

LIVING WITH THE SPECTERS OF THE PAST:
AN INSIGHT INTO IDENTITY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND
MEMORY IN TRABZON

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Thesis Abstract

Erol Sađlam, “Living with the Specters of the Past: An Insight into Identity, Subjectivity, and Memory in Trabzon”

This thesis aims at comprehending the dynamics of identity in Romeika-speaking locals of Akyayla, Trabzon, through focusing on the status of Romeika as a living memory. My analysis depicts the language as a private and intimate element of communal identity that fuels the investment in and performance of Turkishness in the area. Public private discussion is reassessed to understand the complexities of the (in)visibility of Romeika in the public sphere. This research also touches upon how Romeika-speaking locals relate to official discourses and other communities who raise political demands that are based-on their socio-cultural distinctions. The staunch allegiance of locals to nationalist ideals is analyzed in relation to their haunting heritage and memories. Finally, dynamics of local identity and how it affected by the continuity of Romeika is discussed in relation to psychoanalytic theory to get a better grasp of subjectivity, identity, and remembrance in Akyayla.

Tez Özeti

Erol Sağlam, “Geçmişin Hayaletleriyle Yaşamak: Trabzon'da Kimlik, Öznellik ve Hafıza Üzerine Bir Katkı”

Bu tez, yaşayan bir hafıza olarak Rumca (Romeyka) üzerinden, Trabzon Akyayla'da Rumca konuşan cemaatlerin kimlik süreçlerinin dinamiklerini daha iyi anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma Rumcanın cemaat kimliğinin özel ve mahrem bir parçasını oluşturmasından hareketle nasıl bölgede Türklüğün performansını ve ona yapılan (duygusal) yatırımı alevlendirdiğini tasvir etmektedir. Bu bağlamda ve Romeyka'nın kamusal görünürlüğü veya görünmezliğinin peşinde, kamusal alan özel alan tartışmaları da yeniden ele alınmıştır. Bu araştırma aynı zamanda Romeyka konuşan Akyayla sakinlerinin devletin resmi söylemlerine ve kamusal alanda sosyo-kültürel farklılıkları temelinde talep geliştiren diğer grup/cemaatlerle ilişkilenmeleri meselesine de dokunmaktadır. Akyayla sakinlerinin milliyetçi amaç, ilke ve söylemlere olan kuvvetli bağlılıkları bölgenin hala yaşayan tarihsel mirasına ve toplumsal hafızası ile ilişki içerisinde tahlil edilmiştir. Son olarak da, Akyayla'daki kimlik, öznellik ve hatırlama mekanizmalarını daha iyi anlayabilmek amacıyla, yerel kimliğin dinamikleri ve bu kimlik süreçlerinin Romeyka'nın günümüzde hala devam eden kullanımı ile ilişkisi psikanalitik teori çerçevesinde tartışılmıştır.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to understand the dynamics of identity and nationalism in Turkish context through an analysis of Romeika¹-speaking communities of Akyayla, in the east of Trabzon.² Through my research in the area and employing a particular theoretical perspective, I aim at deciphering the intricate links between identity and cultural practices, specifically in the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, to get a better grasp of pervasive performances of nationalism in the city. This account might also give us a clearer depiction of the pervasiveness of staunch nationalism in Turkey, especially of what we have witnessed in the last two decades that manifests itself in diverse modes of performances and discourses.

1 Although there is some confusion about the term used to denote the language, I prefer to use Romeika (*Rumca* in Turkish) since locals themselves refer to the language they speak with that term. That preference is also in parallel with findings of Bortone, Asan, Sitaridou, and Özkan; although Özkan chooses the term Muslim Pontic for his linguistic analysis. *Pontiaka/Pondiaka* is used in most of the Greek academic works, but locals have clearly stated that they do not use that term for their native tongue. Plus, as indicated by others, *Pontiaka/Pondiaka* is a term created by Greek scholars to differentiate the dialects spoken originally in Northeastern Turkish littoral, which have later been moved to Greece as a result of the population exchange in the first half of twentieth century. Moreover, *Elinika* (*Helence/Yunanca* in Turkish), which is used to refer to modern standard Greek of today, is never used by locals to name the language they speak natively. *Lazika* (*Lazca* in Turkish) has also been used, sometimes as a cover, by locals to name the language they speak although two languages are totally different.

2 Due to ethical reasons, I do not prefer using the real name of the area where I have conducted my field work with locals who speak Romeika natively. I also do not use the real names of my respondents from the area who have courageously shared their thoughts and feelings on their native tongue and surrounding socio-political implications. That avoidance is caused not only by ethical reasons which aim at preserving their social, physical, and political well-being, but also by my responsibility to ensure that their subjectivities, trust, personal thoughts are respected.

My analysis, in this sense, attempts to contribute to the existing scholarly works in two ways. The first aim consists of re-positioning Romeika as a socio-cultural practice, reminiscing the communal/personal stories of the people living in the area, since that local language is rarely subjected to sociological analysis which might give us clues about the composition of local culture and society. The fertile terrain provided by the analysis of the Romeika, as an intriguing heritage, might provide us an opportunity to examine the role played by that language in the processes through which locals in the area relate to both themselves and the others. The position of Romeika in the identity of locals, in this sense, might raise awareness about the field which in turn might lead to a further scholarly interest in the language.

The second aim of this thesis involves situating the local mechanisms of being and belonging, in the specific case of Romeika, by demonstrating how that language constitutes a remarkably central position in constructing local identities. Following that, I also aim at analyzing the dynamics of identity in the area through an assessment of how locals relate to others and by which mechanisms they cope with the transformations experienced in Turkish socio-political scene in the preceding two decades of turmoil and confrontation.

In this path, following these two aims, I claim that Romeika constitutes the traumatic core of identities in the area, where Romeika is spoken natively, which incessantly fuels the performance, investment, and discourses of Turkish nationalist identity. I also claim, in relation to other social groups, that changing socio-political terminology in Turkey has been one of the crucial factors by which local senses of

being and belonging are both subjected to a challenge and, in turn, rigidified. In this context, I suggest to approach identity as a continuous process of construction that is negotiated in connection with changing social, political, economic, and cultural circumstances. It is re-articulated and re-arranged in relation to the composition of the symbolic structure through which meaning and signification are produced.

Various scholarly researchers have outlined grand theories on the historical construction of nations worldwide. Implications of modernization and its subsequent developments have been designated as factors that paved the way for the “imagination” of nations constituting a global system of nation-states with forces that generally attempt to unify/harmonize various subgroups that are supposed to create a homogenous nation.³ The imagination or the construction of nation and of its political equivalence nation-state has not only profoundly transformed modalities of politics and culture, but also radically changed subjectivities of those individuals or communities.

Reformed modalities of being, belonging, and remembering lie at the heart of the topology of ideal Turkish citizenry within a modernist ideological structure that has profoundly re-articulated history, culture, society, citizenship, identity, subjectivity, and politics. That mode entails an entrenched commitment to a western style modernization and nationalism supported by rearranged accounts of the history of the nation as an entity constituting the basis of political legitimacy and action. Reforms, however, are not limited to the mechanisms of legitimacy in the political

³For more information on historical processes of the construction of the nation, please see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

sphere, solely. The so-called private realm or forms of subjectivity has also been deeply affected by the transformations of the era starting by the late Ottoman reforms and intensified in the early decades of the Republic.

Processes through which one assumes a position as a subject, remembers the past, affiliates itself with contestant forces in the political scene, conceives his/her position within a structure of meaning have all been shaped by the particular “modernization” process that Turkey underwent: Women's representation within the modernity vs. tradition with moralistic consequences, the strict implementation of laïcité, the acceleration of individualization at the expense of local networks and communities, the practices around a hegemonic definition of Turkish citizenship can all be considered as direct reflections of those processes. Various Turkish and non-Turkish scholarly resources have pointed out these significant shifts and how they have gradually become an essential part of modern Turkish citizenship and identity.⁴ This thesis might also help us to get a better grasp of contemporary Turkey and the nationalist reaction against diverse forms of demand and initiative for democratization, recognition, and representation.

The hegemonic existence of Turkish nationalism, and/or its public performance and circulation, is a crucial issue that forms the contours of Turkish social, cultural, and political life.⁵ Various debates around identity, history,

4 For a comprehensive overview of the reforms in the early Republican period, please see: Eric Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2006). Especially Section II. Füsün Üstel, “*Makbul Vatandaş*” in *Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet'ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005).

For an analysis on the recent transformations in the social and political spheres and their implications on subjects: Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

5 Gramscian concept of hegemony, as further elaborated by Chantal Mouffe, refers to an “indissoluble union of political leadership and intellectual and moral leadership” (Page 179)

citizenship, rights, culture, or autonomy are intensely legitimized through arguments either based on the givens of the nationalist discourse that define an ideal typology of citizenship within carefully carved boundaries of the nation, or challenged via a set of counter discourses which attempts to limit/reverse the effects of that nationalist discourse and its subsequent boundaries. The importance of the issue reflects itself incessantly in various discussions, ranging from the decades-long Kurdish conflict to the status of Alevis, from challenges to the status of Turkish as the sole official language to demands for education in Kurdish, from Armenian demands for the recognition of past and present atrocities by the state to democratization processes, from the flag-displaying protests to the lynching of Kurds or political activists. Profound implications of nationalism and its subsequent discourses, in this context, received various scholarly attentions, which have generally analyzed the implications of the reforms and discourses of the newly founded Republican regime in the first half of 20th century. Various others have touched upon the issue of growing nationalist emphasis on education, language, and

providing ontological and epistemological structure which produces truth, representation, and consent in addition to providing the illusionary cohesion in the society. It includes a system of nodes according to which the truth is defined and distributed; through these key signifiers, it stabilizes the meaning and signification for a social body in a given time and space. Such a twist, initiated by Antonio Gramsci and later developed extensively to understand the socio-political condition in Western Europe, have helped Marxist analysis to comprehend the striking absence of revolutionary experiences in relation to the role played by the state. When I use the term, hegemony, I refer to such a conceptualization of the very terminology of both politics and socio-economic spheres, which are supposed to be articulated and represented in a particular way to be legible and audible.

For further fruitful discussion on hegemony that have immensely affected my understanding of the concept and its reflections in contemporary world, please see:

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

James Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1998).

Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci," in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

politics in the succeeding fifty years that have witnessed the intensification of nationalist imposition and challenges under the banner of Kemalism.

Contemporary Turkish society is once again faced with a surge of those discourses and performances which both try to ensure the continuity of the grand narratives of the official accounts on identity, history, and culture. The process following the military coup in 1980 had imposed a strict and pervasively oppressive form of nationalist imagination and performance throughout the country, attempting to erase the traces of those communities and individuals who, one way or another, fall outside the limits of ideal typology of nationalism.⁶ Legal restrictions on the use of Kurdish might be pointed out as the culmination of those attempts, which has been implemented to suppress those cultural practices that essentially constitute a refutation of these official discourses on identity through undermining its conception of present and past. Existence of those “deviant” forms, in this sense, has basically been perceived as threatening forms that challenge the homogeneity of the nation, impairing official narrative, and disrupting the hegemonic mode of citizenship.

In the same process, however, Turkey has also experienced a radically transforming and growingly more visible counter struggle, notably Kurdish movement, which has challenged the prohibition and impositions by the state while trying to open space for its own terms and perspectives. Since the beginning of the Republican era, but certainly dating back to the period of late Ottoman rule, Kurdish groups have challenged the very terminology and modality of the Republic through which citizens are expected to assume a particular subject position, remember a

6 Zeynep Gambetti, “Linç Girişimleri, Neoliberalizm ve Güvenlik Devleti,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 109 (Summer 2007): 2.

specific past, and belong through a specific articulation to a specific modernizing ideology. Although, repressed violently a number of times by governments in the early twentieth century, the movement kept resurrecting and voicing new political demands that pose a radical challenge to the terms imposed by the state. PKK and Kurdish political parties ended up as increasingly radicalized, committed, and agenda-setting forces in the Turkish political scene due to the convergence of various factors that are too lengthy to state within the scope of this thesis.

Limiting ourselves to the discussion of Turkish nationalism, we should however note how the Kurdish movement and its increased visibility have an impact on Turkish nationalism, and other ethnic or religious communities in Turkey, particularly Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon in our case. In line with scholarly resources mentioned above, I assert that the increased visibility of Kurds in Turkish socio-political scene has deeply entrenched Turkish nationalism by fueling subsequent investment in, circulation of, and performances of nationalism. In other words, the last three decades have seen the ever-growing intensification of public visibility and affectivity of the Kurdish movement, which in turn, has produced another wave of nationalist reactions from those groups who consider themselves Turkish.

The recent decade and its subsequent nationalist eruptions brought in various consequences, coinciding with the growing profound changes in economic and social spheres. The significance of that process might lie at the very conjunction of various factors that converged to create a new socio-political domain under the new economic logic of neoliberalism. Given the unprecedented visibility of challenges

and demands from those who have previously been suppressed harshly, denied, and/or ignored, as in the case of Kurds, Alevis, Armenians or Greeks; these newly intensified socio-economic factors have paved the way for a new performance of identity in Turkish context. Citizens, feeling insecure in a profoundly transformed economic structure, have also been performing nationalism and circulating its discourses through various new forms: Lynches, marches, communal conflicts, or displaying flags.⁷ Blurring the boundary between the state and the public sphere, the transformation underlines an intriguing trend giving rise to intensive nationalist performances by the citizens.⁸ Thus, local and particular forms of Turkish nationalism and diverse dynamics, that create a push for collective and violent eruptions against those who are assumed to be threatening the structure of national identity, should be assessed to comprehend various underlying mechanisms and psycho-social, economic, cultural, and historical parameters that sustain Turkish nationalism.

Our analysis will attempt to understand the dynamics and implications of diverse psycho-social, cultural, economic, and historical elements through which we might grasp the structure and causes of over-performance of Turkish nationalism.

The following chapter will provide some information about the area, the research,

7 Zeynep Gambetti, "Linç Girişimleri, Neoliberalizm ve Güvenlik Devleti," *Toplum ve Bilim* 109 (Summer 2007): 1-3.

8 Zeynep Gambetti, "Linç Girişimleri, Neoliberalizm ve Güvenlik Devleti," 3-4. Another research also touches upon that intensification of nationalism in the face of unprecedented visibility of "others" in the social and political scene in the last three decades. The research examines how Turkishness is reconstituted and upheld in relation to changing dynamics: Ferhat Kentel, Meltem Ahıska, and Fırat Genç, "*Milletin Bölünmez Bütünlüğü*": *Demokratikleşme Sürecinde Parçalayan Milliyetçilik(ler)* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2009). Especially Chapters II, III, V, and VII demonstrates the dynamics of identity that are re-calibrated in the changing circumstances of Turkish social and political life and how ordinary people cope with those changes.

and the methodological foundations of this work in addition to discussing the socio-historical and cultural characteristics and developments in the area that have motivated me to start this research and embark a trip to Trabzon.

In the third chapter, I will try to analyze how Romeika acts as a bearer of the communal privacy and intimacy constituting the communal identity. The analysis of the privacy that the language constitutes, will guide us to a discussion on public and private in the area that is indexical, fluid, and fragmented. I will also discuss how citizenship and the public sphere interact in the socio-historical case of the Turkish Republic and how the hegemonic definitions of Turkish citizenship have affected socio-cultural distinctions, especially in the case of Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon.

The succeeding chapter, will deal with the mechanisms of interaction by which we analyze how locals engage in official discourses in the face of their, practical or imaginary, encounters with “the others”, who raise political demands about their socio-cultural distinctions. I will also attempt to decipher the meaning of their staunch opposition to such “politicization” and their allegiance to the state, as the *addressee* of such demands, in the wake of re-articulation of the public sphere, memory, citizenship, and identity.

In the last chapter, I will engage in an analysis of identity in relation to Romeika through analytical tools provided by psychoanalytic conceptualizations. Based on the preceding inquiries, psychoanalytic concepts, such as the symbolic, trauma, fantasy, and symptom will be utilized to get a better grasp of the intensity of the nationalist performance and investment in the area. Moreover, I will try to

understand the structural incapacibilities and the limits of identity which will be exemplified in the case of Romeika-speaking respondents. Additionally, in relation to our analysis of locals' relation to other groups in Turkey, I will discuss how locals' encounters with others produce affective changes in the area. This analysis will mostly rely on how the Kurdish demands and movement are perceived in affective terms by the Romeika-speaking locals of Trabzon.

CHAPTER II

FIELD, CONTEXT, AND METHODOLOGY

In late 2011, when I went to Trabzon for my field research, the city was experiencing similar structural processes to that of other parts of Turkey. Deprived of secure employment opportunities, the city presented a quite dilapidated scene with traces of a richer past, elegant but deserted buildings, a culturally vivid imaginary that is no longer alive, a thick cloud of paranoia and conspiracy, and an infallible hospitality. Facing away from the sea, the littoral is almost fully covered by a highway, Black Sea Coastal Highway [*Karadeniz Sahil Yolu*], further inhibiting the connection between the sea and the residents. Striking thing however, if you approach the downtown via highway either from the west or the east, is the series of monotype footbridges creating a passage for the pedestrians. Apart from their quite unaesthetic forms and colors, one point needs to be mentioned about them: they are all named after soldiers, “martyrs”, fallen in the fight against the PKK. One after another, all those footbridges remind you the everlasting support of the locals (or of the local administration) to the national cause that is threatened by a “subversive group”. Trabzon, as the second biggest city in the littoral, has an intriguing composition that needs to be grasped to understand the dynamics of the city giving rise to intense demonstrations of nationalism in the face of growing demands for the re-articulation of Turkish citizenship and identity.

After being an imperial capital for the Greek Empire of Trabzon for

centuries, the city has been taken over by the Ottoman Empire in the middle of fifteenth century. Following the start of the Ottoman rule in 1461, the city has experienced a gradual demographic change which has seen a movement by non-Muslim communities to move away from the center, in addition to a religious change in the population.⁹ Due to the resettlements in the area and the conversions¹⁰ in succeeding decades, the Islamic majority has been established in the city of Trabzon around the sixteenth century; yet the majority of the Muslim communities could not be established until the late seventeenth century in the historical district of Of, which also includes the area where I have conducted my field research and had a chance to talk to the locals.¹¹ Accordingly, “the Bishopric of Of has disappeared from the episcopal lists of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1645.”¹² Interestingly, this

9 For a detailed analysis of the transformation Trabzon experienced aftermath the Ottoman conquest, please see: Heath W. Lowry, *The Islamization and Turkification of the City of Trabzon (Trebizond) 1461-1583* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009). Especially, Chapters II and VI.

10 Although there is some dispute about the issue of conversions, which highlight anxieties around ancestry and identity, both Ottoman records and various scholarly sources indicate such a trend of conversion of non-Muslim groups into Islam in the succeeding two centuries after the Ottoman conquest. As referred by Meeker, City Registers of 1583 for the city of Trabzon indicates that the population of the city was half Turkish and half Muslim; however 70% of all residents were registered as Greek-speaking implying the significance of conversion. Moreover, a specific pattern about the names of men in City Registers also confirms the potentiality of conversion. Striking frequency of *İskender* and *Abdullah* might give us clues about *ihtida* (conversions into Islam) cases in the area.

Heath W. Lowry, *The Islamization and Turkification of the City of Trabzon (Trebizond) 1461-1583*, 148-152.

This does not, on the other hand, mean that the whole process of demographic change took place solely on the sphere of conversion. One, no doubt, also has to take immigration of Muslim communities and resettlement policies of the Empire to properly assess the dynamics of that change.

For more information about the discussions on conversion, please see:

Michael E. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley LA: University of California Press, 2001).

Ayşe Hür, “Trabzon'un Etnik Tarihine Bir Bakış,” in *Trabzon'u Anlamak*, eds. Güven Bakırezer and Yücel Demirer (Istanbul: İletisim, 2010).

11 Michael E. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 90 and 161.

12 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 161.

Ottoman registers for the area suggests a mass conversion around seventeenth century, as well, but

period also witnessed the emergence of religious academies of the area, which have later found great fame all over Anatolia and subsequently have been integrated and recognized by the religious establishment of the imperial capital, Istanbul.¹³ In this context, the district of Of constitutes an intriguing example of demographic change since they both converted into Islam almost one century after the other groups in the littoral and, maybe more interestingly, kept their pre-Islamic linguistic tradition, Romeika –a Pontic dialect of Greek–, up to this day.¹⁴ Although the language is heavily influenced by Turkish over decades, it is still preserved by communities in the area, as well as in some other parts of Trabzon.

With its multicultural societal structure, Trabzon had also been a major commercial and cultural center for the area, culminating in the first half of the eighteenth century with the intensification of links with the outside world, both economically and socio-politically.¹⁵ The following centuries, however, have witnessed both economic decline and communal conflicts due to the international

the path through which the conversion took place has been a controversial issue for both Turkish and Greek nationalism. Greek nationalist theses claim that the dispute between the religious leaders of Trabzon and Of has caused the latter, Bishop Alexandros, to convert into Islam in his quest for more power and influence under Muslim Ottoman rule in seventeenth century. Turkish theses, on the other hand, claims that some hodjas from Maras (*Maraşlı Hoca*) have come to the area in sixteenth century as Islamic missionaries and have gradually succeeded in Islamizing the residents.

13 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 161-165.

These academies have lost their official recognition and representation after the implementation of Republican reforms for secularization in 1920s. However, they remained in the area and kept on their tradition of religious teaching and scholarship, although in secrecy, thanks to the seclusion made possible by extremely mountainous geography of the area.

14 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 164-165.

The same continuity can also be observed for other peoples of the littoral, such as the Lazi or the Hemshinlis.

15 Güven Bakırezer, “Trabzon'un Sosyo-Ekonomik Çöküşü,” in *Trabzon'u Anlamak*, eds. Güven Bakırezer and Yücel Demirer (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 29-31.
Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, XXII, 103, 181.

context, wars, and the emergence of nationalism. The rise of nationalism resulted in a disastrous rivalry between the Greek- and Turkish-speaking communities that ended with numerous deaths and the population exchange in 1924. In the middle of the twentieth century, Trabzon had lost its non-Muslim elements, and the Turkish-Sunni hegemony had been firmly established in the city. Although, the eastern Black Sea littoral has a remarkable diversity in terms of customs and language, the allegiance of locals to the Republican ideals is quite entrenched and firm.¹⁶ Moreover, the locals seem to be quite integrated into the social, cultural, economic, and political spheres of the wider community, taking active roles in all domains of Turkey.

In the last decade, however, Trabzon has witnessed certain incidents that have brought the city and its internal dynamics into spotlight in the middle of the socio-political transformation Turkey has been experiencing. Although it was a relatively unknown cultural phenomenon till 1990s, the use of Romeika has been noticed by both academic and non-academic researchers, even though at a minimal level. Various reports in Turkey have indicated the intriguing existence of the language in Trabzon quoting locals saying “We are Turkish but our mother tongue is Romeika.”¹⁷ In the middle of that recently increased awareness in contradiction to previous

16 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 293.

17 “Evde, Kahvede Tek Dil: Romeika,” *Sabah*, January 4, 2011. Available online at: http://www.sabah.com.tr/Yasam/2011/01/04/evde_kahvede_tek_dil_romeika (Accessed last on April 15, 2013)
“Biz Türk'üz ancak ana dilimiz Rumca.” Here, one must notice the difference between the two separate signification of Greek language and people. *Yunan/Yunanli* and *Yunanca* stand for Greek (of Greece, *Yunanistan* in Turkish) and Greek language (of inhabitants of Greece) respectively. However, *Rum* and *Rumca* signify Greek-speaking citizens residing in Turkey/Anatolia and the language spoken by them, respectively. Cypriot Greeks constitute an intriguing case since although they are not Anatolian; they are still designated as *Rum*, rather than *Yunan/Yunanli*.

neglect, I also remembered the intensity of nationalism and religious conservatism in the area that has been reflected in a series of dramatic events unfolded through last fifteen years in Turkey.

In late 1997, Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew and some other prominent figures from various socio-economic echelons of Turkish society have embarked the ship, Venizelos, to highlight the urgency of the pollution levels in Black Sea and to attend “Black Sea Symposium on Environment”¹⁸, and sailed towards Trabzon as one of the key points in the region from where they had planned to keep the tour going to Greek ports, anchoring in different cities to disseminate their messages on environmental preservation. One of the leading figures of the Turkish industrial scene, Rahmi Koç, was also on board along with some other prominent political personas. The group had intended to disembark the boat to visit a local exhibition of folkloric characteristics of the area. However, rumors about a visit by the Orthodox Patriarch and his entourage had also been circulated around the city and a crowd had gathered in the port to protest against their visit and supposedly their “separatist agenda” which aims at “reviving the old Greek rule in Pontos”. The protesting locals blocked the entry of the Patriarch and others into the city while some even threw stones to the boat. Eventually, those on board concluded that they were unable to leave the boat amid protesters and departed the Trabzon port sailing towards Istanbul.

In April 2005, the city has witnessed another dramatic incident that has put

18 In the introduction of the book, *Trabzon'u Anlamak*, editors Guven Bakirezer and Yucel Demirel have put the name of the symposium as “Din, Bilim ve Barış” [Religion, Science, and Peace]. Guven Bakirezer and Yücel Demirel, “Giriş: Trabzon'u Anlamak,” in *Trabzon'u Anlamak*, eds. Guven Bakirezer and Yücel Demirel (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 15.

