelievers... Certainly, the youth, whose

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<sup>63</sup> In their presentation of collective identity, authors employ a hierarchical discourse. In *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, for instance, Turhal is not fair to professors who are made present to a ‘weak’ and ‘inconsistent’ situation in their discussion with Dilara. Muslim characters like Dilara, however, are always firm and consistent.

spiritual bonds are cut off, despise themselves...If we do not respect the religion and beliefs of this country's people... then we become destined to remain an unimportant society (pp. 286-287).

**the original text:**

"Eğer din bağı ile birlikte ilmi bir terbiye usulu denense, milliyet, vatan fikrini, makbul karakterler kursaydı, yıkılan temellerin yerine yenisi yapılsaydı, gençlik sarp bir kale olur, bütün fitnelerden benliğini korurdu...

Ne yazık ki, bazı gençler inançsız oldukları için, memlekete hizmet yolunda, hainlerle aynı safta bulunduklarının farkında bile değildir...Manevi bağları koparılan bir gençlik elbette kendini küçümser...bu ülkede halkın dinine ve inancına hürmet etmezsek...çürük bir cemiyet halinde kalmaya mahkum oluruz.

He continues to criticize Marxism as a "doctrine that led to world destruction (dünyayı hüsrana götüren doktrin)":

For Marx, there is no place for possessions...For Marx, religion is opium. For Marx, a housewife is an ornament with illness...For Marx, love for offspring does not exist...Before all else it was necessary to criticize religion in order to reform societies. He said, "Man created religion, and religion did not create man." Exterminating religion is a prerequisite in order for people to attain true happiness (p. 287).

**the original text:**

Marks için mülkiyet yoktur...Marks için din bir afyondur. Marks için aile kadını hastalıklı bir süstür...Marks için evlat sevgisi mevcut değildir...Her şeyden evvel cemiyetleri karıştırmak için dinin tenkidinden başlamalıydı. 'Dini insan yaratmıştır. Din, insanı değil' diyordu. Dinin imha edilmesi halkın gerçek saadetine icabıdır.

Günbay Yıldız—as one of first generation of novelists who experienced the political conflicts of the pre-1980 period between rightist and leftist groups—often directs his criticism towards Marxism in his novels. To this end, he presents a simplified and caricaturized interpretation of Marxism. What he takes as a measure for his criticism of Marx is again a religious vision of the world to which, he stresses, Marx was hostile. At the end of his speech, he warns youth

not to be 'seduced' by foreign ideologies (besides Marxism, Zionism is also often cited) but to rely on the true message of Islam. What is emphasized at the end of the novels therefore is that Islam is a solution to all malaises of the modern age. The problem, in other words, as enunciated by novelists is not Islam but de-Islamization in the name of modernity that led to the plight of the current society. In this regard Muslims should struggle to narrate to people the goodness of Islam. Messages of novels are encapsulated by the dominant motto of Islamists of the 1980s: "Peace is in Islam."

As with Cihan, Dilara also transforms into an activist aspiring to convey the message of Islam to people. What is common in both cases (and salvation novels of the period) is that Islam not only defines Islamic identity, but also constitutes the only way to salvation for everyone. Inflamed by such a preconception, Dilara, who begins to work as a pediatrician in a hospital, is not satisfied merely performing her occupation. She continually thinks of new ways to serve Islam and humanity. She begins to develop "ways of childraising according to Islam." (p. 138). This is because Dilara,

came to believe that every pediatrician must know the character of their [children's] soul in as much as they know how their bodies function. She understood that to cure their body was not sufficient, unless it is accompanied with filling up their spiritual void by addressing their souls (p. 138).

**the original text:**

Her çocuk doktorunun, bu küçük yaratıkların bedenlerini tanıdıkları kadar, ruh yapılarını da tanımasının gerekli olduğuna kanaat getirmişti. Çünkü manevi boşluklar dolmadan onların ruhuna hitap etmeden, bedene şifa vermenin yeterli olmayacağını kavramıştı.

And she begins to address to "empty souls" of children coming to hospital for their physical illness. She asks them:

--Tell me little kid, do you believe in God?

--Yes.

--Can we see Allah?

--No.

--Why?...No answer, this is because Allah has not been taught to and settled in the heart of this child.

**The original text:**

--Söyle bakalım küçük Allah'ın varlığına inanıyor musun?

--Evet.

--Allah'ı görebilir miyiz?

--Hayır.

--Neden? Cevap yok, çünkü çocuğa Allah tanıtılmamış, kalbine yerleştirilmemiş

Dilara explains the existence of Allah by using analogy of microbes

and goes on to narrate:

--Then where shall we learn about our creator?

--No answer.

--From Qoran that Allah sent us, from nature and our Prophet...

--Now, will you promise me that you will take medicine I will prescribe for you and learn that book [Qor'an]? (p. 139).

**the original text:**

--Pekala nereden tanıyacağız yaradanı?

--Cevap yok.

--Allah'ın bize gönderdiği kitap Kur'an'dan, tabiatı ve Peygamberimizden...

--Şimdi sana yazacağım ilaçları içeceğine söz verdiğin gibi o kitabı da öğreneceğine söz verir misin?

Dilara's enthusiasm to explain Islam to her patients exemplifies the socially committed and authoritarian position of Islamists who think that Islam should permeate every sphere of life. In other words, they know the 'good life' and impose it on others. According to this vision of the 'good life' it is necessary to live Islam in every detail and to indoctrinate it to youth since "... the children, who have grown uninformed about Islam, would become either anarchists or form masses of people who had no interests except eating and drinking ...[Islam'dan habersiz yetişen çocuklar ileride ya anarşist ya da yiyip içmekten

başka marifeti olmayan insan yığınlarını meydana getiriyordu] (p. 140).

Therefore precisely as these novels do, it is claimed that the Islamic message, in every instance, should be conveyed to humanity.

In the dominant Islamic discourse of the 1980s, Islam is seen as the basis of every social act, social relation, vocation and imagination. Islamists are firm in their assertion that 'they have the solution.' This is also valid for Islamist novelists. As one of them states: "Many philosophers, writers and thinkers searched for the answers to questions such as 'where do we come from? Why are we living? And where are we going?' We have found the answers of these questions...We are narrating these in our novels" (*Radikal*, 1997, 6 November). The answer clearly is spelled out by another novelist: "It is Islam that determines the only true and perfect way of life" (ibid.).

Islamic novels narrate the realization of this 'true way of life' through privileged dominant voice of novelists, as third person commentators. Islamist authors have a clear 'authority' over the meaning of what has been written. In this regard, Islamic novels are what Kristeva calls "bounded texts" (Kristeva, 1980). This is to say that before Islamist novelists put pen to paper and set down the first word, they know what the last word will be and almost where the last word will fall. And in their last words, Islamist novelists of the period share a common discourse.

All salvation novels conclude with similar scenes in which not only westernized characters (like Cihan and Dilara) but also their close circles (fathers, mothers, and friends) are blessed with the true message of Islam. These characters (for instance, the fathers of both Cihan and Dilara) are made to immediately question their beliefs as a result of their interaction with Muslim

protagonists and adopt Islamic idioms. These novels are identified in Islamic circles as 'salvation novels' signifying the fact that the novelists lead all characters toward a fixed happy ending, or salvation. Collective salvation signifies Islamists' aspiration for a holistic transformation of society. Another dimension of these happy endings is the message that salvation, being Muslim and living an Islamic way of life brings peace and happiness to new convert protagonists. Accordingly, at the end of *Boşluk* and *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var*, Cihan meets the pious character Ebru who had rejected her proposal before and marries her, whereas Dilara on the other hand is rewarded by going to Mecca during *hac* as a doctor where she receives a marriage proposal from İbrahim.

The marriages at the end of novels, however, are not only depicted as scenes in which individual characters receive happiness. Rather, novelists emphasize that they are 'ideological marriages' in the service for collective salvation. Dilara for instance thanks God when she receives her marriage proposal and thinks that:

O my God thank be to you, please make our marriage good for Islam. You granted me a companion of life, who will accompany me during my struggle for your cause. Let this house, which is being established, be a source for generations of hope, which will grow. Let Mus'abs and Zaynabs grow out (p. 156).

**the original text:**

Şükürler sana Allah'ım...nikahımızı İslam için hayırlı et. Senin yolunda edeceğim mücadelede bana bir hayat arkadaşı nasip ettin. Kurulacak bu yuva, yetişecek ümit nesline ocak olsun...Mus'ablar, Zeynepeler yetişsin.

This representation of Dilara's marriage encapsulates the dominant Islamist vision of the world in which love and marriage do not simply refer to a relationship between two persons but are conceived of as a reflection of

ideological commitment to religion.<sup>64</sup> What is emphasized is that Islamic collective ideals that should be prioritized over individual desires and taken as the measure in constructing every aspect of life.

Islamic novels in this regard are closed texts with identical narrative closures. Narrative closure is one of the most significant elements of narrative through which “the events of the story become fully intelligible to the reader” (Belsey cited by Webster, 1990; 55). By their very form, all narratives involve a conclusion. The nature of the ending however varies from apparently ‘open’ to unresolved or ambiguous closure. The ideological dimension of Islamic novels in this sense is once more displayed by their overt narrative closure in which collective salvation is achieved. The common closure of novels signifies the ‘completion’ which Islamism as an ideological system of thought aspires to have. In sum, the narrative closure of Islamic novels mirrors the Islamic ideal of the collective transformation of society.

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<sup>64</sup> As another example, in *Müslüman Savaşçı*, protagonists who in the last scene marry are depicted as such: “They were happy but they were aware that they were not born for such a happiness. They knew that this world was an examination. They would be in constant fight with Satan and the friends of Satan” (Tekin, 1998; 197).

## CHAPTER IV

### SALVATION NOVELS IN THE PATH TO COLLECTIVE ISLAMIC SUBJECTIVITY

Islamic salvation novels of the 1980s, with their main plot revolving around Islamic and westernized visions of the world represented by Islamic and secularist/westernized characters in the contemporary relational context of Turkey signify a new arena for cultural politics of Islamism. Islamist writers via these novels challenge the modernization process of the Republican period that, in their words, led to the negative stigmatization and exclusion of Muslim agents at the same time as it paved the way for the rise of a 'materialistic,' 'immoral' and 'degenerate' civilization. The salvation novel, in this regard as a new genre rising in the 1980s, represents the questioning of secular narratives of Kemalist modernization through a literary medium.<sup>65</sup>

Whitebrook suggests that not only persons but also political bodies or regimes construct narratives to order and explain themselves. Order for both persons and political regimes depends upon telling a coherent story. Any political order, in this sense, needs to tell a "compelling story" to convince the "readers" and to establish its identity. The legitimacy of political order is provided by this "storytelling." To ensure a valid legitimacy, the story must be credible and listeners should understand the connection of events in the story (Whitebrook, 2001; 135-40). Viewed this way, the political language of the Kemalist project of modernity can be reconsidered in narrative terms. The

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<sup>65</sup> For an interpretation of the official sources of Kemalism see Parla 1991 and 1992.



framing device of the dominant secular narrative of civilization is formed around a conflict between modern Western and Islamic values. What this dominant narrative promotes is that only through the adoption of Western values would the country reach the level of contemporary civilization. On the way to modern civilization, Islamic values were recounted a retrograde force that must be left behind. In other words, the narrative of the secular political regime of Turkey assigned a 'threatening' role to the public assertion of Islam that must always be kept under control.

The rise of Islamist movements in the 1980s and their challenge to the project of modernization reveal that the secular-democratic political regime of Turkey could not anymore sustain a mutually understandable and credible narrative for some of its Muslim subjects.<sup>66</sup> In this context, the appearance of Islamic novels, as a site of struggle over the definition of civilization and Islam, can be apprehended as act of telling new stories by Islamist subjects based on their criticism of the hegemonic secular narratives of civilization. What Islamist novelists aspire for, then, is a renarrativization of the process of civilization. They do so by situating their narratives within the larger narrative of civilization and by attempting to renarrativize the past and present of Turkey, as well as the political context in which they live.

Islamist novelists, then, to use MacIntyre's words, give historicity and relationality to their narratives while seeking to order and impose a new pattern on events. Islamic novel, in this sense, emerged as a new way for Islamists to make sense of themselves and the world. Islamist novelists aimed not only to

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<sup>66</sup> During the 1980s not only Islamists but also feminists and Kurds began to voice their discontent with the consequences of the Kemalist project of modernity. The rise of critical voices reveals that the discrepancy between stories told by the regime and stories by several groups increased in this period (see Arat 2000 and Kasaba, 1997).

cope with negative representations of Muslim identities but also present new ways of being Muslim on the basis of representative ideal Islamic characters. The novel, in other words, was employed by Islamists as a discursive strategy not only to combat the negative effects that, they believe, are produced by secular narratives but also to imagine and form new social relations, gender rôles and emotions.

### **The Quest for a New Repertoire of Action and Emotion for Islamists through the Novel**

On the basis of their promotion of ideal Muslim identities, it can be argued that Islamic narratives do not only organize the symbolic fabric of social life around the negotiation of Islamic and Western lifestyles, but are also formative of identities, social relations, gender roles and emotions. The Islamic identities promoted by fictional narratives signify the endeavour of Islamists to form new (young) Muslim subjects which “have been excluded from modernist definitions of civilization and history making” (Göle, 1996; 26). Novel writing, in novelists’ words, is construed as an important means to provide the young generation with knowledge and orientation, so they might be able to play an active role in the making of history. Günbay Yıldız, who says that he writes his novel for youngsters, stresses that “[this is] because they need to be raised decent and honest. This is because signposts in this society have been removed and youngsters are running to a tragic end through roads without signs. I am trying to demonstrate the places of removed signposts” (*Radikal*, November 6, 1997). The analogy of revealing signposts in this quote is reminiscent of the title of Sayyid Qutb, *Yoldaki İşaretler* (*The Signs on the Road*), as one the most influential

books on Muslim youth of the 1980s. This analogy is also indicative of the assertive claims of Islamists who posit that they know 'the truth' which does not need any claim to legitimacy. Literary narratives, in this vein, appear as a means to convey this 'absolute truth,' i.e. the Islamic vision of the world, to the young generation in order to lead the whole of humanity to the 'true path of Islam.'

Several writings in Islamic and non-Islamic journals demonstrate that Islamic novels do in fact resonate with their 'implied readers,' i.e., Muslim youth. According to a survey, these salvation novels are widely read by students of Koran courses, *imam hatip* (religious high) schools and partly by university youth (Şişman, 2001; 66). Fatma Karabıyık Barbarosoğlu, an Islamist novelist-sociologist conducting this survey, notes that these novels are especially widely read among girls. Students revealed that these novels were given to them by their fathers and brothers. Barbarosoğlu contends that Islamic novels present those girls living in enclosed circles with an important "public sphere experience" (ibid.; 66). This suggests that through novels young readers come across characters that they would never be in contact with otherwise and internalize the answers developed by Islamist protagonists on certain controversial issues. In this sense salvation novels, through their easily-read popular forms, function as educational material as much as artistic products. This also conforms to the perception of literature by novelists themselves who constantly state that their aim is to convey Islamic messages via novels. The authorial intervention that becomes explicit at the end of novels, as exemplified in *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var* and *Boşluk* serves directly to provide young readers with schematic answers regarding the position of women, polygamy in Islam, 'foreign ideologies' like Marxism, and the mission of Muslim youth. Islamic novels in other words

present “mass production dialogues on potentially conflictual subjects” (ibid.; 60).

