

Istanbul's Multiculturalism Reimagined in Contemporary British Fiction

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Any discussion of multiculturalism needs to take into account the fact that the word simultaneously means two related concepts of different register: as Kenan Malik points out, “the lived experience of diversity” and “manag[ing] diversity” (Malik, 2012). More and more, multiculturalism rears its head in public discourse as the management of different cultures living together, a political process which has been declared dead many times over in Europe. The proponents of multiculturalism, those who consider it more as ‘the lived experience’ and don’t want to let go of it simply because the political processes have failed, look further afield, to see in what kind of spaces a functioning multiculturalism was/is made possible. The need to discover ‘multiculturalism elsewhere’ is reflected in the popularity of both non-European books that deal with cultural diversity, and European writers’ own efforts to imagine multiculturalisms that are lived outside and/or on the margins of Europe. This explains the popularity of writers such as Alaa al Aswany in Cairo, Elif Shafak and Orhan Pamuk in Istanbul, as they write about the multicultural past and present of these cities. In this study I will look at two British efforts at trying to (re)locate multiculturalism in Istanbul, in Jason Goodwin’s *The Janissary Tree* (2007) and Barbara Nadel’s *Passion for Killing* (2007). I will start by situating Turkey historically within multiculturalism debates and then examine how in fiction Istanbul is re-imagined as an ersatz setting where one can observe how cultural diversity operates in different historical and geographical contexts. This instrumentalization of Istanbul, I argue, is a means of rapprochement between Europe and Turkey in Turkey’s bid to be a part of the European community. Construction of a future together requires a reconstruction of the past, and I suggest that this is what these books set in Istanbul are working towards. These British novels that re-imagine the Ottoman past also reveal Britain’s and by extension Europe’s strained relationship with the legacy of the Ottoman Empire.

Politicians and writers make much of Istanbul’s heritage of cultural diversity and claim, emboldened by theorists of multiculturalism such as Chandra Kukathas and Will Kymlicka, that the Ottoman past can provide lessons in multiculturalism that Europe can learn from today. In contemporary political discussions, multiculturalism as a problem engendered and contained by the nation-state is discussed with reference to the *millet* system, which is perceived as the Ottoman state tool developed to organize the multicultural society of the Ottoman Empire.¹ Notwithstanding the detractors of the idea that the *millet* system was a full fledged apparatus with an easily identifiable structure (Braude, 1982), from Kukathas’ description of ‘imperial state that does not seek integration of the diverse peoples’ to Kymlicka’s ‘non-liberal religious tolerance’ (1995, p. 155), Ottoman multiculturalism is referred to as a functioning method, indeed a management method, of keeping diverse cultures together living together in peace in the same commonwealth. The efforts for

¹ According to Will Kymlicka’s definition, in the Ottoman Empire each religious community was its own *millet*, under its own theocratic control. Thus there was tolerance of different religions, however, each community strictly controlled its own members. The millet system, as Kymlicka puts it, was “a federation of theocracies.” (1996, p. 155)

'integration' is the key element that distinguishes different countries' approach as to how different cultures living side by side should be managed; as it also distinguishes between the oft-twinning concepts of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. Both cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism are used for social situations in which different cultural groups need to share the same public space, and they are constructed as two different responses to the presence of cultural diversity. While cosmopolitanism is perceived as a more laissez-faire, eclectic life style of incorporating aspects of different cultures into one's own, multiculturalism is taken to be more about the preservation of different life styles in an environment where members of communities need to interact with people with different worldviews.

While the discussion of whether the Ottoman Empire had a cosmopolitan (i.e. an integrative culture that incorporated differences) or a multicultural (i.e. separated communities that guarded their differences) social fabric continues, some scholars of cosmopolitanism read the interest in the lived experience of cultural diversity in the Muslim Orient as a pragmatic effort to tease out the liberal heritage of Muslim societies that are imagined and constructed as intolerant today (Zoubaida, 2002). It is true that Muslim countries feel the need to prove liberal credentials, with historical proof where possible. This proves particularly tricky for Turkey where until the 1990's the troubled relationship with the Ottoman past did not allow an easy engagement with the imperial heritage. The early Republic's attempts to legitimize itself as a secular nation-state included a wholesale rejection of the Ottoman past, which was Muslim and multicultural at the same time (Çınar, 2005; Özyürek, 2006). However, in recent years the multicultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire has presented itself to the reluctant members of the Turkish secular elites as a means through which they can reconnect to Ottoman history. This rediscovered past has a legacy of coexistence of different cultures, a marketable quality that many contemporary European countries such as Great Britain and the Netherlands hold dear. Engaging with the desire to establish multiculturalism as a positive lived experience, Turkish politicians, men and women of letters find they have to admit that not all had been bad, that the Ottomans seemed to have possessed that elusive Holy Grail for Europe. Thus, the rediscovery of Ottoman multiculturalism works as a tool of rapprochement not only between Europe and Turkey, but also between the secular Turkish elites and the Ottoman past.