Trabzon into the spotlight, again. While five members of TAYAD (*Tutuklu Aileleri Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği* - Solidarity Association of Prisoners' Families) were distributing pamphlets about the harsh conditions and the isolation of political prisoners in F-type prisons, various rumors have been disseminated through the city about how they burnt a Turkish flag, publicly unfurled a PKK flag and a poster of the leader of PKK, Abdullah Öcalan. Hundreds of locals gathered in the center and attempted to lynch those five people. Police came to help, took the TAYAD members away from the crowd; and interestingly four of those activists have been detained by the police. Just four days after the incident, another group wanted to read a press release condemning the internment of those four, another crowd attempted to lynch them again. Various local newspapers have widely covered these issues and some have highlighted the strength of the nationalist feelings of locals, which they said, had been provoked unjustly by different “manipulators”.¹⁹

One year later, in February 2006, the Catholic priest Andrea Santoro of Santa Maria Church in the center of Trabzon was murdered by a 17 year-old juvenile. The murderer has expressed, supposedly, to have been influenced by Christian missionary practices and the Cartoon Crisis, which caused outrage in Islamic world due to the depiction of Prophet Mohammed.²⁰ The murder caused a controversy going beyond the borders of Turkey.

19 “Trabzon'da Sıradan Faşizm,” *Bianet*, April 7, 2005. Available online at: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/58486-trabzonda-siradan-fasizm> (Accessed last on May 2, 2013)

20 Cartoon Crisis has erupted by the publication of a number of cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammed by a Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, in late 2005. The incident has attracted numerous protests, a number of which has turned violent and resulted in casualties. The subsequent critiques and further publication of the cartoons in different newspapers and magazines outside Denmark have fueled the debate around freedom of speech, hate speech, and religious teachings/tolerance.

The next year, one of the most significant incidents that profoundly marked the recent memory of Turkish society has taken place with the involvement of a 17 year-old guy from Trabzon. In January 2007, Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was assassinated in Istanbul. A few days later, while running away after his accursed act, the murderer was caught in Samsun, on the way to his hometown, Trabzon. According to the video recordings leaked to the Internet, those police officers who had caught and detained him had also taken photos with him in front of a Turkish flag, demonstrating their support for his supposedly “heroic” act. More strikingly, thousands of supporters of Trabzonspor, the local team competing in the top national league, have demonstrated their support for the murderer by wearing white berets and chanting “*Hepimiz Oğün'üz!*”²¹ [We are all Ogun!] in reference to the widely discussed placards and slogans of funeral and demonstrations of Hrant Dink: “*Hepimiz Hrant'ız, Hepimiz Ermeniyiz!*” [We are all Hrant, We are all Armenians!] Blatant solidarity with the murderer for the sake of ever-intensifying nationalism continued to be reflected in numerous occasions.

These events²², followed by an awareness of the continuity of Romeika, have paved the way to formulate my questions about the dynamics of identity, culture, and memory in the case of Trabzon. What are the mechanisms through which identity is

21 “Müvekkili Gibi Avukatı da Tehditçi,” *Radikal*, September 27, 2009. Available online at: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=234061> (Accessed last on May 2, 2013)

22 Significant embeddedness of local reactions into violence should be noted here. Although, an analysis of violence and its characteristics in the local case require a much more extensive research and analysis, we can still say that these local performances of national identity is incessantly plagued by violent eruptions, which might give us clues about over-performance and over-investment. Through their violent manifestations, such performances might, indeed, be indicating the limits of “excess”, the re-constitution of identity by locals, and how it is reflected in daily encounters of locals. Pervasiveness of violence in the area, in this sense, is worth a separate analysis which might provide a valuable insight into the dynamics and intensity of local subjectivities.

connected to memory and culture? In the case of Trabzon, how is Romeika related to intense demonstrations of Turkish nationalism for the locals in these areas? What does it mean to be both Romeika-speaking and a Turkish nationalist? How local identities and subjectivities are produced, negotiated, challenged, and represented?

After learning about the intriguing continuation of Romeika and puzzled by the unfolding drama in the city over years, I have embarked a fruitful trip to Trabzon to discover the cultural and political patterns through which I would both understand the extend of the use of Romeika and related socio-cultural phenomena, and analyze the dynamics of identity through which one can get a better grasp of the impact of Romeika in the nationalist performances in the area. In order to accomplish the latter, I first had to understand the internal dynamics and the context in locations where Romeika is said to be spoken by the elderly. Thus, after a series of fruitful interviews in the downtown Trabzon, I have found myself in Akyayla, some 90 kilometers east of the center, where “there were people who speak it”, as my primary respondents in the city put it.

My first task was to understand the current condition of Romeika. In the 1965 Census, official records had registered 4.565 locals indicating their mother tongue as Greek (*Rumca*)²³, however different accounts on the area have implied a severe decline in the use of the language due to increasing nationalist attachments. In his book, *Pontus Kulturu [Pontos Culture]*, Ömer Asan had implied that the language is

23 Ömer Asan, “Trabzon Rumcası ve Pontos Etnofobisi,” in *Trabzon'u Anlamak*, eds. Güven Bakirezer and Yücel Demirel (Istanbul: İletişim, 2009), 179.

dying with youngsters generally refraining from using it in their daily lives.²⁴

Official accounts had also, even though in a limited sense, had admitted the existence of Greek speakers in the area but limited the use to an older segment of a relatively small mountainous area:

Although one can encounter a small number of elderly speaking a language which resembles Greek of Greece in the districts of Of, Sürmene, and Maçka and in the Tonya subdistrict of Vakfikebir; younger generation hates speaking this language.²⁵

With that information, I had expected to find only a handful of respondents who might give me relevant information on how to assess the co-existence of natively Romeika-speaking and Turkish nationalism. Following my initial interviews in the city center, I headed up to Akyayla, an area famous for its religious academies, where I expected to find some old people in the mountain villages.

In my two trips to Akyayla, which has centuries old history, I have engaged in in-depth interviews with locals. According to official statistics, the district has a total population around 6.000 residents but obviously less people were actually living in the area all year round. The relative small size of the population has been one of the basic tenets of the local demographic structure which has witnessed intense immigration to cities and abroad for employment and better opportunities. The area has always been an integral part of the historical district of Of but currently is organized as a separate administrative entity with necessary bureaucratic representations. Apart from bureaucratic engagements and transportation, employment opportunities are quite limited. However, the area is still famous for its

²⁴ Ömer Asan, *Pontos Kültürü* (Istanbul: Belge, 2000), XXXIV.

²⁵ *1930-1940 Yılları Vilayet Belgelerine Göre Trabzon*, Trabzon Valiliği Yayınları, Trabzon, 1997, p. 53. Quoted in Ömer Asan, "Trabzon Rumcası ve Pontos Etnofobisi", 179.

deep entrenchment in (secular) scholarly field as well as its religious academies.

My methodology for this research consists of participant observation, oral history, and in-depth interviews with locals who are mostly still living in the area, except one respondent who is currently residing close to Istanbul since he is working in an IT firm in that area. My ethnographic model have led me to engage in mostly unstructured conversations with locals that have touched upon various issues ranging from politics to history, from their economic concerns to personal memories, from Romeika as a part of their social existence to their views on contemporary Turkey. Their narratives, in this sense, constitute the basis of my research through which I attempted to grasp the dynamics of local identity and subjectivities. Due to the privacy of the language for the community, participant observation would not be adequate by itself, so I had to engage in further conversations with the members of Romeika-speaking communities to get more information about their sense of being, belonging, and remembering. I, however, do not claim to comprehend and represent the totality of local interactions and perceptions on these issues, neither do I suggest that locals I have been in contact directly represents the whole community. This research and the subsequent analyses are limited to the context of my respondents in which their perceptions, feelings, and thoughts are reflected upon.

Respondents are chosen randomly through local contacts, via snowballing technique, which might have created a level of bias in narratives, and that point should always be kept in mind as a limitation of our research. However, due to the local sensitivities on gender division and honor, my access to female informants was severely limited which resulted in an analysis based on the narratives of an almost

all-male informant pool. This second limitation should also be noted. As a third limitation, readers must remember the narrative-based structure of this research which relies on the representation of the local self to “an outsider” which would, inevitably, cause some distortions and gaps in the narratives. The public representation of the self would, predictably, not exactly correspond to intra-communal representation and discourses. Even though, I was shared with relatively unknown communal characteristics, it would still require a much deeper effort and time to get a better picture of local dynamics. Due to the political and social sensitivities around the use of Romeika, narratives of respondents are deeply fragmented and relative meaning is produced upon these fragments of local narratives.

CHAPTER III

PRIVACY OF THE LANGUAGE: CONSTRUCTING INTIMATE COMMUNITIES

Throughout my initial encounters in Akyayla, it was quite easy to find local men who were eager into expressing their views on local culture, success of their sons or daughters or relatives who have done quite well in bureaucratic or academic echelons, recent political developments, national history, local heroes and militia leaders of never-ending wars and inter-communal conflicts beginning in late nineteenth century till the establishment of the Republic in 1923, Kurdish demands and how state should respond to them, or grandiose international politics in the Middle East. Although they were sometimes not at ease with explaining their views on matters which might be deemed to be “excessively political”, the fact that I have roots in Trabzon through my paternal ancestry has significantly made it easier for them, since *hemşehrilik* [fellow townsmanship] establishes a strong connection. The hard thing to hear from the locals, as one might expect reasonably considering the socio-political context of contemporary Turkey, however was their views on Romeika and local history. After lengthy and strikingly similar conversations, when I first asked whether they could speak Romeika or not, the faces of all my interviewees have dramatically changed as if I had touched upon an essentially uncanny point about their identity. For almost all my informants, as soon as I posed the question, the eye contact got cut immediately with an evasive gaze focusing on a distant and blurry horizon. It was quite a self-explaining performance about the symbolic meaning of Romeika in the area. Its uncanny existence and ambiguity are marked.

Almost all my respondents answered the question if they knew the language with a staunch “No!” in the first phase. That blatant denial and discomfort reflect the

anxiety over the status of the language for the locals in an ever-changing socio-political context. That specific discomfort with the knowledge of that cultural trait is illustratively reflected in the words of Vahit Tursun, who wrote his thoughts on the region in the edited book, *Karardı Karadeniz*, as follows:

And then there is our mother tongue, Romeika, which caused many to suffer in different circumstances... They [those who emigrated from the area] were cautious not to speak Romeika. But regardless of that caution, they would still get *caught* by some of their neighbors in their houses, especially through dialogues between children. For a moment, mothers and fathers would blush. They would immediately stare at the neighbor, to contemplate on neighbor's reaction. For a forthcoming troublesome question, their brain cells, triggered by the confusion, would be busy to prepare a response. They would be on tenterhooks.²⁶

Tursun's detailed account of insider's contemplation of the Romeika as a socio-cultural practice, when they are “caught” by outsiders speaking that uncanny and obscure language unknown to outsiders, thus reflects the privacy and intimacy of the language. Moreover, one of my respondents also illustratively defined the status of Romeika for the community: “That is private for us, it is *sacred*. It is our *intimacy*. It establishes affinity.”²⁷ That privacy over the language reflects the initial reaction of locals whom I interviewed. Romeika is preserved into a communal domain within which the use of language is casual, according to the respondents. When outsiders put inquiries about their supposed-to-be-secret cultural characteristic, locals defensively tend to deny their ability to speak Romeika. The veil around the use of the language, especially in the presence of outsiders, constitutes a private sphere

26 Vahit Tursun, “Sancılı Geçmişten Sessiz Sona,” in *Karardı Karadeniz*, ed. Uğur Biryol (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 40. Emphasis is mine.

Tursun, a vocal native of the area, has written some essays on the status of Romeika. Some of my respondents, though, despised Tursun as “someone with harmful aims” indicating their assumption that “he has been working in line with Greek Pontos revivalists.” According to his website, Tursun currently lives in Athens, Greece, after leaving Turkey in 1989.

27 Ahmet. January 28, 2012.

within which communal ties are established and an intimacy among members of the community is sustained and strengthened.

The door of secrecy is slightly opened when the conversation goes on and with the significant help of my ancestry and local contacts; gradually, respondents' positions turn into "I understand a bit, but can not speak. Though, there are ones here who can speak." After the initial denial, locals begin, even though limitedly, talking about the language with unease. They are always cautious about revealing an intimate part of their identities, which in turn might be used negatively in the current political climate. Thus, they carefully select words when they explain the continuity of Romeika in their locale, and continuously add statements reasserting their unwavering history of Turkishness and their firm patriotism, as if they were trying to find an excuse for their "deviance" from the norm. As the conversation goes on, however, they begin admitting that they also can speak the language as everyone else in the area, through vague expressions that automatically inscribes the individual respondent into a community. To understand that hesitation and caution for the community about the language is clearly explained in the words of one of the interviewees, Hasan, who is from the area but lives in close to Istanbul currently and working as an engineer in one of the technology firms:

That [secrecy and privacy] existed in the past. It was more intense in the past. Yet, we had internalized Turkishness so much, or being non-Greek to be more precise. We internalized that so much. We consider that something like a crime or disgrace. I mean, being Greek. Or humiliation... We consider it as a humiliation, to express it more precisely. That is why we could no way admit it [that the language we speak is Greek]²⁸

That cascade of revelation also reasserts the privacy and intimacy of Romeika for the

28 Hasan. March 14, 2012.

members of the community in Trabzon through which distinct cultural characteristics of the community are continued in a secluded setting, where inquisitive gaze of the outsiders can not witness these cultural practices that might be perceived as a deviation from the ideal topography of Turkish citizenship.²⁹

This secrecy and privacy, however, should be carefully assessed in our context. Through designating Romeika as a private/intimate socio-cultural practice, we do not mean that Romeika is fully concealed under the public representation of locals. Although, its use is severely limited outside communal interactions and reserved for private sphere, it is easily predictable that outsiders know the existence of a “different” language that community members use among themselves, constituting the core of our analysis. In no uncertain terms, I do not assert any kind of statement which claims full secrecy for the language; on the contrary, such a controlled leak and its ambiguous existence produce the very foundations upon which local subjectivities are constructed, as is my analysis. While discussing the social dynamics of secrets, Louise White makes a parallel claim which blurs the very

29 In his article, Mahir Özkan also touches upon such a privacy in the case of Black Sea peoples (specifically the Lazi and the Hemshinlis) in general, which accordingly created a split between personal memories and public representation. Such public representation and its dissimilarity to intercommunal encounters have made it possible for those communities of the Eastern Black Sea coast to accommodate their socio-cultural distinctions in their privacy and at the same time to be fully integrated into the socio-political and cultural structure of the national space under the prototypes of *Karadenizli* and *Laz*: “Bu tanımlamaların tarihsel doğruluğundan bağımsız olarak bölgede halkların bir gerçek kanıları bir de resmi söylemleri bulunmaktadır. İnsanlar kendi aralarında başka bir tarih, kamusal alanda ise başka bir tarih konuşmaktadırlar.” Mahir Özkan, “Karadeniz Halkarı, Asimilasyon ve Reasimilasyon,” in *Karardı Karadeniz*, ed. Uğur Biryol (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 166.

The same process can also be analyzed in the case of the Lazi who have chosen to seclude their socio-cultural distinctions into the private sphere. Even today, *Lazlık*, as a visible socio-cultural distinction, lacks political connotation in the public and seems to be accommodated in the hegemonic conceptions of identity. Moreover, their perceptions of Kurdish movement and identity-politics seem to be in line with the official discourses.

Nilüfer Taşkın, “Laz mısınız? Estağfurullah! Laz Kimliğinin Politik Sınırları,” in *Karardı Karadeniz*, ed. Uğur Biryol (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 181-183, 187.

definition of secrecy:

Secrets and secrecy are social acts, constantly aware of audiences and publics [...]. When we realize how poorly secrets are kept, how selective and managed tellings 'leak' information to a wide variety of audiences, it seems clear that secrets ironically are ways of making information known.³⁰

Such a conceptualization of secrecy or privacy indeed helps me to understand how locals manage their socio-cultural distinctions and how outsiders are exposed to glimpses of such differences over time. Thus, in the case of Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon, the secrecy, as we understand, does not involve an opaque veil which does not transpire communal characteristics to outsiders; rather it should be considered as a particular manner through which a specific knowledge is managed and conveyed, it is a form of knowledge management and interaction.

That segmented revelation of their cultural practices allows locals to enjoy a privacy and intimacy through which individuals' attachment to the community is ensured which also takes away the potential sense of guilt of a possibly perceived "deviation" from the norm of Turkishness away from individuals to the community, where the same deviation is shared by fellow members. It also enhances a sense of security due to the public performance of Turkishness in line with the official discourses through limiting the "deviant" performances into the communal space. Thus, apart from safeguarding the community from further scrutiny and creating a secure public representation, that segmentation also provides individual relief and belonging that are further sustained and strengthened through the privacy of Romeika. Both the public invisibility and intimacy of the language are clearly

30 Louise White, "Telling More: Lies, Secrets, and History," *History and Theory* 39 (2000): 22.
Quoted by: Yorgos Tzedopoulos, "Public Secrets: Crypto-Christianity in the Pontos," *Bulletin of the Center for Asia Minor Studies* XIV (2009): 169.

depicted in the words of one of the respondents when I asked if locals would feel secure about inquires on the status of Romeika and how they perceive it:

They would react differently to a stranger. Because people are scared. Why? Who is s/he? Is s/he a police? Why asking that? This is our *intimacy*. Look, all the families, who speak Romeika, here consider it sacred. And, they consider it *private*. Well, there is no one else speaking that language other than us. If someone in any way can speak this language, I know either him/her or his/her family, or we are in a quite close area. That is why it is so sacred for us.³¹

Another respondent's account of his experience of hosting two Pontic Greek friends of him in his village also supports our claim that Romeika and intimate distinctions it creates constitute a strong basis for communal solidarity and identity:

Afterwards, while I was studying in Greece, I went to the village with two [Pontic Greek] friends of mine. I took them with me and went to the village. You had to see the atmosphere there. I, naturally, had taken some normal friends of mine there as well, but it was more like 'hello, welcome, how are you, how is your mom, how is your dad'... That was the whole conversation. A guest. But, then we went there with those guys. Well, wherever we go, the whole village would also come there. It was like that. It was like as if they were the children of one of our families who were living outside. They were like that. Because it is the same language. They know the most special thing inside your family. For instance, I will say *havis*, or I will say *malez* or *cumur*, or I will say something [in Romeika]. But, it would not mean anything for you. But, for him, it will mean something. This being the case, there was an incredible intimacy.³²

Thus, non-publicity of the language and its confinement to the communal limits establish a strong bond among members through which a solidarity and intimacy are constituted and sustained.

While analyzing the privacy of Romeika for the locals and the intimacy and communal belonging it provides, reflections of locals on its privacy and its public invisibility outside the community constitute an important point through which one

31 Yusuf. November 28, 2011.

32 Hasan. March 14, 2012.

can understand the dynamics and the position of the language for the community. When I asked if they would speak Romeika in the presence of outsiders and, if they would not, what were the reasons for that retraction, most of the locals I have interviewed have stressed their tradition of not using Romeika in front of people who do not know the language. Some have considered the issue as a gesture of “civility” and empathy with outsider who might be puzzled with what they do not understand. That symbolically important gesture also provides an important terrain for the locals upon which they all assert their “civilized” difference from Kurds, who are depicted as a group speaking their language in public with no concern for those who might not understand it. One of my interviewees, Yusuf, explains that as follows:

Well... Our people speak [in Romeika] among themselves. With those who know it. At least one two people know it. For instance, if you do not know Greek [Romeika], I would not speak Greek in your presence. However, discrimination within society starts in such cases. For instance, we have our Kurdish citizens here, they speak Kurdish. That is wrong! Well, why? And, you can speak among yourselves, as much as you want. But, I do not know it, what am I supposed to understand? Could I make my point clear? Well, we do not speak [Romeika in the presence of those who do not understand Romeika]. Three five people...³³

Another respondent confirms that attitude: “In a social setting, we would not speak Romeika, unless it is quite necessary. It is like speaking a *foreign* language [in front of those who do not know it].”³⁴ That specific seclusion of Romeika into the communal sphere, thus, relies mostly on a “civic empathy”, locals claim.

Some claimed that they consider learning Turkish as an opportunity for success in economic and social life outside the community. One of my respondents

33 Ahmet. February 1, 2012.

34 Kemal. February 6, 2012.

reply the question if it is true that they avoid using Romeika, by referring to such concerns of families to ensure the social adaptation of their children in the light of their personal experiences:

Avoidance to speak [Romeika] is true. Absolutely true. This is partially due to the pressure of families. They put pressure [on kids] to speak Turkish, specifically. Families did that. [...] 'I had difficulties because of that. I had communication problems. People have discriminated against us in some cases.' To make sure I do not experience such difficulties. Yet, everyone wants [their kids] to learn [it], too. [...] Dad still tells me that 'If you ever marry, marry someone *from us*; so that your child will know [it].' Because, as I said, it is something sacred for us, let alone not hating [it]. However, unfortunately, avoidance to speak [it] is true.³⁵

The language, thus, constitutes a private-intimate space within which speakers are connected to each other. It creates a communal sense of “we” which is carried by the language which is secluded to the private sphere. As can be seen, though they confirm their reluctance to use Romeika outside the communal limits, the reasons may vary among the speakers.

In addition to those explanations, some of my interviewees have also touched upon the issue of political obscurity that might come along with a public display of Romeika outside community boundaries. I claim that, beyond the common explanations over the privacy of the language, there might be certain socio-political factors forcing locals in the area to limit their distinctive cultural practices into their exclusive space. I would also argue that, the privacy of Romeika also ensures the political security of the community in the socio-political scene of Turkey. All through my conversations, my interviewees almost fully perceived minority position as a disadvantaged status in the current socio-political state, and that perception has

35 Muhammet. February 5, 2012.

solidly been supported by memories and contemporary experiences. One of my respondents states that uneasiness about the language they speak:

Occasionally, we would become restive at the language we speak. Is it Greek [*Rumca*] or Greek [*Yunanca*]? What is *Rum*, what is *Yunan*? A conceptual confusion... Or Lazi? It is also mentioned as Lazi. Is the language we speak Lazi?³⁶

Another respondent also touches upon that issue in one of his comments in a forum:

Unfortunately, we have avoided or have been deprived of speaking about that issue [the language]. To exemplify, almost all of us have posed that question once in their lives: 'Are we Greeks?' However, we had to confine ourselves to merely posing that question. Surely, one two of us, with some more courage, have asked that question to their grannies and grandfathers. But the answers they have got have generally been that: 'Hush! *E gavurobulin doles esi emis musulman imes. Alomiyan thena akugo hayitika.*' And this is the case that issue has reached our days. [...] I consider the way our grannies and grandfathers answered that question as a defensive mechanism. Because, even a single word coming out of their mouths might have had a really different meaning for us and we might have faced various sanctions or discrimination as a consequence in the society.³⁷

Almost the same dialogue is repeated by another respondent:

My grandmother is around her 90s, 92-93 years old. She does not know Turkish. She can not speak [it]. I say, 'Grandmother' and ask 'Are we Greeks?' She says, 'No, *tövbe tövbe*, we are Muslims.'³⁸

Another respondent mentions similar concerns for locals in relation to their use of

Romeika:

When a stranger scrutinizes that [the use of Romeika], especially when s/he has the attitude such as 'You speak that language, so you have to be Greek'... Because some [people] have experienced discrimination because of that. 'Greek seeds...' [...] People are cautious since there are such disturbances.³⁹

36 Ahmet. February 1, 2012. Once again the readers are invited to pay attention to the crucial difference locals recount between categories of *Rum* and *Yunan*.

37 Hasan.

38 Hasan. March 14, 2012. *Tövbe tövbe*, in Turkish, are the words uttered for repentance of sins by the faithful.

39 Veli. February 7, 2012.

Vahit Tursun also refers to such concerns in his article in the book, *Karardı*

Karadeniz, as follows:

The constantly experienced tension around PKK and Kurdish issue has prevented ethnic groups other than Kurds from talking about their distinct culture or cultural characteristics. No doubt, Greek-speaking community of Black Sea [Region] had their share [of such hindrance].

Today, with unprecedented levels of economic hardship, it caused Muslims with Pontic origins to hide more, and even more, pushed them to take part in nationalist, Turkist entities. Due to the experience of military coups in the past, people still hold sentiments of insecurity. The fear of being filed by the security forces is still alive in spite of all democratic developments. Greek-speakers refrain from engaging in an activity related to that language, writing anything about that issue, or participating in any cultural event. Because they have concerns such as 'I might lose my job eventually' or 'my children might struggle to get a job.' Probably, even after the full democratization of Turkish Republic, these fears [of Romeika speakers] will last long.⁴⁰

To understand that reluctance and caution, we should also investigate the developments that paved the way for the emergence of Turkish public sphere with its strong emphasis on nationalism and uniformity. The idea of citizenship or our very concrete example of Turkish citizenship, and its public demonstration demands citizens to “bracket” their differences in favor of a uniform citizenship through which all can be perceived as equals to participate and deliberate in the public.⁴¹ As we know, Republican ideology has thoroughly defined an ideal scheme according to which public performances of citizenship are deemed to be tolerable or not. Based on the premises of socio-historically constructed notions of Turkishness and Sunni-Islam, various other forms have been forced out of the appropriate [*makbul*] domain

40 Vahit Tursun, “Sancılı Geçmişten Sessiz Sona”, p. 41. My translation.

41 Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 62.

of identity and citizenship.⁴² That mode of citizenship and its public demonstrations, abruptly, pushed various “deviant” forms into “private zones” which might have been deemed to be more secure than they would be in the public considering the policies of the state towards groups that were publicly visible, as in the case of suppression of Kurds or structural discrimination against non-Muslim communities.