By narrativizing the experiences of a social identity to which Muslim youth belong, Islamic novels tell them that ‘they are not alone.’ Thus literary narratives serve as an important means of communication within a social category, i.e. Islamic circles. Literary communication, as McDuffie notes “is achieved not through a face-to-face relationship between author and beholder, but over spatiotemporal distance, through intermediary text” (McDuffie, 1998; 102). Therefore Islamic novels can be understood as intermediary texts linking Muslim subjects living in different parts of Turkey (and the world) over spatiotemporal distance. They emotionally bind people who have similar experiences and face similar problems.

Literature for Muslim subjects, in the sense Nussbaum uses the term “is an extension of life not only horizontally, bringing the reader into contact with events, or locations or problems he or she has not otherwise met, but also...vertically, giving the reader experience that is deeper, sharper, and more precise than much of what takes place in life” (Nussbaum, 1992; 48). In their function of linking Muslims horizontally and vertically, novels not only provide them with prearranged answers to which they can give their assent, but also evoke certain emotions. Emotions, as Nussbaum notes,

“are not feelings that well up in some natural and untutored way from our natural selves...they are in fact, not personal and natural at all...they are, instead, contrivances, social constructs. We learn how to feel, we learn our emotional repertoire. We learn our emotions in the same way that we learn our beliefs—from our society. But

emotions, unlike many of our believers, are not taught to us directly through propositional claims about the world, either abstract or concrete. They are taught, above all, through stories" (Nussbaum, 1992; 287).

Therefore Islamic novels can be taken as one of the important sources in the construction of the emotional repertoire of Islamism. This is because novels speak about Muslims, their lives, choices and emotions within a web of social relations in a secular context. They represent the emotions of 'conscious Muslims,' their feelings of being victimized and excluded. Yet more important than this Islamic narratives aim to evoke certain emotions in the reader. In other words, they not only record emotions that are claimed to be experienced by a social category of Muslims but also serve to construct and promote an emotional strategy that paves the way for the rise of an assertive Islamic identity. In the face of problems Muslims experience within a secular context, Islamist novelists tell Muslim youth through narratives that 'you should not make concessions,' 'you should keep on your struggle in the way of Islam,' 'all goodness lies in Islam and Islamic way of life,' and 'you should have a feeling of pride since you will be the winner at the end.' Based on such premises Islamic novels teach not only forms of life but also forms of feeling.

In stirring up feelings of pride and (expected) success, novelists regularly assert that the stories of salvation novels are lived not by individual characters but by many actors sharing the same collective experiences. Islamic novels give readers the sense that Muslim characters live similar experiences to them and vice versa. Therefore they insistently and consistently aim to confirm Muslims'

sense of collective identity. In all novels of the period actors that are made to acquire an Islamic consciousness are transformed into collective actors speaking with a language of “we” in a way that overcomes feeling of isolation in the current order and links Muslim actors into a shared consciousness for collective action. Collective representations serve as ‘scaffolding’ for Islamists to construct a positive collective Islamic identity. One of the major framing devices in constructing positive identity is the emphasis put on collective ideals in transforming the society as a whole. To achieve this end, all Muslim actors are required to give up their worldly pleasures for the sake of this collective ideal. Novelists legitimize this situation by often resorting to Koranic verses and sayings of the Prophet to stress that ‘this is what Islam dictates.’

The construction of a discourse around the dictates of Islam through religious texts has sometimes been interpreted in a way that paves the road to essentialist understanding of Islamism, and thus overlooks emerging Muslim subjectivities. Based upon Islamist novelists’ frequent references to ‘God’s laws’ or ‘divine law’ to construct Muslim identity and Islamic order, Dilek Doltaş, for instance, argues that “political Islamist novelists search for neither an identity nor a cultural background. What they search for is the characteristics of an identity and culture of an imaginative ideal society (that they call *Asr-ı saadet*, age of happiness)...on the basis of the dictates of fundamentalist Islam” (Doltaş, 2001; 23). This interpretation is indicative of essentialist accounts of Islamism that attributes the Islamist social movements an everlasting fixed political language and practice by which Muslim selves are determined. Such an approach interprets Islamists’ recourse to textual sources, as in the case of Islamic novels, in a way that implies that “Muslims do not reimagine and rearticulate what it

means to be a Muslim in rapidly developing societies but only *act on* fixed Islamic principles” (Yavuz, 2003; 16). Therefore this approach is blind to the issue of agency since it apprehends Islam as a system of belief that leaves no autonomy for subjectivity.

How can then Islamists’ invoking of Divine law (*seriat*) to give sense of a Muslim self and notions of subjectivity be correlated? In other words, if “becoming an Islamist involves a consciously willed conformity to a law formulated outside oneself” (Houston, 2004; 31), how can the notion of subjectivity apply to an Islamist? Put it differently, how can a Muslim subjectivity arise in the context of Islamist politics which aspires to introduce religious law whose basic precepts are claimed to be bestowed by God? Searching for the space of autonomy where Muslim subjectivity lies, Houston draws attention to the nature of Sharia’ which, for Muslims, besides its undebatable basic precepts, involves revisable concepts that allow for continuous reinterpretation. This suggests that Divine law is not only constituted by divine texts but also involves “humanly produced and elaborated sharia’.” In other words, it is the “unfinished character of sharia jurisprudence” and the acceptance of its mutability by human legal innovation that open up a space for a new reinterpretation of Islam (Houston, 2004; 33). Islamism in this respect signifies a rearticulation of Islam by new actors of Islamism in the 1980s. God’s laws, as Islamist novelists refer to, are specific interpretations of Islamic laws by new Muslim subjectivities in the context of the 1980s. Islamic novels that arised synchronously with Islamist movements provided Islamists with an important space for a new interpretation of Islam and a certain way of Islamic life. Therefore Islamic literary narratives signify new Muslim agencies who

voluntarily reinterpret Islam, differentiate themselves from traditional Muslims and challenge the secular narratives of Kemalist modernization in Turkey.

Literary Islamism represents the construction of new stories based upon the reimagination of Muslim subjectivity. The rarity of “I” and the ubiquity of “we” in Islamic novels, however, signify that it was a collective subjectivity that paved the way for a collective Islamist movement with its stress on collective harmony and collective ideals that disregarded any internal conflict among the members of the movement.

Islamic novels can, therefore, be taken as a vital means in the construction of a ‘frame’ through which Islamist movement and its collective identity has been shaped. I use the term frame here in the Goffmanian sense of something that facilitates the interpretation of experiences by ascribing their meaning and enabling individuals to perceive, identify, locate and organize such experiences (Goffman, 1986). Frames are crucial for social movements since they provide participants with shared interpretive schemata to make sense of themselves and the world. And narratives are the key mechanisms through which frames are produced and identities forged (Steward et.al. 2002). Islamic salvation novels, in this sense, are narratives that provide Islamists with a shared frame for the construction of Islamic identity and for the alignment of Islamists with the movement and other participants. More concretely, the frame promoted by Islamic narratives in the 1980s provided Islamists with easy and clear schematic answers of ‘what is good,’ ‘what has been done’ and ‘what ought to be done.’ It can be said that in the context of the 1980s in which Islamist intellectual and political actors constructed a sharp oppositionary discourse with their claim for the collective enforcement of public morals, Islamic novels with their didactic



forms contributed to the formation and propagation of a certain Islamic vision of the world.

The distinction made between political Islam and cultural Islam has often been employed as an explanatory tool for understanding the complex nature of Islamist movements (Göle, 1991). The political in this distinction refers to Islamist movements that are focused on attaining political power (the state), often utilizing an oppositionary discourse. Cultural Islam on the other hand signifies a different vision of certain Islamist groups endeavouring for the Islamization of daily life. In other words, while political Islam represents a top-down will to vertically Islamicize the whole society, cultural Islam, which does not revolve around an overt political language, aims to transform social relations horizontally. With reference to this distinction, Islamic novels have sometimes been located on the side of cultural Islam. It was asserted that Islamic novels, with their message-conveying narratives for the Islamization of daily life, signified the voice of cultural Islam (see Yılmaz, 2000).

This interpretation says little about the nature of cultural Islam as promoted by literary narratives, while it also understates ‘the political’ as inherent component of Islamic novels. I would argue by contrast that the politics of literary Islamism displays a close parallelism with the dominant political discourse of Islamism. The construction of the main plot in Islamic novels around the negotiation of Islamic and Western visions of the world is reminiscent of the language employed by Islamist political actors in political scene of the 1980s. Necmettin Erbakan, for instance as leader of the pro-Islamic Refah party, stated that “the history of mankind is the struggle between two civilizations: one (Western civilization) which prefers ‘power’ and the other

(Islamic civilization) which prefers the 'right.'" Within this line of thinking, it was asserted that all other worldly systems will eventually fade away, leaving the space for the Just Order (*Adil Düzen*) (Erbakan, 1991; 16-18). With regard to the representation of the westernized life style, what is salient in all Islamic narratives is their authoritarian organization that gave priority to an Islamic way of life as the only dominant voice. The authors' overarching concern was to construct a discursive hierarchy with the narrators' (Islamists') discourse at the top speaking the language of unproblematic truth. Accordingly collective Muslim subjectivities of the 1980s engaged in relations with their opponents monologically rather than dialogically in the Bakhtinian sense. Thus, Islamic literary narratives gave voice to, what we might call, a collective and monologic Islamism that denied that there existed outside of it other consciousnesses or equal subjectivities, with the same rights and equal decisive force. Islamic literary discourse signified monologic Islamism that in an authoritarian fashion aimed to reconcile all differences and put the 'final word' to the narrative.

In sum, in the 1980s monologic interpretation of Islamism, promoted by Islamic literary narratives, the current order was marked with the 'malaise' of westernization that brought about a morally degenerate society. The only medicine to this 'malaise' was Islam. An Islamic way of life was totally separate from and incompatible with other (secular, materialist, individualist) ways of life. The former was presented as 'true' while the latter was absolutely 'not true.' All solutions and peace was claimed to be found in Islam and this had to be manifested by uncompromisingly practicing an Islamic way of life: by wearing the headscarf, performing prayers, and promoting morally appropriate behaviour in private and public life. Muslims had to save themselves from corrupting

spaces and relations. As actors possessing knowledge of true ‘goodness,’ Muslims had to endeavour to ‘illuminate’ people with the light of Islam. These others who were deemed wretched had no choice but in the end to adopt the true path of Islam. A wholistic salvation or the imaginary creation of an Islamic society marked by a re-moralization of public life was inevitable, leading to a closure in which humanity lives ‘paradise on earth’.

### **Critique of Salvation Novels within Islamism**

Concurrently with the rise of Islamism in the 1980s, various academic and journalistic circles scrutinized and sought to understand veiled girls, Islamic journals, or Islamic intellectuals. Notwithstanding this intense interrogation, the Islamic literary sphere and literary discourse were rarely debated outside of Islamic circles. Indeed by the end of the 1980s it was Islamists themselves who began to raise criticisms about the narrative and aesthetic value of Islamic salvation novels.

For example, one academic from Islamic circles, M.Emin Ağar identified salvation novels as a “green series” (*yeşil dizi*), connoting the Islamic nature of novels with ‘green’ and aesthetically unsophisticated narratives of Islamic novels with the term ‘series.’ In *Suffe Yıllığı*, a literary almanac of Islamic circles, Ağar pointed out that one of the problems in Turkish literature was series (*dizi romanlar*) with their unsophisticated narratives. He went on to say that,

“These series are named according to colours like a pink series, white series, yellow series that bear no literary concern. We can collect a great part of the novels published as Islamic novels in our milieu under such a series. We can call this new series a green series.

The novels that we can include in this series do not bear any artistic or literary concern. They narrate the lives of people who, while initially living an indecent life, begin immediately to live a true Islamic life along with coincidences one can hardly find in fairy tales (*binbir gece maslları*). On the other hand, many are quickly written drawing on the *exaggeration of the news in dailies*. Indeed most headscarf novels are this kind of book. Üstün İnanc's book entitled *Yalnız Değilsiniz*, Mehmet Zeren's books of *Öz Yurdunda Garipsin I-II*, are novels that quickly novelized the news in dailies" (Ağar, 1987-8; 75) (emphasis original).

Similarly, Miyasoğlu, an Islamist novelist, accused salvation novels as "clumsily written" handling the issues of salvation or the need for faith in an awkward fashion. He argues that "with these novels neither novel nor religious thought could thrive" (Miyasoğlu, 1999; 101). These critiques, which at first glance seem only to focus on the literary value of Islamic novels, extend beyond the aesthetic sphere to include the ways these novels represent Muslim characters. A basic criticism of their depiction of Muslim characters dwelled on their equation between Muslims and the lower classes along with an apologetic language appropriate for them. It was asserted that the language used in Islamic novels correlated with an "arabesque discourse" mirroring the grievances and dreams of new migrants or of rural originated people living on the skirts of the cities (*Kitap Dergisi*, no.28; 1989). Islamic novels were criticized on the basis that they represented Muslims in "a subordinate position" (Miyasoğlu, 1999; 224) with their feelings of subordination as a result of their "non-adaptation to

the city” framed with an “Islamic arabesque language” (*Kitap Dergisi*, no.28; 1989).

This critique might be socially accurate, as it appears that the Islamic novels of the 1980s vivify the experiences of the new actors of Islamism who (not only in Turkey but also in other Muslim countries) come from recently urbanized social groups.<sup>67</sup> However towards the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s Islamists began to take critical objection to representations of Muslims as subordinate agents belonging only to the lower classes. This suggests that the Islamic narratives of the 1980s included aspects of a collected identity with which the generation of Islamic actors in the 1990s could not easily accommodate to their own stories of identity. This is mainly because the new generation of Islamists are no longer newcomers, but have modern professions and public roles as doctors, engineers, mayors, TV and radio speakers, businessmen and businesswomen. Islamists in the 1990s have formed a middle class and have created their own counter-public spaces like hotels, cinema saloons, TVs, radios and beauty parlors. Accordingly Islamism is not anymore a marginal ideology but one which has acquired an electoral success in local and general elections. In this decade, salvation novels have not sold as well as they did in the 1980s. Indeed some publishers in Islamic circles have announced “the death of the ideological books.” These books include not only salvation novels but all “ideological books,” “books on the Iranian revolution,” and by “radicals [the books of radical thinkers].” Publishers note that what is sold are books that “attack no one” and books on “personal entrepreneurship and development”

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<sup>67</sup> Göle argues that the new actors’ process of becoming Islamist follow a common pattern in that they generally move from small provinces to big cities where during their high school or university education they encounter the works of contemporary Islamist thinkers (Göle, 2000; 95).

(Aksiyon, [com.tr/227/pages/dosyalar/dos2/htm](http://com.tr/227/pages/dosyalar/dos2/htm)). The new books of Islamic actors also involve self-questioning novels focusing on the critique of the ideals and narratives of the previous decade. In sum, the 1990s has paved the way for novel(istic) understanding of Islamism. I will now turn to this development.