Nadel and Goodwin come to Ottoman/Turkish multiculturalism from different angles. While Nadel is a journalist, Goodwin is a historian of the Byzantine Empire, and accordingly, while Nadel explores the remnants of Ottoman multiculturalism in contemporary Turkey and tries to give a taste of the new Turkish multiculturalism that is being formulated in Istanbul, with different ethnic and religious groups taking pride of place, Goodwin sets his crime novels in the 1830's, the beginning of the end for the Ottoman Empire. In Nadel, the setting is one where the Ottoman social order that accommodated religious and cultural difference has already been replaced by the Turkish nation-state project; in Goodwin it is one of *fin de siècle*, when Ottomans are looking to Europe for inspiration in order to reform their malfunctioning institutions, and when the life style of the *ancien régime* is having to be abandoned. The books of the two writers taken together show us once again how reconstructions of the past are informed by today's concerns. Nadel's emphasis on the endurance of cultural diversity in Turkey calls for an exploration of multicultural social fabric of the Ottoman times- a call answered, as it were, by Goodwin's novels. Nadel asks us to jog our memories and Goodwin obliges; through fiction, historical memory is reshaped for both British and non-British audiences. Turks are recognized as the descendants of an Empire that was *contemporary* to the British, and Turkey as a country that had the lived experience of multiculturalism connected to Empire contemporaneously to the British, flying in the face of historiography that puts non-European nations 'in the waiting room of history' (Chakrabarty, 2000). Thus, contemporizing the past, the books work towards contemporizing the present, suggesting that Europe and its neighbours inhabit the same extended space and the same time- the same chronotope.

Goodwin's *The Janissary Tree* begins with the Sultan reviewing his new military corps, the

New Guard that has replaced the eponymous janissaries a decade ago. The Janissary Corps, that wonderful multicultural² invention of the Ottomans is described as having ‘degenerated’ into a mafia-like organization before Sultan Mahmud II decided to put an end to it in 1826.³ The New Guard is the product of a rejection of the way the Ottoman military managed their troops, and the state’s newly avowed intention to ‘modernize’ the corps. It is to replace the by nature multicultural body of the janissaries, with a much more standardized, much more Europeanized model of an army. As historians have pointed out, modernization and/or the adoption of European forms of organization in the Ottoman Empire always started with the military, and Goodwin alerts the readers to the fact that this process of looking to Europe as a model for modernization and reform had started, as one may expect, not in 1923 with the establishment of the republic, but almost a century before that.

The victims in the story are New Guard cadets, which suggests that the serial killer is an ex-janissary who has been put out of a job by the abolishment of his corps, driving home the message that they will not go away so easily. With his crime of choice, Goodwin, as a historian, alerts the reader to the fact that each historical period has its own ghosts to appease. Just as the secular elites today, though with much less conviction in the last few years, may want to relegate the successes of the Empire to obscure history books, so does Sultan Mahmud in the novel want the memories of the janissaries forgotten, the murderer found and punished at once. To put an end to the violence, the expertise of one Yashim, a eunuch sleuth that appears in a series of Goodwin’s novels, is called for.

While the body of evidence in the Goodwin novel is the corpse of a New Guard soldier, the central one in *A Passion for Killing* is a *kilim*, found in the same car with the first corpse of Nadel’s novel, rumoured to have once been owned by T. E. Lawrence. The image of T. E. Lawrence, is, of course a very suggestive one as it points to a shared history between the UK and Turkey, and a very troubled one at that. With the UK’s recent forays in the Middle East, Lawrence’s role, and his failed – depending, again, on what you choose to remember and what you choose to forget – mission in the region. The *kilim* and Lawrence allow for a couple of afterwords at the end of the novel, one, explaining Lawrence’s mission and the other, ‘The Ottoman Empire in the First World War’:

» Once the war was over, Lawrence became quickly disillusioned with regard to the treatment of the Arabs by the British, the French and their allies [...] It was with great anger and trepidation that Lawrence watched the western empires carve the Middle East up into the deeply troubled region of falsely created states we see today. « (Nadel, 2007, p. 332)

The afterwords articulate, more than anything else, the contemporaneity of Ottoman Empire with the Allies, and show that these powers were equally implicated in the way maps were drawn at the

² I use the word superficially here, in the sense that they were recruited from different religious and ethnic groups. Janissaries were a corps of soldiers trained from a very young age, chosen among the children of non-Muslim families of the Empire. The idea behind this selection was that should the soldier hold a very high position in the army, he would have no family ties that could pose a threat to the Ottoman dynasty. The Encyclopedia Britannica describes them as follows: “(Janissary, also spelled Janizary, Turkish *Yeniçeri*, New Soldier or Troop), Member of an elite corps in the standing army of the Ottoman Empire from the late 14th century to 1826. Highly respected for their military prowess in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Janissaries became a powerful political force within the Ottoman state. The Janissary corps was originally staffed by Christian youths from the Balkan provinces who were converted to Islam on being drafted into the Ottoman service.” The Janissaries had replaced the traditional *sipahi*, and were, in late 14th century, as the etymology makes clear the New Corps of their time. When their time came, they too would be replaced yet another ‘New’ corps, the New Guard.

³ This is how Goodwin’s narrator describes the state that the Janissaries have degenerated into towards the end of their time: “Once the Ottoman Empire’s crack troops, the Janissaries had degenerated- or evolved, if you liked- into an armed mafia, terrorising sultans, swaggering through the streets of Istanbul, rioting, fire-raising, thieving and extorting with impunity.[...] For decades they had held the empire to ransom. The New Guard had finally settled the account.” (2007, p. 9)

beginning of the last century. The falsity of the said states lies, as internecine violence in the region has shown, in no small measure, in their ethnicity and/or sectarian based notion of the nation, and raising the specter of a troubled Middle East, Nadel reminds us that we need to celebrate multiculturalism wherever we find it, in order to fight the homogenizing and centralizing excesses of state structures. The *kilim*, as we learn about its journey in the Middle East, in a way comes to stand for the region as well. It has changed hands so many times that at the end of the novel the detectives find it difficult to identify the legal owner: it has been stolen, sold and bequeathed many times over, and as such, much more than the motive of the murder, remains the core of the mystery and suspense in the novel.⁴ Detective İkmén looks at a photo of it being held by Lawrence:

» A tall thin weeping willow, or Tree of Life [...] dominated the carpet. Delicate and at the same time sinuous, in the hands of these two foreign and, in Lawrence's case, alien men, the Kerman was like a precious traveller from another time if not from another world entirely. Its central design struck something deep inside İkmén. He didn't know what it was, but when he had first seen this picture tears had risen, as from a great underground river, and burst across his eyes like a rainshower. The Englishman, Melly, had said he completely understood why that had happened. « (Nadel, 2007, p. 71)

The *kilim* is thus given an almost otherworldly, talismanic quality that works across nations and faiths, able to move hard old men like İkmén to tears. Nadel draws our attention, over and over again, through the statements of different characters, that the motif of the *kilim* is the Tree of Life, "which is sacred in all three religions." (2007, p. 35, emphasis mine) And of course Istanbul is the place where all three religions have lived in harmony for centuries, protest the narrator and the characters. To prove how intertwined different communities are, Nadel thinks up improbable names and surnames some of which hardly look/sound Turkish, labyrinthine marriages and adoptions between different faiths. This gives much room for complexity, and hence opens up narrative space for long resolutions- vehicles, naturally, of crime fiction.

Further into the investigation, detective İkmén goes to interview the only surviving victim of a male serial killer who sexually assaults and then brutally murders his male targets. The victim is Esad, a Jewish boy, and he tells the detective about the perversion of the killer. The door opens and in comes a hijabi girl who tells Esad "We mustn't miss *namaz*" and then Esad introduces her as his girlfriend and explains that he is a recent convert to Islam (Nadel, 2007, p. 36).⁵ This is a casual scene from *A Passion for Killing*; a scene that does not necessarily propel the plot forward, but is there, quite clearly, to make a point about Istanbul's multiculturalism. Coming one thirds into the novel, it surprises the reader only marginally. From the very first pages we have been introduced to Detective İkmén's best friend pathologist Sarkissian subsequently referred to as 'the Armenian', the almost agnostic İkmén's devout wife Fatma, his Albanian sorcerer mother, and his Jewish son in law Berekiyah. Nadel's Istanbul is one that is bristling with cultural and religious diversity as if the ruptures of the Turkish nation-state project never happened.