Appropriate public performances, as defined by the official discourse and disciplinary measures, generally promoted the use of Turkish, expected a steady allegiance to the regime and its paradigms, expanded the reach of politically backed Sunni-Islam, limited the visibility of “deviant” practices, and pushed those deviant forms into non-public zones where they could not be articulated as politically challenging demands.⁴³ From the case of Kurds to the experience of Alevis, from the

42 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, XIV.

43 In order to comprehend the discussions around the composition and forms of identity in Turkey, in a socio-historical context, one can track contemporary debates, both in political and non-political spheres, on the new constitution and its definition of citizenship. While some argue for a new definition around *Türkiyelilik* and *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Vatandaşlığı*, others stick to *Türklük* as the definition. Although the issue requires a much more extensive debate, that second stance, a defense of inclusiveness of the *Türklük* as a definition of citizenship, assumes the neutrality of the term and, in turn, underlines a crucial point in the Republican conceptualization of citizenship and public sphere: its claim to be universal, identity-blind, and neutral. Although, the Republican ideology also has associated itself with ethnically toned historical theses that connect “Turkish nation” to the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, it has also included clauses such as “*Ne mutlu Türk'üm diyene!*” which emphasized the identity-neutral claim of the citizenship. These two dimensional structure must always be kept in mind when trying to grasp the pervasiveness of Republican-modernist, and partially of nationalist, call in the country. Such a conceptualization also assumes a strict divide between public and private, latter of which is to accommodate socio-cultural distinctions.

For a few examples of such articulations around new definitions of citizenship, please see:

“Türk Milletine Çağrı' Bildirisi Açıklandı,” *Milliyet*, March 27, 2013. Available online at:

<http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/-turk-milletine-cagri-bildirisi-aciklandi/siyaset/siyasetdetay/27.03.2013/1685914/default.html> (Accessed last on April 29, 2013)

“O Bildiriye Neden İmza Attılar?,” *Habertürk*, April 3, 2013. Available online at:

<http://www.haberturk.com/polemik/haber/832801-o-bildiriye-neden-imza-attilar> (Accessed last on April 29, 2013)

“Anayasada 'Türk'lük Tartışması,” *Radikal*, March 29, 2013. Available online at:

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal.aspx?atype=radikaldetayv3&articleid=1127148&categoryid=77> (Accessed last on April 29, 2013)

discrimination against non-Muslim minorities to the infamous campaigns on the use of Turkish in public solely, and from the strict contemplation and implementation of laïcité to the changing of geographical names all over the country, one can clearly observe the imposition of a uniform modality of public identity and citizenship which strictly regulates the ways through which “others” could be represented in public. The status of Turkish language in public sphere constitutes one of the most illustrative cases through which Republican regime has consolidated its hegemonic conceptions of identity and subjectivity. Although reflecting a historical continuity, various dialects and languages have been pushed out of the public sphere, and the use of Turkish has been promoted.⁴⁴ That policy of the state has crystallized the role of Turkish for the Republican ideology and its reflections on citizenship and identity.⁴⁵

In an intriguing shift, that imposition and its hegemonic re-structuring of the public sphere might help us to understand the dynamics between those communities and the state. Yüksel Işık analyzes that imposition of the new Republican citizenship upon Alevi to comprehend their strong allegiance and support for the regime, which might also assist us to get a better grasp of dynamics of the nationalism of Romeika-speaking communities:

Following the foundation of the Republic, Caliphate had been abolished; and afterwards, 'concepts, that are directly related to Alevi, such as *baba* or *dede* had been banned alongside the forced closure of hermitages and dervish

44 Hüseyin Sadoğlu, *Türkiye'de Ulusçuluk ve Dil Politikaları* (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003), 276-277.

45 For a detailed discussion of intricate relation between nationalism and language in Turkish case with historical discussions of official policies and their implications, please see: Hüseyin Sadoğlu, *Türkiye'de Ulusçuluk ve Dil Politikaları* (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003). For the analysis of Republican policies in that domain, see Chapter IV.

lodges', but more importantly, laïcité has been adopted even if it has been weirded out by its content aimed to disseminate Sunni-Islam by the means of the state. For the first time ever, thanks to the Republic, Alevi, who had been forced to conceal themselves and to flee from the state since the time of Yavuz [Selim I], have attained an 'equal' status with others in the public sphere. Although that 'equality' ended up as an '*equality in absence*', it can ever fall between the cracks for a community which had always been subjected to massacres, whose murder is obligatory on sight, and who have always had a sense of insecurity for their lives and possessions. Wrapping it up in a single sentence to make it more comprehensible for those authors in their ivory towers... The relationship between Alevi and Kemalism is a state of 'concurrence with malaria in the face of death!'⁴⁶

As illustratively depicted by Işık; tactics employed by various communities in Turkish society, with the conspicuous exception of Kurds who fought over their visibility in the public sphere, envisioned a difference between private and public performances of identity and citizenship. A similar position can be attributed to Armenian community in Turkey that cautiously has avoided any political demand based on their identity and cultural/ethnic distinctions, as claimed by Erbal and Suciyan while discussing the socio-political condition of Armenians of Istanbul both in Turkey and in wider Armenian diasporas:

Additionally, the recent privileging of certain Diasporan Armenians as legitimate interlocutors in the Turkish-Armenian divide is a continuity of the same Republican nationalist mentality, because more often than not these privileged diaspora Armenians happen to be the ones who have chosen *not* to articulate any *political* demands. A subtle, premeditated silencing of

46 Yüksel Işık, "Alevileri Anlama Kılavuzu [Guide to Understand Alevi]," *Radikal*, December 12, 2011. Available online at: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1072232&CategoryID=99> (Accessed last on 27 January, 2013) Emphasis is added.

Original in TurkishMy translation.

In her analysis of the interrelationship between space, subjectivity, memory, and identity in the case of late Alevi music, Leyla Neyzi makes a similar statement. She indicates that early Republican Alevi generations generally been compliant with the assimilationist policies of the Republic which have inscribed Turkish-nationalist-modernist fragments of subjectivity deep inside the Alevi subjectivities today.

For more information: Leyla Neyzi, "Embodied Elders: Space and Subjectivity in the Music of Metin-Kemal Kahraman," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38/1 (2002).

Armenians' legal and political demands, therefore, permeates both relations and the discourse, and leads to a further evasion from the issue that is, in essence, *political*.⁴⁷

That conceptualization of identities and citizenship demanded subjects to publicly express only those characteristics that are compatible with official discourses; Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Alevis, Kurds, and others fall outside those limits, alongside with the Romeika-speakers of Trabzon.⁴⁸ As a consequence, those “inappropriate” categories are secluded into the private sphere, stripped of their political connotations, either rendered invisible or reduced to harmless cultural ruins frozen in an eternal past without whatsoever connection to the present. Foti Benlisoy also talks about such processes through which several cultural distinctions are transformed into apolitical folkloric remnants of the past. He points out that process of gentrification, as follows:

An identity of victimhood that does not include struggle can be an 'identity' that the sovereign, even at its best, tolerates. For instance, Greeks of contemporary Turkey are captives of such identity of victimhood without any struggle/resistance. As nostalgic, sympathetic folkloric elements Greeks constitute a recognized other with no threat for the powerful. [...] Their representations, which have been rendered nostalgic and sympathetic, and the visibility of their distinctions-identities are not a threat for Turkish nationalism, but on the contrary, a reason for self-appraisal.⁴⁹

That specific use of the term, *political*, in this context, thus, includes a vital importance underlining the structural implications of the politics, which should be conceptualized as a counter-hegemonic struggle that aims at changing the very terms

47 Ayda Erbal and Talin Suciyan, “One Hundred Years of Abandonment,” *The Armenian Weekly*, April 29, 2011. Emphases are mine. Authors refer such tendency to understand the position of Istanbul Armenians within the greater Armenian community or diaspora.

48 One can here also remember other social categories that have been pushed to the margins of “appropriate” public domain, ie. Political Islamists or LGBT individual/communities.

49 Foti Benlisoy, “Mağduriyetten Faillige Kimlikler,” *Granta* 1 (Spring 2013): 63. My translation.

organizing the life itself. It is, in this sense, a radically subversive move that aims at re-articulating the political scene to make space for another modality of being and belonging, intricately related to the constitution of identity, but not limited to it.⁵⁰ Political, both as used in our research and as understood in several theoretical perspectives, covers a more structural confrontation between hegemony and counter-hegemonic subversive challenges. As indicated by Ranciere, it is a process that witnesses the confrontation between the forces of policy and equality/emancipation/politics, it is a struggle to raise the voice of the self in its own terms.⁵¹ Thus, our understanding of the political consists of a characteristically radical challenge that confronts the hegemonic structure to open space for the excluded/suppressed/ignored, to distort its sustenance or operation, to replace it.

That assertion is generally supported by locals' claims that those outside the community do not regard Romeika as an odd social phenomenon since they neither speak it in front of outsiders nor depict the language as something more than mere cultural quality with a humorous side. Some respondents' statements about Romeika and their interaction with outsiders reflect that process of stripping political connotations of such cultural distinctions and caricaturization of them. One of them refers to depictions of the local cultural practices in such terms:

50 When discussing the term political, in the footsteps of Žižek, we can also talk about an “effective” “socio-critical resistance” to power that involves in “a radical rearticulation of the entire symbolic field by means of an act proper, a passage through 'symbolic death.’” It requires the engagement of an “ethical act” that “disturb[s] the fantasmatic kernel” of the symbolic order and re-arranges *points de capiton*. Such radicalism is the point by which they are separated from “imaginary” resistances that “reasserts the symbolic status quo and even serves as a positive condition of its functioning”. Slavoj Žižek, “From 'Passionate Attachments to Dis-Identification,” *Umbr(a) 1 Identity/Identification* (1998): 5-9.

51 Jacques Ranciere, “Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization,” *October* 61 The Identity in Question (1992): 58-59.

But what is the case [here], that guy can depict it [that Romeika spoken in the area] as a quality. Look, for instance, there is that [TV] program of TRT. The one with the woman, who travels around, named something like 'Yollarimiz ...!', the one traveling around Turkey for seventy years. There they reflect it as a humor, or they reflect it as a cultural [phenomenon]. But, you cannot approach Kurdish in the same manner? Well, there is something political [...] Look, for instance, we can use Romeika culturally. For instance, visitors say... Look, there are programs made here on Romeika speakers. The Lazi is spoken. This and that. But you cannot reflect it [Kurdish] so. Because of what? It is used politically.⁵²

And even, when that caricaturized depiction is not sufficient for locals, they resort to a cynical approach that is employed to cover the uncanny connotations of Romeika.

Apart from presenting Romeika as “*kültürel birikim*”, one of the respondents also told how he responded inquiries about the language:

Sometimes, in the university, some would say, 'You must be Greek since you speak Greek' and such. The guy who says that is from Rize. [Laughing] Then, I would say 'So, you are Lazi'. There is nothing negative about that, for me. Not for him, either.⁵³

Thus, those distinctions that are perceived to be incompatible with the demands of the Republican regime have been de-politicized, pushed into a private-cultural sphere that is bounded to a frozen past, and their contemporary reflections are handled through a cynical attitude that slides over the issue silently.

Uniform depiction of identity and citizenship alongside with nationalist history writing and policies, thus, fully occupied the Turkish public sphere, choking other modes of existence and expression, making it practically, and usually juridico-politically, impossible for these communities to articulate their demands from the state in the public sphere. That impossibility, no doubt, emerged out of the structural inability or refusal of the (Turkish) public sphere, since the construction of its

52 Ömer. February 3, 2012. TV program of TRT implied here is *Gezelim Görelim*.

53 Ahmet. February 1, 2012.

hegemonic composition, to absorb those non-Turkish and non-Sunni Islamic groups and to embed their discourses and demands into its official body. Michael E. Meeker, also, touches upon that process, brought by the emergence of Turkish hegemony by referring to the socio-historical case of the eastern Black Sea communities evolving from the imperial Ottoman structure to the modernist Turkish Republic:

In Ottoman times, social categories like Laz and Kurd, although not prestigious, no worse than 'Turk', a similar kind of term, which derogatorily referred to a Muslim Anatolian villager or a Turcoman nomad. Since the development of Turkish nationalism, however, new implications have arisen in connexion with the use of these words. Now the conclusion is sometimes drawn that people categorized as Laz or Kurd are somehow less than true Turks. [...] They [locals in eastern Black Sea area] maintain they are Turks and would only distinguish themselves as being Black Sea Turks (*Karadenizli*), an explicit regional classification.⁵⁴

Thus, emergence of the new articulation of the Republican citizenship through Turkish features decorated with Sunni-Islam thoroughly transforms the mode of identification and poses a challenge for those who might fall outside those limits.

Two possible tactics might be carved out in response to that process of exclusion and seclusion through which “others” are pushed out of the public sphere: First path would include reconciliation/assimilation by those excluded groups to admit the new structure and either relinquish their distinctions or confine these “deviant” practices into their private/communal space away from the control and discipline of the state. I have indicated before that several groups have been

54 Michael E. Meeker, “The Black Sea Turks: Some Aspects of Their Ethnic and Cultural Background,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971): 322.

The reader must be aware of the fact that the term Laz refers to diverse peoples of the eastern Black Sea region in general with no specific signification of Greek-speakers, the Lazi, or Hemshinlis. The author uses the Lazi to designate the people with distinct linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics, who live in the easternmost sections of the littoral, toward Georgia. Wider Anatolian populations to refer to people from the area, however, use the Laz. For further information on differentiation of the use of Lazi and the Laz, please see page 321 of the aforementioned article.

structurally forced to choose this option, which has been clearly visible in the case of Greeks of Istanbul, as mentioned by Foti Benlisoy who further argued that such docility is later on absorbed to the extent that those communities took pride in their loyalty and allegiance to the Republican regime.⁵⁵ That does not automatically mean, however, that those groups fully absorb the discursive premises of the Republican regime and deny/forget/suppress their socio-cultural distinctions. Although that might also be the experience for various cases or can be observed increasingly with younger generations who are more integrated into the wider society, one might also conclude the continuation of those “deviant” practices in the comfort of their private space among their fellows.

If not fully assimilated, such tactic would involve the privatization of distinctions alongside a specific public display of identity. Thus, it becomes neither a full scale assimilation for all groups, nor a fully conscious performance and representation of socio-cultural distinctions in public. It embraces both assimilation and dissimulation since such reconciliation might bring both the denouncement of socio-cultural characteristics and, alternatively, their continuation in the comfort of privacy. Various cases can be referred exemplifying that path: Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Romeika-speakers, the Hemshinlis, the Laz, and Alevis.⁵⁶ The crucial point of such an adaptation is its invisibility or the very absence of its representation

55 Benlisoy, “Mağduriyetten Faillığe Kimlikler,” 63.

56 For a productive analysis of the Lazi identity and representation, which have also clear parallels with our analysis of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, please see: Nilüfer Taşkın, “Laz mısınız? Estağfurullah! Laz Kimliğinin Politik Sınırları,” in *Karardı Karadeniz*, ed. Uğur Biryol (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012). Nilüfer Taşkın, “Representing and Performing Laz Identity 'This Is Not A Rebel Song!'” (MA Thesis, Bogazici University, 2011).

in the public sphere politically, where the imposing authority of Sunni-Turkish hegemony reigns. Through historical analysis of the converts of *Kurumlu*, Zeynep Türkyılmaz also touches upon that public invisibility of distinctions:

Despite the markedness of their difference, which was acknowledged locally under the name of *Kurumlu*, it is also clear that such a difference was accommodated as long as there was no public vocalization and/or display of what it meant to be *Kurumlu*.⁵⁷

The privacy of those distinctions, thus, constitutes one of the pillars through which republican public sphere has dealt with groups bearing non-Turkish and non-Sunni characteristics. Such seclusion has ensured the political safety of those communities and provided opportunities for them to represent themselves in economic and political domains by means which are identity-blind and articulated in tandem with the modernist-Republican ideology, as we have indicated before in the case of Alevites who welcomed such equality in absence of the Republic. Yorgo Tzedopoulos, also points out that mechanism of the Ottoman regime toward deviant groups, through the specific case of religious deviance, conversion, and apostasy:

Of course, the deviant religious practices of those villagers [Kurumlus], who, according to the British consul in Trebizond, were seen as being 'neither Mussulmans nor Christians'; were not to be officially accepted. Socio-cultural realities, however, were open to negotiation, and eventually contradictions were tacitly tolerated. Unlike the Shiite *Kızılbaş*, who had challenged the legitimacy of the Sultan's power in the sixteenth century, religiously deviant populations (like the Judaizing *dönme*) were as a rule not persecuted in the

⁵⁷ Kurumlus, or Kromni, has been used to refer communities which were historically residing in the hinterland of Trabzon Vilayet of Ottoman Empire, what is now the mountainous area between Gümüşhane and Trabzon, who have supposedly continued an intriguing amalgam of Islam and Christianity, but later declared their wish to return to Christianity alone and to be registered as such, in nineteenth century. Their case, although not fully secret and constitutes a fruitful example of public secrets, has triggered anxieties of Ottoman administration which have strangled the movement via its bureaucratic red-tape and attempted to sustain the Muslim hegemony of the Empire.

Zeynep Türkyılmaz, "Anxieties of Conversion: Missionaries, State and Heterodox Communities in the Late Ottoman Empire" (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2009), 69.

Ottoman Empire. As long as they fulfilled their obligations vis-à-vis the state, kept a low profile and did not cause scandal among their more orthodox neighbors, they were left more or less free to live in blasphemy.⁵⁸

Although increasingly integrated into the wider Turkish socio-cultural and political spheres, all groups still perform their distinctive cultural and/or religious practices – for some that continuation currently even goes beyond the private domain and is raised as a political demand for recognition vis-à-vis the state, as we can see in the case of Alevis and their djemevis [*cemevi*].⁵⁹

A second tactic would, predictably, would involve a reaction from those groups whose socio-cultural and/or ethno-religious distinctions have been challenged and forced into seclusion away from the public sphere, or “bracketed”, by the hegemonic conceptions of the Republic around identity and citizenship. This path might involve dissimulation and thickening of socio-cultural distinctions.⁶⁰ Through an experience of blatant rejection, excluded groups cultivate a growingly separate yet challenging consciousness on identity and present which might, in turn, create direct confrontation with the hegemonic structure. As we have seen in the case of Kurds, that path also included the path to resort to an open armed conflict with the state. While the latter has wanted to fundamentally Turkify the public sphere and, thus, exclude characteristics of the Kurdishness from that domain, Kurdish groups have continuously contested that intention via a series of rebellions. Moreover, these

58 Yorgos Tzedopoulos, “Public Secrets: Crypto-Christianity in the Pontos,” *Bulletin of the Center for Asia Minor Studies* XIV (2009): 169 – 170.

59 Caroline Tee, “Holy Lineages, Migration and Reformulation of Alevi Tradition: A Study of the Derviş Cemal Ocak from Erzincan,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 37/3 (2010): 336.

60 Dennis Klein, “Assimilation and Dissimulation: Peter Gay's Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture,” *New German Critique* 19/1 Germans and Jews (1980): 158-159.

socio-cultural or ethno-religious distinctions have also been transformed into categories that have been utilized to raise political demands from the state. Although, it had been completely denied for decades in twentieth century, Kurdish identity has recently been recognized and partially got rid of legal restrictions on its public representation. Reasons that enabled Kurds to opt for the second option and directly challenge the official policies, however, are diverse and beyond the reach and capability of this research. Our research deals with the former tactic that has been more or less adopted by Romeika speaking communities in Trabzon.

Based on my observation and locals' reflections, I assert that Romeika is constituted as a private cultural capability that is secluded into the intra-community interactions. That seclusion and its non-publicity constitute the area, where the language is spoken, as a private space within which both individual and communal identities are established and sustained. Two aspects of that statement, however, should be clarified: the dynamics of identity and the meaning of public and private.

To begin with the former, it should be noted that identity, as reflected upon throughout this thesis, is not articulated as a homogenous and coherent structure that is based upon a stable essence with fixed boundaries constituting an inside and outside. Rather, following diverse theoretical contributions on the analysis of the identity, it is treated as a constantly changing and “negotiated” phenomenon that is definitely affected by interactions of the self with others.⁶¹ It involves a process of

61 Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 38.

For a detailed discussion on the use of the concept of identity, please see: Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond 'Identity',” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000).

Brubaker and Cooper carefully analyzes how excessive use of the term in contemporary social disciplines have corroded the effectivity which have gradually signified both everything and nothing. One must note that, while our understanding of the category of identity avoids denoting stable essences for social identities and prefers treating them as fluid and fragmented structures, in

identification through which subjects acquire conceptions of who they are which is always fragmented and “is never a final or settled matter”.⁶² Such a reflective and interactional process “involves knowing who we are, knowing who they think we are, and so on: a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities.”⁶³ In his preface to his photos in the first Turkish volume of *Granta*, Osman Bozkurt depicts a quite instructive portrait of identity:

Identity is like the thing which gazes upon itself, cut out to fit the self [by others], cut out to fit the self [by the self], exasperated, contradictory, aggressive, non-conforming, conforming, one that we want to belong to, limiting, liberating, one that we chase, one that chases us.⁶⁴

Thus, when I refer to individual or communal identities of locals, under any circumstances, I do not conceive a holistic body that is acting rationally in a number of cases and, yet, preserving its essential characteristics.

On the contrary, my conceptualization of identity basically refers to a fragmented constellation that is re-articulated over and over again through endless interactions of the subjects with both themselves and outsiders.⁶⁵ It does not envision

line with scholarly tracks which have been labeled as “clichéd constructivism”; that does not mean identities as social categories completely lack “persistent” features. The very concrete co-existence of community members in a given time and space, and maybe their sharedness, is always an important element of the analysis of identity which constitutes the terrain upon which such fluidity and fragmentation take place. Thus, when we claim a structural instability, we do not mean that members of the social collectivities lack any form of sameness; rather we refer to processes through which such shared experience and qualities are transformed and attached to some other signifiers. And even when such persistent elements are detected, our analysis asks the question of “how do these elements interact with others on practical and discursive terrains?” rather than “why do they *still* exist?”.

62 Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 17.

63 Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 5.

64 Osman Bozkurt, “Zihin Haritaları,” *Granta* 1 (Spring 2013): 80. My translation.

65 Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 9 and 38.

a fixed essence; neither assumes rational tactics creating clear-cut boundaries between true and false, private/individual and public, or inside and outside. Thus, this thesis do not, directly or indirectly, claim that privacy of Romeika and locals' public performances through excessive performances are a result of rational calculations presupposing a proper awareness of limits, differences, and desires shaping their identities in public. Rather, my argument strictly avoids such a handling of the issue and conceives such incompleteness and fragmentation as the structural characteristics of the identification processes, which are by their definition vague and heterogeneous. Meltem Ahıska, in her discussion on identity, also touches upon a quite intriguing aspect of modern identity:

In contemporary world (or worlds), where all the specters emerge from cellars they have been jammed in, where west-oriented modernity is fragmented first by wars and massacres, and then by post-modern and post colonial reflections, can we still think of 'identity', with all its use, as a dream for home? On the contrary, is it not more illuminating to contemplate identity as a hope of escape, not necessarily from home, but from the hole that one has been incarcerated? Some sort of escape from the self (from not being the self)... From an existence, [that has been made] through coercion, violence, economic profit, disciplining of desire, denial of body and experience, in other words [an existence] that is not itself any more and has been crammed into a hierarchy by the disruptive and aligning history of modernity, an escape to the centrally organized space of the symbolic by shouldering the 'cultural' arms that have been made within this same history, again. Giving a new existence to disintegration, silencing, not being yourself through representation. Is not it such a place [where] identity begins speaking?⁶⁶

Thus, identity emerges as a structurally evasive category that always leaks from the strict limits of modern normative orders, which try to draw stable boundaries creating fixed inside and outsides. Rather, our understanding of identity, and its representation, deals with the fissures in the normative order through which the

66 Meltem Ahıska, "Kimlik Kavramı Üstüne Fragmanlar," *Defter* 27: 14.

wounded and confused self constantly re-articulates the meaning of contradictory elements of identities, around a traumatic silence that is not represented but still disrupts its operation through its absence.⁶⁷

As of the second aspect of our claim, the privacy here should not solely be comprehended as individual or domestic sphere, as it has generally been designated by theories that analyzed the issue through a fundamental dichotomy. In the case of Romeika-speaking communities, the privacy of the language constitutes the boundaries of the community as a private space, beyond which mode of communication changes, marking the outside the communal area as the public. However that transition between public and private is not based on a topographical divide; rather, it is the relationality among the members of the community which constitutes transitions between the public and the private. Thus, outside the physical boundaries of the villages or of the town, one can still argue that the privacy can be maintained through interpersonal positioning and relationality. In the same manner, the physical space of the communal area does not automatically grant the presumed privacy and intimacy to the members for the use of Romeika, especially in cases when outsiders are present and might be puzzled or intrigued by its vocalization. Thus, our analysis must dwell on a particular understanding of public and private, which might change depending on the relationality among members of the community and outsiders. That relationality should also encapsulate fluidity of the spaces that can change throughout the terrain without constituting a totality.

⁶⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 95.

PUBLIC - PRIVATE DISCUSSION

Since social practices and articulations are not always strictly limited to either public or private spheres, we need to find a theoretical perspective through which we can recognize the major shifts in the practical level. In the case of Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon, we see an intriguing phenomenon: beyond the boundaries of individual and the family, communities end up as private spaces vis-à-vis the general public. The limits of the community establish a sphere of privacy where Romeika is spoken without any hindrance from outsiders. Outside that limit is, on the other hand, designated as the public sphere where the locals limit the use of Romeika deliberately. However, communal space beyond the walls of houses can also be considered public vis-à-vis the privacy of the domestic sphere. When outsiders are present, the communal space does not provide the private and intimate terrain upon which expressions are not hindered; in that case, houses are constituted as private spheres where the use of Romeika is intensive. The same logic can also be extended inside the house as well. Before analyzing the processes through which the use of Romeika has been contained to the limits of the community on an interactional level however, I believe we must clear what we mean by public and private to comprehend the tactics of locals.