## CHAPTER V

### NEW NOVELS of the 1990s: A PATH TO MUSLIM SUBJECTIVITY

#### Islamism and Islamist actors in the context of the 1990s

The salvation novels of the 1980s issued a challenge to secular narratives of modernization/westernization in Turkey. Islamic novels deconstructed and reconstructed this narrativized process of civilization. In their deconstruction, Islamists developed schematic narratives in which the current order and 'its other' (typified by 'secular/modern' subjects) were represented as products of the 'malaise' of Westernization. Islam, on the other hand, was reinterpreted and presented as the source of all goodness and the only remedy to the 'degeneracy' brought about by secular modernization. Islamic narratives were based on a dualist vision of the world in which Islamic subjects were fated to be in constant struggle with secularist values and identities. Such a perception of the world led to a collective representation of Islamic subjects in contradistinction to a similar homogenization of monolithic secular identity. In other words, the Islamic literary narratives of the 1980s promoted a counter collective Islamic identity acting with singular motives moving toward a fixed goal, represented by a will for a holistic transformation (Islamization) of society. Accordingly the collective Islamism of the 1980s conceived of Islamic identity in group terms and spoke with a language of "we" in a way that depersonified and stereotyped distinct Muslim selves or individual characteristics.

This collective representation of Islam led to a particular understanding of an Islam(ic way of life), presented as distinct from and incompatible with the

hegemonic secular vision of the world. In keeping with this radical and exclusionary discourse – in which Muslim actors were oppositionary rather than self-reflexive, and focused on future revolutionary ideals more than the present – differences within this constructed Islamist collective self were not problematized. Rather, Islamic identity was presented as homogenous, overlooking internal divisions on gender, ethnic and national lines. Within this frame men and women, for instance, were defined according to their supposed complementary functions in a way that stressed harmony and interdependence not conflict. Collective Islamism of the 1980s then defined individual identity as congruent with collective identity and ideals. Collective ideals in this decade overshadowed both individual differences.

Nevertheless, despite its oppositionary nature, what characterized Islamism was not a withdrawal from modern life but a collective will to participate in it. In literary narratives of the 1980s Muslim youth, male and female, were encouraged to attend universities and acquire modern professions so as to become ‘conscious’ and pious mothers, doctors and teachers who would transform society in the name of Islam. The 1980s witnessed the proliferation of Islamist youth in university campuses symbolized by their distinctive body politics, pursued through the headscarf or the Muslim beard. Although the headscarf was banned in Turkish universities, this censure was not always nationally applied until late 1990s. Thus many Islamic youth attended university despite ongoing constraints and exclusion.

As the 1980s passed into the 1990s, Islamist actors acquired modern professions by skillfully utilizing, to use Mardin’s term, the “opportunity space” (1980) in educational institutions opened up by the secular Republic (see Göle,



1992; 137-8). As this movement gathered momentum, Islamic actors became increasingly visible in newly founded pro-Islamic TV and radios stations or various (Islamic or secular) private enterprises. Muslim women, organized around new civic initiatives or platforms, participated in national and international women's conferences (see, Şişman, 1996). Islamic actors formed various associations to foster their interests in business circles (e.g. Müsiad) or working life (e.g. Hak-İş). In sum, Islamist groups began to form their own middle class, urban actors and professionals capable of using both secular and Islamic idioms.

In the process of forming an intimately connected but simultaneously rival economy (from high quality and expensive pre-school and childcare centres to cafes and popular music) male Islamists were able to become active in public life and the labour market rather 'less painfully' than headscarved women, cutting their beards and wearing cravats while being employed in Islamic and 'other' companies. Professionalization and the capitalist organization of work facilitated a challenge to earlier collective ideals and definitions of Islam. Frequenting new spaces and performing new jobs has led to internal conflicts for many male actors of Islamism. These conflicts were sometimes publicly shared in Islamic journals and dailies. For instance, an Islamist journalist-humorist, Hasan Kaçan, commented on his conflict as such:

A Muslim is a human being who, as the night does, hides ugly things, and as the sun does illuminates beautiful things<sup>68</sup> But how can we do this? Let's say, for example, you are a journalist. Journalism involves interpretation as well as objective reportage. It is what we do. But what is the thing we interpret? All we do is to seek after the hidden agenda [*çapanoğlu*] behind newspapers and television

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<sup>68</sup> This refers to a saying of the Prophet whose application is supposed to characterize a Muslim. In Turkish, it says that "Müslüman çirkinlikleri gece gibi örten, güzellikleri gündüz gibi aydınlatan insandır."

channels. We are no longer aware of beautiful things. I feel this contradiction on my part. How can a Muslim journalist hide ugly things as the night does, and illuminate beautiful things as does the sun? (*Yeni Şafak*, June 28, 1997).

Similarly Cafer Karaduman, a businessman organizing Islamic fashion shows, replied to Islamist critiques of the incongruity of Islamic veiling with fashion by saying: "Shall I defend something which is prohibited [*haram*]? Of course I know that employing female models in fashion shows is a sin. I am also unable to come up with a satisfactory explanation for the things we have done. Nevertheless, there are many events which Muslims are unable to explain satisfactorily" (*Yeni Şafak*, June 28, 1997). These two accounts might be seen as indicative of the internal conflicts of Islamist actors in the 1990s attempting to combine Islamic ideals, Muslim identities and modern professions. They are also representative of the ability of Islamic actors to live with and accommodate seemingly contradicting values and life choices in an Islamic frame.

For female actors of Islamism, Islamism as a social and economic movement provided women with a vehicle to assert their autonomy and build social networks outside the home, despite that movement's rhetoric of domesticity and conservatism (Arat, 1990; 21). Accordingly the demands of Islamist women (once graduated from school or university) also began to revolve around transformed practices of work. The complaint of "victims" of the previous decade, 'I want to attend university with my headscarf' turned into a more self-assertive statement: 'I want to practice my job as a doctor or a lawyer' wearing my scarf (Çayır, 2000; 51). However, Islamist women also experienced bitter conflicts between their professional desires and assigned roles as keepers of Islamic morality framed by the headcovering that prevented their access to the

non-Islamic labour market. Women Islamists felt that they were squeezed between their education, the 'real life' discrimination of the republic and gendered roles and duties still expected by their husbands or families. The difficulties in developing coherent narratives of identity embodying both their domestic and public roles became a prominent theme in Islamist womens' discourse. A university graduate who works at home depicts her situation as such:

If I said I was a university graduate and I have five kids, they would ask which of them I was proud of. If I had said directly that I was a housewife, I would have the feeling that I was nothing else during the times I did not do housework. If I had added that I am a teacher, I would think with regret 'what is the use of saying this' since I could not answer the questions of 'where my students and school are.' I usually say that I am at home and I have children. However, the answer is always hard for me (*İzlenim*, September, 1996).

Similar to Islamic males, but differently as well given the gendered nature of earlier Islamist discourse, veiled women in the 90s appeared to feel themselves squeezed between the collective and oppositionary definitions of Islamism promoted in the 1980s and individual desires to participate more actively in the public sphere. As one Islamist writer commented, when Islamist women voiced their will to work outside and attend public spaces they converged with feminist discourse; on the other hand when they stayed at home, they approached 'ordinary' women (Barbarosoğlu, 1996; 23). This was because male and female actors of Islamism voiced an oppositionary discourse that posited that Muslim women would both be different from feminists and traditional women. As in the case of *Müslüman Kadının Adı Var* of Katircı Turhal mentioned in the third chapter, they radically homogenized and accused of feminists as they disregarded their maternal roles in the name of working outside. Muslim women also aimed to differentiate themselves from their

‘unconscious’ traditional mothers. Nevertheless, as the above quotation indicates Muslim women who once imagined becoming both ‘conscious’ mothers while having a profession, felt themselves squeezed between their worldly desires and collective Islamic ideals when they graduated their schools.

Women Islamists hotly debated the position of women and the meaning of headscarf in Islam in relation to secular conceptions of modernity in newly published journals, monthlies and public conferences in the 1990s. Instead of the demonstrations and sit-ins of the previous decade, Islamist women actors began to express their will to participate in modern urban spaces via professional social movement organizations, platforms and civil associations. While in the 1980s, the issue of the licitness (*haram*) of the woman’s voice was debated among Islamic circles (see Azak, 1999), in the 1990s Islamist women organized conferences and panels during which they spoke side by side with males to males without the segregation of sexes among the audience. Here the principle of the segregation of the sexes was violated and challenged by Islamist women themselves. Similarly, 80s Islamist appeals to headcovered girls to leave their schools if they had to choose between careers and religious faith no longer found an echo among the younger generation of Muslim students. Regarding the attitudes and aspirations of younger veiled girls an Islamist columnist writes disapprovingly that “they [veiled girls] want to go to the United States not to Palestine anymore” (Eraslan, *Akit*, October, 26, 2000). Here Palestine, the key symbolic place for the Islamic resurgence of the 1980s, is displaced by the United States as the imagined destination in which to actualize an Islamic self. In other words, in the 1990s professional careers and the forms of lifestyle such

careers are thought to bring emerge as an important component of individual Muslim identities in a way that challenged the collective definitions of Islamism.

1990s also witnessed the creation of counter Islamic public spaces advertised as conforming to the requirements of Islamic morality. Newly founded Islamic hotels, which provided separate sections in which women could swim, invited Muslim women with slogans such as ‘now you can swim’ or ‘you can enjoy a peaceful (*huzurlu*) holiday.’ Moreover, new cinema saloons (playing Islamic films and censored Western films), restaurants (where alcohol is not served) and beauty saloons (where female employers serve veiled female customers) facilitated new experiences in which Islamic morality could be protected especially with respect to gender relations. Compared to 1980s this new period has been described as ‘a post-Islamist stage’ in which Islamism has lost “its revolutionary fervour” but has steadily infiltrated “social and cultural everyday life practices” (Göle, 2000; 94). Besides hotels, cinema saloons, cafes and restaurants, newly formed Islamic institutions such as pro-Islamic radio and TV outlets, newspapers, hospitals, schools, fashions and commercial companies also signified the infiltration of Islamic practices into daily life that opened up a channel for Islamic actors to realize themselves in public life.

In brief, the relational settings or habitus from where Islamic narratives originated in the 1980s have been transformed in the new decade. It is in such a context that new habitus, new professions, new desires, new market forces and new institutions led to the emergence of new tensions and new literary narratives among Islamic circles. In the 1990s the collective harmony of salvation novels were first challenged by dissatisfied female Muslim actors. New narratives appeared voicing the frustrations of headcovered women who had acquired

modern professions but had little possession of or input into public life (see, Aktaş 1991, 1995 and Toros 1990). The stories of Cihan Aktaş in particular narrated the disappointment of educated Muslim women who were not working outside the home. These women were represented as “neither rural nor urban, neither housewives nor businesswomen, neither ambitious nor relaxed, neither speaking nor silent...neither existing outside the home nor living at home happily” (Aktaş, 1991; 32). In her stories Islamist male actors are heavily criticized for placing the burden of the Islamic movement on the shoulders of women. Male critics claimed in reply that she had forgotten that hundreds of men were “in jail not in the name of manhood but of Islam” (Yanar, 2001; 128). In spite of Aktaş’s criticism of Islamist male actors, her stories might still be considered as only a ‘partial challenge’ to collective definitions of Islam since she still searches for a ‘pure’ and ‘preserved’ Islamic female identity in the context of modern social relations. However, such narratives and the debates that cohere around them signify that the collective and coherent narratives of the 1980s are under dissolution according to the new social positions of Islamist actors in the 1990s.

These new experiences and socialization patterns of a younger generation of Islamic actors paved the way for the emergence of more self-reflexive and self-exposing novels challenging the collective ideals of the previous decade. The new more self-reflexive novels of the 1990s sharply differed from salvation novels because their narratives and characters question Islamic perceptions of self, ideology and the world. They made the inner-conflicts of Islamic identities and conflicts within the group visible. This is not to say, however, that salvation novels have ceased to be published: Islamist authors continue to write salvation

novels, although their numbers have decreased and their contents partly been modified in this decade. Emine Şenlikoğlu for instance, a prolific writer of salvation novels influential in influencing Islamist perception of the struggle between decent Muslims and the others in the 1980s, has begun to depict injustices within Islamic circles in her new novels. She has especially criticized Islamist men who “oppressed women” with concealed second marriages (see Şenlikoğlu 1995). Moreover many of the authors of salvation novels have also given interviews in which they have taken a self-critical stance towards the ‘schematic’ narratives of the previous decade. Yüksel Şenler, for example, who once portrayed unveiled university girls as the “call-girls of Europe” in her influential novel, *Huzur Sokağı*, stated in an interview that “If I had written this novel today, I would use a more moderate discourse... I now found it schematic” (*Zaman*, June, 16, 2002). Even Gunbay Yildiz, the biggest selling salvation novelist, has modified his ‘biography’ in his new 1990s novels. The short self-description in his old novels was self-assertive: “The writer dealt with all groups of society... He wrote on the struggle between right and wrong...and he *clearly pointed out the solution*” (emphasis mine). This biography has been modified in his new novels: “... he also gave clues towards their solution.” The certainty of Islamic assertions constructed through schematic literary narratives has to some extent been replaced by critical voices in new salvation novels. Nevertheless, they comply with the basic narratives of salvation novels since they still conclude imposing a good life framed with Islamic salvation.

The new self-reflexive and self-exposing novels of the 1990s by contrast de-construct the narratives of salvation novels and of collective Islamism of the 1980s. In terms of sheer numbers, self-reflexive novels are difficult to compare

to the salvation novels of the 1980s. Neither do they form a coherent genre as do the narratives of the previous decade. Nevertheless their narratives critiquing Islamic conceptions of the 1980s (via inscription of the various voices of the period) provide us with grounds to analyze Islamism and Islamic subjects. In this chapter I will analyze Islamists' perceptions of self, the other and the social context in which such selves are composed by drawing on two novels of the period, *Halkaların Ezgisi* and *Yağmurdan Sonra*. Let me begin by presenting a short summary of both novels.

### ***Halkaların Ezgisi* and *Yağmurdan Sonra* as two Exemplary Novels**

*Halkaların Ezgisi* (1997) by Halime Toros<sup>69</sup> is recited through the inner dialogue of a woman writer who adopts an Islamic way of life by wearing the headscarf in the 1980s yet unveils herself some years later. Nisa, the protagonist of the novel lives in Ankara in the 1980s and 1990s in an Islamic circle where she is first seen as “deficient” since she does not don the headscarf (p. 38). In time, she adopts the headscarf with the encouragement of her husband. Upon veiling, Nisa is made to feel that “she is not an ordinary woman anymore” (p. 40) since veiling carries with it new bodily postures, new ways of being looked at, and new modesties, as well as various stigmatizations not only from secular but also Islamic circles. As a veiled woman the experience of new relations with Islamists and secularists make Nisa realize and question the binary oppositions and ready-made answers employed by both oppositionary groups. Confused by such a ‘them and us’ battle, she refuses to align herself with one side via the

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<sup>69</sup> Halime Toros (b. 1960) is a graduate of Health Studies. She holds an MA in public administration. Her other works are *Tanımsız* (1990) and *Sahurla Gelen Erkekler* (1993).



invoking of prescribed slogans. She begins to hear the voice of her 'other self' and thus to take a critical stance towards the radical separatism of Islamism. At the end of a questioning process, she declares that she can no longer bear neither the stigmatizations of secular circles nor the prescribed answers of Islamists. In a key passage the main character says that she is not only Nisa but also Nisan (127). Nisa here—which derives from Arabic, meaning woman and has Koranic connotations regarding veiling— signifies her Islamic identity, while Nisan symbolizes the 'overflow' of her soul. The novel develops through the dramatization of dialogue between Nisa and Nisan as two sides of her identity. As a result, she decides to leave Nisa "behind the door" (p. 162) and takes her scarf off. She also tries to convince her angry husband that she still "feels veiled" (p. 163) and is a Muslim performing her prayers. This process leads her to revise and reinterpret the dominant collective Islamic understandings of the 1980s.