In Nadel's Istanbul, particularly in the person of İkmén who is described as proud both of the Ottoman heritage and the accomplishments of the Republic, people seem to have resolved the tension between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. Nadel thus almost wishes a post-republican (project) Istanbul into presence, where people have learned to either forgive or suppress

⁴ The *kilims* are important also as artefacts from the past that Turks have always been able to exhibit with pride. As İkmén's daughter opines they are 'one of the few things from the 'old days' that were the 'funky'' (Nadel, 2007, p. 24)

⁵ Recently in fictional narratives that deal with multiculturalism, love stories between Jewish boys and Muslim hijabi girls have been cropping up. In Buket Uzuner's novel *Istanbulular* (Istanbulites) that follows the lives of various kinds of Istanbul inhabitants, again in quite a carnivalesque manner, there is a prominent story-line exploring the attraction between a hijabi girl and a Jewish boy.

their *ressentiments* resulting from the dismantling of the Ottoman way of life, indeed, the mismanagement of the cultural diversity present in the Ottoman lands. The republican revolution, whose draconian measures included the change of the alphabet, abolishment of turbans and *çarşaf*, and change of the weekly holiday, and whose authoritarian effects can still be felt today, has seen a certain mellowing down in the past decade with the policies of the current Islamic leaning government. In Nadel's book, reconciliation seems to have been accomplished, and the present nation-state moment is, unproblematically, reconsidered to contain previous moments including the Ottoman. The current lived moment is a palimpsest of experiences that can now be unearthed. Nadel's above quoted multi-faith exchange conjures up, by necessity, the history of how those characters came to be in that same space, and when considered along the historian turned novelist Goodwin's janissary story, fiction does the work of archaeology:

» Yashim looked along the street. An imam in a tall white cap lifted his black robe a few inches to avoid soiling it in a puddle and stepped quietly past the café, not turning his head. A small boy with a letter trotted by, stopping at a neighbouring café to ask the way. From the opposite direction a shepherd kept his little flock in order with a hazel wand, continually talking to them, as oblivious to the street as if they were following an empty pathway among the hills of Thrace. Two veiled women were heading for the baths; behind them a black slave carried a bundle of clothes. A porter, bent double beneath his basket, was followed by a train of mules, with logs for firewood, and little Greek children darted in and out between their clattering hooves. Here came a cavass, a thickly-padded policeman with a red fez and pistols thrust into his belt, and two Armenian merchants, one swinging his beads, the other counting them with slender fingers while he spoke.« (Goodwin, 2007, p.34)

The parading of Istanbul's different ethnic 'characters' as if in a *Karagöz* shadow play⁶ in the novel provides the perfect background for the crime genre, as different cultural heritages bring with them different histories and different resentments that could easily erupt in today's Istanbul as complex crimes. The carnivalesque⁷ display of one 'ethnic' character after another in these novels leads us to the question that lies at the heart of the discussions of multiculturalism. Do these novels represent a society that nurtures organic bonds between communities, or is the Ottoman miracle characterized by keeping these communities separate in their own spaces, thereby preventing any confrontation or any productive synthesis? Is a society multicultural when members can lose their original identity and float among all the different communities in that society in a cosmopolitan manner, or when a person is recognized for his/her 'true' identity through which he/she attains rights and responsibilities? While in the novel we are given the descriptions of multicultural street scenes, i. e. the 'lived experience', there is little to no discussion as to how these communities were in large part segregated from each other, for, as certain historians argue, the Ottoman method of 'managing diversity' was to minimize interaction between communities and giving them semi-autonomy in their allocated neighbourhoods (Aktay, 2012, p. 470).

⁶ One of the most important characteristics of the Turkish *Karagöz* shadow play is that there are set characters which allow for funny misunderstandings between their different idioms and accents. Apart from *Karagöz*, the wise-buffoon and *Hacivat*, the didactic urbanite, there are Albanian and Greek characters, along with characters such as the slow-witted 'Karadenizli' (from the Black Sea region), and the *kabadayı*, the street tough man. For more information see Kudret, Cevdet. 2004. *Karagöz*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.