“Since the emergence of the [influential] doctrine of separate spheres”, as indicated by Susan Gal, the analysis of the social phenomena generally relied on the “contrasting and incompatible more principles that are conventionally linked to

either public or private: community vs. individual, rationality vs. sentiment, money vs. love, solidarity vs. self-interest.”⁶⁸ Habermas' controversial theorization of the “liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere” has also followed that track through which the basic tenets of the public are positioned in antagonism with spheres of the private, of the state, and of the economic activity.

As widely discussed, Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere has attracted numerous critiques which in turn helped us to analyze diverse contexts out of which new definitions of public and private. Based on his theoretical structure, the idea of public sphere assumes a domain, which “is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized area of discursive interaction.”⁶⁹ Regardless of differences based on class, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or political stance; the ideal public sphere is assumed to provide an unhampered, secure, and guaranteed channel through which citizens can participate in discussions for their shared concerns and aspirations.⁷⁰ It is ideally a sphere where rationality reigns deliberations to reach a common good as opposed to affection, love, interest, power of other realms. That Habermasian conceptualization of public sphere, as a socio-political phenomenon, basically is envisioned in opposition to what is domestic, private, emotional or familial in addition to the domain of the state or economic activity.⁷¹ It is originally positioned vis-à-vis the state, to render the

68 Susan Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13/1 (Spring 2002): 77-78.

69 Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 57.

70 Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” 57-59, 63.

71 Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” 82, 84.

state more accountable and transparent toward the citizens, and separated from economic domain where individual interests are favored in comparison to the general interests. It is, however, also separated from the private domain where supposedly the emotion reigns, constituting the public sphere as the sole realm of politics that can be articulated through legitimate terms that are comprehensible for all.⁷² In this sense, public sphere is ideally supposed to be a domain where all underlying inequalities can be ignored with the “leveling” of citizens to establish an inclusive participation by all for the good of all.

Apart from assuming a significantly stable boundary between what is public and what is private or domestic, Habermasian theorization of the public sphere fails to acknowledge the ever-changing dynamics of the interplay between public and private spheres in specific socio-historical circumstances⁷³ in addition to designating the public as the sole domain of politics through a specific terminology, that analysis of public sphere also fails to comprehend the transitivity between public and private spheres.⁷⁴ Moreover, the fundamental assumption of mutual incompatibility prevents

Haydar Darıcı, “Politics of Privacy: Forced Migration and the Spatial Struggle of the Kurdish Youth,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13/4 (2011): 459.

72 For a productive analysis of the public-private discussion in the case of Kurdish youth in Turkey, please see: Haydar Darıcı, “Politics of Privacy: Forced Migration and the Spatial Struggle of the Kurdish Youth,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13/4 (2011).

73 Habermasian conceptualization of the public sphere has attracted numerous critiques from different theoretical stances. Feminist critiques have raised their own objections to the conception of the public sphere as the site of politics, which in turn renders women's contribution, subjectivity, and struggles invisible through its radical exclusion. Various other critical comments have put emphasis in the heterogeneity of such spaces that are neither coherent nor stable, on the contrary include rather flexibly cross-changing indexicalities and fragmented nestings. Other critical perspectives have emphasized the absence of gender and, ethnicity, culture, communal ties, or even the (modern category of) “children” in the constitution of the public sphere.

74 Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” 85.

us from recognizing the private domains in public sphere and the public spheres within the realm of the private. Susan Gal also touches upon that issue and proposes a semiotic analysis:

[...] contrary to customary scholarly parlance and commonsense usage, 'public' and 'private' are not particular places, domains, spheres of activity, or even types of interaction. Even less are they distinctive institutions or practices. Public and private are co-constitutive cultural categories, as many have pointed out. But they are also, and equally importantly, indexical signs that are always relative: dependent for part of their referential meaning on the interactional context in which they are used. First, then, the public/private dichotomy is best understood as a discursive phenomenon that, once established, can be used to characterize, categorize, organize, and contrast virtually any kind of social fact: spaces, institutions, bodies, groups, activities, interactions, relations.⁷⁵

Thus, Gal attempts to recognize the fluidity of the public-private exchange in an indexical context rather than limiting and anchoring them in specific context, practices, or institutions. Their relevant use and contextual meaning are indexed and determined only relationally. That relationality and indexicality allow us to conceive an interplay between public and private which are not two clearly separated homogenous totalities, but rather as two heterogeneous entities constantly changing according to the characteristics of specific cases. In the words of Susan Gal, “spaces that are undoubtedly public (in one context) can be turned into private ones by indexical gestures [...] which are re-calibrations that bring them into new contrast sets.”⁷⁶ Thus, both public and private are not only co-constitutive but also fragmented constructions through which subdivisions produce public within private as well as private in public through its indexical composition. Susan Gal designates

75 Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” 80-81.

76 Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” 82.

that new perspective as “fractal distinction”, referring to the geometrical term which describes “how a single pattern recurs inside itself –is self-similar– often with multiple nestings.”⁷⁷ That recursion and multiplicity of the nestings provide the analysis to examine various aspects within each sphere without totalizing the cases through an assumption of boundaries between two absorbing totalities, as indicated by Gal:

No matter how labile or 'shifty' we imagine boundaries to be, the idea of boundaries does not do justice to this semiotic and communicative process. On the contrary, discussions of public and private spaces with unstable boundaries assume a single dichotomy, thereby collapsing the nested distinctions into each other, making the nesting processes and indexical recursions hard to notice.⁷⁸

Therefore, “embedded distinctions” and heterogeneity, as revealed by a semiotic/indexical examination, might allow us to go beyond the conventional dichotomy and recognize ever-changing spaces, practices, institutions, and identities that are adjusted and marked separately in different contexts. One must also be aware of the fact that the fluidity and relationality of such instability, however, might be temporal or regularized depending on the circumstances. Susan Gal points out those further possibilities, as well:

[O]nce a dichotomy is established, the semiotic logic forms a scaffolding for possibilities of embedding and thus for change, creativity, and argument. In these nested dichotomies, there is always some skewing or redefinition at every iteration. Furthermore, redefinitions that create a public inside a private or a private inside a public (be it in identity, space, money, relation) can be momentary and ephemeral, dependent on the perspectives of participants. Or they can be made lasting and coercive, fixing and forcing such distinctions, binding social actors through arrangements such as legal regulation and other

77 Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” 81.

78 Ibid, 82.

forms of ritualization and institutionalization.⁷⁹

So, although such embeddedness are relational and depends structurally on the context and its elements, various socio-cultural and juridico-political factors might also engage in the process. In turn, those temporal formations might be solidified to create permanent structures as a result.

Following my observation in the area and theoretical insight provided by Gal's intervention, I assert that locals' preference to confine Romeika into the communal sphere and their reluctance to use it outside their communities reflect the notion that the public-private scale is marked by the relationality between interacting subjects indexically, which temporarily registers the fragments of the relationality as public and/or private. In the light of our discussion on the theorization of the public and the private, we can analyze the attitudes of locals to avoid using Romeika outside their community and how that constantly regenerates multi-layered public and private spaces according to their contexts.

To begin with, the communal boundaries are not strictly attached to the geographical marks where locals reside, thus the physical limits cannot be taken as the dividing line between the public and the private spheres. On the contrary, the continuous relationality between members of the community and outsiders, those who do not know the language, prevents the emergence of homogenous and stable zones of private and public as two clearly separated and mutually exclusive domains. Rather, both communal area as a geography and the wider terrain beyond its physical

⁷⁹ Ibid, 85.

limits can be turned into public and private transiently depending on the relationality among the speakers and how they index their settings. To exemplify, one can note that, in the absence of a foreign gaze, communal area as the residual space of speakers becomes an intimate and private space for locals, allowing the use of Romeika casually without any hindrance. In that context, the inter-communal space among locals is indexed in opposition to the outer-communal area where the outsiders' gaze makes locals to revert to Turkish. However, that very intimate inter-communal space turns into public where the use of Romeika is limited when outsiders are present, changing the dimension of the relationality among locals.

Following the proposition of Gal, one can still track nodes of privacy and intimacy even when the inter-communal space is constituted as public. In this case, interactions among locals at local houses enjoy a certain degree of privacy and intimacy providing an unhampered space for the use of Romeika, which might be further re-enacted in house and room level examination as well. Or in a contrasting scenario, although outside the communal geography, interpersonal encounters among Romeika-speakers has the potentiality to create a zone of privacy away from the (inquisitive) gaze of non-speakers. In his analysis of the family and the state in Of, Michael Meeker briefly touches upon the issue through his observations on the *oda* [room], where male guests are received in the house. Puzzled with the ambiguity posed by the *oda*, he writes:

The men who would be welcomed into this room would include individuals who would not necessarily be permitted into the inner house itself. The *oda* is then part of the house, but not among the rooms of the family interior itself. It is an in between space where individuals from the outside are welcomed into the house, but not taken into the very bosom of the family. [...] The *oda* is an ideal social space in between the public square (*meydan*) and the household

(*hane*), but it has connection with both. Even though the *oda* is part of the house, the social occasions which take place within it are an ideal of public life. This is a somewhat strange proposition from a modernist perspective where the distinctive between public and private is more or less coordinate with outside and inside the family. [...] The gathering of the *oda* is not part of family life, since it is pointedly set apart from the household interior.⁸⁰

Thus, *oda* creates a gray zone that is hard to locate in the concrete division of conventional conceptions of public and private. Although created through familial and gendered lines, the interchangeable composition and signification of *oda* confuses those who expect to witness fixed and permanent boundaries that renders the existence of the other impossible. Rather, as exemplified in the observations of Meeker, the fluidity of social interactions and signification continuously remarks spaces and interactions as public and private in a floating process composed of fragments.

Thus, creating multi-layered and “nested” spatial arrangements within which homogeneity is replaced by a temporal and fragmented constellation of public and private that is indexically determined in response to the relationality among the interacting subjects. The dynamics of that fluid and continuous reconstitution rely on the relationality between members of the community and outsiders in addition to indexical meaning attached to the practices. The interaction among members of the community and their relation to outsiders, thus, constantly renegotiate the spaces, creating nodes of publicity and privacy as much as creating intimacy among speakers. Thus, the confinement of Romeika into a private space and its public invisibility do not directly correspond to a homogenous and stable spatial

80 Michael E. Meeker, “Concepts of Person, Family, and State in the District of Of (Revised),” in *Social Practice and Political Culture in the Turkish Republic* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2004), 178 and 180.

arrangement; rather based on the specificity of the context with its socio-cultural and political implications that seclusion and invisibility temporally denotes spaces as public or private with nestings and fragments.

CHAPTER IV

RELATIONS WITH “OTHERS” AND THE STATE

In the preceding chapter, I have outlined the differences that are reflected in the use of Romeika for the community. Our analysis has demonstrated that the privacy and intimacy of the language maintains the communal sense of “we” and identity and ensures political security as well as economic interests for the members of the community. The use of Romeika, alongside with other distinctive cultural practices and relevant heritage/memory, thus is constructed and reflected as private phenomena which are taken out of the public sphere and secluded in a private space. That de-politicization of socio-cultural distinctions, unlike the experiences of other minorities with vocal demands, we asserted, have paved the way for locals to refrain from publicly performing their distinctions in favor of the desired topography of citizenry of Turkish republican discourses. Following the statements of locals, we have concluded that the privacy of the language puts locals on the side of the majority as Turks with no political demands attached to their socio-cultural distinctions. Through this chapter, I will attempt to comprehend the implications of that privacy and non-publicity of Romeika on the relations of community toward

other minority groups who raise political demands in the public sphere for their cultural distinctions, especially in the case of Kurds. We will examine how locals perceive such maneuvers by those groups and what those demands uncover about the Romeika-speakers in the context of contemporary socio-political debates in Turkey.

I had briefly touched upon the issue through the accounts of locals on their avoidance to use their mother tongue in public in presence of others: they were positioning themselves in contrast to Kurds who use Kurdish in the presence of non-Kurdish speakers. Locals had designated such an act as uncivilized, reckless, and discriminatory, selfish.⁸¹ To further our comprehension of locals' attitudes and their defensive comparison with those others, I have asked some questions about growing Kurdish visibility in the political scene, their socio-cultural and political demands, Alevis, Armenians and 1915, Greeks, recent discussions on Dersim, Diyarbakır Prison, and murders with no identified assailants. Responses of locals have provided an unexpected pillar of my analysis, which might shed further light on the segments of Turkish society that staunchly resists to democratization and perceives socio-cultural rights as concession and sign of weakness.

The analysis first will deal with the perceived position of locals as a community on the side of the majority in opposition to noted minority groups such as Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, and Greeks. Although, the community can also be categorically considered equivalent to those groups, the local attitude toward others

81 Here, one must note how and why Kurdish demands are designated as such. Kurdish rejection of, or struggle against, to the exclusive inclusion of the citizenship of the Republican hegemony is perceived as a betrayal since it symbolizes the rejection of the love of the Other. What one of the respondents was saying, "If I can love my country; these men must have been able to love, as well." exemplifies such a perception lucidly. Kurdish demands are seen as a naughty rejection of the compassion of the Republic with no apparent reason; it is marked as a senseless, egoistical deviation from the love.

and the state is remarkably divergent. Our first step would be to uncover the dynamics of that twist. That analysis will also assist us understanding the discursive shift in the area which positions locals as the *addressee* alongside the state to which demands are directed, while the others are designated as the *addressers* who have distinctions and subsequent vulnerabilities that are raised as demands. Following these steps, finally, we will analyze how that interaction and re-positioning point out an affective circulation in the area, basic tenets of which can be found in shame and humiliation, further tracing the constitution of subjectivities.

ADAPTATION, REMEMBRANCE, TEMPORALITY

While examining the patterns through which Romeika is secluded into a private space, we had referred to a number of accounts by locals. One of them had said:

Well... Our people speak [in Romeika] among themselves. With those who know it. At least one two people know it. For instance, if you do not know Greek [Romeika], I would not speak Greek in your presence. However, discrimination within society starts in such cases. For instance, we have our Kurdish citizens here, they speak Kurdish. That is wrong! Well, why? And, you can speak among yourselves, as much as you want. But, I do not know it, what am I supposed to understand? Could I make my point clear? Well, we do not speak [Romeika in the presence of those who do not understand Romeika]. Three five people...⁸²

By pointing out Kurds as the antagonistic example, locals re-claim their position as Turks in a growingly unstable scene, connecting them to the appropriate scheme of Turkish citizenry. That automatic comparison and differentiation with Kurds, who has become the most visible political and social actors in Turkish context in recent

82 Ahmet. February 1, 2012.

decades, underline significant shift in the political terrain. Firstly, such a shift creates a socio-political divide between those who consider themselves Turks -as the majority of the country that is compliant with the hegemony over socio-cultural and politico-economic spheres- and those who are separated from that majority through their publicly visible and “deviant” of ethnic, religious, and linguistic distinctions: notably Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and Gypsies. Through distinguishing themselves from those groups, locals aim at consolidating their non-minority status in the public sphere and position themselves on the side of majority. The line is, no doubt, far from being clear and complete creating mutually exclusive and homogenous spheres of majority and minority. However, the tone of the political discussions, current incidents of violence against minorities ranging from stabbing to murders and from stoning to lynchings, and the collective memory have all clearly demonstrated us that such positions still matter in contemporary Turkey.

Within this context, members of the community distance themselves from other minorities who attempt to bring their cultural distinctions back into the public sphere, from where they had been pushed out by hegemonic definitions of Turkish citizenry: Kurdish movement demands state to recognize their socio-cultural and political rights arising from their ethno-cultural distinctions and inclusion of such characteristics into the state institutions –from judiciary to education–, Alevis raise demands for their *cemevi* to be recognized as a temple [*ibadethane*] by the state, Assyrians have similar demands for their religious and cultural possessions, Greeks and Armenians demand their establishments to be functional and recognized by the state with no hindrance. Thus, the structural composition of the public sphere and

citizenry is challenged by those groups in 1990s, “when the Turkish polity witnessed a breakthrough in voicing communal identities that were not compliant with the officially promoted and imposed Turkish and Sunni Muslim ideology in the shadow of the Kurdish War.”⁸³ While all those demands are raised in public sphere with ever increasing visibility, Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon did not jump into the wagon and call for similar recognition and representations for their cultural distinctions, as in the case of other peoples in Eastern Black Sea region, such as the Hemshinlis or the Lazi. On the contrary, locals in Romeika-speaking communities fervently denounce such attempts and oppose new articulations of Turkish citizenship or construction of a new public sphere where a multiplicity of distinctions could be represented alongside the hegemonic presence of Turkishness. Moreover, they also deny any kind of formulations of citizenship and public sphere which might place them in the category of minority –alongside Kurds, Greek, Alevis, or Armenians– established in opposition to the mainstream/official articulations of Turkishness and its public dominance.

The rise of political demands based on identities and subsequent ethno-cultural and religious distinctions, thus, emerges as a significantly challenging issue for locals. To understand the staunch opposition of locals to the visibility of non-Turkish characteristics in the public sphere and to recognition of these characteristics by official institutions touches upon a structurally important nerve, representing the basic pillar of the local identity in relation to national composition of citizenship and public sphere. As we had mentioned earlier, the public performance of locals and

83 Zeynep Türkyılmaz, “Anxieties of Conversion: Missionaries, State and Heterodox Communities in the Late Ottoman Empire” (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2009), 37.

their (affective) investments on that modality of being have created a differentiation between their public and private spaces. Alongside the requirements and premises of the Turkish official discourses, their public identity had been constructed in such a way that their socio-cultural distinctions have been invisible in for outsiders, secluded into a private and intimate space among their fellow community members. By “bracketing” their distinctions, they could act as a “normal” and equal Turkish citizen in the public sphere, as we have seen in the case of Alevi, and enjoy the potentialities offered to *makbul* [appropriate] citizens.

To comprehend that firm allegiance further, we might scrutinize the local's engagement and perceptions alongside with their aspirations outside the communal space through a historical process started before the emergence of the Turkish Republic replacing the Ottoman Empire. Our claim suggests that historical integration, political security, and enhanced politico-economic opportunities might also have lured locals into the full-scale association with the public requirements of the Turkish citizenry. That willingness for the engagement, however, has emerged as a result of the convergence of various factors ranging from historical experiences to the limitations of the geography.

Although, one can not account for a direct causal link, we can talk about the impact of limitedness of agricultural economy in the area. Since the area lacks physical space for agriculture due to immensely mountainous geography and industrial employment opportunities are relatively limited, economic activities are concentrated on academic/bureaucratic or commercial/industrial fields for locals following the local traditions of teaching and study, a claim supported by Michael E.

Meeker: “No fertile soil, short summers, forced them into professionalism. These skills appear to have included reading and writing and, quite possibly, even before conversion, religious teaching and learning.”⁸⁴ Locals emphasize their reputation for academic success or their *hemşehri* [fellow townsmen] who left the town for major cities and made big fortunes as successful businessmen or professionals. Numerous names are recited to exemplify that claim ranging from industrialists to prominent managers.

In addition to businessmen, locals also have extensively talked about fellow natives who have ostentatiously risen in bureaucratic echelons to become ministers, governors, undersecretaries, or directors –all following local “tendency to study.” Some of my respondents have humorously told how “even some of minibus drivers might have a university degree but work as a driver since there is no other employment option in the area.”⁸⁵ In his book, Michael E. Meeker also underlines the reputation of locals to engage successfully in bureaucratic, commercial, and professional circles, while explaining why the area constitutes a fertile ground for his research:

I had been specifically attracted to the eastern Black Sea Coast by the reputation of its inhabitants. They were said to be unusually conservative in their social relations but nonetheless successful as official, professionals, and entrepreneurs.⁸⁶

The local tradition of literacy, which is rooted in the historical tradition of religious

84 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 57.

Also mentioned By Ali Çelik, in his book on the folkloric characteristics of the area. Ali Çelik, *Trabzon Çaykara Halk Kültürü* (İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2005), 7.

85 Kemal. February 4, 2012.

86 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 5.

teaching and scholarship, is reflected in contemporary fields of engagement that is clearly not limited to that domain, extending into secular professions currently. In one of his articles inquiring about family and state interaction in the area, Meeker refers to that historical legacy that is still quite vivid in the area:

The Of academies were also of some significance, not just for the propagation of Islam in Of, but for the propagation of Islam in all Anatolia as well. During the nineteenth century, the graduates of the academies of Of represented a source of prayer leaders (imam) for many Anatolian villages and towns, and after the declaration of the Republic, when religious instruction was severely curtailed, they became a source of prayer leaders for prestigious religious institutions. [...] More recently, the tradition of literacy and learning in upper Of has gradually become increasingly secular. The western valley is now less known for its religious teachers and students than for professors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, journalists, and writers.⁸⁷

It should also be noted that currently there are four on-duty governors from Akyayla among eighty-one of them. That out-of-proportion representation of a relatively small area in bureaucratic echelons, in the words of locals, reflects “the political capabilities of the area, and of Trabzon” in contemporary Turkey. Again, Meeker refers to the socio-historical process, through which the political and economic structure of Trabzon has been integrated into the imperial system connecting the area to the global markets, to underline the eagerness of locals to engage in an affinity with official bodies: “Given their background of participation in market and state systems, they could immediately understand how state service was an opportunity rather than a catastrophe.”⁸⁸ Thus, following their historical experience of multi-dimensional interaction with the wider imperial structure, the locals perceive such engagement as a potentiality promising economic, cultural, or social returns.

87 Meeker, “Concepts of Person, Family, and State in the District of Of (Revised),” 172.

88 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 104.

Furthermore, such engagement would also enhance the allegiance between the political power and the locals, solidifying their claim for Turkishness through public performances, identification, and integration. In the words of Meeker: “This contemporary self-identification can be dated to the beginning of the nationalist period, but it is consistent with a much longer history of state participation.”⁸⁹ That embeddedness in the politico-economic structure might also be considered as one of the pillars upon which such firm allegiance of locals can be evaluated.

While mentioning the embeddedness of the community into the wider society, one should not miss the issue of religious academies and scholarship, for which the area is famous. The area, since the Ottoman period, has hosted numerous religious academies training religious scholars from all paths of life, later serving in different parts of the Empire. According to Meeker, religious establishments of the area were officially recognized by the imperial center in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹⁰ Although such religious teaching has been legally banned by the republican regime in 1920s, causing them to lose their public visibility and official status, thanks to the seclusive geography and grueling conditions of access to the valley, the academies could survive in the underground and flourished again in 1940s.⁹¹

For those, who are familiar with the religious scene of Turkey, *Oflu Hoca* [Hodja/Imam from Of] emerges as a pervasive theme, generally decorated with humorous anecdotes referring to their two vaguely intertwined characteristics:

89 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 154.

90 Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 60.

91 Ibid, 66.

deeply pious and wise about Islam, yet, biased to cheat (even God). Although the prototype refers to Of, religious academies where those scholars are trained are generally located in Akyayla; one must also remember that, Akyayla was a subdistrict of Of till 1948. Moreover, since the littoral parts of Of are relatively easy to control for the state institutions; Akyayla, through its valley system, constitutes a refuge for those institutions that aim at keeping the tradition of religious teaching alive while not being visible, as frequently accounted by some of my respondents. That prototype of humorous Islamic scholarship is also another noteworthy pillar through which the community interacts with the outsiders. Through attracting numerous students to the local *medreses*, those trained imams would do occasional trips to the villages of Anatolia, preaching and leading religious communities on their way, even today.⁹² Eventually, they would end up as the resident imams in those villages and towns, as well.⁹³ Thus, throughout Anatolia, they interact with the society, beyond their communal borders, strengthening their ties with the peoples of the country.

Due to their relatively small number, especially in comparison to Kurds, the community has been remarkably successful in maneuvering in the middle of all these requirements of the citizenship of the Republic, which was imposingly unitary and suspicious towards non-conforming elements in comparison to preceding imperial rule. In addition, due to the absence of viable employment options in the area and within the community, locals had to have looked for means to engage outside their communal space and growingly had to interact with outsiders; a process, no doubt,

⁹² Ibid, 68.

⁹³ Ibid, 58.

has been intensified through immigration and commercial activities. Thus, we can assume that, in their dealings outside the intimate communal space, locals have thoroughly and successfully embraced the Republican mode of life and established a solid base for their commercial, academic, and bureaucratic lives.

Eventually, locals constituted a delicate and functional balance between their communal space and the public, which in turn provided them necessary comfort, security, and opportunity in social life, politics, and economic sphere. Therefore, the imposition of hegemonic and nationalist definition of Turkish citizenship, at least in the public sphere, did not bring a devastating change for locals; on the contrary, such an articulation of the public sphere and the citizenship have provided a commodious channel through which locals can both sustain their cultural distinctions in their private sphere and be an equal part of a “homogenous” majority with no threat or obstacle. When considered from this perspective, Republican ideology has been an appealing force for locals in Trabzon, promising them equality in the public sphere – as long as they act in accordance with the ideological requirements and seclude their distinctions into their private domains– as we have seen in the case of some fractions of Alevi community.⁹⁴

Instead of directly challenging the constitutive terms of the citizenship and its reflections on the composition of the public sphere, the community perceives the “bracketing”, or the very distinction-blindness, of the public performances as a precious opportunity for them to be acknowledged as citizens, who theoretically

94 Tee, “Holy Lineages, Migration and Reformulation of Alevi Tradition: A Study of the Derviş Cemal Ocak from Erzincan,” 336.

would be equal to Turkish speaking majority with Sunni-Islamic beliefs.⁹⁵ Such a twist has also rendered it possible for them to be integrated into the hegemonic myth of national history that imposed its modernist, emancipatory, and exclusive paradigm upon all the subjects of the country through a comprehensive socio-political system. Thus, locals' adoption of the republican paradigms of citizenship and public sphere has provided them a sense of pastness, constituting the link between the contemporary fantasies around identity and the past. Not only the present is constructed in a secure way, but also the circuit of meaning is completed through the official history theses of the Republican hegemony that attempt to organize not only the present, but also the past of the subjects.