*Yağmurdan Sonra* (1999), written by Ahmet Kekeç<sup>70</sup> represents a different form of self-exposure in public than the unveiling of the body. The novel tells the story of a 'lost' Islamist living in Istanbul in the context of February 28 Process.<sup>71</sup> Murat, the main character of the novel is an ex-publisher. In an environment where people no longer read books, and as a man who has lost his Islamist ideals, Murat starts to sell stationary. He is presented as a cynic, not interested in politics. However, during the February 28 Process he is taken to court for a book he had published six years ago. In this 'political environment' in which Muslims are scrutinized, he is made to question and revise his past and

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<sup>70</sup> Ahmet Kekeç (b. 1961) is currently a columnist in a pro-Islamic daily. He has worked as a journalist and editor in several Islamic dailies and his stories have been published in different Islamic journals.

<sup>71</sup> In February 28, 1997, the military in Turkey through the National Security Council intervened in the political and civilian sphere. The Islamic Welfare Party coalition government was forced to resign. In the process, the Welfare Party was closed down. Its leader and some of its members were taken to court and deprived of their political rights.

present life. In the present, Murat has problems in his marriage. He finds his wife boring since she is engaged in the drudgery of housework. He feels his wife searches for “status” that he can not provide her with (p. 62). During evenings when he does not want to go home, he meets ‘different’ friends with whom he goes to pubs and lies to in order not to drink alcohol. Furthermore, Murat has problems with his father who left his family when Murat was young and married another woman. Despite not seeing him for years Murat begins to visit him when he gets old and becomes ill. In one of his visits, Murat sees his stepsister, Hülya, and falls in love with her. His visits to his father’s house become more frequent in order to see her. Several times he tries to tell her about his love, but cannot. He is torn between his ‘sinful’ love, his marriage and his faith. The novel concludes with an inner- dialogue on his conflicting and contrasting desires.

These two novels resonate with the Islamic imaginary of Muslim authors who, to use Kristeva’s conceptualization, ‘read history and society as text’ and into which they insert themselves by ‘rewriting them’ (Kristeva, 1980; 65). Here the narratives of a younger generation—who were born in the 1960s and lived in a milieu where Islam was no longer a marginalized ideology— express a self-reflexive and self-exposing voice of Muslim actors and their Islamic practices. Narrative as a form provides grounds to order events, and allows Muslims to understand ‘who they are and how they became so.’ In this sense, the new narratives of the 1990s involve the reconsideration of the practices and understandings of the 1980s as well as perceptions of self and the other in the new political/cultural environment of the 1990s.

## Depiction of the Islamist conceptions of the 1980s

New self-reflexive novels, understood as a manifestation of Islamists' will to develop a coherent narrative identity in the context of the 1990s, involve the reexamination of a collective past. Nisa and Murat self-critically depict a social milieu where Islam is presented as the solution to all malaise. Halime Toros in *Halkaların Ezgisi*, via the self-reflexive voice of Nisa, portrays those days as a time when "radicalism was religion." Yet somewhat nostalgically, this Islamism influenced by the ideological discourse of the Iranian Revolution reflected a time when

... the language was changed, new readings and new namings were done...the Koran was taken from the wall down and read... journals were swallowed... revolution was dreamed. [It was a time when] those, who did not have time to wait, were going to the mountains of Afghanistan or Khom (p. 22-23).

### the original text:

...dilin başkalaşdığı, yeni okumalar ve yeni adlandırmalar [yapıldığı]...Kur'an'ın duvardan indirilip açıldığı...Dergilerin yutarcasına okunduğu...Devrim hesaplarının yapıldığı...Bekleyecek kadar sabrı olmayanların Afganistan dağlarına ya da Kum kentine doğru yola koyulduğu" günlerdi.

In such a political context, Islamists created slogans:

May parents find the straight path, may laic people be damned...let the Ülkücü people give up claims to be Muslims... We all flew to Iran, Pakistan, Egypt and Afghanistan...Sayyid Qutb was our handbook. Ali Shariati was our rebellion. Books on Jihad were our guidebooks. Life was all about hate and anger (p. 119-120).

### The original text:

Ana-babalar doğru yolu bulsun, laikler kahrolsun...ülkücüler müslümanlıklarından vazgeçsin... Hepimiz uçmuştuk; İran'a Pakistan'a, Mısır'a, Afganistan'a... Seyyid Kutub el kitabımızdı. Ali Şeriatî isyanımızdı. Cihat el kitapları kılavuzumuzdu. Hayat baştan sona nefret, baştan sona öfkeydi.

These quotations are dramatic representations of the dominant Islamist conceptions of the 1980s in Turkey. The Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 provided Islamists not only with an impetus for the development of a revolutionary interpretation of Islam but also a revolutionary imaginary that conceived of seizing state power to implement Islamic precepts in secularized Muslim contexts. This decade, as Nisa spells out, encompassed the years “when revolution was dreamed” by Turkish Islamists too. Similar feelings of an activist ability to re-make the world are encapsulated in the words of Murat of *Yağmurdan Sonra*, who had become an Islamist in his university years as many other actors of Islamism: “The country was on the verge of disaster. We were going to save it... We were young, lively, and bold enough to change the world [Ülke uçurumun kenarındaydı. Biz kurtaracaktık...Gençtik, kıpır kıpırdık, hayat doluyduk, dünyayı değiştirecek cesametteydik]” (p. 29). The repertoire of Islamist groups in Turkey that sought “to save the country” was culled from the works of Middle Eastern Islamist thinkers. Almost all the books of thinkers such as Ali Şeriatî, Seyyid Kutub and Mevdudî were translated into Turkish at the beginning of the 1980s, paving the way for the formation of an Islamist vocabulary which, as Nisa self-reflexively points out, was highly antagonistic (to secularized regimes) and sloganistic. In sum, what characterized the 1980s according to these revisionist novels was a recoding of language and history and a reinterpretation of faith in a way that led to the rise of a radical/oppositional Islamist discourse.

Nisa lives in such an Islamic milieu and is devoted to living a life in accordance with Islamic principles. However, she does not wear headscarf. In an environment where “slogans are in the air,” life is difficult for her since she is

unveiled. Living 'inside' with her 'non-Islamic' outlook becomes problematic.

This was because she says,

In a time when how others perceive you was more important than how you feel about yourself, when belief had to be manifest (and registered) I was always seen as lacking, deficient, because the Koran commanded 'cover your head.' When you did it, you were treated as practicing all other precepts (p. 38-39).

**the original text:**

İnsanın kendini nasıl hissettiğinden önce başkalarınca nasıl görüldüğünün daha önemli olduğu, inancın mutlak olarak tescil edilmesinin gerektiği dönemde bana hep, bir tarafım eksikmiş gibi bakılıyordu. Çünkü Kur'an kadınlara hitaben 'Örtünün' diyordu. Zaten bunu yapınca her ameli yerine getiriyormuşsunuz gibi davranılıyordu.

Nisa critically voices the interpretation of veiling in Islamic circles in the 1980s. As promoted by salvation novels of the period, veiling was an indispensable part of the construction of Islamic female identity. While the Koran did not dictate such a strict bodily signifier for males, being Muslim for women meant wearing the headscarf. This was because, as nearly all literary and non-literary accounts of Islamism emphasize, Islamic communitarian morality (and order) was best assured when social interaction between the sexes was strictly controlled. Veiling in such a framework signified not only an Islamic dress code but also the provision of communitarian morality through self-governance and the social control of women. Veiling denoted an Islamist politics of distinction via connotations of women's modesty and chastity.

Brow-beaten by such a discourse Nisa dons the headscarf with the encouragement of her husband after their marriage. She remembers the day she wore the scarf for the first time:

Tahsin [her husband] covered me with a cream-colour veil... he wrapped me, he veiled me... he had kissed me on my forehead and added “hanım” to my forename. When I got angry, I could not say “höst, yavşak, hadi be!” anymore.... I used to say them. I had to say “La havle” (God is enough to us) or lower my eyes and say nothing. I was not an ordinary woman anymore! (p. 25-27).

**the original text:**

Krem rengi bir örtünün içine aldı beni Tahsin... beni sardı, beni örttü... [beni] alnımdan öpmüştü... ve adımın sonuna “hanım” eklemişti. Ben de artık, “höst, yavşak, hadi be!” gibi şeyler söylememeliydim sinirlenince... ki söyledim. “La havle” demeliydim mesela çok öfkelenirsem, gözlerimi yere indirmeliydim. Ya da hiçbir şey söylemeyerek tavrımı koyabilirdim. Sıradan bir kadın değildim ki ben!

Thus Nisa narrates her transformation from a Muslim woman to an Islamist through veiling. She self-reflexively exposes her feeling of being ‘controlled’ by her headscarf, as it demands she change her conduct as an ordinary woman. This is because veiling carries with it an Islamic praxis that puts on women’s shoulders a responsibility to act modestly in daily life. As she makes explicit below, such a framing of women derives from Islamist conceptions in which headcovering is construed as a ‘signifier’ of an Islamist alternative to secular modernity. The headscarf’s exemplary, overdetermined status made Nisa, and all veiled women, subject to the public gaze of both secular and Muslim circles. I will comment on this later. For the moment, what is important is Murat and Nisa’s depiction of the Islamist understandings of their milieu. *Yağmurdan Sonra* does not explicitly narrate Murat’s process of Islamization although the novel indicates that Murat becomes an Islamist in his university years. Nisa on the other hand becomes an ‘insider’ by wearing the headscarf since otherwise she is “always seen as deficient” in her Islamic circle. In other words, she conforms to the overemphasized role of women and the

meaning laden upon veiling (such as modesty, distinctiveness and respectability) in Islamist oppositionary discourse of the 1980s.

The scenes in which Murat becomes an Islamist and Nisa adopts an Islamic way of life represented through her veiling, correspond to the closing pages of salvation novels. In other words, the protagonists of salvation novels, who once lived a non-Islamic life, are led to acquire an Islamic consciousness and an Islamic identity towards the end of the story. Accordingly, salvation novels conclude with an imagined peaceful and happy life for newly converted Islamist characters. They are presented as those who have achieved collective salvation. Thus salvation novels, as one of their Muslim critics state, “come to an end where life begins” (Şişman, 2001; 55). They end by imagining a blissful Islamic life without connecting this to the experiences of Islamist characters in their daily lives, homes or workplaces. New self-reflexive novels, on the other hand, situate key characters in heterosocial urban spaces. Characters acknowledge the difficulty in living in modern urban spaces as Muslims with collective ideals, both in sustaining collective representations of Islamism and imagining an internal stability of Muslim characters. Nisa’s experiences as a veiled woman and Murat’s dilemmas in his daily life as a Muslim man become representative of Muslim subjects’ conflicting and contrasting desires in the context of the 1990s.

### **Veiled woman between Islamic ‘burden’ and secularist stigmatization**

Salvation novels presented veiling not as if it were a “cultural choice” but as “characteristic of an identity” rooted in “human nature” (Doltaş, 2001; 26). Accordingly, an Islamic life style was configured as the true ‘good life’

consistent with human nature. Within this constructed association the characters of salvation novels adopted veiling as source of a peaceful life as well as conforming to Islamic claims for authenticity (represented by a lived tradition, i.e., *Asr-ı Saadet*). Nisa however makes explicit that as much as the Islamic dress she wore was constructed as a recovery of sacred tradition, it was also a new practice involving new rules to be learned. As a woman who wears Islamic dress for about ten years (p. 52), Nisa critically reflects upon her experience of veiling with a flashback to the 1980s:

...new customs and patterns of behavior were identified [with veiling]. It was an unusual type of feeling. The air we assumed and the comfort we had... as well as the way we nodded and made gestures...with bluejeans, weekend garments, night suits and long and narrow skirts were no longer expressive. Indeed, the new style of dressing brought along its own rules. Modesty [*sakınma*] was the only rule of this new style... We had not known how to walk, how to live within this new style. We were to learn. Looks directed at us would fashion our attitudes, blames on us would say to us: “stop” (p. 39-40).

**the original text:**

...[örtü ile] yeni alışkanlıklar, davranış biçimleri biçildi. Başka bir hissediyti bu. Blucinlerin, haftasonu giysilerinin, gece kıyafetlerinin, uzun dar eteklerin... içine girdiğinizde takındığınız eda, adımlarınızdaki rahatlık... başınızı ve ellerinizi kullanış biçiminiz artık işinize yaramazdı. Yeni giyinme tarzı kurallarını da taşıyordu zaten. Sakınma; yeni tarzın biricik kuralıydı... Böyle nasıl yürüneceğini, nasıl yaşanacağını bilmiyorduk henüz. Öğrenecektik. Bakışlar tavırlarımızı yoğuracak, kınamalar bize “dur” diyecekti...

This narrative differentiates Nisa from the veiled characters of salvation novels. While they depict the moment of veiling as a life altering event, Nisa describes what veiling means for women in their daily lives. In contrast to salvation novels in which veiling ‘turns’ characters into ‘stable’ women, Nisa spells out that they do not yet know how to walk and live with this new Islamic garment. She becomes aware that veiling is more than wearing a garment, but



involves an action system and a mode of praxis framed by “modesty.” What imposes such a mode of praxis on veiled women is the social environment in which Muslims and secularists negotiate and define their positions through the headscarf. Thus in such a situation the headscarf equalizes women, abolishing their differences and making them the carriers of Islamic claims. This suggests that headcovering makes women visible and subject to communitarian control not only by secular circles but also by Muslims. Nisa feels that when people look at her, they do not look at a woman “who has a name, age, reason, husband and child” (p. 95). What they expect is the presentation of modes of conduct that people connect to headscarved woman: “You should not harm (halel getirmemelisin) Muslimness by smoking [in a park]” (p. 95). “You should behave as if warmth does not disturb you [in this veil]” (p. 92). Social control is so constraining for veiled women, says Nisa, that if they transgress narrowly defined boundaries of Islamic modesty, people

would say what sort of Muslim is this. They would tolerate your veil, but humiliate the woman inside it. Even if you hide yourself in the deepest folds of your veil, they would find you. They would always warn you that you carry a big weight... they would once more sanctify you (p. 95).

**the original text:**

Bu nasıl müslümanlık böyle diyecekler. Örtünü hoşgörecekler, içindekini horgörecekler. Örtünün en derin kıvrımlarına gizlensen bile gelip seni bulacaklar. Büyük bir iddiayı taşıdığını, hep hatırlatacaklar... seni bir kez daha kutsal yapacaklar.