⁷ I use the term primarily to mean 'relating to the Carnival', as the Baklahorani Carnival in Istanbul was the time when Christians were allowed to be loud and rowdy and be more visible than at other times of the year. That it was banned in the 1940's and that the ban was lifted in 2009 is yet another sign of Turkey coming to terms with its multicultural past. The Bakhtinian sense of the carnivalesque, however, applies not so much to Goodwin's but more to Nadel's novel as it features a more topsy-turvy world where Turks turn out to be Armenians, Jews Muslims, and straight men gay.

In Goodwin's novel the above multicultural scene remains mostly a tableau vivant, in Nadel, on the other hand, there is ample – but questionable as to its authenticity in contemporary Istanbul – interaction between members of different ethnic and religious communities, that include scholarly cooperation, that was *de rigueur* both in Islamic Spain and the Ottoman Empire (Bulliet, 2004; Mazower, 2004). It is interesting to note that it is not the history-trained Goodwin but journalism-trained Nadel that highlights a more integrative, cosmopolitan sense of multiculturalism:

» Süleyman looked at Arto Sarkissian who said, 'This gentleman lives across the road'
'I am a Muslim scholar. Leyla was a Jewish scholar,' the man, who had to be at least eighty, continued. 'We were friends. We spoke of and enjoyed differences. It is the Turkish way.'
'Yes...'
'My grandfather, he was an Armenian,' the old man said. Though still tearful, he was nevertheless in his stride. 'I don't care who knows it! Leyla knew it. You know what she was doing here so late into the night on her own? She was going through archives taking notes for a book she wanted to write – a book about all the Turks who saved Jews from the concentration camps in the Second World War. If this is the work of people who call themselves religious...' « (Nadel, 2007, p. 135)

This passage is symptomatic of Nadel's writing, her urge to drive the point home with superfluous explanations. Nadel would have the reader believe that this über-multicultural engagement 'is the Turkish way', as if the whole city is the venue for a never-ending conference on inter-faith relations and confessions. Naturally, the Muslim scholar comes from Armenian stock, and he feels it incumbent upon himself to add to the truths that the investigation will reveal by protesting his ancestry. This is Nadel's nod to the idea that Turks are now becoming more accepting of ethnic differences, and more open to talking about the Armenian question. Indeed, the multiculturalism chronotope becomes diachronic as Nadel conjures up not only the remnants of Ottoman *millet* system but also the heroisms of the republic. Saving Jews from concentration camps is a strong and multivalent metaphor for the cultural and ideological membership of Turkey in Europe; it is indeed a narrative device used by many contemporary European fictions.

Apart from the indigenous non-Muslims, in both novels there are also European characters that are integral to the plot. In *The Janissary Tree*, Watson to Yashim's Sherlock is one Palewski, the ambassador of the now/then defunct Polish Empire, which the Ottomans, Goodwin's narrator conveniently lets us know, continue to recognize "to irritate the Russians" (Goodwin, 2007, p. 105). In *A Passion for Killing*, the scene of the crime is The Forest of Belgrade "So named because of the Serbs, from Belgrade, who were once entrusted to guard it by Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent" (Nadel, 2007, p. 29) right next to a compound where the foreign diplomat community is living. Detective İkmén, when not interviewing what seems to be every single member of the remaining non-Muslim Istanbul community, is up at the complex delving into the complex marriage lives of the diplomatic corps. Naturally, the detectives' investigations take us to spaces where crimes can be committed without being in view of the public. Whereas in Nadel this space is a ravine in the Forest of Belgrade, in Goodwin, it is the just as thickly paneled streets of old Istanbul.

In *The Janissary Tree* the killer communicates with the public and his fellow ex-Janissaries through the poetry of their heterodox *karagözi* sect⁸ and the clues direct Yashim to look for one of

⁸ My understanding is that the *Karagözi* sect is fictional. It is quite telling that Goodwin chooses the name of the multicultural shadow play mentioned above for the name of the secret brotherhood of the multicultural body of the janissaries. At all events, this is how one ex-janissary describes the strength of the fraternal bonds within the corps: "We were more than a family. We had a world within a world. We had our own food, our own justice, our own manner of religion. [...] There are various ways to serve God and Mohammed. To join a mosque is one way, the way of the majority. But we Janissaries were mostly Karagözi." (Goodwin, 2007, p. 52)

their meeting places, the 'fourth *tekke*' in the narrow alleyways of the city. Yashim chases after the changing cartography of the city, visits archives and embassies, including the English one, to consult or steal maps that will reveal to him the location of the *tekke* he is looking for. The maps that he has acquired and that are of different dates are of little help to him as Istanbul seems to shape-shift through fires and reconstructions every few decades.