That, however, does not necessarily mean that collective memory or personal remembrances have been totally forgotten or suppressed in favor of that universal hegemonic perception of the past. Rather, the fragmented structure remains haunting local identity and performances, creating temporal eruptions and ruptures in the performances of citizenship, incessantly challenging the premises of the grand nationalist narrative. One anecdote, recalled by one of my respondents, summarizes that fragmentation in the remembrance of the past, presented in a humorous way:

95 That call of the Republican establishment, at least in theory, would promise an equal position for all on the condition that they embrace the Republican mode of being and belonging: individual, modernist, nationalist, moral in a particular manner, secular, progressive, and western-oriented. The very invisibility of socio-cultural distinctions provided the base upon which such a new orientation could be constructed. One can remember the decades-long practice of school uniforms (*önlük*) which would create equality through its rendering socio-cultural and economic distinctions invisible. Although, one can point out the corporatist logic at stake in this practice aiming at concealing the class divisions and imagining a harmonious/organic societal structure, it is still possible, and indeed quite productive, to argue that such a policy in schools might be understood in a context which requires the absence of socio-cultural distinctions in the public sphere. Interestingly, in parallel with the unprecedented visibility of identity in Turkish political scene, requirement for students to wear *önlük* have also been revoked recently.

The Governor [of Trabzon] comes to the pastures of our Akyayla. On the way, he sees an old grandpa there. He asks the grandpa, 'Grandpa, how are you?' and stuff like that. 'I am fine' he replies, 'Thanks, son.' The governor says, 'Do you have any needs, concern, or demand from the state?' He replies saying 'No, son. God bless our state. We are all fine.' But then he says, 'I have a thing, a request.' [The governor asks] 'What is it?' 'Well,' the old man says, 'those Russians came back then, constructed those roads. But [they have] never taken care of these roads since then. They shall come and take care [of the roads].' The roads of our locale and pastures have mostly been constructed in Russian era. Russians have constructed them. Look, the man still remembers that.⁹⁶

Thus, for locals, the remembrance does not solely rely on national narratives through which a universal, linear, clear-cut, and progressive march of the nation is depicted. This national perspective created a sense of past that is supposed to create uniform effects on national level with a succession of events that are articulated through a specific type of narrative.⁹⁷ However, personal experiences and remembrances, as reflected in the intriguing story above, reveals concrete subjectivities involved in the act of remembrance through presenting a fragmented, changing, sometimes incoherent personal narratives which might create different temporalities in the present blurring the boundary between the present and the past, as well as “going beyond the lifespan of the narrator”.⁹⁸

96 Mehmet. February 8, 2012.

One must also note that the respondent himself also “remembers” that specific historical period, although he is in his early thirties and never experienced the period mentioned in the story. His use of “yapıldı” rather than “yapılmış” reflects such a direct engagement with the past. Not only the old grandpa facing the governor, but also the narrator himself recounts a different modality of past.

That account of the road, heading to the inner plateau toward Bayburt, having been constructed by Russians during around 1916-1918 is also supported by Meeker, but locals apparently claim that the route has existed since the ancient time when it was used as a trade route. Please see, Footnote 13 at Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 156.

97 Maurice Halbwachs, “The Collective Memory,” in *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, eds. Rossington, Michael, and Whitehead (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 142.

98 Arzu Öztürkmen, “Remembering through Material Culture: Local Knowledge of Past Communities in a Turkish Black Sea Town,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 39/2 (2003): 5.
Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Representations* 26 Special

To get a better picture of the issue, one can remember the story of the *Küçük Ayvasıl Camii* [Mosque of St. Vasil] in the vicinity of Trabzon, which has been constructed in 1971 and named after a saintly priest.⁹⁹ It is quite intriguing that even in 1970s, when the hegemony of the Turkish-nationalist ideology is thought to be firmly established and decades after the population exchange, the mosque had still been named after a Greek Christian figure named Vasil who has allegedly lived there. Not surprisingly, the name has caused anxiety afterwards retroactively, when such an uncanny intermingling of memory and history is exposed, and the name was changed to a neutral one, by the demand of the *cemaat* [community], with no breach and disturbance: *Akoluk Çarşı Camii*.

Or again, one can remember the official policy to re-name villages, mountains, and other geographical units to strengthen the Turkishness of the space.¹⁰⁰ Although, numerous villages, mountains, or pastures have been renamed by the state, locals still refer to their surroundings in their old names, a practice which I have also witnessed during my field research. Although, official policies designate the area as Turkish by giving new names that attempt to erase the remnants of the past, the memory leaks into the present and creates an uncanny overlap by locals' inability to adapt these new names although they circulate official discourses pervasively.

Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989): 8-10.

99 "Cemaat İstedi, Camiden Papaz Adı Çıkarıldı," *Haber10*, December 25, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.haber10.com/haber/105437> (Accessed last on May 2, 2013)

Kudret Emiroğlu, "Trabzon Ne Yetiştirsin?," in *Trabzon'u Anlamak*, eds. Güven Bakirezer and Yücel Demirer (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 122.

100 Mahir Özkan, "Karadeniz Halkarı, Asimilasyon ve Reasimilasyon," in *Karardı Karadeniz*, ed. Uğur Biryol (Istanbul: İletişim, 2012), 167-168.

Yiğit, *Çaykara ve Folkloru*, 6.

As those incidents remind us, the memory, in collective and/or personal level, goes beyond the uniform facade of the national(ist) history and provides opportunities for us to find out cracks, diverging experiences, desires, conflicts, resistances, objects, and subjects within the flow of a given temporality. Collective or personal memories, in this sense, not only constitute breaches and parallel accounts of the past experiences, they also tell something about the present of the narrator.¹⁰¹ Those very breaches remind us the incompleteness of the grand national narratives which fail to penetrate the personal/collective forms of remembrance/reminiscence. Sometimes in the form of inscriptions engraved in a stone, sometimes as an old grandpa who reminds some uncanny experience, memory creates a temporal, timeless space which resists into the endless occupation of the history of the nation.¹⁰² Against the very mechanized and inhuman accounts of the past, such reminiscences appear as the bearers of concrete and particular human experiences with all its instantaneousness, or its presentness, that bursts out of the linear recount of the history. It signals the very conflict between what history tells us and what particular subjects experience and/or reminisce of that period. It reminds us the collapse of the past into the present, blurring the boundaries between the two, a leak that breaks the progressive link of modernist-nationalist account of history

101 Meltem Ahıska, "Occidentalism and Registers of Truth: The Politics of Archives in Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 34 (2006): 21.

102 Memories of Rıza Nur underline the importance of such reminiscences. He recounts his dialogue with Topal Osman, who is controversial figure because of his violent campaigns in the region during the War of Independence:

"Ağa Pontusu iyi temizle,' dedim 'temizliyorum,' dedi. 'Rum köylerinde taş üstünde taş bırakma,' dedim. 'Öyle yapıyorum ama, kiliseleri ve binaları lazım diye saklıyorum,' dedi. 'Onları da yık, hatta taşlarını uzaklara yolla, dağıt. Ne olur ne olmaz, bir daha burada kilise vardı diyemesinler,' dedim. 'Sahi öyle yapalım. Bu kadar akıl edemedim,' dedi."

Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım* (İstanbul: İşaret, Vol. 3, 1992), 164. Quoted by: Hür, "Trabzon'un Etnik Tarihine Bir Bakış," 161.

through constituting a circular time and space.

Although, one can point out similar cases in various other locations, the Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon also allow us to see how these temporalities operate and interact with the grand progressive narratives. The frozen and secluded cultural distinctions also bear the traces of collective memory which reflects itself in a range of events. The community itself becomes a temporal burst in the endless flow of rational grand narrative through presenting contradictory, antagonistic, and incoherent elements that could not be accommodated in the national account of history. Communal space emerges as a timeless space with the reminiscence of the past in the middle of an imposing and expanding national terrain, obsessed with present and future in reference to the past. As can be observed in the story of the old man answering the governor, the national imagination is destabilized by this timeless bubble. It would not be surprising to assume that the answer would disturb the governor, as the representative of the state, since it both points out a crack in the national narrative and underlines how similar reminiscences still linger in the air reminding us inconsistencies, heterogeneity, fragmentation in the past and present. The single dimensionality of the modernist-national history is destabilized by the timelessness and presentness of the memory that is intricately embedded in now. The past is visible in the present in the area, it survives in fragments that can still be experienced and performed, in profound contrast with the modernist conception of time which treats past as dead.

The Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon, thus, establishes a crack in

the grand narrative through directly and incessantly leaking the specters of past, which have been buried by the Republican ideology long ago, into the present. Cracking the coherence of the ideological premises, they pose a subtle but steady challenge not only to the present, but also to the past of the regime. They both undermine the official theses which claim homogeneous historical experiences, or uniform “socio-historical processes”¹⁰³ as Trouillot claims, for the subjects in Anatolia and the conception of a past within which members of the nation have convergent political, socio-cultural, and linguistic characteristics. Thus, apart from constituting intimate and private spaces, through their cultural distinctions Romeika-speaking communities also create temporal localities where the sense of time and space exists in a contradictory manner vis-à-vis that of the state.

Local forms of being and belonging, in this context remind us a timeless space where the linearity of modernist conception of time is distorted and revoked. Rather, there remains a circularity which collapses the past into the present, breaking the sequential of time and creating a fusion where the space and time are detached from the homogeneous flow of the national(ist) history, time, and space. In the face of the uniform, homogenizing and totalizing flow of the national(ist) history, the locale emerges as a bubble of memory, reminiscence, and belonging which can not break its intricately woven link between the present and the past. Thus, communal space and time are constituted as a breach of hegemonic conceptions of time and space, and of being and belonging, through their incessant leaks and frozenness,

103 Trouillot, in his analysis of the historiography, distinguishes two dimensions of data production and remembrance as “what has happened” and “what is said to have happened”, former of which is designated as the socio-historical process while the latter constitutes the basis for diverse narratives. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 1, 24-25.

which is covered by excessive performance and investments.

ADRESSER OR ADDRESSEE:

ALLEGIANCE TO THE STATE AGAINST OTHERS

After assessing the constitution of the firm allegiance of communal identities to the national ideological framework, we can analyze how they relate to other social groups with similar socio-cultural characteristics. Embeddedness of locals into the politico-economic structure of Turkey, as explained in the preceding section, should be kept in mind while assessing the composition of their interaction with other social groups.

As widely known and as stated earlier, in the last decades Turkish political scene has witnessed a surge of politically articulated demands that seek visibility in the public sphere for their socio-cultural and ethno-religious distinctions. Notably, Kurdish movement has become one of the major forces that have profoundly transformed the terms of the politics and society in Turkey. However, as discussed above, Romeika-speaking locals in Trabzon has long been integrated into the general Turkish public sphere in addition to investing heavily on Turkishness and its public requirements and upholding nationalist views and sentiments through fantasies that cover up their incessantly intruding cultural distinctions.

When considered as a community with similar distinctions, one might have expected locals to support Kurdish demands for socio-cultural recognition and rights, such as education and state services in their mother tongue and feel solidarity

with a group that at least share their religious belief and practices but suffer from discrimination due to their socio-cultural distinctions. Although, they did not experience violence from state institutions on a systematic basis, the similarity of the social status Romeika-speakers with Kurds, Greeks, Armenians, or Alevis is remarkable, given their significant deviations from the norm.

However, as indicated before, Romeika-speaking residents of Trabzon raise a staunch opposition to such demands and to the possibility of such a substantial re-articulation of the terms of Turkish citizenship and its reflection in the public sphere. They deny any kind of representation of their socio-cultural distinctions in the public sphere and in politics, in opposition to the demands by Kurds and other communities. Pietro Bortone, also touches upon that issue, pointing out the divergences community presents for the mainstream conceptualization of Turkish citizenship:

Romayka speakers do not seek formal recognition of their language and do not endeavour to spread its use. [...] Furthermore, Romayka, unlike languages such as Hebrew and Irish, lacks political motivation: the speakers have no distinct ethnic and political identity, and no separatist aspirations, which are often key factors in the development and retention of a different language variety. Indeed, the few Romayka speakers who might want to do something to save their language may be discouraged by the fear that their aims may be misconstrued as being *political*.¹⁰⁴

Through using official discourses, they associate such demands with “foreign forces” that “manipulate and use” some people and designate such demands as essentially “divisive” and baseless. They frequently refer to conspiracy theories to delegitimize organizations that have sought to make those demands visible in the public space. In

104 Pietro Bortone, “Greek with No Models, History or Standard: Muslim Pontic Greek,” in *Standard Languages and Language Standards: Greek, Past and Present*, eds. Alexandra Georgakopoulou and Michael Silk (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), 78 – 79. Emphasis is mine.

addition to putting state at the center of all life, they recurrently legitimize suppression of such demands by any means, as crystallized in 1938 at Dersim (Tunceli, today) and in the Southeastern Turkey for decades. Such legitimization also entails contemporary articulations in the political scene that breaks the link between the past and the present and further delegitimizes demands that point out injustices of the past and ask for corrections, recognition, and justice.¹⁰⁵

In the face of such demands, local stance would invite others to “forget and go on” rather than uncovering the veil of neglect and denial, which attempts to strengthen the hegemonic forms of belonging and remembering, hindering the emergence of justice. Through imprisoning the wound into a separate past which is left behind and connected only linearly to the present, in line with official account of history, such an invitation as recounted by locals, also denies the very effusion of the past into the present of those groups: These wounds live in the present, they emerge from the past but not contained in a passive memory; rather they flow into the present of locals interrupting the smooth linearity of time and invade the present of those who feel wounded and demand remembrance, recognition, and justice. One respondent explains why he opposes such re-examination of the past from this point of view:

My friend, It has been done in 1920s, 1930s. Well, that has been done, am I able to change that? For instance, let us talk about that same thing on the case Greekness? There has been a population exchange. 'We are enemies!' Well, let us not be! Let us not be! A mistake has been made. This is a similar case. Well, a mistake has been made. Correcting a mistake with another one...

¹⁰⁵ Here, it might be helpful to remind ourselves that the healing processes through which “past” injustices should be assessed by quoting Yerushalmi: “Is it possible that the antonym of 'forgetting' is not 'remembering,' but justice?” Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 117.

OK, it has been made; I would accept that, you would, as well. Well, because some mistakes have been made, why would I be indebted to you? I do not have such a thing. [...] Well, the country is something sacred. So, of course, we protect our country and flag. Let these people alone; do not mess with Turkishness or Kurdishness of them.¹⁰⁶

The locals rejection highlights the underlying dynamics of these reactions dealing with demands in political scene: It attempts to be integrated into a public sphere and politics that are, in theory, blind to ethnicity and subsequent differences, as promised by the Republican regime, and it also denies any attempts by various minorities of Turkey to alter that structure and bring their distinctions back into the realm of politics. Thus, demands for the re-articulation of the public sphere and the citizenship are deemed to be profoundly irrelevant, threatening, and revealing.

Although they also have similar socio-cultural distinctions with those groups, they consider such demands as structurally subversive, divisive, and insincere. Various respondents raise similar concerns when I ask questions on how they perceived such demands and the possibility of a structural transformation in Turkish public sphere and citizenship:

[E: Kurds have a demand for education in Kurdish. Do you have similar demands?]

We do not have such a demand. We cannot have, either. What can we ask for? Sometimes I think about it, I speak Greek...

[E: Measures to protect the language?]

The state cannot protect it! People protect the language. The state does not prevent me [from speaking Romeika].

[E: For instance, the legal impediments on establishing language courses?]

I would establish, why cannot I?

[E: So, you do not have such a demand?]

We do not, definitely not. That is to say, there is nothing preventing me. No one is torturing me not to speak Greek. Well, they did to my father[’s generation]. Well, it is partially because of that. The kid speaks Greek. S/he should speak Turkish.

106 Salih. February 5, 2012.

[E: To be successful?]

To be able to succeed. Well, they are right, too. So, I do not believe that, back then, teachers did that because [s/he thinks that] Greek is bad. S/he could not communicate with the child. They have to teach Turkish. What would happen otherwise? I would be educated in Greek? Who would teach me? Under these circumstances, it was necessary back then. As I said in the beginning, there were branches in classroom, like the branch not to speak Greek. Maybe, it was necessary. It was wrong, but maybe necessary.¹⁰⁷

When thought in relation to other minorities, even the previously criticized measures of the state is defended and legitimized. In addition to that striking defense, other groups that raise such demands and criticisms are portrayed through an infantilization that takes away their agency and reduces them to mere instruments of foreign powers, which are the true “others” in that kind of discussion. Another respondent again refers to Kurdish movement as an infantile actor whose major demands are not constructed through a self-initiated process but by “sinister” manipulation of outsiders who use and delude them to reach their goals on Turkey:

[E: Do you think there should have been some measures by the state to include those different languages?]

Requirements of that era... I want [that Romeika is taught], and would want it then, as well. Yet, it is a recently founded state. Let Greek-speakers speak Greek, and Kurdish-speakers speak Kurdish.

[E: So, you think it is logical that state should provide education in those languages?]

It is logical. There shall be an elective course for Greek, there should have been.

[E: Then, do you perceive that as a threat to national identity?]

I would not. I would not, for Greek/Romeika. But when you ask if I saw that for Kurdish, I would perceive [it as a threat].

[E: Why?]

I would. Because, I have lived amongst Kurds. I am the minority within minority. *If I can love my country; these men must have been able to love, as well.* I have been exposed to the thing [discrimination] much more than them. If we talk about issues of discrimination or suppression... Well, they have been suppressed. It is OK; I accept that. I have seen that, as well. Yet, if I could love that country as the minority within minority, they could have

107 Muhammet. February 5, 2012.

loved, as well. They could. I do not believe that. I do not believe that a Kurd knows what s/he truly wants.

[E: For instance, what do they want?]

What do they want? They want a state; they want this and that. *They want that because some others want them to want it.* S/he wants that because some others want him/her to want that. Well, you ask the guy, 'What would happen when you found a [Kurdish] state?' They cannot answer! '[Founding our] State is our right!' So, what?¹⁰⁸

While rejecting the pertinence of demands by Kurds, respondents also question the agency of those groups by associating their demands with some vaguely defined foreign powers, in line with the official discourses. The same logic is clearly reflected in the words of a respondent:

I would oppose a Kurdish region. Why? I know Kurds very well since I lived amongst them, as I said. That region will not belong to Kurds, truly will not. So, what happened? In case a Kurdish region is established, will Kurds from major towns go there? What will happen? What kind of structure will it be? Well, it is like that... Something utopic. What will happen when that thing, called Kurdistan, is established? What will my country lose? What will my country get? I mean the remaining part. What will Kurds get and what will they lose? So, when I think over these, Kurdistan will lose, Kurds will lose, my country will lose. All parties will lose. Who is favored here, if it is possible at all, is great powers. They will end up better off. Thus, it does not sound reasonable.¹⁰⁹

The words of another respondent reflect the same perception of Kurdish demands:

“For sure, there are things that have foreign elements in the case of terrorism. Not everyone is aware of that. It was a matter of manipulation.”¹¹⁰ That opposition, established between locals' perception of themselves and others, creates a comforting divide between Romeika-speakers and others, who raise a demand in public sphere for their distinctions. While others are assumed to be instrumentalized by sinister

108 Hasan. March 14, 2012.

109 Kemal. February 4, 2012.

110 Yusuf. November 28, 2012.

outsiders, locals take pride in their firm loyalty and subjectivity. Through this divide, locals both uphold their subjectivity and allegiance to the Republican ideals and mark others as “puppets” deprived of their subjectivities for the divisive goals of some major powers, which constitute the real interlocutor in this grand interplay for locals. Denying the agency of those groups, locals oppose any proposition to render socio-cultural distinctions visible in the public sphere. Although, they refer to similar concerns and ill-treatment in some parts of their lives because of their heritage and cultural practices, they furiously defend the mechanisms of the system and refuse to transform it in a way through which differences can be accommodated.

Within this context, one can get a better grasp of the dynamics of the staunch opposition of locals to such demands. Those demands, apart from challenging the hegemony of Turkishness in the public sphere, emerge as a potential to reveal the fantasies and excessive investment which Romeika-speaking locals have utilized to cover up the dissonance caused by their own cultural distinctions. Since locals have adapted the terms of the Turkish public sphere by secluding their deviating practices into a publicly invisible and intimate private space, they had enjoyed the benefits of a structure that brings “equality in absence” through Turkishness for those who abide by the rules of bracketing. Through performing Turkishness in the public sphere and aligning themselves with the hegemony, they had avoided the bitter experience of those other groups who have endured discrimination, legal restrictions, and even violence.

Thus, we can claim that eastern Black Sea Region in general and Romeika-

speaking communities specifically have a firm allegiance toward Turkish hegemony through adapting their terms and re-shaping their public performances. The locals are securely denoted as loyal Turks by the general population, famous for their bravery and nationalistic passion, as stated by Meeker: “Central and western Anatolians accept the Laz as Turks by virtue of their allegiance to the republic, their religion, and their almost universal fluency in Turkish.”¹¹¹ In the same manner but from the local perspective, locals also consider themselves as an inseparable part of the Turkish nation-state: “The Black Sea Turks see their fate as closely intertwined with the Anatolian Turks of central and western Anatolia. They resent and reject any suggestion that their customs have connexions with the peoples of the Caucasus.”¹¹² To further demonstrate the loyalty of the locals in the eyes of the Republican administration, various narratives are circulated, which have also been retold by some of the respondents as well, indicating Mustafa Kemal's personal appreciation of the regional patriotism and bravery reflected through selecting his bodyguards exclusively from the area, or his desire to establish a special army unit consisting solely from soldiers from the area: “Even Mustafa Kemal indicated that. I would establish a separate army [consisting of recruits] from Black Sea, though then there might be [conflicting] factions in the army.”¹¹³ Thus, through their staunch investment, community members are perceived to be a truly integral part of wider Turkish population. Although, they have cultural practices that might be perceived as

111 Meeker, “Black Sea Turks: Some Aspects of Their Ethnic and Cultural Background,” 323.

112 Meeker, “Black Sea Turks: Some Aspects of Their Ethnic and Cultural Background,” 345.

113 Salih. February 5, 2012.

Also touched upon by Meeker, “Black Sea Turks: Some Aspects of Their Ethnic and Cultural Background,” 325.

non-Turkish, since they do seclude those distinctions into a private domain, they end up as the flag bearers of the Republican ideals which aims at constituting a Turkish public sphere, promising equality and opportunity for those who obey the rules.

Through their rejection of demands by minorities, the Romeika-speaking self is re-constituted as a Turkish subject through establishing an opposition between local status and the minority position. By aligning with the official discourses and marking themselves as Turk, community members differentiate themselves from others, from those who struggle to bring their socio-cultural and ethno-religious differences into the public sphere. That specific twist by locals constitutes them as the *addressee* of the demand, on the side of the state, the sovereign, the majority, and the powerful, the subject to whom the demand for recognition is directed. Although they, themselves, have such distinctions, in the face of a challenge (by Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, or Greeks) they associate with the Republican regime, the sovereign, by distancing themselves from those others, who end up as the *addressers* in this contestation as those, who take the position of the non-sovereign, the subordinate, the oppressed, and the object that is used by others.¹¹⁴ Such a stance inscribes Romeika-speaking locals as the sovereign vis-à-vis that group of communities that they belong categorically. They also enhance their fantasies, which are vital to keep their performances afloat in the middle of all breach and incompleteness, through

¹¹⁴ Here, to clarify the designations I made, it is important to stress that that opposition between addressers and addressees do not constitute two homogeneous camps with mutually exclusive socio-cultural and political/economic interests. Rather, such alignments can be used analytically to get a better grasp of the difference between communities that either challenge official discourses or uphold these official discourses that are put into circulation to sustain the hegemonic conceptions of identity, citizenship, and memory. It refers to a strategic re-positioning which requires re-calibration in the language and remembrance. It places the subjects in a particular position in the face of a discursive confrontation that interacts through demands and counter-demands. As a form of interaction, they both continuously construct the subject as well as giving it a “meaningful” space to exist and to be a part of a greater social body.

further performing and investing in Turkishness. Through marking themselves as the addressee of those demands, on the side of the sovereign, they reject the wound, the vulnerability coming along with the minority status.

In addition to marking of themselves and others, they, also, declare their allegiance to and confidence for the composition of the public sphere and the citizenship, which (in theory) is supposed to turn a blind eye to the socio-cultural distinctions and offers, at least theoretically, significant opportunities through equality. Thus, the communal allegiance to the Republican ideals reflect their belief in the exclusion of non-Turkish and non-Sunni features out of the public sphere where admissible politics is conducted and tolerated.

CHAPTER V

IDENTITY, INTRUSION, AND INCOMPLETION

In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to analyze local patterns of identification and belonging in the specific case of Romeika-speaking communities in the east of Trabzon. One of the most intriguing elements of my research was about the narratives of locals on the origin of the language. Since almost all respondents claim Turkish ancestry and mostly deny any allusions to conversion from Orthodox Christianity to Sunni Islam, although both official records and various scholarly and non-scholarly sources underline conversions¹¹⁵, when I asked how they learnt the language, locals recall narratives which give different accounts on the acquisition of Romeika by the locals.