As Nisa makes explicit later, it was the Islamist interpretation of veiling that sanctified women and made them subject to a public gaze that expected from them modesty and virtue. The visibility and sanctity bestowed on women through the veil, however, means Nisa has limited space in her daily life. She begins to reflect upon her and the male Muslim’s positions. When she compares

her situation with that of Muslim man, she feels that her “feelings of justice” are offended. What is unfair is not “men’s comfortable shirts or shaved faces” but the “invisibility” provided by these characteristics:

One could do good actions as well as bad ones with such a manner of dressing...It was enough for a man to walk with his wife on streets so that he could ward off suspicions whether he is a Muslim. In turn, it was enough for a man not to walk with his wife on streets to validate suspicions of other people about his own allegiance to Islam.

**the original text:**

İnsan o kılıkla iyiyi de kötüyü de yapardı... Eğer müslümanlığından şüphe duyanlar olursa karısını yanına alıp ortalıkta dolaşması yeterdi. Eğer müslüman olduğundan kuşku duyanlar varsa karısıyla ortalıkta görünmemesi kafi gelirdi” (p. 111-112).

While the characters of salvation novels promote a discourse of complementarity and harmony between men and women around a collective ideal, this quote reveals a self-reflexive voice questioning the inequality between men and women on the basis of their bearing a bodily signifier. What Toros’ novel spells out is how it was veiled women in particular who have been humiliated in and excluded from Republican urban space.

Further, as an educated veiled woman Nisa feels humiliated in many aspects of modern urban life in Ankara. When a driver in a bus asks her “HANIM ANNE BİLETİNİZ?” because of her veiling, she feels her “young body is again humiliated” (p. 46). When she chooses not to listen to Yusuf Islam giving a conference on his conversion to Islam but to go to the theatre next to the conference hall, she feels people look at her and her veiled friends asking “what are they doing here? Why are they hanging around?” (p. 71). She encounters a funeral cortege one day when she alone, the funeral of a woman from secular circles. While people walked in the cortege shouting slogans, a man shouts at her: “It is because of you! This woman died because of you! You killed her!”

Nisa asks herself “why was this man pointing at me? What did I do? Who was I?” She feels

so out there and defenseless because of my visibility...as if on the whole earth there was only this one cortege, the people waiting at the bus station and me. As if I, alone, was representing everything, as if I alone carried all the responsibility of guilt. The earth split and Muslims slipped into it... Like everywhere, the assumption of “US” was simply wishful thinking. Although it was useful to talk about “US,” it meant nothing when you are left alone on streets (p. 49-50).

**the original text:**

Görünürlüğümle kendimi o kadar açıkta, o kadar savunmasız hissediyordum ki... Şu koskoca yeryüzünde sanki bir tek kortej, durakta bekleyen insanlar ve ben vardım. Sanki tek başıma temsil ediyordum herşeyi. Bütün “suç”u tek başıma taşıyordum. Müslümanlar yer yarılıp da içine girmişlerdi... Her yerde olduğu gibi burada da BİZ, bir saymacadan ibaretti... Konuşurken bir kullanım değeri olan BİZ, sokakta öylesine yalnız kalakalmaktan başka bir şey değildi.

This quote stands in contrary relationship to the discourse employed in salvation novels. What characterized the discourse of characters in salvation novels against secular stigmatization was their assertive and oppositionary stance towards secular circles. Protagonists of the monologic Islamism of the 1980s often spoke in the name of a collective “we” along with a discursive hierarchy in which the collective “we” was presented as a solid unity that would achieve holistic salvation at the end. Despite “postpone[ing] all problems to the time of post-revolution” (Göle, 1992; 159), monologic and collective Islamism was unable to hinder the emergence of tensions among Islamist actors. As a result of their experiences in modern urban contexts, veiled women in particular felt that they were the ones who were excluded, humiliated, and injured due to their visibility. Nisa makes explicit how Muslim women felt ‘unprotected’ and ‘weak’ in the face of daily experiences in contradistinction to males. They began to question the use of a collective “we” for veiled women, feeling themselves

'crushed' by collective and political ideals that, as another novel (*Mızraksız İlmihal*) expresses, placed on women's shoulders "the obligation to be a warrior, a guerilla, to take the responsibility for a war that would change everything and the world fundamentally" (Efe, 1993; 50). In contrast to the collective roles attributed to veiled women, new protagonists' response is encapsulated in the following words of the female character of the novel who declares that "I am small. I am weak. I am a girl...GIRL" (ibid, 51). This response signifies the resistance of veiled women to collective definitions of Islamism along with their demand to fashion their own individual Muslim self identities.

Nevertheless, it is not easy for Nisa 'to be small', to rework the boundaries of her individual identity, not merely because of negative stigmatization but also because of Islamic appeals to women "to scare the Satan" (p. 12). She begins to question the framing of woman in Islamist politics that posit women as having to 'control' themselves since otherwise they may seduce men and contribute to disorder (*fitne*) (p. 40). Such an understanding in the last instance grants "rights to men" and "responsibilities for women" (p. 40). She thinks about the Islamist men advocating this discourse:

We submitted everything to men, even the things we should not have submitted...This was because men had so many rights over woman...Many men used to read passages from al-Ghazzali's works...'Getting married was very beneficial for men'...Of course, getting married is useful for men. Women keep the house in order, serve guests, cook, do the laundry. If men were to be occupied with these tasks, says al-Ghazzali, they would be taken away from studying and worshipping. Then what were women supposed to do? Perhaps, they were supposed to do everything in order for men to be accepted into the Paradise (p. 40).

**the original text:**

Erkeğin eline verdik, Vermememiz gereken herşeyi... Çünkü erkeğin kadın üzerindeki hakkı büyüktü... Birçok erkek ellerinde Gazzali kitapları kadınlara pasaj okuyorlardı... Evlenmek erkekler için çok

faideliydi... Evlenmek tabii ki erkekler için faydalıydı. Kadın evi düzeltir, gelene gidene hizmet eder, yemek pişirir ve çamaşır yıkardı. Erkek bunlarla meşgul olursa diyordu Gazzali, ilim ve ibadetten geri kalır. Peki kadına düşen neydi? Erkeğin cennete girmesi için elinden geleni yapmaktı herhalde.

Nisa criticizes not only the male dominated Islamic discourse of the 1980s but also challenges the texts of al-Gazzali, a prominent Muslim thinker and jurist, as sources constituting such a discourse. Her critique thus goes beyond the Islamist male interpretation of Islam to include 'sacred' texts that would allow her later to reinterpret them. This discourse she says limits women with their home and advises women to "sit down, listen and be thankful. Read salvation novels. Do not question your existence" (p. 103). The definition of women as constituted via their domestic roles, modesty and chastity, Nisa goes on to argue, leave Muslim women no space to exist in the labour market. She directs her criticism towards Muslim men who, according to her, "push veiled women towards the home":

...Muslims with private business companies could not employ their 'sisters' fearing that their honor might be impugned. Muslims working in the public sector used to employ them but re-located them to the farthest rooms of the office. They would then have morning coffee with beautiful girls and elegant women...But they never failed to greet their sisters (p. 104-5).

**the original text:**

... özel sektör müslümanları bacılarının namuslarına hanel gelmesin diye onları işe almazlardı. Kamu sektörü müslümanları da onları en dip odalara iter, sonra gider güzel kızlarla, şık bayanlarla sabah kahvesi içerlerdi... Yine de bacılarına selam vermeyi ihmal etmezlerdi.

Graduating from university but not working afterwards was particularly problematic for Muslim woman. This was because staying at home caused them to merge with the 'ordinary women' from whom they were trying to differentiate themselves. Furthermore these women had great ideals and made ideological

marriages to actualize their Islamic selves.<sup>72</sup> In the course of her marriage Nisa reflects upon and reconsider these marriages and Islamic ideals:

We were innocent, young and poor...As we graduated one after another, we moved out from youth houses, where we had poor but colorful life experiences, into modest places as a family. We did not want jewelry, expensive household goods or a car. We were simply after God's approval... After getting married we could not understand how marriage turned into seeking the approval of one's husband. We were to learn afterwards that being a woman under such conditions was more harmful than what we suffered during our years at university [by being expelled from it]...that streets, homes, bureaus and government offices had different moral codes, that it was not true that ninety-nine percent of our population was Muslim...and many other things (p. 115-116).

**the original text:**

Masumduk, gençtik, yoksulduk... Işıltılı bir yoksullukla yaşadığımız bekar evlerinden mezun olup çıkıyor ve mütevazı evlere artık birer aile olarak taşınıyorduk. Altın, eşya, kat, araba istemiyorduk. Biz Allah'ın rızasını istiyorduk... Evlenince ne oldu da kocanın rızasına dönüştü evliliklerimiz, anlayamadık. Böyle bir kadın olmanın üniversitelerde olduğundan [üniversitedeki dışlanmadan] daha incitici olduğunu... sokağın, evin, büronun, devlet dairesinin... başka bir ahlakı olduğunu, halkımızın yüzde doksan dokuz olmadığını... daha bir çok şeyi sonradan öğrenecektik.

This paragraph is indicative of disappointment of educated veiled women that was narrated in several stories of the 1990s. Veiled women, who had been assigned and who had internalized the 'big claims' of Islamism in their university years began to express frustration at constraining public and private lives determined not only by exclusivist secular politics but also by their Muslim husbands and comrades. Veiling, Nisa begins to feel, led Muslim women to be excluded from public spaces, to stay at home, to leave their schools, in sum "to sacrifice themselves" in the face of difficulties they lived in their marriages and daily lives. While experiencing all this they were expected to be patient and to

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<sup>72</sup> Cihan Aktaş depicts Islamist girls' dreams about marriage in one of her stories in this way: "We married neither for money nor career... We would struggle for others, humanity and Islam rather than ourselves. We called it ideological marriage" (1991; 50-66).

take the women of the Prophet's time as their role models Nevertheless, Nisa revises her stance to the world by confessing that conditions in real life were different from their Islamic idealistic conceptions:

We had to forget our interrupted schools, dreams and ideals... If [the men] did not change, then we should. We had to bear everything... We should have tied boulders to our stomach like the friends of the Prophet had done. But we became pregnant. And the children did not want stones. This life was very different. (p. 116-117)

**the original text:**

Yarım kalmış okullarımızı, düşlerimizi, ideallerimizi unutmalıydık... Onlar [erkekler] değişmiyorsa biz değişmeliydik. Tahammül etmeliydik... Tıpkı sahabilerin yaptığı gibi taş bağlamalıydık karnımıza. Ama hamile kalıyorduk ve çocuklar taş istemiyordu. Bu hayat çok başkaydı, çok farklıydı.

In radical Islamic understandings of the 1980s the role and position of woman as well as other issues were handled in the context of romanticized past. Different stories of women from the period of the Prophet were distilled and circulated as ideal role models. Nisa's reference to 'tying boulders to our stomach when they are hungry in order thus to keep on struggling' as well as her confession of the impracticability of these stories for real life indicates her resistance to the authenticating claims of Islamism. Thus she challenges "the fundamentals" and the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam dominant in the 1980s. What this fundamentalist understanding involved was a return to sacred tradition and the questioning of every 'distorted' thing after the golden age in order to reconstruct them in the modern era. Yet Nisa declares her failure in this process by admitting that "after a period of mental construction, what remained were ruins, consisting of only concepts." She describes herself as "tired of trips to the past, of going to the same places and seeing the same things" and confesses that "we want new and unknown stories" (p. 197, 212).

Indeed Nisa is aware that Muslims began to live ‘different lives’ in the 1990s. In the previous decade she tells how “we did not have full automatic washing machines, computers... and foreign currency accounts in banks.” In the 1990s by contrast “we were climbing up the ladder of the city. Our bodies were getting thinner and thinner, our garments were new and our clothes were becoming more and more colorful...people were used to going to restaurants with great food and service and to vacation and entertainment resorts [kentin eteklerinden yukarı çıkıyorduk. Bedenlerimiz inceliyor, libaslarımız yenileniyor, giysilerimiz renkleniyordu... yemeği ve servisi iyi lokantalar, tatil ve eğlence yerleri [ne gidiliyordu]” (p. 118-119). Nisa depicts the process of the formation of a Muslim middle classes, and the vertical mobility that Islamic circles achieved in the 1990s. In this new decade,

Everything, all realities, all truths, all faults and all goals have changed. Radicals became liberal and democratic. They assumed positions in political parties, they cut their black beards. They handed down their shirts without collar to their wives to be kept for special days. Everything was felt in the interjection “ah the good, old days!” (p. 24).

**the original text:**

Bütün gerçeklikler, bütün doğrular, bütün yanlışlar, bütün hedefler değişti. Radikaller liberal oldu, demokrat oldu, partilerde görev aldılar, kara sakallarını kestiler. Yakasız gömleklerini belki özel günlerde gitmek üzere, hanımlarına uzattılar. Her şey “hey gidi günler” oldu.

Nisa portrays the transformation of Islamism’s male actors who, in the face of real life, revise their radical stance, give up their Islamic ideals and become visible in urban spaces with new ‘faces’ and democratic claims. This transformation of Islamism, however, did not involve veiled women. Nisa points out how,



The only thing that has not changed is this woman. The thing on her head. The thing on her body. It is the only thing that does not change. That is not questioned. When the subject is woman, all the groups unify. When the subject is life, all diverge (p. 25)

**the original text:**

Değişmeyen tek şey varsa o da bu kadın. Bu kadının başındaki. Bu kadının üstündeki. Bir tek o değişmiyor. Bir tek o sorgulanmıyor. Konu kadına gelince bütün gruplar birleşiyorlar. Konu hayata gelince bütün gruplar ayrılıyorlar.

This is because “even if we did not want it, the veil has been our only reference...our bodies turned themselves into signifiers...language was not needed anymore [Öyle olsun istemesek de örtü biricik referansımız oldu... Gövdeler kendi başına bir anlatım biçimine dönüştü...Dile ihtiyaç kalmadı]” (p. 82). In such a context, as a writer willing to tell people different stories in her lectures, Nisa feels that people invite “not her” but “it [the veil]” (p. 84). In other words, people invite her to speak not to listen to her individual voice but to hear absolute truths and prescribed answers. Squeezed between her individual and collective identity, Nisa begins to hear an inner voice, another self, a Nisan that represents her this-worldly and non-ideological identity. This other self summons Nisa saying “veiling hurts me... I want to work, produce, succeed. I do not want to be despised and humiliated [örtü beni incitiyor artık... Çalışmak, üretmek, başarmak, itilmemek, horlanmamak istiyorum]” (p. 90). Her two selves engage in a ferocious and exhausting dialogue to find an exit from the well-guarded borders of the collective definitions of Islamism. In an environment where “”people approach the world and others through their absolute truths and their collective goods and wrongs,” Nisa declares that “I am not playing.” (p. 85). Nisa listens to Nisan and decides to take her scarf off.

## Muslim man between his religious faith and sinful love

Ahmet Kekeç in *Yağmurdan Sonra* gives voice to daily life, contrasting the desires and frustrations of an ex-Islamist man in the aftermath of February 28. The date refers to the first few months of 1997 when the pro-Islamic Welfare Party was head of a governing coalition. In these months, the appearance of religious leaders in the Presidency Hall at the invitation of the leader of the Welfare Party, or of party members in religious *hac* dress in the public space of Istanbul Airport occupied TV scenes several days. Such visible Islamic references were represented as an attack on the presuppositions of Kemalist modernism by secular media circles. The arrival of the Welfare Party in power and the increasing visibility of Islamic actors and symbols in public spaces led to the intervention by the military into the civilian and political sphere, supported by the mainstream media and civil associations. The intervention led to a limiting of public space available to 'Muslim' actors. The wearing of the headscarf to university was banned. The financial transactions of Islamic companies scrutinized.