» He had spent the morning asking people if they remembered a Karagözi tekke. He had supposed that a redundant tekke could become anything from a shop to a tea-room. It hadn't occurred to him until now that the most likely fate for an abandoned tekke was to be adopted by another sect. A Karagözi tekke would become someone else's. « (Goodwin, 2007, p. 219)

Yashim's search for the 'original' use of buildings provide a vehicle through which Goodwin gets to tell the reader about certain moments in the history of the city, including the conquest by Mehmed II, underlining the palimpsestic quality of urban space. While the search for the next crime scene takes the reader to the moment of the conquest of the city, the search for the owner of the *kilim* in *A Passion for Killing* gives us a short history of the passage from the empire to the republic as İkmén questions one of the English diplomats:

» Lawrence of Arabia, yes,' İkmén said with a smile. 'I have seen the movie. Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif. Yes, he was a heroic figure for you' He looked pointedly across at the Englishman. 'The Ottoman Empire was by then a dying and corrupt administration. Some years later, as I am sure you are aware Mr. Melly, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk changed everything'« (Nadel, 2007, p. 57)

Just how Atatürk changed the country and spearheaded a cultural revolution that not only relegated religion to the private sphere but also made 'Turks' out of all the ethnicities that lived in the Empire, İkmén does not go into. Indeed, the way the city still seems to be teeming with non-Muslim Istanbulites in Nadel's novel seems to suggest that it was a painless process, that a reduction of the city's non-Muslim population never really occurred. She insists on the 'lived experience' aspect of multiculturalism and chooses to forget the fatal 'mismanagement' of diversity that occurred during the transition from Empire to nation state. Should we put that down on Nadel playing it safe, there is still the telling picture she provides us with: Sarkissian, ('the Armenian' as she insists on calling him throughout) working in his lab "behind him on the wall, a stern portrait of Atatürk looked down impassively." (Nadel, 2007, p. 21) Just as the wishful administration of the Sultan hoped the janissaries would silently go away, the early republic thought that the non-Turkish peoples of Turkey, along with their memories, would go away as well. As such, both books are about remembering and forgetting certain parts of history, and the return of the repressed.

Together the books imagine a past and a present for Turkey in which multiculturalism plays an important role. It is presented as a legacy that extends through time, with the magic touch of fiction, without the caesura of the nation state. While for a long while it was the break with the Ottoman past that seemed to be the saving grace of the Turkish republic, now, through a post-republican sense of multiculturalism, it is the possibility of continuity that is cultivated that seems palatable to Europe. Enduring multiculturalism becomes the strongest chronotope for narratives about Istanbul-as Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, p. 84) puts it "[t]ime [...] thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history." As a chronotope, multiculturalism legitimizes and encourages the present Turkish moment becoming invested with the past and contemporizes Turkey both with Europe, and with its Ottoman past.

Making multiculturalism one of the driving themes of their novels and illustrating, sometimes too fervently, that the Ottoman Empire enjoyed and managed a diversity of cultures, the novels seek, if not the genealogy, the elective affinities of multiculturalism, the concept that has become the philosopher's stone for social peace in European societies. Taken together, the two books

challenge the idea of ‘first in Europe than elsewhere’ (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 6) and show that if not before, contemporaneously to Europe Turkey had and has the lived experience of multiculturalism. Thus, in the words of Nilüfer Göle (2012, p. 5), Turkey functions as the constitutive outside, an ersatz place for debating issues of plurality and diversity where one can discover new ways of managing difference and relating the self to the other. Being instrumental in discussions of community and society, Turkey, as portrayed in these novels, shakes off its time lag and then is hauled out of the waiting room of history. This makes Europe’s rapprochement with a Muslim country and the way its state is/was run possible. The books thus reveal the special status of Turkey in its ability to field critique at Europe’s presumed superiority in minority and race relations, not necessarily through the method of provincializing, but through reminding Europe collectively of a shared, multicultural past.

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