Some of the respondents pointed out their interaction with local Greeks prior to population exchange in 1924, some have denied cohabitation in villages altogether and referred to merchant Greeks on the coast with whom they got into contact for economic transactions, some have mentioned the increased influence of local Greeks during the brief Russian occupation in the first phases of the World War I. Only a few of them briefly touched upon the cohabitation in the area prior to population

115 Yorgo Andreadis, *Gizli Din Taşıyanlar Kolostai: Dönerler, Tenasur: Din Değiştirenler* [English original edition: Georgios Andreadis, *The Cryptochristians Klostoi: Those Who Returned Tenasur: Those Who Have Changed*] (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1997), 14. Page numbers are based on Turkish edition.

Hür, "Trabzon'un Etnik Tarihine Bir Bakış," 130.

Michael E. Meeker, "Greeks Who Are Muslims: Counter-Nationalism in Nineteenth Century Trabzon," in *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F. W. Hasluck, 1878-1920*, ed. David Shankland. Vol. 2. (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2004), 308 - 314.

exchange and indicated that they acquired the language through their daily encounters with Greek residents of the area. Almost none of the narratives touched upon the issue of conversion and ancestry; the issue has been ignored decisively. Some respondents have touched upon some other issues that constitute a clear deviation from grand national(ist) narratives of past and present, that they support and defend so ardently, while some others have pointed out the split they experience due to their “different” cultural practices. But as a common theme, following all these diverse accounts, they continued with their firm allegiance to Turkish nation and the state: “People of this area are loyal to their motherland and nation.”¹¹⁶

In the middle of all these diverse accounts on the local experience and signification, how are we to assess these local patterns of being and belonging? What do these diverse narratives by the same people from the same area about a private and intimate part of their cultural life tell us? What is at stake in all these narratives? Why do people recount these perspectives of past and present when I ask why, in their opinion, they spoke Romeika, as if I asked why they *still* spoke it? Why do they always accompany these answers with statements explaining their uncompromising patriotism and love for the nation and the state? What does that mismatch mean socio-culturally and politically? These are the questions which invite us to analyze mechanisms of memory and narratives through which identity is performed and represented. In the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon, I claim psychoanalytic concepts will help us to decipher the interrelationship between identity and memory with which dynamics of local identity and subjectivities can be

116 Original in Turkish: “Buranın insanı vatanına milletine bağlıdır.”

grasped better.

Lacan has a quite intriguing statement on the nature of the cause: “*Il n’y a de cause que de ce qui cloche.*”¹¹⁷ In addition to being a symmetrical reflection of another French maxim, *les gens heureux n’ont pas d’histoire*¹¹⁸, the statement basically claims, in the footsteps of Alenka Zupancic and Slavoj Žižek, that only something that does not work, or does not constitute a coherent unity, has a cause.¹¹⁹ It associates the cause with the opposite of its conventional perception and forces us to rethink its role. Apart from basically reversing the conventional understanding of the relationship between cause and effect, embedded in the long tradition of Kantian philosophy, the formula also touches upon an immensely important factor in the analysis of meaning, narratives, subjectivity, and -related to all these- identity.¹²⁰

The very emergence of the cause as an inquiry in the realm of (un)consciousness, signals the disjoint in the symbolic chain that fails to produce a smooth and functioning path of signification, but it also creates a intriguing dissonance in the middle of that conflicting and non-functioning causal link between the cause and effect. Out of that incompleteness and malfunction, a “psychoanalytic

117 Alenka Zupancic, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions* (Uppsala: NSU Press, 2008), 36.

Translation: There is a cause only of that which does not work.

Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 132 - 133.

Quoted from;

Jacques Lacan, *Les Quatre Concepts Fondamentaux de la Psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 25.

118 *Les gens heureux n’ont pas d’histoire*. Translation: Happy people do not have a story/history. Although there are different interpretations of the maxim, one must note the mirroring logic between the two statements. This statement, in clear contrast to the Lacanian one, might be referring to the absence of interpretation and narrativization in cases where the causal link is not disturbed by the uncanny presence of the uncompromising gap, or as one can claim rightfully, in cases where the interaction between object and meaning is subject to law rather than cause in psychoanalytical sense.

119 Zupancic, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions*, 36.

120 Zupancic, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions*, 36-37.

cause” emerges, a cause that signifies the uncompromising gap between cause and effect and, at the same time, creates a productive force, a *thing*, which is born out and because of that gap.¹²¹ In one of his famous seminars, Lacan touches upon the issue to underline that gap, differentiating the cause from law:

Cause is to be distinguished from that which is determinate in a chain, in other words the *law*. By way of example, think of what is pictured in the law of action and reaction. There is here, one might say, a single principle. One does not go without the other. The mass of a body that is crushed on the ground is not the cause of that which it receives in return for its vital force -its mass is integrated in this force that comes back to it in order to dissolve its coherence by a return effect. There is no gap here, except perhaps at the end.

Whenever we speak of cause, on the other hand, there is always something anti-conceptual, something indefinite. The phases of the moon are the cause of tides –we know this from experience, we know that the word cause is correctly used here. Or again, miasmas are the cause of fever- that doesn't mean anything either, there is a hole, and something that oscillates in the interval. In short, there is cause only in something that doesn't work.¹²²

Signaled by Lacan, that gap in the causal link gives rise to a driving force which, in turn, creates its own symbolic push which attempts to overcome that *quelque chose qui cloche* in the causal chain. The production process involves an interpretation, a leap, which both underlines and attempts to move out of the gap.¹²³ However, crucial point is here to notice the fact that such a gap and the disturbing thing in the middle of it, *quelque chose qui cloche*, are the “motors of the interpretation” although they are not included in the process of interpretation.¹²⁴ Zupancic mentions that in her

121 Zupancic, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions*, 37.
Zizek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, 94 – 95 and 98.

122 Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis – Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, 22. Emphasis is original.

123 Zupancic, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions*, 43.

124 Zupancic, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions*, 43.

book as well:

It is, once again, *ce qui cloche*, that which does not work in this interaction. It is the free-floating radical, the object that circulates in the relationship between the subject and the other, embodying the very quandary of this relationship. And it is not that we interpret this object, we interpret everything else (words, gestures, gazes, etc.), yet this object is, properly speaking, the motor of the interpretation.¹²⁵

That point must be underlined explicitly since it draws our attention to a really important function of the process, it creates an impulse for interpretation around itself; however, as the cause of that interpretation it is not included. Out of the rift and interaction between two ends of the causal link, between object and meaning or between subject and the Other, the “limping” *thing*, *ce qui cloche*, spawns the productive process of meaning and interpretation, trying to overcome the structural deadlock and produce a narrative out of the interaction.¹²⁶ Thus, deviation, improper function, or mismatch brings causality into question, igniting a process of meaning-production and narration that stems from its disturbing existence in the middle of the causal chain.

In the footsteps of such a conceptualization of the symbolic order and its operation, we can talk about that constitutive gap in the middle of the causal link. Through its destabilizing inability to be incorporated into the symbolic chain through which signification and meaning are allocated, that limping thing reminds us the very fundamental tension between the real and the symbolic. In the footsteps of Zizek, “Real as cause” appears as the constitutive but non-existing and non-

125 Zupancic, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions*, 43.

126 Zupancic, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions*, 40-41.

Slavoj Zizek, “Love Thy Neighbor? No, Thanks!,” in *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 81.

incorporated aspect of the symbolic, which is constructed around the abyss of the Real.¹²⁷ That traumatic kernel of the symbolic order, *ce qui cloche*, structurally resists any attempts of symbolization and yet is reflected through disruptions it produces in the symbolic.¹²⁸ In this sense, with the words of Žižek, “the Real is the absent Cause of the Symbolic.”¹²⁹ It produces the symbolic production and signification while rendering its proper operation and completion impossible.

While talking about that traumatic kernel of the symbolic order that both constitutes and disrupts its operation, we, however, have to note that the thing that disturbs the causality in the symbolic is not traumatic by its own existence or qualities; rather, its traumatic character is constructed retrospectively and only within the symbolic structure, as in the case of childhood memories which grow into being traumatic causes after the incorporation of the child into the symbolic order which will in turn initiate the process.¹³⁰ It requires a re-articulation from the “symbolic horizon”.¹³¹ Its retroactive fabrication is quite significant since it both brings the question of the Other into question again and stresses the importance of symbolic order for the subject. That point will further be analyzed in our case of Romeika-speaking locals in Trabzon.

127 Slavoj Žižek, *Kırılğan Temas* (Istanbul: Metis, 2011), 40-41.

128 Žižek, *Kırılğan Temas*, 41.
Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, 95.

129 Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 30.
Same logic is at stake in this writing of Žižek: “*Kisacasi gercek, simgesel yasanin nedenselligini bozan namevcut nedendir.*” (Žižek, *Kırılğan Temas*, 41)

130 Žižek, *Kırılğan Temas*, 41-42.

131 Žižek, *Kırılğan Temas*, 42.

Before going into our analysis of local patterns of identity and subjectivities in relation to their cultural distinctions and relations with others, we should delve into the status of the subject in this theorization and how it copes with this traumatic abyss of the Real around which the symbolic is constructed. In the broken chain of meaning and signification, how are we supposed to assess the position of the subject? Where does it stand in this failing causal link? To answer these questions and enhance our analysis, we should go one more step in the analysis of the cause in the symbolic order, its relation to the traumatic and non-symbolized kernel, and the implications of its inherent failure.

In his discussions of the issue of the subject in connection with that unsymbolizable object of the causal limp, Žižek talks about the position of the subject as follows:

The subject is strictly correlative to this real *qua* Cause: \$ - *a*. In order to grasp the constitutive paradox of the the subject, therefore, we must move beyond the standard opposition of 'subjective' and 'objective', the order of 'appearances' (of what is 'only for the subject') and the 'In-itself'. Likewise, we must reject the concomitant notion of the subject as the agency that 'subjectivizes', moulds and makes sense of the inert-senseless In-itself. The *objet a* as cause is an In-itself that resists subjectivation-symbolization, yet far from being 'independent of the subject', it is *stricto sensu* the subject's shadow among the objects, a kind of stand-in for the subjects, a pure semblance lacking any consistency of its own. In other words, if the subject is to emerge, he must set himself against a paradoxical object that is real, that cannot be subjectivized. [...] this void of subjectivity is strictly correlative to the emergence of, in the Real itself, of a stain which 'is' the subject.¹³²

Thus, subject emerges out of that limp in the symbolic causality because of the traumatic kernel that is not symbolized; subject emerges exactly because of such causality, with its lingering uncanny gap in between, as indicated by Žižek above.

132 Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality*, 32 – 33. Emphases are original.

And, the traumatic kernel appears as the cause and the condition of the subject, as implied by Žižek:

[T]he traumatic Real is *stricto sensu* the cause of the subject – not the initial impetus in the linear chain of causes that brings about the subject, but, on the contrary, the missing link in the chain – that is, the cause as remainder, as 'the object that cannot be swallowed, as it were, which remains stuck in the gullet of the signifier. As such, it is correlative to the subject *qua* break in the chain of the signifying causality, hole in the signifying network.¹³³

In this sense, the gap between symbolization and the traumatic real produces the thing, *quelque chose qui cloche* or *objet a*, which gives rise to the subject in the interaction through its failure in the signification chain. Subject relates to that problematic and lingering thing as its own cause, the uncanny element that is both impossible to incorporate and yet disturbingly close to the subject. It emerges as a disruption and imprints the subject in the symbolic order. Thus, subject emerges when things do not work as they are supposed to, in a context where meaning and signification are operated and centered around a non-interpreted element, a traumatic kernel that acts as the motor of these process of meaning-production and signification, in line with *points de capiton*¹³⁴, retroactively. Subject and its (fantasmatic) narratives are derived from that constitutive gap and unsymbolized *thing*. Our analysis will basically rely on this path of psychoanalytic theory which claims that fantasmatic narratives by the subject are produced by that retroactively constructed traumatic kernel that can not be incorporated into the symbolic order and distorts the “proper” or “normal” functioning in the symbolic. In the footsteps of the

133 Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality*, 33. Emphases are original.

134 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 109.

Yannis Stavrakakis, “The Lacanian Object,” in *Lacan and the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 23-24.

Lacanian premise that we started with, the very incoherency between the object and meaning/signification, we shall understand what that unsymbolized kernel means for the subject and what does it stand for.

That constitutive and unsymbolized kernel as *cause* and the subsequent emergence of the fantasmatic narratives to go beyond the disruptive fissure in the symbolic structure, thus, play a significant role in the analysis of the self and the subject. These fantasmatic narratives provide an “imaginary scenario”¹³⁵ that renders it possible for the subjects to overcome the limps in the signification chains and to stabilize the meaning, as argued by Žižek:

Fantasy functions as 'absolute signification' (Lacan); it constitutes the frame through which we experience the world as consistent and meaningful - the a priori space within which the particular effects of signification take place.¹³⁶

The fantasy, in this sense, veils the impossibility of the symbolic to acknowledge the traumatic kernel that is retroactively constructed and could not be incorporated; it also covers the lack in the Other, to the mystery of which our fantasmatic narratives respond.¹³⁷ Thus, fantasies help us to bypass the mismatch in our symbolic causal chain, the inability of the self to fulfill the call of the Other, and also the very incompleteness/lack in the Other.¹³⁸ It helps us to overcome the structural impossibility through a leap that bridges the mismatching sides of the causal chain. In this sense, it both reveals and conceals the failure of the symbolic, as indicated by Žižek, “fantasy

135 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 128.

136 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 138.

137 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 128.
Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality*, 178.

138 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 128 – 129.

is a means for an ideology to take its own failure into account in advance.”¹³⁹

Fantasy, therefore, creates a position for the subject in its relation to the Other; it “is a way for the subject to answer the question of what object he is in the eyes of the Other, in the Other's desire – that is, what does the Other see in him, what role does he play in the Other's desire”.¹⁴⁰ It helps the subject to eliminate the dissonance created by the fissures in the symbolic that is revolving around the traumatic real. The subject is filled with its perceptions on how s/he is seen by the Other, the role s/he plays in what the Other desires. In turn, subject slides into a flow that carries him/her into an (obsessive) identification with ritual and performances accompanying narratives to sustain the fantasmatic veil. The fantasmatic narrative – concealing both the limp in the symbolic structure and the lack in the Other – is supported by these performances, the demise of which, through exposure of the lingering kernel of the trauma, would not only destabilize the whole universe of meaning and belonging, but would also cause “an unbearable shame that leads to the subject's *aphanisis* – self-obliteration.”¹⁴¹

However, while fantasy attempts to cover that deficiency in the symbolic order through its leap to sustain the meaning and signification, it also directs our attention to what is veiled through the fantasmatic narratives.¹⁴² It, in this sense, functions in both ways: through a fantasmatic narrative it both tries to overcome the structural incompetencies of the symbolic order which threatens the fundamentals of

139 Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 142.

140 Zizek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality*, 177.

141 Zizek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality*, 178.

142 Zizek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality*, 145.

the self and it draws our attentions to that constitutive void out of which fantasmatic narratives emerge. Through its over-performance around that traumatic kernel, fantasy creates a swelling in the symbolic order that is far from being concealed, rather it simultaneously signals the very failure of the symbolic chain, or the lack of the Other.

In this interplay, the call of the Other with all its imposing mystery and impossibility is converted into a positively graspable narrative in the universe of meaning and, in turn, it is crossed via fantasy. The subject is situated in a fantasmatic narrative that not only crosses the impasse of the lack of the Other, but also reflects such impossibility onto a symptom that emerges as the obstacle to the (fantasmatic) desire.¹⁴³ The very absorbed existence of the symptom sustains the fantasy and conceals the inherent impossibility of the desire of the Other. It also saves the subject from the shame and guilt of failing in his/her accomplishment with the call of the Other. For a crystallized depiction of the symptom, one can re-examine the position of the Jew in the Nazi fantasies and how they reflect the inner incompleteness and inherent split in the Nazi self. The Jew figure, in this context, reflects nothing other than the structural rift of the totalitarian-Nazi identity. The impossibility of the fulfillment of the call of the Other by the self is covered by a sinister representation of the Jew, as a symptom, hindering the realization of the fantasmatic desire. Žižek touches upon that reflection as follows:

The 'Jew' is the means, for Fascism, of taking into account, of representing its own impossibility: in its positive presence, it is only the embodiment of the ultimate impossibility of the totalitarian project - of its immanent limit. This is why it is insufficient to designate the totalitarian project as

¹⁴³ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 16.
Žižek, *Kırılğan Temas*, 110.

impossible, utopian, wanting to establish a totally transparent and homogeneous society - the problem is that in a way, totalitarian ideology knows it, recognizes it in advance: in the figure of the 'Jew' it includes this knowledge in its edifice. The whole Fascist ideology is structured as a struggle against the element which holds the place of the immanent impossibility of the very Fascist project: the 'Jew' is nothing but a fetishistic embodiment of a certain fundamental blockage.¹⁴⁴

The symptom, thus, embodies the non-fulfillment of fantasmatic ideals through inverting the blockage from the constitution of the self to the external other. The structural incapacity of the self to incorporate the traumatic kernel and to attain the call of the Other is projected upon the other, who stands as a hindrance in this path. That shift must be kept in mind to understand the relation of the self to other(s) through a fantasmatic narrative.

That logic of psychoanalytic theory might be helpful for us to decipher the excessive performance of and investments on nationalist-Republican ideals by the members of Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon. In the preceding chapters, we have also outlined the uncanny but intimate existence of Romeika for locals who use it in their daily lives and *still* perform an excessive form of Turkish nationalism: The very uneasiness of locals to name the language they speak and a strong claim for Turkishness go hand in hand with an intimate representation of Romeika and belonging.

In the beginning of our theoretical discussion, we had discussed the mismatch between cause and effect and how cause emerges out of such a limp in the symbolic structure. In my interactions with locals, although I ask them why, in their opinion, they do speak Romeika, they were giving different accounts on their ongoing use of

144 Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 142 – 143.

the language. In other words, they were explaining why they still speak Romeika as a language, supposedly, external to their represented self; their statements were a reply to the question, “Why do you *still* speak Romeika (if you are Turks as you claim)?”, with an emphasis on their allegiance to the country and the nation; rather than the original question of mine, “Why, do you think, you speak Romeika?”. The intriguing gap between these two questions and subsequent answers reminds us the limp in the symbolic sphere, as we have discussed above. That very mismatch, as we have observed in the case of local patterns of being and belonging, constitutes the core of locals' narratives on their relation to Romeika. The first point we can make in this interplay, in this sense, focuses on how such a mismatch relates to their excessive investment, narrativity, and performances of Turkish-nationalist identity.

We had briefly touched upon the issue of how locals perceive the language as an uncanny part of their socio-cultural existence and how it constitutes a breach in their identification patterns. It is also considered as a “sacred” element of local subjectivity and identities.¹⁴⁵ Considering the continuation of the use of Romeika in Trabzon, thus, emerges as an intriguing phenomenon that is intricately related to their over-performance. I claim that, the very existence of Romeika as a living memory in the area incessantly destabilizes the identities in the area and forces them to overcome that traumatic kernel of their subjectivities. That initial point of our analysis underlines the fact that non-symbolization and non-representation of Romeika as a both integral and external part of local self act as a motor of local narrativity and performance. It enhances the activities in the symbolic sphere in

145 One must remember the striking depiction of Romeika by one of the respondents: “Bu bizim özelimiz, kutsalımız bu. Bu bizim mahremimiz. Bir yakınlık oluyor.”

order to overcome the unbearable burden and to stabilize the meaning and signification in the contemporary world where such “aberrant co-existences” can not be accommodated.¹⁴⁶ Through their intense interaction with the outside of the community, locals performatively construct a Turkish identity that is not limited to the public, but also pervasive in the private interactions among the members of the Romeika-speaking communities.¹⁴⁷ Thus, as argued before, such nationalist discourses are not external to the self, but, on the contrary, are deeply entrenched in local subjectivities.

The very existence of Romeika, in this context, reflects a profound inner fissure, a traumatic kernel that pushes the subjects to “obsessively” over-perform the rituals of Turkishness and circulate subsequent discourses.¹⁴⁸ The increasing visibility of local deviations in the contemporary Turkish public sphere, in this sense, further fuels such excess through which locals' investment and performance are intensified. That over-performance of Turkishness, thus, is intricately related to the

146 Here, we should note the implications of modernist-national forms of belonging that attempts to leave no room for ambiguous definitions of identity with blurred boundaries. As can be observed in other experiences of nation-state building, processes of modernization and subsequent attempts for homogenization aims at eliminating those cross-cultural experiences and *forcing* the subjects, communal or individual, *to make a choice*. In addition, intensification or growing visibility of such “aberrations” and increasing interaction with wider social body must also be taken into account when analyzing the re-calibration of dynamics and limits of identity. As an historical example, one can see the unpublished dissertation of Zeynep Türkyılmaz, who argued that the emergence of *tenasur* movement strikingly corresponds to the period when those communities, who have lived through an intriguing amalgam of Christianity and Islam, have chosen to take a side, to convert into Christianity after almost two centuries of Islamic representation. Apparently, the very collapse of mining communities in the secluded mountain villages have forced locals to seek employment in other parts of the Empire that, not surprisingly, could not accommodate their *uncanny* socio-religious practices.

For further information, please see: Zeynep Türkyılmaz, “Anxieties of Conversion: Missionaries, State and Heterodox Communities in the Late Ottoman Empire” (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2009).

147 Here, once again, we must note that aspects of the hegemonic Turkish-nationalist identity is not solely performed in the public for the sake of interests, rather how they are internalized and become part of the local self through which they relate to both themselves and to the others.

148 Zizek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality*, 177.

re-emergence of socio-cultural distinctions in the realm of politics and citizenship in Turkey. The wounding crack, caused by the living memory of Romeika, forces locals to excessively comply with the ideals of the Other, the nationalist ideological call, which calls them into particular subject positions. These fantasmatic scenarios, which provide an answer to question “What am I in the eyes of the Other and what does the Other want (from me)?”, constitute the interpellation of the Turkish-nationalist hegemony as the answer to the unbearable ambiguity in the desire of the Other through interpellating the subjects into the Turkishness, with its entire luggage around the present and the past, which they strive to attain.

Traumatic kernel of identity, thus, is not assimilated into the symbolic structure where signification and meaning are produced, as in the case of Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon, whose representation does not include that cultural distinction, at least in their public representations and encounters with others.¹⁴⁹ The coherency of that symbolic order, however, relies on the fantasmatic process of veiling the constitutive gap-center of the order. In the case of Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon, the privacy and intimacy of the language can be assessed through such a perspective: Romeika, as a part of the socio-cultural heritage of the area, constitutes a traumatic kernel that is not incorporated into the symbolic structure which locals utilize to relate to and represent themselves in connection with the others.

Within the symbolic order and in relation to ideological nodes that respond to the call of the Republican-nationalist ideals, the existence of Romeika is concealed

149 Ahıska, “Kimlik Kavramı Üstüne Fragmanlar”, 14 -15.

under the fantasmatic veil of diverse narratives which are recounted to externalize the language further. As a part of local socio-cultural subjectivities, Romeika is silenced and “retroactively” transformed into the unstable core of the symbolic order which continuously ignites the performance, affective circulations, and investment by locals, acting as the motor of performance, affectivity, and narrativity.¹⁵⁰ It is transformed into an invisible essence of local being and belonging that is not represented in the level of identity, but is deeply entrenched in the self's relation to itself. It is structurally and culturally embedded in the construction of the self, yet barred from any form of representation in encounters with the others. Romeika, although depicted as a central part of communal forms of being and belonging, is dismissed from the terrain of performance and narrativity, it is rendered invisible and muted. As a reminiscence of an “aberrant” modality of existence and relationality, it traumatically haunts the today of the speakers through its public silence and invisibility.

Such retroactive reconstruction of Romeika as the traumatic kernel not only ignites the contemporary investment, performance, and narrativity in the area through which local self is shaped, but also externalizes that cultural characteristic from the identity of locals. As we have indicated before, Romeika is perceived as an *uncanny* element of local identity that is at the center of the subjectivities, yet could not be accommodated in the symbolic order. Through retroactive construction of Romeika, as a cultural “deviation”, it is excluded from the domain of narrativity and performance in addition to being externalized from the local self in favor of Turkish

150 Zizek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality*, 31 – 32.

identity. Thus, it represents an intriguing case, which is both inside and outside of the local identity. It constructs and negates local forms of being and belonging, producing a terrain through which local performances and investments are cultivated. As an uncanny element of local identity, it creates a void in the symbolic sphere that is neither absorbed nor fully excluded or denied. Through its contemporary visibility, it incessantly creates limits and breaches those limits. In this sense, Romeika acts as a self-negating kernel of the local identity that both constructs and undermines local forms of being and belonging.

Following the first layer of our analysis arguing that basic function of Romeika lies at its uncanny position for the local identities, we now can venture to track how such traumatic elements and fantasmatic leaps not only are rooted in a fissure for the local self, but also constitute a structural challenge to the grand narratives and interpellation of the Turkish nationalism, as the Other, in this interplay. As a following assertion, I claim, that the continuing use of Romeika in the area constitutes a reminder of the structural impossibility or inherent failure of the (national) identity in general. That structurally embedded failure also involves the intrinsic setback in the particular case of Turkish-nationalist identity that aims at creating a unitary national composition out of diverse experience, practice, and memories. That fundamental mark of Romeika thus reminds us the very failure of the identity and signification that is far from being complete and has to be supported by fantasmatic veils crossing the constitutive abyss.