Various interpretations and evaluations of these events infiltrate *Yağmurdan Sonra* via the voice of protagonist Murat. Murat consumes media news or has conversations with people from secular circles. Secularists' positions in the novel emerge when Murat engages in a dialogue with one of his neighbors:

Look what this man [Erbakan] has done...you get such terrible insults in the tent of a desert-Bedouin, they show disrespect to your national anthem, and you behave as if nothing happened. O my dear, such events make me fearful. Have you seen those women with black veil at Sultanahmet area? ...They are encouraged by the

government... they will go down soon by a military coup, let's see (p. 24-5).

**the original text:**

Şu adamın [Erbakan'ın] yaptıkları... Sen git çöl bedevininin çadırında ağız dolusu hakaret işit, ulusal marşına saygısızlık yapsınlar, sonra dön hiçbir şey olmamış gibi kös kös makamında otur. Korkutuyor bunlar insanı azizim. O kara çarşafli kadınları gördünüz mü Sultanahmet'te... Hükümetten cesaret alıyor bunlar... Yakında bir darbeyle defolup gidecekler ya, dur bakalım.

The quote gestures to various 'real' political events (like Erbakan's trip to Libya) that have already been represented in the media and that were influential building blocks in the case built by the secular media resulting in the February 28 Process. Murat's neighbor is depicted as someone who takes a critical stance towards the so-called pro-Islamic government and hankers for a military coup. His neighbor, however, make a distinction between Islamists and Murat by saying "but you are not like them Muratçıgım" (p. 29). Although it is not made explicit throughout the novel, his neighbor's response suggests that Murat is understood to be a Muslim because his wife is veiled. It seems that Murat does not use any Islamic signifier like the beard since the secular characters he meets treat him as one of them and speak with a language criticizing Islamists. Murat, on the other hand, does not adopt the assertive and polemical stance against such criticisms taken by the Islamist characters of salvation novels. Although he gets angry with the secular critiques as a man who is "alone and has lost his future ideals" (p. 24), he takes a cynical attitude, responding either by saying "he does not care about such events [visible Islamists]" or by pointing out that "he does not have a paranoia [about Islamists]" (p. 25).

Murat is depicted as a man who has lost the assertive Islamic language of his university years. One of the reasons underlying this is his 'virtuousness' represented by his resistance to changing circumstances and to using his social

networks to get rich. His brother-in-law, for instance, referring to the Welfare Party government, tells him that “your boys came to power” and encourages him to talk to his old friends in Ankara in order to make new business. Murat rejects him even though he recalls his wife’s complaints that “they do not yet have a car” (p. 62). Problems in his marriage are spelled out as another reason for Murat’s frustrations in his daily life. Murat is bored by his wife’s complaints, her praising of his ‘talented’ brother-in-law, Sunday rituals (having breakfast and then reading the newspapers etc.) and their routine life (pp. 74ff).

While confronting these problems in his business and marriage, Murat learns that he is to be taken to court for a book that he had published six years ago. He is informed that he is accused of “inciting the public to hatred and hostility on the basis of class, race and religion.”<sup>73</sup> Murat once again recalls his neighbor’s response: “but you are not like them Muratçıgım” and begins to question his political and apolitical self; ‘where do I stand and what am I’. Psychologically oppressed by these problems, Murat begins to spend time in cafes since he wants to go home late. One night in a cafe he meets a writer he knew a few years ago and his friends. Among them, Müge, a 26 years old sociology student appears extremely attractive to him. Murat looks at her and thinks:

She looks like the VJ girl that he sees in TV in the morning. A beautiful girl. Not beautiful so much as attractive. For the last ten years, all the girls he saw seemed attractive to Murat. They were all so natural, so at ease. Especially girls from Cerrahpaşa who came to his shop. He felt utterly confused and agitated when he saw them (p. 50).

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<sup>73</sup> This article became popular in February 28 Process and was especially used against Welfare Party members.

**the original text:**

Sabahları televizyonda gördüğü VJ kıza ne kadar benziyor. Güzel kız. Güzel değil de, dikkat çekici. Son on yıldır gördüğü, rastladığı bütün kızlar dikkat çekici geliyordu Murat'a. Nasıl da doğal ve rahattılar. Hele o dükkana alışverişe gelen Cerrahpaşalı kızlar... Onları karşısında gördüğünde her defasında aklı karışıyor, eli ayağı birbirine dolaşıyordu.

Murat diverges from the assertive and committed Islamist characters of salvation novels because he makes explicit his feelings about women. He violates the Islamic principle of moral guidance towards the inner self via his self-exposing character that is attracted to Müge and other women. Murat compares Müge with his wife. When he learns that Müge is a widow, he catches himself thinking that Müge might be an "easy girl" (p. 83). Then he is ashamed of his thoughts and asks himself whether thinking of such possibilities "is not it immoral and more importantly a sin?" (p. 83). As Murat learns more about Müge, he compares himself with this 26 year old and feels himself "raw, untouched and inexperienced [toy, el değmemiş ve acemi]" (p. 80). Interaction with the 'other' leads Murat to reconsider his 40 years, his beliefs and attitudes. As a married Muslim man, he begins to violate an Islamic morality that revolves around controlling the social interaction of sexes, not only through thinking about Müge but also by going with her to restaurants and pubs where he lies so as not to drink alcohol (p. 176).

What differentiates this novel from salvation novels is Murat's perception of 'the other.' Salvation novels were based on the construction of black and white characters. They homogenized secular characters as lacking self-consciousness and presented Islamic characters in contradistinction to their secular opponents. By contrast, in *Yağmurdan Sonra* Kekeç does not totalize and stigmatize all non-Islamic characters. Murat realizes that Müge is different

than her secular friends. While her friends speak with a secularist oppositional language and position themselves against Islamists, Müge is portrayed as a character who respects differences. Thus we can specify two types of ‘other’ in the novel. One is the ‘offensive’ secular characters represented by Müge’s friends and Murat’s neighbors with whom Murat is in conflict at a discursive level throughout the narrative. The other is Müge, ‘a democratic liberal other’ who respects different views. With this ‘other’ Murat goes to pubs, to non-Islamic spaces, and discovers ‘other worlds’—while frequently asking himself “what I am doing here” (p. 84). New contacts with the ‘other’ and excursions to new spaces shake his singular and well-rooted Muslim identity.

Another event that upsets Murat’s Muslim identity is his encounter with his step-sister, Hülya. Murat has had a problematic relationship with his father since his father left them years ago and married a woman of Italian-origin. When visiting his sick father Murat meets Hülya. He is affected by her beauty, a girl in her twenties with “blonde hair and tall legs” (p. 67). Murat is drawn to Hülya and begins to fall in love with her. He visits his father’s house more frequently. He waits for her when she goes out of her office. He plans to tell her about his love several times but cannot. When Murat’s brother-in-law realizes his interest in Hülya, he criticizes him,

You are siblings, mate! Is it proper for a man to chase after his sister? Shame on you! Even if you do not feel shame, at least know that it is also a sinful act, you rascal! You are an educated, married and furthermore a devout man! Does it suit you? (p. 161).

**the original text:**

Ulan siz kardeşsiniz be! İnsan kendi kardeşine sarkar mı? Ayıp diye birşey var. Hadi ayıbı bilmiyorsun, günah ulan günah! Sen okumuş yazmış, evli barklı, üstelik dindar bir adamsın! Yakışıyor mu?

Even though Murat tries to reject the criticisms by saying “she is not my sister,” he accepts the truth of his brother-in-law’s words. Nevertheless, he confesses that

One can not control his feelings all the time. Hülya is my weakness. I love her. Even though my love is not reciprocated, it is a source of strength and meaning in my life. It may be a dangerous intimacy, an immoral tie but... I love this girl. Let this be my death. Let this be the denial of my whole life, of the order that I have for years struggled to establish (p. 130).

**the original text:**

İnsan duygularını denetleyemiyor her zaman. Hülya da benim zayıf tarafım. Onu seviyorum. Tek taraflı bir sevmek de olsa, bu bana güç veriyor, hayatımı anlamlandırıyor. Belki tehlikeli bir yakınlaşma; ahlak dışı, örf dışı bir bağlanma biçimi ama... Evet seviyorum bu kızı... Bu da benim ölümüm olsun. Bu da benim hayatımın, yıllardır biriktirdiklerimin, kurmaya çalıştığım düzenin inkarı olsun (p. 130).

The character develops a new mode of reasoning in a narrative form that stands opposed to the collective narratives of Islamist subjects of the 1980s. Salvation novels sought imaginatively to construct a notion of communitarian morality that revolved around controlling one’s inner and outer selves and thus promoting modesty. Murat’s exposure of his love, especially an ‘unnatural’ love, violates the borders of Islamic morality and constitutes a challenge to the collective’s understanding of Islamism. More ‘dangerously’ perhaps, his exposition of love signifies the denial of social constraints.

By narrating the ‘indecent’ of a Muslim subject, *Yagmurdan Sonra* also constitutes a challenge to the Islamic conception of literature that claims to derive from *edep* (decency). Discussions on this novel in Islamic circles demonstrated the borders and hinterlands of Islamic morality. After its publication radical circles accused Kekeç of depicting ‘indecent’ and ‘deviant’ relations and asked “how a Muslim personality could write such things.” It was

noted disdainfully that the novel was an autobiographical one. Moreover it was asserted that the novel did not portray “us” adequately. A critic wrote that the novel “stabbed us from behind and even bad-mouthed us” (*Haksöz*, April 2000). Kekeç replied to these comments in his column by stating that “the ‘We’ is not clear I think... Am I subjective in my writing? Of course. The novel did not bear any mission. I am not a missionary. I have just written a novel. If you write on life, it is inevitable to depict some taboos... I am not uncomfortable with that (*Yeni Şafak*, May, 19, 2000). Clearly, Kekeç’s understanding of literature and Islamic identity diverges from the authors of collective Islamism. As noted by a novelist in 1989, Islamist actors of the 1980s “claimed that the novel was a mean for our ideals... It was not enough to write a poem, its content must have been full of belief, ideology and pedagogy... If in a novel a protagonist stands in front of a brothel, the writer was condemned as if it were he who stood there” (*Kitap Dergisi*, June, 1989). In this regard, Kekeç’s narrative issues a challenge to collective representation of Islamic subjects. The novel presents the inner self of a Muslim character as a site of struggle between conflicting desires. Murat’s longing for love, as the above quote demonstrates, leads him to resist the boundaries of communitarian morality and to free himself from the image of Islamic identity. His desire for “dangerous intimacies” in public places constitutes resistance to the authoritarian tendencies of Islamist politics that depend on monitoring the social interaction of the sexes in public space.

Despite his rejecting of Islamist tenets and his conflicting and contrasting desires, Murat feels that he can not save himself from being charged as *irticaci* (reactionary) in the context of February 28 Process since his trial continues as an



ex-publisher. When he reads a statement of *Batı Çalışma Grubu*<sup>74</sup> noting that they “scrutinize everything that the reactionaries (*irticacılar*) do,” he ridicules both himself and the “regime” that takes him to court by thinking that,

Have they [*Batı Çalışma Grubu*] been watching over me? If so, who knows what they think about me? Vagabond, lover, idle...He does not take good care of his business, he does not go home, he spends his days and nights on streets. So far we have not come across any backwardist (*irticai*) activity here, but such people are more dangerous. He hides [*takiyye yapıyor*] who he is, by giving the impression that he spends his time with girls and has fun all the time (p. 154).

**the original text :**

Beni de izliyorlar mı acaba? İzliyorlarsa ne düşünüyorlardır kimbilir? Serseri, aşık, avare... İşiyle ilgilenmiyor doğrudürüst, evine gitmiyor, cadde sokak sürtüp duruyor gün boyu. Bugüne kadar irticai bir faaliyetine rastlanmadı ama, böyleleri daha tehlikelidir; genç kızlarla eğleniyor görünerek aslında takiyye yapıyor...

Murat criticizes the secular regime’s essentialist understanding of Islam that interprets every manifestation of Islamism as a threat to the foundations of the republic. He speaks subtly and ironically about his situation and the regime’s treatment of his Muslim personality. Significantly, like Nisa in *Halkaların Ezgisi* Murat desires to withdraw to his private boundaries, having given up his Islamic assertions and taken a critical stance against collective definitions of Islamism. Similar to Nisa, to achieve this he does not simply take an oppositionary stance to secular harassment of Islamists, but also directs his criticism towards Islamic circles. When Murat chats with a few Muslim publishers about the February 28 Process, one of them notes in passing that the “[February 28] Process runs severe.” In response Murat says

If the process has gone harshly, we should blame it on not only those who initiated it, but also on people like you who prepared such a

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<sup>74</sup> *Batı Çalışma Grubu* is a group within the military founded to monitor Islamic companies and personalities in the February 28 Process.

process by leading astray the devout majority...You pretend to be superior by talking about universal democracy, pluralism and law, while you simply repeat what you hear from high ranking military officials...Why did not you think about [these], when you kept selling cheap stories of reaching the true path (p. 145).

**the original text:**

Süreç sert işliyorsa, yalnızca süreci başlatanlarda değil, senin gibi vaktiyle dindar çoğunluğu azdırıp bu sonucu hazırlayalarda da aramak gerekli kabahati... Generallerin ağzına bakıp evrensel demokrasi, çoğulculuk, hukuk diye kış atmayı biliyorsunuz... Beş para etmez hidayet öykülerini roman kılıfı geçirip satarken neden aklına gelmedi [bunlar]...

Thus Murat does not invoke a discourse of collective Islamism that simply accounts for the ‘victimization’ of Muslims because of exclusionary secular politics. Rather he considers the Islamist understanding of his period as another source of the conflict. In other words, he finds not only secularists but also Islamists responsible for the rise of systemic conflict and distances himself from the understandings of both groups.<sup>75</sup> Despite his reassessment of Islamic politics the novel concludes with Murat’s arrest and jailing as a Muslim man unable to tell Hülya about his love for her nor to happiness in his marriage.

### **Self-reflexive Narratives and Emerging Muslim Subjectivities**

What differentiates *Halkaların Ezgisi* and *Yağmurdan Sonra* as narratives from the salvation novels of the 1980s is their self-reflexive narratives.

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<sup>75</sup> In the context of February 28 Process, not only novelists but also various Islamist intellectuals from different circles expressed a more critical attitude towards Islamism rather than parroting a simple ideological response. Journalist-columnist Ali Bulaç, for instance, pointed out the lack of criticism among Islamic circles with titles such as “Bizim mahallenin hikayesi” and “Bizim mahallede eleştiri yürek ister” (Zaman, May 6-9, 2000). Nuh Gönültaş from the Nurcu circle contributed to the debate with the same title by pointing out that “our quarter is not so different in its mistakes than yours” (Zaman, May 7, 2000). These columnists noted that the collective and political ideals of Islamism led to an intolerant attitude towards Muslims who criticized an Islamic party, company or institution from within. They noted the oppositionary Islamic perception that “any critique of Islamism by a member of the movement serves the interests of the enemies.” Such a perception led to Islamists’ closing their eyes to mistakes and injustices in their own circles. Bulaç also criticized the position of older politicians and Islamic authorities: “They know everything, make plans and want you to obey without questioning.” Such critiques signify that the collective ‘we’ of the 1980s is under threat.

Reflection, as Ricoeur notes, is not intuition: "Reflection is the effort to recomprehend the *ego of the ego cogito* in the mirror of its objects, its works, and ultimately its acts... Reflection is the appropriation of our effort to exist and our desire to be by means of works which testify to this effort and this desire" (Ricoeur, 1974; 327). Reflexivity in this sense is the basic means uniting individual and social processes. As Mead points out "it is by means of reflexiveness—the turning back of the experience upon himself—that the whole social process is brought into the experience of the individual involved in it" (Mead, 1934; 134). Islamic literary narratives of the 1990s constitute the self-reflection of Muslim actors as mediated through texts. In other words, the self-reflexivity of actors constructed through novels brings the Islamic experiences of the 1980s and 1990s into the fore. Nisa narrates the overdetermination of veiling in Islamic circles as well as the conceptualization of women as the key bearer of Islamic claims in the 1980s. Murat makes the constraining collective definitions of Islamism explicit. In short, both Muslim characters narrate themselves in the mirror of works, texts, and discourses of Islamism derived from the 1980s and seek to reinterpret them, to reconstruct their subjectivity in an intelligible form.

What connects these two characters at the end of their process of self-reflection is their critique -even transgression- of the collective boundaries of Islamism. Nisa transgresses the boundaries by taking her scarf off, while Murat violates Islamic morality by exposing his inner self and sinful love. Boundary-crossing, as Iser notes, signifies a subject-creating event. It is a "revolutionary element" since it breaks down "accepted classification" (Iser, 1993; 9). During the 1980s, the headscarf, beard, salvation novels, and Islamic intellectual works questioned the western-centric Kemalist conception of civilization and

represented the transgression of secular boundaries (that equated the civilized with the Western) by Islamic subjects. These subjects, however, were collective subjects speaking with a language of 'We' that was oriented towards group ideals promoted by the literary and intellectual narratives of Islamism. New socialization patterns, acquisition of new professions, attendance of urban spaces and transformed practices of Islamic precepts in daily life resulted in new subject formations in the 1990s. The confession of conflicting desires, the acknowledgment of sinful love, the taking off the scarf constitute another boundary-crossing that not only break with collective definitions of Islamism but also represent the emergence of new Muslim subjectivities along with their new interpretations of the true (or truer) meanings of Islam.

When Nisa takes her scarf off and Murat confesses his sinful love it might be interpreted that they forsake their Islamic identities. However they do not reconstruct themselves by adopting Kemalist sensibilities or practices. Even though Murat goes to non-Islamic spaces, he does not drink alcohol. What he feels he has done is revise his earlier Islamist ideals and disregard the strictly defined boundaries of Islamic morality. The theme of love in his case plays a crucial role in his transgressing of such boundaries —as was the case in *Mızraksız İlmihal* of Mehmet Efe (1993), another self-reflexive novel of the period.<sup>76</sup> Göle's reference to Touraine on the role of love while interpreting Efe's novel also applies to Murat's case: "the love relationship does away with social determinisms and gives the individual a desire to be an actor, to invent a

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<sup>76</sup> This novel narrates the transformation of a young Islamist man through his love of an assertive and critical Muslim girl. İrfan, the protagonist, who at the beginning of the novel says that "a Muslim does not fall in love with a woman, but only with Allah" finds himself at the end of the novel imagining looking for a job and having the small happiness in his private life of a man who "took off his militant uniform [parka]." Commenting on this novel, Göle points out that this narrative "testifies to and contributes to the development from collective political Islamism toward the emergence of Muslim subjectivities" (Göle, 1997; 77ff).

situation, rather than to conform to one... It is thanks to the relationship with the other as subject that individuals cease to be functional elements of the social system and become their own creators and the producers of society” (Touraine, 1995; 227). It is the love relationship of Murat and the commotion it produces in his inner self that leads him to recomprehend his situation and to reorder his narrative life hi(story). When he realizes that he is not content with his life, marriage, and the (Islamic) concepts on which he has built his self-narrative, he acts to create a different self. In the process Murat, who in his university years once sought “to save the country” now confesses that “we realized too late that we had wasted the best years of our youth with impracticable concepts, with a futile attempt to apply an import-substitutional civilizational project [Ama çok sonra anladık ki, hayatımızın en güzel, en verimli yıllarını, içini dolduramadığımız kavramlarla, o kavramların taşıdığı ithal ikameci bir uygarlık projesini savunarak tüketmişiz]” (p. 29). What he refers to by “import-substitutional project” is the import of the works of Middle Eastern Islamist thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati and Mawdudi that played a crucial role in shaping the agenda of Turkish Islamists in the 1980s. Because of this adoption of revolutionary and fundamentalist Islamic thinking he goes on to say,

we did not read our own traditional cultural works... We could not read Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar... What we did read, in the name of ‘universal revolution’ were the trivial scholars of Egypt, Pakistan and Afghanistan (p. 145)

**the original text:**

Geleneksel kültür verimlerini tanıyamadık... Ahmet Cevdet Paşa’yı, Yahya Kemal’i, Tanpınar’ı okuyamadık... Sonra gelsin, “evrensel devrimcilik” adına kıytırık Mısır, Pakistan, Afganistan uleması.

The Middle Eastern Islamist thinkers that were praised by Islamist Murat in his university years are now treated as ‘trivial’ by Muslim Murat. We might say that what he rejects is not his Muslim but his Islamist identity and his revolutionary understanding of Islam. Revolutionary Islamism involved a radical and negative re-appraisal of previous Islamic manifestations (as traditional) along with its will to return to *Asr-ı Saadet*. His reference to Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar signifies his desire to cut his ties to fundamentalist/revolutionary Islamism while reconciling himself with other figures that had been treated by radical Islamists as ‘distorted.’<sup>77</sup> In short, Murat’s case testifies to a process in which a new Muslim self is shaped via the rejection of revolutionary ideals and the reappropriation of despised local particularities, paving the way for novel understandings of Islam.

Similarly, when Nisa takes her scarf off she does not deny her Muslim identity. However her situation is more difficult than Murat’s since she gives up her veiling, a symbol considered the ‘flagship’ of Islam by Islamic circles. After unveiling “the talisman that kept her husband protected from evil, and constantly reminded [him] of his religion” (p. 57) suddenly disappears. He becomes cold towards her and has frequent crying fits. She tries to make him understand that she still feels “veiled” (p. 163) even though she no longer wears a scarf. She continues to read the Koran and to practice other religious rituals. She does not reject the premises of Islamic belief, even headcovering. What she does oppose is the overdetermined meaning of the headscarf and the related framing of

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<sup>77</sup> Rejecting and disregarding traditional experiences in order to search for the ‘truth’ in *Asr-ı Saadet* has also been critically assessed by Muslim women in the 1990s. Toros, for instance, notes Islamist women’s ignorance of the women’s movement in Ottoman times: “In the 1980s, when we sought to criticize a huge [western] tradition through our intuition and readings, we did not know the women and movements that had already done it before us. This was because this past was kept away from us” (Toros, 2000; 206-7).

women that it imposes. Her unveiling is a personal choice and constitutes resistance to collective definitions of Islamism.

Like Murat, Nisa, too represents a new Muslim subjectivity that rereads the Islamic experiences of the 1980s. Central to her questioning of Islamism is the position of women. A discourse on women has always been a cornerstone of Islamist politics, since the veiling of women was associated with the provision of communitarian morality while being unveiled was treated as the source of disorder (*fitne*). Now unveiled, Nisa asks her husband whether “every woman you see on the street seduces you?” (p. 182). She answers her own question in response to her husband’s silence: “Let women not be ashamed of everything. Let men be a bit more modest... Let everyone be a master of his/her body, morality, eye and ear [Kadınlar herşeyden bu kadar utanmasınlar artık. Biraz da erkekler utansın... Herkes kendi bedeninin, ahlakının, gözünün, kulağının efendisi olsun]“ (p. 183). She challenges the duty given to women of carrying in their body the collective’s morality. She resists the framing of woman as a source of disorder. Finally she mocks the radical Islamic stance that despised the present in the name of the purity of the ‘golden era’:

This questioning attitude is as blinding as considering everything of the past sacred and indisputable. Because once you start unwinding the yarn of the sacred, you could go as far as the Koran. Such is the rule of the game. You have to play it to the end. And you will return, as every treasure seeker before you, loaded with nothing but defeat and disappointment. You will lose everything that you took on your journey... This is what we did. We pretended that there were hidden treasures and that we would find them (p. 212).

**the original text:**

Geçmişte kalan her şeyi kutsallaştırıp dokunulmaz ve tartışılmaz kılmak kadar ama, belki bu sorgulayıcı tutum da aynı oranda bizi bağlayacak, körleştirecek diye düşünüyorum. Çünkü o zaman

kutsalın ilmeği Kur'an'a kadar gidiyor. Oyunun kuralı bu. Sonuna kadar oynayacaksın! Her define avcısı arayıcısı gibi sonunda bıkkınlık ve hüsrarla eve döneceksin. Hem giderken yanında götürdüğü her şeyi kaybederek... Düşünüyorum da bizim yaptığımız, tam da bu. Biz bulalım diye saklanmış hazineler varmış gibi davranıyoruz.

Nisa rejects the authenticating claims of Islamism. Authenticity was a key word of Islamism, providing Islamists with the assurance of an Islamic golden age and a model which could be enacted in the present. Authenticity facilitated the search for "treasure", the endeavor to ground practice in the past in the project of Islamizing modern society. Yet Nisa declares failure on this enterprise by admitting that "after a period of mental construction, what remained were ruins, consisting of only concepts." She describes herself as "tired of the trips to the past, of going to the same places and seeing the same things" (p. 212).

Nisa(n) cuts her ties with the enterprise, proclaiming that "there is no such an age that sheds its golden lights! [altın ışıltıları saçan bir devir yok!]" (p. 215). Islamic history too is full of violence and injustice (e.g. the assassination of Khalif Osman). By asking the question of the history of Muslim women's role in politics and social life to the fore<sup>78</sup> she reinterprets the position of women in Islamic history.

In conclusion, I would argue that Murat's and Nisa's reflexive reinterpretation of Islamic identities constitute new Muslim subjectivities that are not 'anti-Islamic' interpretations of Islam but anti-Islamist. In this sense their

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□ Criticism of the Islamist conceptualization of women are not limited to the literary sphere but also extend to academic writings of Muslim women in the 1990s (see Ramazanoğlu, (ed.) 2000 and Tuksal, 2000). Tuksal's work "Kadın Karşıtı Söylemin İslam Geleneğindeki İzdüşümü" has generated a fierce debate in Islamic circles. Tuksal, a veiled Muslim theologian who wrote the thesis for her PhD, analyses the sayings about women that have been accepted as the Prophet's tradition in Islam. She argues that the Prophet's sayings promote a discourse that "humiliates women" and "prioritize men over women." These sayings and deep-seated attitudes towards women in Islamic circles, she contends, are not religious dogma but human products deriving from a long tradition of patriarchy. The work goes on to reconstrue the Prophet's sayings, one of the pillars of Islamic discourse.



position might schematically be described as identities shifting from Islamist to Muslim. Without the headscarf or with a sinful identity one can still be Muslim: one cannot easily be considered Islamist. These new self-reflexive and self-exposing characters and the Muslim selves outside the text whose self-constitution they enable testify to the emergence of novel understandings of Islam generated and reflected in novels.

## Conclusion: From *Epic* to *Novel(istic)* Conceptions of Islamism

Throughout this study, I have interpreted Islamic literary narratives of the 1980s and 1990s as an important means of developing a coherent identity—or a narrative (hi)story—in modern Turkish society by Muslim subjects. What make these literary narratives valuable cultural and political texts of the period are not only the authorial intentions presented in the characterization of Muslim selves but also their plots and dialogues into which ongoing political debates of the two decades infiltrate. To put it more concretely, Islamic narratives are political and cultural texts that are intimately linked to contemporary debates and practices of modernity, democracy, secularism, the headscarf and an Islamic order, issues that relate not only to Islamism but also to the entire social formation. The salvation novels of the 1980s were narratives in which relations between an Islamic and secularised order were negotiated, an Islamic counter-culture was imagined, and youth were proposed as the ideal Muslim self necessitating their formation within a collective identity. The more self-reflexive novels of the 1990s interrogated these collective Islamic ideals as they reconstructed Islamic identity in the changing relational context of the period.

In the production and consumption of Islamic novels, I argue that there is a mutually determining relation between texts, contexts and the formation of Muslim selves. This is because, as Fornas points out, “the relations between cultural texts and human subjects run in both directions: texts emanate from interacting subjects who are themselves continuously transformed by using texts” (Fornas, 1995; 227). Islamic literary narratives then not only *reflect*

Islamist actors' endeavour to develop a positive Muslim identity in a secularised context but also are generative of gender roles, attitudes and emotions. Their varying characteristics reveal and contribute to changing Islamic politics, identities and conceptualizations of the two decades.

Islamic narratives of the two decades display sharp differences in terms of their authorial discourses, organization of plots and construction of time and characters. These two different types of narratives, I contend, can be explicated by referring to the Bakhtinian definition of the epic and the novel. Here I do not propose that the literary narratives of the 1980s correspond to the epic and those of the 1990s to the novel as genres. The narratives of both decades are clearly closer to the novel in a literary sense. Nevertheless using the distinction more analogously, Bakhtin's analysis of characters and time in epic and novelistic texts respectively illuminate some of the differences between the two narratives.

Bakhtin distinguishes these two genres primarily on the basis of their organization of time and characters. The epic, he argues, is "absolutely completed and finished generic form, whose constitutive feature is the transferral of the world it describes to an absolute past of ... beginnings and peak times" (Bakhtin, 2000; 15). In the epic everything is evaluated in the light of an absolute past which is construed as the "single source and beginnings of everything good for all later times as well" (ibid. 15). Thus the epic world draws on a single and unified world view represented by the absolute past leaving no room for other possible truths. This absolute past is celebrated through the agency of a hero who is a fully completed being and entirely externalized. He has nothing hidden to be uncovered: "Everything in him is exposed and loudly expressed. His internal world and all his external characteristics, his appearance and his actions all lie on

a single plane” (ibid. 35). Since wholeness and completeness characterize the hero of the epic world, he lacks any inner resistance.

By contrast the novel “comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present” (ibid. 27). It reflects the world in-the-making. When the present becomes the center of human orientation in time and in the world, the epic wholeness of the hero derived from the absolute past disintegrates. While the virtue and ideology of the epic hero is exemplary for the whole community or the whole epic world, protagonists in the novel act in a contested terrain where different characters with different worldviews interact. The novel represents “the heteroglossia of the period” (ibid. 300), i.e., its different voices. Thus novelistic words are inherently dialogical since they draw on the interaction of various voices populating the language of an era. The novel orchestrates all these different voices in the face of an inconclusive future. Given the existence of the future in the novel as a promise of undeveloped possibilities, the novel’s characteristic feature is its eternal rethinking and reevaluating. This suggests that the epic hero and the epic world view disintegrate under the pressure of constant reevaluation or the search for a new point of view on one’s own self (ibid., 32-34).