The first layer of that structural challenge Romeika poses involves an analysis of how locals' perception of Turkishness is hindered by their continued use

of Romeika as an “aberrant” social practice and how diverse narratives are employed to overcome the instability in their symbolic universe. As we have indicated before, the language constitutes an ambiguous position that is both internal and external to the local identities. The very antagonism of a Greek language to the Turkish nationalism within a modernist-monist nationalist system of belonging has been stated as the source of such dissonance that constructs the language as a traumatic motor of local subjectivities which could not be absorbed into the symbolic order. Within this state of being, we have also pointed out the over-performance and over-investment by locals in the ideals of the nationalist ideological structure. The call of the Other, in this context, interpellates the local self into a particular subject position which requires the relinquishment of aberrant socio-cultural characteristics in favor of a modernist-“neutral” form of being and belonging. Continued existence, remembrance, or exposure of “aberrant” social-symbolic practices, however, structurally hinders the process of attainment towards the ideals of the Other by haunting the present and past of the self through reminiscences of the non-conforming elements. It points out the limits of the capabilities of the symbolic order and identity, underlining dynamism and fluidity of both. It also, once again, reveals the abyss at the center of the identity, as a socio-cultural process, that is far from being a rigid and essential core of the self. It reminds the self the very slippery terrain upon which the self is destined to fail in his/her quest for its non-existent soul.

In this context, Romeika, as a living memory leaking into the present of locals, appears as a reminder of the limits of the identity and signification. As a

residue of the symbolization, it acts as a mark of non-compliance. It reminds the self of the incompleteness of the process of subjectivation and the lack of integrity of the identity by pointing out the remainder. Romeika-speaking self is cracked because of the continued existence of Romeika, since the very core of the self is antagonistically attributed to be the very sign of the failure of the identity. Members of the Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon are faced by the destabilizing glimpse of Romeika, while attempting to be proper (nationalist) Turks in line with the ideals of the ideological call. The process, however, is hampered by their non-public socio-cultural practices. It reminds them their partial integration into the symbolic, or their incomplete compliance with the ideals of Turkishness. The call of the Other, to put it in simple terms, is not fulfilled because of the communal characteristics: The full realization of Turkishness, with all its modernist-monist conceptualization of being and belonging, is rendered impossible while upholding Romeika, as a central part of local subjectivity and identities.

If we approach the issue from another angle, though, the continuity in Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon might also help us to designate the dynamics and limits of identity. Since Romeika, as a reminiscence of the past reminding an “aberrant” form of being, constitutes a structural breach for the modernist-monist conceptions of identity, of Turkishness; it also underlines how the unintegrated parts of identity still lingers in the air revealing the (in)capabilities of the ideological call that subjects strive to attain. As we have indicated before, although members of the Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon are excessively passionate about circulating and performing discourses related to Turkishness, we

have also analyzed how Romeika, as a part local socio-cultural heritage, constitutes a major and private-intimate part of local relations that is central to the communal interactions. In this context, even though ideological call of the nationalism is remarkably pervasive for almost all our respondents and reflected in their perceptions of the self and others, we can also notice some sort of incapability of that ideological call on identity to profoundly infuse into local subjectivities. Ongoing existence of Romeika in the area, thus, emerges as the ultimate limit of the ideological call of the nationalist discourses of the Republican establishment. It signals the partiality of the fulfillment on the side of locals, which highlight the gap that still needs to be traversed. In the contemporary socio-political climate of Turkey, it reminds the structural rift that is embedded in the local identity. Thus, it exposes the failure of locals to attain the ideals of the Other, of Turkish nationalist hegemony.

That exposure of the non-attainment of locals with the call of the Other, however, is not solely explained by the existence of Romeika as an uncanny part of local identity. The very existence of other communities, notably Kurds, also has a partial effect through which such a non-realization of the call of the Other can be explained. As we have indicated before, symptoms are depicted as the hindrances which reflect the inherent impossibility of fantasmatic narratives. The failure, or non-attainment, of Turkish-nationalist ideals in the case of Romeika-speaking communities similarly denote Kurdish groups and their defiance as the symptom of the symbolic structure within which the realization of the call of the Other, of Turkish-nationalist interpellation, is incessantly hindered by the existence and challenges of Kurdish movement. The inherent impossibility of both local and

national aspirations and their structural incapability to attain the ideals of the Other, is thus, reflected on to the Kurdish image/body, which is designated as a coherent and disruptive element in this interplay. In this context, Kurds emerge as the symptom of the Turkish-nationalist ideology and locals mark them as the concrete obstacles on the path to full realization of the ideological call, partially concealing the inherent disturbances caused by the very continuity of Romeika.

Such an exposure of the limitations not only marks the incompleteness of the symbolic order through the continued use of Romeika, but also underlines the fluidity of the identity which lacks stable boundaries and is constructed socio-politically in a given historical context. That point brings us to the last claim we make about Romeika: It structurally annuls the possibility of completion for identity, in addition to pointing out other modes of being and belonging which can accommodate what is thought to be impossible to co-exist in modernist thinking. Antagonistically conceived categories of identities are, thus, re-conceptualized as interacting and relational elements of the self, that are neither stagnant nor able to include essential characteristics. Ongoing use of Romeika, in this sense, reminds us the very possibility of co-existences of what modernist paradigm depict as mutually exclusive and that identity itself is continuously re-defined. As an experience, it highlights the potentiality for other modes of being and belonging that is based on co-existence and remembrance rather than exclusion and oblivion.

Romeika-speaking subjects of Akyayla, in this sense, constitute an illustrative case through which antagonistic social categories, that are thought to be impossible to co-exist, are attached together. The case of Romeika-speaking Turkish-nationalist

community of Trabzon thus challenges our modernist-monist thinking of identity and subjectivity. As an illuminating example of remembrance and heritage, it reminds us the plurality of human existence and experience that can still be observed in fragments. With such quality, Romeika-speaking communities might provide us clues about new modalities of being, belonging, and remembering with which one can go beyond the limitations of our contemporary being and thinking. Through traversing these contemporary modes, one can integrate those excluded memories into identity in a comprehensive manner to reduce the dissonance created by irreducible gaps in the symbolic.

In the intriguing case of Romeika, we are vividly exposed to that abyss of being, the Real, once again. Romeika, as a contemporary socio-cultural practices reminds us that identities do lack fixed boundaries that permanently define inside and outside through intrinsic qualities of the self and others. Rather, those boundaries of inside and outside, of I/we and others, do change and are subject to incessant recalibration in relation to changing socio-cultural context and terminology. The very co-existence of Romeika and Turkish nationalism, in this sense, appears as an remarkable negation of what is thought to be the definition of identity. Both today and in the past, such co-existences remind us the fact that the absence of a stable quality for the self is the sole quality of the identity which is centered around that horrendous but constitutive abyss and moved by a retroactively constructed trauma. Thus, I claim, in opposition to all performances and investments, Romeika ends up as a reminder for the locals of the intrinsic fluidity of the identity, demonstrating the slipperiness of the terrain upon which borders of the identities are negotiated and re-

constructed incessantly. It is a mark of a failure on their side to attain ideals in the call of the Other, of Turkish nationalist ideology, in its interpellation for a particular type of being and belonging. It highlights how they, even after all those excessive performance and investments, still lag behind in what is expected of them; it is perceived as the crystallization of their setback communally. However, in general sense, it also represents how identity in general constitutes a structurally elusive category that is impossible to fully fit in, always slipping out of the hands those who strive to be: It is always either too much or too little, never properly attained.

Readers, in this context, must always keep in mind that, my analysis, under any circumstances, does not refer to the issue as a revelation of a hidden core of the self that is reserved to the private realm for survival of the community. In parallel, in no such manner, we do not claim any other “national” essence that is out there to be discovered, as implied and argued by many.¹⁵¹ To exemplify, one can take the

151 Such an essentialist reading of ethnicities/nations can be traced in the book of Yorgo Andreadis, *Gizli Din Taşıyanlar*, as well. In one of the passages explaining the tenasur movement through which Kurumlus renounced their ambiguous lifestyle and has designated Christianity as their sole religion, the author says:

“Bir süre sonra, savaş bitti ve Ruslar bölgeyi terk ettiler. 2.000'den fazla aile onları Rusya'ya ve Rus Kars'ına kadar izledi. Onlar Hıristiyanlıklarını açıklayan böylece *ikiyüzlülük* maskesini çıkartanlardı. Kars'ta Rum, Hıristiyan köyleri kurdular ve orada mutlu ve özgürce yaşayacaklarını sandılar; fakat bu sonsuza kadar sürmedi.” (Yorgo Andreadis, *Gizli Din Taşıyanlar Kolostai: Dönerler, Tenasur: Din Değiştirenler*, 66)

Such a conceptualization of identity not only distorts the previous experiences of Kurumlus through depicting their dual lifestyles as consciously and strictly divided between true and false sides of their being; it also theoretically falls into the trap through its *ex post facto* imposition of modernist-monist paradigms on the case. Direct association of Greekness with the local communities, as an ever-present quality of the self, thus both fails to grasp the dynamism of the identity and how it interacts with changing socio-political context. Moreover, a few pages later, while recounting his grandmother's last wish, Andreadis also says: “Büyükanneimin tek arzusu, bedeninin yıkanmasıydı. Yıkanmadan beni mezara koymayın, demişti. Bu arzusunu yerine getirememenin üzüntüsünü duyduğum zamanlar olmuştur.” (Page 71) Such a cross-cultural reading of the identity, erupting occasionally even in the analysis of the author himself, seems to be a more comprehensive perspective that can help us to decipher the local experience. Thus, we once again claim that identity is far from being a representation of a stable inner essence, rather it is constructed and negotiated continuously in relation to social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances surrounding the self.

linguistic analysis of Hakan Özkan, who has provided a valuable and productive perspective of Romeika, presents his views on local patterns of identity as follows:

In contrast to those who do not see any Greekness in their identity, many of my informants take a totally different stance. Surprisingly they frankly *acknowledge* a Greek (T[urkish] Rum) identity lying beneath their Turkish national identity.¹⁵²

Such an understanding of identity, with intrinsic and stable qualities that remains there to be discovered, fails to grasp the core of discussion and falls into the trap of nationalist paradigms through its essentialist reading of being and belonging.

Throughout our analysis, and by our examination of Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon, we have attempted to demonstrate the unstable composition of identity that is centered around a constitutive abyss. Thus, our analysis of Romeika and its relation to communities in Trabzon do not assume any Turkish or Greek, or any other, core that is socio-historically stable and include unique qualities. In addition to depicting such nationalist categories (including the claims for Turkish and Greek ethnicities) as ever-changing, unstable, and constructed; I also claim that such socio-cultural characteristics should not be assessed in a direct causal chain, but rather understood in relation to socio-political evolution of hegemonic forms of identity. Romeika, as a socio-cultural practice, can not automatically be assumed to reflect a stable Greek essence, nor can it be understood without admitting the socio-historical interactions among diverse communities in the area.

In opposition to such depiction of local identity and subjectivities, I challenge mutually exclusive construction and representation of modernist identities through

¹⁵² Hakan Özkan, "The Pontic Greek Spoken by Muslims in the Villages of Besköy in the Province of Present-day Trabzon," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 37/1 (2013): 138. Emphasis is mine.

my analysis which might be considered as a humble contribution into the re-conceptualization of different modes of being and belonging. Contrary to such theories of homogenous and coherent identities with clear boundaries, this research on Romeika reminds us the abyss of identity that acts as the motor of subsequent performance, investment, and narratives. Both other historical cases and experience of Romeika thus underline the role fantasies and performances play in the construction of identity.¹⁵³ Under, all these appeasing tactics that try to defer the abyss of the Real, there lays a horrendous emptiness which haunts the identity. That crucial point constitutes the basis of our understanding of identity and subsequent performances and must be kept in mind permanently.

AFFECTIVE ENCOUNTERS

Before I conclude this chapter, following my analysis of the local psychoanalytic dynamics and maneuvers in the face of radical challenges to the definition of the citizenship, I will also draw some attention to affective encounters between locals

¹⁵³ Remembering the historical case of *tenasür*, as discussed by Zeynep Türkyılmaz and Yorgo Andreadis separately, would help us to get a better grasp of such historical experiences and our theoretical structure. Prior to emergence of *tenasür* movement in late 19th century, those communities could accommodate both Islamic and Christian practice and beliefs. Such an amalgam can not solely be understood as a survival tactic, it definitely entails an allegiance to both of these belief structures, as stated by these aforementioned sources, too. Thus, although they have been later crystallized as mutually exclusive categories, prior to encounter with outsiders, such communities could inhabit a remarkably flexible identity and related performances. That takes us to our claim once again, identity lacks a stable essence. In this context, claim for Greekness or Turkishness fail to grasp the gist of the process, since its inherent inability to grasp those cross-cultural experiences and dynamism which people demonstrate in response to changing socio-political circumstances.

and those groups that raise political demands about their socio-cultural distinctions, most notably Kurds. Theoretically speaking, such demands might trigger specific and significant affective vibrations in the area, further enhancing the performance of identity and re-constituting subject-object positions in the area. The interactive process that I attempted to analyze operates through a range of affects, including but not limited to shame, envy, hate, anxiety, and humiliation.¹⁵⁴ Such discussion of affective interactions and circulations in the area might give us more clues about what other mechanisms might be at stake while discussing the subjectivities of Romeika-speaking locals of Akyayla. Thus, following my psychoanalytic assessment of identity and subjectivity in the area, a theoretical discussion of local perceptions of others and how they relate to these other communities provide us intriguing perspectives on the contemporary transformations in Turkish society.

Throughout this thesis, I had indicated that Romeika stands as a reminder of locals' inability to be fully assimilated into "Turkish" society. That inability to attain the ideal signifies not only the dissonance self experiences, but also the crack in the

¹⁵⁴ Our understanding of affects, or emotions, is not limited to conventional conceptualizations of emotions as psychological states that stem from inner contemplations. On the contrary, in the footsteps of Sara Ahmed, who has immensely contributed into the field through her book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, affects involve "sociality" and produce "surfaces and boundaries" that in turn re-constitute subject and object positions. In this regard, through emotions, or affective encounters, the boundaries of inside and outside are formed, as well as the boundaries between I/we and others. The process applies to individual subjects in their encounters with objects and others, as well as collectivities which are (re-)constituted and delineated from other collective bodies, the most notable example being the nation. That affective designation creates positions of subject and object, or inside and outside, which moves the *feeling* subject and connects it to the inside through delineating it from the object of emotion. As intrinsically social phenomena, they also produce belonging and connection for the subject and embed them into a particular social-symbolic structure. That socio-symbolic structure eventually becomes a central pillar for the meaning production and identity of the subject and "their demise is felt as a kind of living death." Since affective circulation provides a symbolic terrain within which the subject is located, the subject is entrenched in that structure through his/her affective encounters that produces connections and belonging, as lucidly visible in the case of nations and nationalist discourses. For more information on affects, their operation and circulation, please see: Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

symbolic sphere that is decomposed by the unexpected exposure of the failure on the side of locals. Such exposure reminds us the very incompleteness of the socio-symbolic structure and the inherent impossibility of the symbolic wholeness while shedding light on the wounds under the harmonious veil of the phantasmic narrative and performances that are reflected through affective encounters.

Exposure and subsequent over-performance as a reflection of the desire for concealment point out that disharmony and incompleteness that are concealed even from the self itself. One basic premise, revealed through such dissonance, underlines that the full symbolic attainment is impossible to reach. Beneath the nebulous but comforting veil of the phantasmic account of being, there lies an aberrant self which does not work properly, one which can not attain the ideals of the Other; affective encounters crystallize and expose that non-compliance under the guise of harmony.

However, one should note that in the shameful moment of exposure, two things are revealed: firstly, the inability of the self to attain the ideals of the other, and secondly, love and attachment of the self to these ideals of the Other. That is why Sara Ahmed says, “that the failure to live up to a social ideal is a way of taking up that ideal and confirming its necessity; despite the negation of shame experiences, my shame confirms my love, and my commitment to such ideals in the first place.”¹⁵⁵ The interpellation of Turkish-nationalist hegemony is assured of its supremacy even when non-attainment is exposed. It is quite instructive to remember the growing intensity of nationalist discourses in Turkey for the last two decades, when the fundamental premises of the hegemony are profoundly challenged and

155 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 106.

subjected to fragmentation. That exposure of its ideological incompleteness and fragmentation, however, does not automatically cause its pervasiveness to diminish from socio-symbolic sphere. On the contrary, such exposure and a sense of non-attainment on the side of locals, indeed, contribute into the embeddedness of subjects into the hegemony through confirming their love for those ideals of the Other. In their failure, the subjects re-discover their commitment, upholding the ideals they failed to embrace. As in the case of Romeika-speaking locals of Akyayla, the haunting memory and ongoing “deviant” socio-cultural practices become the catalysts of further performance of and investment on Turkishness. It designates the Republican hegemony as an inclusive ideological call that still welcomes the deviant groups as long as they are ready to embrace Republican norms around public display of identity.

The elements of the discourse raised by diverse political groups in Turkey have pointed out the exclusion and suppression they suffered under the Republican political regime. The primary point in the defiance, decades long armed conflict in Kurdish case and ever-increasingly visible political disaffection in other groups, challenged their invisibility and anonymousness in the public sphere in the name of the “neutrality” of the Turkish citizenship. Although that construction of public sphere and citizenship allured some groups and created a strong sense of belonging and identity within the given political setting, as in our case of Romeika-speaking locals in Trabzon and significant parts of Alevi community, counter-hegemonic movements definitely tried to both point out the similar experiences and suffering different communities have endured and reverse the official policies to render

distinctions visible, acknowledged, and legible in the public sphere. That last goal constitutes the very source through which particular affects are produced in Romeika-speaking communities of Trabzon.

The very possibility of transforming the political language, through which the self is both constituted and represented in the public, is at the heart of the dissonance locals feel since it unveils their categorical similarity to those others, to whom they resemble socio-culturally, and underline local over-investment and performance in an ideological interpellation which both includes and excludes them by its inception. As indicated before, while some communities have been assimilated into the majority, some others have endured suppression and denial because of their resistance to assimilationist policies of the state. Particularly, Kurdish movement have staunchly confronted juridico-political establishment and demanded visibility for Kurdish identity in the public sphere while asking for legitimate representation and legibility in political scene. That radical demand, supported by an armed struggle, have thoroughly challenged the basic claim of Republican ideological structure that residents of the country are homogenous in their ethnic, social, and cultural composition with the sole exception of non-Muslim minorities, which have been crippled by legal-political means and reduced to insignificant numbers with low-key profile. Grand national(ist) narratives also underlined historical, political, and social unity of the national body under the terms specified before. All non-conforming characteristics had either been denied or pushed out of the limits of the public.

The very challenge of Kurdish demand, to put it straightforwardly, is its

potential to lift the phantasmic veil under which diverse and and deviant memories, characteristics, and practices are disguised or rendered invisible. That disguise does not refer to an essential particularity of the self which is covered but remains to be re-discovered. Rather, it refers to processes through which such memories, characteristics, and practices are retracted to non-public domains and detached from the public presentation of identity and citizenship. It refers to socio-historical processes by which the *makbul* citizenship and identity of the Republic have been constructed and have eliminated other ways through which such distinctions can be represented and related to the realm of politics. Thus, in the case of Kurdish movement, the counter political discourse attempts to re-articulate the definition of the identity and citizenship, as well as that of the public and the political, to re-attach such distinctions to the subject in the public sphere.

Such an attempt or potentiality of Kurdish movement triggers affective reactions in Romeika-speaking locals in Trabzon for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, the radical challenge of Kurdish movement reveals the socio-cultural distinctions throughout the country, through questioning the fundamental premise of the nationalist-Republican hegemony about the unity of the nation. Through that radical politics, not only Kurdish distinctions and identity are brought into discussion in the public sphere, but also a contagious potentiality for others to go through the same process emerges. It reminds all these socio-cultural distinctions that these communities have not demonstrated in the public, but reserved to non-public settings. Such a contagion marks these communities as deviant, barred, and vulnerable alongside Kurds; they are potentially positioned on the side of the

minority in opposition to the position of the sovereign/majority. That presentation of distinctions through analogousness in their differences wounds these compliant communities and exposes their structural weakness in the given ideological structure.

Such a possibility of exposure oscillates in the air and constitutes a vital threat to lift the veil by which compliant communities are assimilated into the Turkish nation. Through breaching the hegemonic definitions of identity, subjectivity, and history Kurdish movement, thus, shakes the very terrain upon which those compliant communities have constructed their being and belonging for decades. Kurdish intervention threatens to disintegrate the whole network of being and belonging through undermining the basic nodal points of the structure, creating new pivotal signifiers and meaning. It destabilizes the signification chain and attempts to re-articulate all those signifiers from another perspective. Thus, their defiance causes anxiety, shame, fear, envy through its wounding potentiality, through what it aims at achieving. Equivalence with others and attribution of vulnerability with deviation, thus, constitute the first pillar of affective encounters through which locals relate to others and themselves.

Secondly, it points out the compliance of locals with the Republican ideology through which they, as docile subjects, secluded their distinctions into a non-public domain. It marks the exclusionary inclusion through which compliant communities are integrated at the expense of socio-cultural oblivion. Thus, it exposes the integration process as a process against the self, a process that attempts to ignore a particular “deviant” part of identity for the sake of an ideal. Kurdish intervention, in

this sense, unveils both the fact that compliant communities refrained from confrontation and deprived their identity of resistance and sacrifice, and, maybe more structurally, that the very core of identity is designated as non-fixed through disclosing the fluidity of such compliant communities, marking their subjectivities as vulnerable, fluid, and docile; eliminating their presumed essence.

In this context, Kurdish intervention seems to cause envy, anxiety, and shame which are felt by those compliant communities which have chosen, or have been forced to choose, the path of assimilation and integration. When faced with the insistent struggle of Kurdish-speaking communities across the country, Romeika-speaking subjects are reminded of their socio-cultural oblivion which has been deprived of resistance and representation. Counter-hegemonic demands of Kurdish communities not only exposes the vulnerability and incompleteness of identity on the side of Romeika-speaking locals of Akyayla, it also points out the absence of the resistance which deprived local subjects of a stable core of identity that can match their socio-cultural qualities. The exclusion of non-conforming practices from the public sphere, as in the case of their mother tongue, and locals' ongoing commitment to ideals of Turkish-nationalist hegemony should also be considered, within this perspective, which might give us more clues about their growingly excessive performance of Turkishness.

In this discussion of affective encounters between Romeika-speaking subjects of Akyayla and Kurdish intervention, anxiety, fear, shame, anger, envy, and humiliation might all be thought to be at stake due to the revelation made by Kurdish movement. Going beyond the limits of a particular affect, I assert that locals'

perception of Kurdish movement is deeply shaped by those affective circulations which solidify their subjective positions in the socio-symbolic terrain. By anxiously witnessing radical challenges posed by counter-hegemonic groups or by excessively performing Turkishness in protest of these challenges, one can observe the intriguing amalgam of affectivity among locals. Their assimilation into Turkish-nationalist hegemony constitutes the terrain upon which such affective circulations are produced. When faced with Kurdish struggle, such assimilation is re-calibrated as a demeaning process that acted against the self. Although conditions differ enormously, such an absence of resistance or the excessive performance and investment by locals, mark Romeika as a remainder of these affects; it stands for what is absent in the community rather as well as what is excessive. It symbolizes these since it denotes the abyss around identity and subjectivity, which are re-articulated in response to changing socio-political circumstances. It crystallizes shame, envy, anxiety, humiliation through excessive performance and assimilation. In the face of defiant Kurdish communities –who even after decades of suppression and denial could still display their socio-cultural distinctions– such assimilation, performance, and investment appear as a process by the self against the self since it entails the elimination of a certain quality of the self from the public representation.

To conclude this chapter, I have to state that further research and analysis should be conducted to comprehend local dynamics better. My analysis, limited in scope and resources, just reflects a small sample of locals from the area. However, the strength of local sense of Turkishness, their staunch opposition to demands by other groups, and intensity of their performance give us clues about the underlying

dynamics in the area. To this aim, I have utilized psychoanalytic concepts such as fantasy and symptom to explain the pervasiveness of nationalist sentiments in the face of non-conforming socio-cultural practices and memory in addition to briefly discussing possible affective encounters which might also be at quite relevant when considered with locals' perception of others in contemporary Turkey. While psychoanalytic tools provide us a glimpse of how local subjectivities are shaped in relation to hegemonic ideological structure, an assessment of affective dynamics has the potentiality to uncover how their relationship with others profoundly shape these local subjects, as well. Through my analysis, I asserted that Romeika as a living memory of a non-conforming past haunts the present of Akyayla, creating deep fissures in the symbolic structure. Through ideological interpellation and fantasies, such fissures are attempted to be covered and such structural incompleteness is reflected to a symptom. I have also discussed the possible implications of affective dynamics which have plagued the area in the face of radical changes that we have witnessed in contemporary Turkey. Anger, shame, envy, humiliation all might be considered to get a better picture of the local identity and subjectivities. In relation to Kurdish movement and demands, affective encounters shape local bodies and surfaces enhancing intense performances of Turkishness.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to understand the dynamics of identity and subjectivity in the case of Romeika-speaking communities of Akyayla, Trabzon. The aim I had at the beginning of my research, to understand the contemporary transformations in Turkish society, still remains to be an intriguing issue that can be assessed through different perspectives. Continuously changing parameters of both politics and socio-symbolic orders also keep on incessantly altering our perceptions and projections that make us who we are, or how we represent ourselves. This thesis, in this context, should be considered as a humble contribution through which a widely neglected part of the chronic problems we face today can be comprehended thoroughly to imagine new modalities of being, belonging, and remembering.