Within this framework, Islamic literary narratives or salvation novels of the 1980s display characteristics closer to the epic than to the novel. Despite their representation of the Muslim self in the contemporary world, the plot, characters and themes of the narratives were all articulated with a particular Islamic past, the *Asr-i Saadet*, period of the Prophet and four Caliphs. In other words, salvation novels constructed an absolute past, derived role models from it and presented them as authentically replicable in modern times. Authenticity is

not something given, but something created by the reflexive activities of the actor (Giddens, 1991; 52). Islamic novels then played an important role in developing claims to authenticity through a narrative form that allowed the revaluing of contemporary practices in the light of an Islamic golden age. The world Islamic narratives conceived of and presented appeared to be an epic world resting on a single and unitary Islamic plane that disallowed the existence of other (secularist opponents) possible lifeworlds. The narrative closure of salvation novels, brought about by the collective salvation of its characters, is indicative of Islamists' will to a holistic Islamization of society.

In such an epic world view, the protagonists of Islamic narratives of the 1980s appeared on the scene like epic characters rather than individuals. Not only Islamic characters but also secular opponents were represented as types. They acted in the novels as heroes or villains, but always oriented towards great ideals (Islamizing the whole society) or a dramatic destiny. The protagonists of the narratives represented either 'truth' or 'falsehood' clarified in the light of the absolute Islamic past. Salvation novels celebrated the adventures and achievements of heroic religious figures. Islamic heroes of the narratives were depicted as complete and committed identities oriented toward saving the world. This heroic figure lived an ideal Islamic life style in a materialist world and always triumphed over 'corrupt' characters.

Further, the stereotypical presentation of an Islamic worldview to readers meant salvation novels were dominantly "pedagogical" rather than "performative".<sup>79</sup> They were pedagogical in the sense that their Islamic characters were unified and true heroes of Islam who would teach and lead

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<sup>79</sup> The terms pedagogical and performative function of a narrative derive from Homi Bhabha. See Bhabha, 1995.

‘others’ to salvation. Characters in these narratives were represented as “objects of Islamic pedagogy,” devoid of any personal content. They acted, studied, married, wrote, and sacrificed their individual desires while voicing a monologic rather than a dialogic discourse in the name of Islam. In sum, collective ideals and collective Islamic identity were prioritized over personal desires and individual identities.

By contrast, the narratives of the 1990s, with their emphasis on the interiority of characters and their focus on a present no longer understandable in the light of an absolute past are more like novels in the Bakhtinian sense. While the heroes of salvation novels lacked personal ‘content’ and the novels’ narrative received no dynamism from protagonists’ internal conflict, the new novels represented Muslim characters in the uncertainties of daily lives, with their internal doubts and conflicting desires. The increasing participation of Islamists in public life – via the acquisition of new modern professions and the formation of Islamic middle classes and their changing consumption patterns – raised moral questions that the oppositionary Islamist discourse of the 1980s appeared to be unable to answer. Put another way, Islamic actors’ attendance at heterosocial spaces, universities, cafes, restaurants, and bars, thus their interaction with secular publics and the ‘other’ clashed with the epic truth and protective framework of 80s Islamism. New professions, new interactions with the other and new settings of modern social life have led Islamists to reflect upon the ideological life planning of the 1980s. The manufacture of life styles are not free from the social context but rather are “characteristically attached to and expressive of specific milieu of action” (Giddens, 1995; 83). Thus, since the relational context of action of Islamists has changed in the 1990s, the

idealized/imagined/lived Islamic life style of the previous decade has been fractured in the context of multiple life style choices. "Performative narratives" represent Muslim characters in their search for a new sense of self dis-connected from the constraining Islamic conceptions of the 1980s. The inner turn or interior search of the characters of new novels resist typification and general labels. Muslim actors in these novels express their will to withdraw to their private individual lives and to actualize themselves as Muslims who have given up their Islamist (e.g. revolutionary) ideals. In sum, the epic wholeness of the Islamic subject of collective Islamism has disintegrated in the 1990s, and the unity of the governing ideology is undermined by the hero's interiority or self-reflexivity.

Self-reflexivity is not taken here as a quality that lead to the emergence of (Muslim) subjectivity in the 1990s and which Islamists lacked in the previous decade. The novels of the 1980s—and Islamism itself— were also a product of the reflexive action of Islamists. However the representation of Islamic characters with their unitary Islamic affiliations was singular and undifferentiated in order to form a collective 'We'. In that sense Islamic subjectivity in the 1980s might be described as "collective subjectivity," constructed mainly through the mediating contexts of publicity, including novels. The Islamist movement attempted to produce itself as a singular collective subject, censoring fragmenting tendencies on ethnic or gender lines and criticizing both established Islamic understandings and secular moral codes, in the process differentiating themselves from traditional Muslims and secularists. The new narratives of the 1990s are products of self-reflexivity in a more individual sense, mirroring the conflicts within Islamic selves and within its 'We'. Rather than claiming then the creation of a new Islamic subjectivities in

the 90s novels, it is more plausible to argue that a crucial tension has developed between the collective and individual Islamic subject and as a result, the subjectivity of the individual has become an object of experimentation and representation in the 1990s. In new novels, in other words, the epic characters tend to introspection, and epic truth (the sacred Islamic tradition) is subjected to a new re-evaluation.

Following on from this I would also argue that the epic representations of Muslim selves and the world in salvation novels of the 1980s, and the novel(istic) conceptualizations of Islamism in more self-reflexive and self-exposing narratives of the 1990s extend beyond the page and inform us about the changing characteristics of Islamic actors and discourses in the two decades. In other words, the different natures of the Islamic narratives of the 80s and 90s are representative of what we can call epic Islamism and novel(istic) Islamism respectively, the two strands of the Islamist movement dominant in the 1980s and 1990s.

The emergence of novel(istic) conceptions of Islamism in the 1990s in contrast to the epic Islamism of the previous decade refers first of all to alterations in Islamic identity. Identity, as Calhoun notes, is always a project. It is not a settled accomplishment even though various external ascriptions may be fixed (Calhoun, 1994; 27). Islamic identity, in this sense, is not a settled, pre-relational and pre-political position. It is influenced by its theoretical context as well as attempts to reconstruct that context. During the rise of Islamist movements in the 1980s, Islamic identity was shaped by a radical, polemical and oppositionary discourse. What it was opposed to was the 'moral degeneracy' of the secular foundations of modern society. In both the literary and non-literary



texts of Islamism, the world was perceived as divided between two irreconcilable value systems, Islamic and secular moral codes. Islam was construed as a rival belief system with its own organized political system as well as public and private life. On the basis of epic accounts of the Islamic golden age, Islamism was presented as the only alternative to a 'morally degenerate' modern and secular society.

Islamist writings then promoted an image of Islamic actors who, with their internal and external stability, would cure the 'sicknesses' of modern society. Islamic actors were encouraged to save themselves from 'corrupt' spaces, relations and intimacies. The medicine for society was full implementation of Islamic moral precepts in both public and private life. While some actors of epic Islamism sought the enforcement of Islamic moral codes through seizure of state power, others struggled for the remoralization of public life through civic and cultural initiatives. What was common to both literary and non-literary accounts of epic Islamism was that a single truth was presented in a single voice. In this regard, although it might appear that Islamist and secular conceptions of civilization are negotiated in the novels and non-literary texts of the period in a dialogical way, this is more, to use Bakhtin's term, a "dialogized monologue" (1996; 345). The two voices, Islamist and secularist, are not *intersubjectively* related as the second voice is parodied and allowed no reflexivity to respond to the claims, styles and metaphors of the other. This makes itself explicit through the authoritarian organization of Islamic texts which remove all other voices at the end and reach an epic closure represented by the holistic transformation of society. Typically, this authoritarian

organization of narratives is indicative of the authoritative discourse of epic Islamism as an idiom and form of politics.

The critique of epic representations of Islamism initiated by Islamic actors themselves in the 1990s paved the way for novel(istic) interpretations of Islamism. This critical stance arose as Islamist actors reflected upon and revised their experiences of the two decades, renarrativizing the collective and revolutionary ideals of Islamism, Islamic conceptions of women and veiling, party politics, governmental practice during the February 28 Process, and the role and position of Islam in public and private life. Confession by Islamic actors of their logical flaws, their mistakes and inner conflicts constitutes key dimensions that differentiate novel understandings of Islam from the epic conceptions of the 1980s. Previously, Islamic signs of difference were constituted via the submission of self to religious faith, modesty and the moral guidance of the community and individual. These signs, as Göle argues, characterize Islamic “religious conceptions of self and society in contradistinction to the public exposure of self, the confessional culture and the quest for transparency (2000; 103). The confessional act of Muslim actors (the revelation of inner conflicts, non-Islamic thoughts and experiences) constitute a challenge to Islamic conceptions of self and morality, and undermine the collective definitions of Islamism.

Similarly then the self-instituting or self-exposing narratives of Muslim actors are also not restricted to the literary field but extend into the practices of political actors in the late 1990s. Murat’s questioning of his revolutionary ideals and Islamic identity in the context of the February 28 Process finds its counterpart in the younger generation of Muslim politicians who have criticized

the Islamist politics of the Welfare Party (successor in itself of a long line of Islamic *Milli Görüş* parties) and gathered around AK Party which identifies itself as “conservative democrat.” Declaring that “they have changed,” this younger generation of Muslim politicians have also stated that ‘Islam did not advocate a system to be implemented through seizure of the state’ and have recently criticized the concept of an ‘Islamic economy’ (in contrast to *Milli Görüş* movement’s attempt to build economic cooperation between Islamic countries).<sup>80</sup> This younger generation develops policies facilitating Turkey’s membership to the European Union while *Milli Görüş* movement still voices an anti-Western and oppositionary discourse.<sup>81</sup>

Typically then self-critical and self-exposing voices have also been expressed by Islamic intellectuals in their columns and interviews. Mehmet Metiner, for instance, a writer and politician who was a member of *Milli Görüş* movement, has recently stated that he and his friends “have begun to change towards the end of the 1980s”. He depicts the Islamism of the 1980s as “thinking like the Taliban. Islam would take the form of a state, and the society would, if needed, be forcefully Islamized through the state. We would conquer the society through the state... We presumed that all problems would be solved once an Islamic state was bedded down.” He goes on to say that “we began to see that problems would not be solved with an Islamic order” by giving specific references to the Iranian and Afghanistan cases. He and his Muslim friends, he

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<sup>80</sup> These self-critical public figures of Islamism are reminiscent of the male protagonist of Mızraklız İlmihal, who wished to “take off his militant uniform [parka]” (Efe, 1993; 171). Thus these politicians have identified themselves as those who “have taken off *Milli Görüş* shirt [*Milli Görüş* gömleğini çıkarmak]” in order to distinguish themselves from their former political Islamic stance.

<sup>81</sup> Despite the current international agenda in which Islam appears almost synonymous with global terrorism, this younger generation of Muslim politicians take a critical stance towards former conceptions of Islamism and have developed a more plural interpretation of Islam on the basis of democratic participation not only in Turkey but also in several Muslim countries such as Egypt and Indonesia. See Sivan, 2003.

states, have now “given up political Islam” and begun to defend “democracy and a democratic secularism.” His confession, perhaps not unexpectedly, was criticized by other Islamic circles. (*Radikal*, February 23-24, 2004).

My portrayal of 1980s epic Islamism and 1990s novel(istic) Islamism is not, however, restricted to the chronological transformation of Islamic discourse over the two decades. They also refer to two different strands of Islamism that still coexist and clash. The very debates above on the role of Islam in modern world are indicative of the cleavages among Islamic circles. The most severe criticism of those who state that ‘they have changed’ derives from other Islamic circles (particularly *Milli Görüş* members and some radical groups) who still voice a collectivist discourse of Islamism. They accuse the new generation of Muslim politicians and critical intellectuals of “bitter betrayal,” identify them as infected with the “westernization disease” and comment on their situation as a “backward transformation” (*Milli Gazete*, February 5, 7, 2004). Predicting the relative influence of epic and novel(istic) Islamism in the mid-term future is difficult, although the electoral success of AK Party suggests the possibility of a permanent shift in appeal.

What characterizes this new more dominant discourse of Islamism is the disappearance of discursive hierarchy towards other life options. To put it differently, while the epic discourse of Islamism engages in authoritative relations with and leaves no space for other discourses, novel(istic) understanding of Islam provides a ground in which Islamic and other discourses might potentially condition each other. The younger generation of Muslim politicians who identify themselves as “conservative democrats,” the new Muslim female actors who state that they “benefit from and employ the concepts

of feminist movements” (*Birgün*, May 5, 2004) and the protagonists of new novels who search for the possibility of an Islamic life without the headscarf or through the friendship of people from non-Islamic circles are all indicative of new Muslim subjects who develop a discourse in which Islam is reinterpreted as a practice compatible with democracy, secularism and feminism. Recent research has also demonstrated that as Islamism has created its intellectual, political and entrepreneurial elites and new middle classes during the last two decades. It has undergone major changes connected to the transformative forces of a more liberal market, the agency of women, self-reflexivity and individuation (Göle, 2000). In a parallel vein, Arat’s study on headcovered women shows how these women reinterpret Islamic law in keeping with their modern identities and practices since they reject “poligamy, unilateral divorce, or unequal inheritance rights that are generally attributed to Islam and viewed as restrictive of women’s liberties.” According to Arat, these new interpretations of Islam demonstrate “the infiltration of secular values of equality into the religious frameworks” of new generation of Muslim women (Arat, 2001; 43). It might be argued that as Muslim actors intrude into the heterosocial spaces of modern urban life and interact with secular republican values, they develop different interpretations of Islam and negotiate life style choices among different options. Novel interpretations of life choices of Muslim actors display a potential to transform secular public life in Turkey to be more diverse and democratic, as they make Islam more compatible with other worldviews.

Finally, then, in this transformation of Islamism, I would argue that the novel as a genre appears to be the most important tool of the new actors of Islamism in their reappropriation of religion and modern forms of life. The

narrative form of the novel allows Muslims to make sense of life and themselves along as they attempt to reorder events and renarrativize their life history. Writers use the novel as a tool of self-reflexivity, criticizing the restraints of the collective definitions of Islamic identity and “giving voice to and subjectivizing the Muslim” (Göle, 1997; 80). New novels provide Muslim actors with a rhetorical means of negotiating both individual and collective identity rather than expressing prescriptions for an Islamic community. The rhetoric allows the narrative of ‘cultures in contact’, rather than ‘cultures in conflict’. By reinterpreting the golden age of Islam, by questioning their ideals, by fashioning their inner conflicts as caught between the homogeneity of faith and the heterogeneity of practice, and by establishing horizontal relations with the ‘other’, the characters of the new novels represent a potential hybrid Muslim identity. New novels, with their narratives of the intimate relations and internal worlds of Muslim actors, manifest both the way in which experience is re-narrativized over time and the way in which the perceiving subject itself is transformed. These transformed subjects refer to newly emerging Islamic imaginaries in the public sphere, which create a tension within the Islamist movement and signal in turn the transformation of Islamism.

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