Throughout our analysis, I have demonstrated how Romeika, as a local socio-cultural practice, constitutes the communal sense of “we” which is inscribed in the local subjectivities profoundly. In addition, I have analyzed how the continued use of Romeika is habitually secluded into intra-communal interactions which mark such intimate relations as private. The public invisibility of the language, thus, is attributed to be one of the pillars upon which locals construct their identities and represent themselves in the public. Moreover, such seclusion, I have claimed, signifies the delicate status of the language for locals, who excessively perform Turkish nationalist discourses, through constituting it as an uncanny part of local identities. Yet, Romeika is also designated as a “sacred” element of local identity, constituting the basis for communal sense of “we” in the area. Romeika, in this socio-symbolic context, marks a secluded “deviance” from the norm, which is shared by the community and concealed under the nebula of excessive performance

of Turkish nationalism. These elements have formed the first step of my analysis.

Following our ethnographic findings on performance and Romeika, I have analyzed how locals perceive and relate to other socio-culturally distinct groups in Turkey who have begun to be increasingly visible in the public sphere with their political demands. Through an analysis of local input, I have concluded that local alignment with the official discourses of the state situate them in antagonism with those other groups, notably Kurds, as the addressee of such political interactions. That alignment has also been strengthened by the excessive performance of Turkish-nationalist discourses. I have also assessed how such alignments and oppositions are rooted in affective encounters between locals and others through an analysis of shame and humiliation, which I claim to be quite illuminating to elucidate the firmness of the opposition to demands for the re-articulation of citizenship, identities, and the public.

Lastly, I have analyzed how Romeika can also be a helpful to understand the psychoanalytic dynamics of the community, specifically, which can also be extended, with alterations and adjustments, to the wider communities and nations, through the concepts of cause, Real, fantasy, and symptom. These concepts that I borrow from psychoanalysis has helped me to get a better sense of local subjectivities which are traumatized by their own socio-cultural memories and practices that are reflected upon some other external figures. Understanding such intricacies, I have claimed, would also help us to decipher the foundations of identities. At this chapter, an analysis of the status of Romeika as a mute kernel of local identity helped me to decipher the underlying dynamics that fueled the

performance of Turkish nationalism in the area. The sacredness, yet silence, of Romeika have been depicted in relation to fantasies around identity and citizenship in Turkish context to account for the intensity of local performance and investments. Moreover, I have also briefly touched upon a theoretical discussion of affective dynamics in the area which highlight the tension in the face of structurally changing socio-political system, notably Kurdish movement. Through that discussion, I have suggested that affects such as fear, shame, envy, anxiety, and humiliation. These affective vibrations, I claimed, should also be taken into account to comprehend the mechanisms of nationalist performance in the area.

There are some points to be made before concluding this research. First one is to note the difference in the levels of conceptualization for the term “cause”. Although it has also been used numerously to account for the factors that constitute the socio-cultural setting of Akyayla in a sociological perspective, in psychoanalytic theory “cause” is treated differently in terms of narratives produced in the symbolic sphere in line with fantasy and the Other. They are crucially different and should be read so. Secondly, my understanding of Romeika-speaking communities of Akyayla and their perception of other communities do not rely on fixed and permanent distinctions. Rather, these communities have a range of distinctions and similarities that change over time due to surrounding circumstances. Although Alevis and Kurds are depicted in opposition to Romeika-speaking communities of Akyayla, they still bear many resemblances like their increasing adoption of Turkish and Republican type of modernism with its reflections on identity, citizenship, and memory. That point also should be kept in mind. Thirdly, I must state that my analysis on affective

encounters between Kurds and Romeika-speaking locals of Akyayla requires further research and analysis. Although, I have embraced a brief theoretical discussion on the issue, I believe it will be significantly instructive to decipher affective dynamics which sustain subjective constructions not only in Trabzon, but also in whole Turkey.

While concluding our analysis, I would like to invite readers to, once again, think about the potentialities Romeika-speaking communities might bring in to our social existence. Or, to contemplate on the radical alterations which might structurally change the way we conceive ourselves. The particular case of Romeika-speaking locals of Akyayla might help us to conceive a new modality of being and belonging which in turn can remind the multiplicity of experiences for individual and communities. Analyzing that particular case would also help us to understand our situation with numerous socio-political deadlocks that needs to be overcome to accommodate other modes of representation, remembrance, and expression. I believe the way out of the impasse, suffocating the present and the past of Turkish society, relies on the courageous acts which might re-articulate the ways we relate to ourselves and others. Both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles should consider dilemmas posed by the very incapacibilities of the current socio-symbolic order and try to engage in “ethical acts” that gives us the glimpses of a mode of existence organized in a radically different manner. I also believe that the way out requires us to find these radical solutions as much as why they are needed and how these incapacibilities are sustained. I hope this thesis can contribute to this goal.

APPENDIX A: ORIGINALS OF THE QUOTES IN TURKISH

Footnote 25 (Page 19): Of, Sürmene ve Maçka ilçeleri ile Vakfikebir'in Tonya Bucağı'nda Yunan Rumcası'nı andıran bir dili konuşan az sayıda yaşlı insanlara rastlanmakta ise de, yeni nesil bu dili konuşmaktan nefret etmektedirler.

Footnote 26 (Page 23): Hele bir de şu anadilimiz Romeyika yok mu, bu yüzden kim

neler çekmedi ki... [Bölgeden göçenler] Gittikleri yerlerde Romeyika konuşmamaya dikkat ederlerdi. Her ne kadar olsa, yine de komşulardan bazılarını yakalanırlardı evin içinde, özellikle küçük yaşta çocukların aralarındaki diyaloguyla. Yüzleri kızarırdı bir an annelerin, babaların. Bakarlardı hemen komşunun yüzüne; onların tepkisini ölçerlerdi. Gelecek olan bela bir soruya, şaşkınlığın hareketlendirdiği beyin hücreleri, cevap hazırlamakla meşgul olurdu. Elleri ayaklarına dolanırdı.

Footnote 27 (Page 24): Bu bizim özelimiz, kutsalımız. Bu bizim mahremimiz. Bir yakınlık oluyor.

Footnote 28 (Page 25): [Gizlilik] Vardı. Eskiden çok yoğundu. Ama hala o kadar biz özümsemişiz ki biz Türklüğü, ve Rum olmamayı daha doğrusu... O kadar çok özümstedik ki bunu. Ya bunu bir kere biz bir suç veya ayıp bir şeymiş gibi görüyoruz. Yani Rum olmayı... Veya aşağılanma. En doğru kelimeyle aşağılanma, ne yazık ki, olarak görüyoruz. Ondan dolayı eskiden biz bunu [konuşulan dilin Rumca olduğunu] hayatta kabul etmezdik.

Footnote 31 (Page 27): Yabancı birine tepki gösterirler. Çünkü, korkuyorlar insanlar. Neden? Gelen kim? Polis mi? Niye soruyor? Bu bizim mahremimiz. Bak, burada Rumca konuşan bütün aileler Rumca'yı çok kutsal görürler. Ve bizim özelimiz olarak görürler. Yani bu dili, çünkü bizden başka kullanan yok. Bu dili gidip konuşuyorsa, ya ben onu tanıyorum, ya ailesini tanıyorum, ya da çok yakın bir yerdeyiz. O yüzden bizim için çok kutsal bu.

Footnote 32 (Page 28): Daha sonra, bizim köye, işte Yunanistan'da öğrenciyken, iki arkadaşımınla birlikte gittim. Onları aldım, köye gittim. Oradaki ortamı görmem lazımdı. Böyle haliyle ben zaman içerisinde normal arkadaşlarımı da götürdüm ama 'merhaba, hoş geldin, iyi misin, annen nasıl, baban nasıl'... Budur muhabbet. Misafir. Fakat bu çocuklarla gittik. Yani nereye gitsek bütün köy oraya toplanıyor. Yani böyle. Bizim sanki yıllardır dışarıda olan bir ailenin çocukları gibi. Onlar da o şekilde. Çünkü aynı dil... Senin aile içindeki en özel şeyi onlar da biliyorlar. Ben sana mesela şimdi *havis* diyeceğim, *malez* diyeceğim, *cumur* diyeceğim, işte ne bileyim şey diyeceğim. Ama onlar senin için bir şey ifade etmeyecek. Ama o onun için ediyor ifade bir şeyleri. Böyle olunca da inanılmaz bir yakınlık oldu.

Footnote 33 (Page 29): Şimdi... Bizim insanlar [Rumca'yı] kendi aralarında konuşur. Bilenle konuşur. Yani en azından bir kişi iki kişi bunu bilir. Mesela sen Rumca bilmezsen, ben senin yanında Rumca konuşmam. Ama şimdi ayrımcılık, şey, toplumda böyle başlıyor. Mesela burada da Kürt vatandaşlarımız var, Kürtçe konuşur. Bu yanlış! Şimdi, niçin? He, kendi aranda konuş, istediğin kadar. Ama şimdi ben bilmiyorum, ne anlayayım? Anlatabildim mi? Şimdi, biz konuşmayız. Üç kişi beş kişi...

Footnote 34 (Page 29): Bir ortamdayken, çok ihtiyaç olmadığı müddetçe Rumca

konusmazdık. Yabancı bir dili konuşmak gibi yani.

Footnote 35 (Page 29): Konuşmaktan kaçınma kısmı doğru. Kesinlikle doğru. Bu biraz ailelerin baskısı. Özellikle Türkçe konuşmaları konusunda baskı yapmışlar. Aileler, aileler yaptı bunu. [...] 'Ben bundan dolayı sıkıntı çektim. İletişim zorluğu yaşadım. İnsanlar bizi yerine göre dışladılar.' Bu sıkıntıları benim yaşamamam için. Fakat öğrenmelerini de herkes ister. [...] Babam hala bana şey der, 'Evlenirsen, kesinlikle bizden biriyle evlen; çocuğun bilsin.' Çünkü dediğim gibi sana, bizim için kutsal bir şey, bırak nefret etmeyi. Ama konuşmaktan kaçınma kısmı ne yazık ki doğru.

Footnote 36 (Page 30): Ara sıra, hani huylanırdık şimdi konuştuğumuz dilden. Rumca mı, Yunanca mı? Rum ne, Yunan ne? Kavram kargaşası... Lazca? Bir de Lazca diye geçiyor. Konuştuğumuz dil Lazca mı?

Footnote 37 (Page 30): Maalesef bizler yıllarca bu konudan kaçmış veya bu konuyu konuşmaktan mahrum edilmişizdir. Örnek verecek olursak, hemen hemen hepimiz hayatımızda bir kez şu soruyu sormuşuzdur: 'Acaba biz Rum muyuz?' Ama bu soruyu sadece sormakla yetinmek zorunda kalmışızdır. Aramızda illa ki daha cesaretli olup bu soruyu nenelerine veya dedelerine soranlar vardır. Ama onların aldığı cevap da çoğunlukla şu olmuştur: '*Sus! E gavurobulin doles esi emis musulman imes. Alomiyan thena akugo hayitika.*' Ve bu şekilde bu olay bugünlere kadar gelmiş. [...] O dönemlerde nenelerimizin dedelerimizin bu şekilde cevap vermesini ben bir savunma mekanizması olarak değerlendiriyorum. Çünkü ağızından çıkacak tek söz bizim için çok farklı bir anlam taşıyabilir ve bunun bir sonucu olarak da toplum içerisinde çok farklı yaptırım, dışlanma gibi durumlarla karşılaşabilirdik.

Footnote 38 (Page 31): "Babaannem 90 küsur, 92 - 93 yaşında. Türkçe bilmez. Konuşamaz yani. Babaanne derim, sorarım, 'Rum muyuz biz?' 'Yok, tövbe tövbe, biz Müslüman'ız.' diye cevap verir mesela."

Footnote 39 (Page 31): Yabancı biri bunu [Rumca] irdelediği zaman, özellikle de şu şekilde yanaşırsa, 'Siz bunu konuşuyorsunuz, o zaman Rumsunuz'... Çünkü zaman içerisinde çok dışlandılar böyle. 'Rum tohumları...' [...] Bu tarz çirkinlikler olduğu için insanlar temkinli yaklaşıyor.

Footnote 40 (Page 31): PKK ve Kürt sorunu etrafında sürekli olarak yaşanan gergin hava, Kürtler dışında kalan diğer etnik grupların, kendi farklı kültür ve kültürel kimliklerinden söz edebilmelerini engellemiştir. Elbette ki bundan, Karadeniz'de Rumca konuşan toplum da nasibini almıştır.

İnsanların yaşam sıkıntısının dorukta olduğu günümüzde, Pontos kökenli Müslümanların daha çok saklanmalarına, hatta daha da ötesi, milliyetçi, Türkçü oluşumların içinde yer almalarına neden oldu. Geçmişte yaşanan askeri darbeler yüzünden, insanlar halen bir güvensizlik yaşamaktadır.

Fişlenme korkuları, bütün demokratik gelişmelere rağmen halen seyretmektedir. Rumca konuşanlar, bu dil ile ilgili herhangi bir faaliyete girmeye, bu konuda herhangi bir şey yazmaya, kültürel herhangi bir etkinliğe katılmaya çekiniyorlar. Çünkü 'yarın öbür gün işimi kaybederim, çocuğum hiçbir zaman iş bulamaz' gibi endişeleri taşıyorlar. Muhtemelen, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tamamen demokratikleştikten sonra bile, bu korkuları daha uzun zaman sürecektir.

Footnote 46 (Page 34): Cumhuriyet kurulduktan sonra hilafet kaldırılmış; sonrasında Alevileri doğrudan ilgilendiren 'baba, dede gibi kavramlar yasaklanmış, tekke ve zaviyeler kapatılmış' ama daha da önemlisi, Sünni Müslümanlığı devlet eliyle yaygınlaştırmayı amaç edinmiş tuhaf bir içeriğe sahip olsa da laiklik benimsenmiştir. Yavuz'dan bu yana kendilerini gizlemek ve devletten kaçarak yaşamak zorunda bırakılmış Aleviler, ilk kez Cumhuriyet ile birlikte kamusal alanda diğerleriyle 'eşit' konuma ulaşmıştır. Bu 'eşitlik', her ne kadar 'yoklukta eşitlik' şeklinde gerçekleşmişse de, sürekli kıyıma uğrayan, aşağılanan, görüldüğü yerde katlinin 'vacip' olduğu belirtilen, can ve mal korkusunu daima yanında taşıyan bir topluluk için öyle yabana atılacak bir durum değil. 'Sırça köşk' yazarlarımızın daha net anlayabilmesi için bir cümleyle söylemek gerekirse... Aleviler ve Atatürkçülük arasındaki ilişki, 'ölümü görüp, sıtmaya razı olma' halidir!

Footnote 49 (Page 36): Mücadeleyi içermeyen bir mağduriyet kimliği muktadirlerin en iyi durumda ancak hoş gördüğü bir 'kimlik' olabilir. Mesela Rumlar bugün Türkiye'de tam da böylesi bir mücadelesiz mağduriyet kimliğinin esiriler. Nostaljikleştirilmiş, sevimli bir folklorik unsur haline getirilmiş Rumlar, muktadirler açısından tehlike arz etmeyen bir muteber öteki konumundalar. [...] Onların nostaljikleştirilmiş, sevimli kılınmış temsilleri, farklılıklarının-kimliklerinin görünür olması, Türk milliyetçiliği için bir tehdit değil bilakis bir kendi kendini övme meselesidir.

Footnote 52 (Page 37): Ama nedir şimdi, o adam tutup onu [Rumca konuşulmasını] bir mizaç olarak kullanıyor. Bak, mesela, o TRT programı var. Kadın geziyor ya, 'Yollarımız...' bilmem nemiz falan filan, yetmiş yıldır geziyor Türkiye'yi. Onu, bak, mizah olarak veriyor veya o dili bir kültürel olarak veriyor. Ama sen gidip, bak, Kürtçeyi veremiyorsun. Ya politik bir şey çıkıyor. Niye veremeyelim? Ya normal bir dil yani. Verelim. Ama veremiyorsun. [...] Mesela bak, burada Rumcayı kültürel olarak kullanabiliyoruz. Mesela gelen diyor ki... Bak burada Rumca konuşan programlar yapılıyor. Lazca konuşuyor. Şudur, budur. Ama onu veremiyorsun. Çünkü niçin? Siyasi olarak bir kullanıma girmiş.

Footnote 53 (Page 37): Bazen diyorlardı tabii üniversitede, 'Yok işte siz Rumsunuz, Rumca konuştuğunuza göre' filan. Bunu söyleyen de Rizeli. [Gülüyor.] 'O zaman sen de Lazsın' diyordum ben. Bunun olumsuz bir yanı yok, benim için.

Onun için de yok.

Footnote 64 (Page 44): Kimlik kendine bakan, üzerine biçilen, üzerine biçtiğin, bunalan, çelişkili, agresif, düzen karşıtı, düzene uygun, ait olmak istediğimiz, bizi sınırlayan, özgür kılan, peşine düştüğümüz, peşimizi bırakmayan şey gibi.

Footnote 66 (Page 45): Kilere tıklımış bütün hayaletlerin ortaya çıktığı, Batı merkezli modernitenin ekseninin önce savaşlarla, kıyımlarla, sonra post-modernist, sömürgecilik sonrası düşüncelerle sarsıldığı ve parçalandığı bugünün dünyasında (ya da dünyalarında), bugünün kullanımlarıyla artık 'kimlik'i bir ev hayali olarak düşünebilir miyiz? Tam tersine, kimliği evden olmasa da, kapatıldığın delikten kaçma umudu olarak düşünmek daha açıklayıcı değil mi? Bir tür kendinden (kendi olamayışından) kaçış... Zorla, şiddetle, iktisadi çıkar yoluyla, arzunun eğitimiyle, bedeninin ve tecrübenin inkârıyla, yani modernitenin parçalayıcı ve yeniden hizaya sokucu tarihi içinde bir hiyerarşiye sıkıştırılmış ve kendi olmaktan çıkarılmış bir varoluştan, yine aynı tarih içinde yapılmış bir 'kültürel' silahı omuzlayıp simgeselliğin merkezi olarak örgütlenmiş alanına, dolayımına doğru kaçma. Parçalanmışlığına, susturulmuşluğuna, artık kendi olmaktan çıkarılmışlığına temsil yoluyla başka bir varlık kazandırma. Kimliğin konuşmaya başladığı yer böyle bir yer değil mi?

Footnote 82 (Page 57): Şimdi... Bizim insanlar [Rumcayı] kendi aralarında konuşur. Bilenle konuşur. Yani en azından bir kişi iki kişi bunu bilir. Mesela sen Rumca bilmezsen, ben senin yanında Rumca konuşmam. Ama şimdi ayrımcılık, şey, toplumda böyle başlıyor. Mesela burada da Kürt vatandaşlarımız var, Kürtçe konuşur. Bu yanlış! Şimdi, niçin? He, kendi aranda konuş, istediğin kadar. Ama şimdi ben bilmiyorum, ne anlayayım? Anlatabildim mi? Şimdi, biz konuşmayız. Üç kişi beş kişi...

Footnote 85 (Page 61): Burada şimdi bazı minibüs şöförleri bile üniversite mezunudur. İş yok çünkü başka yapacak.

Footnote 96 (Page 67): Vali bizim Akyayla'nın yaylalarını gezmeye geliyor. Gidiyor, bir tane yaşlı dedeyi görüyor orada. Dedeye diyor, 'Ya dede' diyor, 'Nasılsın, iyi misin?' falan filan. 'İyiyim' işte, 'Sağ ol, oğlum' işte. 'Nasıl' diyor, 'var mı bir ihtiyacın, sıkıntın, devletten bir ihtiyacın var mı?' diyor. 'Yok, oğlum' diyor, 'Allah razı olsun devletimizden' diyor. 'Her şeyimiz iyi' filan diyor. 'Ama bir konuda şeyim var, maruzatım var' diyor. 'Hayırdır?' 'Ya' diyor, 'ha o Ruslar o zaman geldiler, ha bu yolları yaptılar. Ondan sonra daha da bakmadılar bu yollara. Bir gelip baksınlar.' Bizim oraların yolları, yayla yollarının çoğu Ruslar döneminde yapıldı. Ruslar yaptılar. Adam bak hala onu hatırlıyor...

Footnote 106 (Page 75): Arkadaş, 1930'da, 20'de yapılmış. Ya yapılmış bu şimdi, onu değiştirebilir miyim? Mesela, aynı şeyi bu Rumluk konusunda da konuşalım. Mübadele yapılmış. 'Düşmanınız!' Ulan, olmayalım! Olmayalım!

Yapılmış bir yanlış. Ona benzer bir şey bu da. Yani, yapılmış bir yanlış. Yanlışla yanlışla düzeltme... Tamam, yapılmış; bunu ben kabul edeyim, sen de kabul et. Ya yanlış yapıldı diye ben sana niye diyet ödeyeyim? Benim öyle bir şeyim yok ki... [...] Yani ülke, ülke kutsal bir şey. Yani, biz ülkemize bayrağımıza elbette sahip çıkarız. Bırak, insanların Türklüğüyle Kürtlüğüyle uğraşma.

Footnote 107 (Page 76): [Kürtlerin dil talebi var. Sizin böyle bir talebiniz var mı?]

Bizim öyle bir talebimiz yok. Olamaz da. Ben ne isteyebilirim ki? Şimdi düşünüyorum bazen Rumca konuşuyorum...

[Devlet tarafından koruma amaçlı düzenlemeler?]

Devlet koruyamaz ki! Dili insanlar korur. Beni engellemiyor ki, devlet.

[Dil kursu açılmaması, mesela?]

Açarım, niye açamayayım ki?

[Böyle bir talebiniz yok yani.]

Yok, kesinlikle yok. Şöyle ki, beni engelleyen bir şey yok. Bana kimse kafama vurup Rumca konuşma demedi. He, babamların dedi. Ya, o da bir nebze şöyle. E, çocuk Rumca konuşuyor. Türkçe konuşması lazım.

[Başarılı olmak için mi?]

Başarılı olabilmesi için. E, o da haklı. Ya, o dönemde ben inanmıyorum o öğretmen onu Rumca kötüdür diye... İletişim kuramıyor çocukla. Mecbur, Türkçe öğretmek zorunda. E, ne olacak? Ben Rumca eğitim mi alacaktım? Kim eğitecekti beni? O dönemde, o koşullar altında bunu yapması gerekliydi. Az önce, başta dedim ya eğitsel kollar vardı, Rumca konuşmama kolu diye. Belki gerekliydi. Kötü bir durum ama belki gerekliydi.

Footnote 108 (Page 77): [Cumhuriyet'in başında bu farklı dilleri yaşatacak şekilde bir sistem yaratılmalı mıydı?]

Dönem şartları. [Rumcanın öğretilmesini] İstiyorum, isterdim de. Ama yeni kurulan bir devlet. Rumca konuşan Rumca konuşsun, Kürtçe konuşan Kürtçe konuşsun.

[Eğitim alanında, mesela, devletin buna yönelik desteği mantıklı geliyor mu size?]

Gelir. Rumca diye seçmeli bir ders olsun, olsaydı.

[Peki, bunu milli kimliğe bir tehdit olarak görür müsünüz?]

Görmem. Rumca için görmem. ' Kürtçe için görüyor musun?' derseni, görüyorum.

[Neden?]

Görüyorum. Çünkü ben Kürtlerin içinde de yaşadım. Ben azınlığın içerisindeki azınlığım. Ben ülkemi sevebiliyorsam, bu adamlar da sevebilmeliydi. Ben onlardan çok daha fazla şeye uğradım. İş ayrımcılık konusuna, ezilme konusuna gelirse. Ha, ezilmişlerdir. Tamam, kabul. Gördüm de. Ama ben azınlığın içindeki azınlık olarak ülkeyi sevebildiysem, onlar da sevebilirlerdi. Onlar da... Ben şeye inanmıyorum. Bir Kürdün gerçekten ne istediğini bildiğine ben inanmıyorum.

[Ne istiyorlar, mesela?]

Ne istiyorlar? Devlet istiyorlar, onu istiyorlar, bunu istiyorlar. Başkaları onu

istememesini istediđi için onu istiyor. Bir başkası, bir başkaları ondan onu istemesini istediđi için istiyor. Ya, adama soruyorsun, 'Devlet olunca ne olacak?' Cevap veremiyor! 'Devlet hakkımızdır.' Hakkımız da, ne?

Footnote 109 (Page 77): Kürt bölgesi olmasına karşı olurum. Niye? Ben Kürtleri, dediđim gibi içlerinde yaşadım, iyi bilirim. O bölge Kürtlerin olmayacak, hakikatten olmayacak. E, ne oldu şimdi? Kürt bölgesi oluşturuldu, metropollerdeki Kürtler de gidecek mi oraya? Ne olacak? Nasıl bir yapı olacak? Yani böyle bir şey... Ütopik bir şey. Kürdistan dedikleri şey kurulduđu zaman ne olacak? Benim ülkem ne kaybedecek? Benim ülkem ne kazanacak? Geriye kalandan bahsediyorum. Kürtler ne kazanacak, ne kaybedecek? He, bunları tarttıđım zaman, Kürdistan da kaybedecek, Kürtler de kaybedecek, ülkem de kaybedecek. Herkes kaybedecek. Karlı olan, artık varsa, o büyük güçler. Onlar karlı çıkacak. O yüzden bana mantıklı gelmiyor.

Footnote 110 (Page 77): Dış kaynaklı olaylar da var tabii bu terör mevzuunda. Herkes farkında deđil bunun. Bir kullanım söz konusu oldu.

Footnote 113 (Page 79): Mustafa Kemal bile dedi bunu. Karadeniz'den ayrı bir ordu kurarım, orduda ayrılık olmasa.

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