

# Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory

»Multiculturalism« as as a Literary Theme  
after 1980

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When I attended the conference in 2005, I did not yet know that I would succeed her two months later, when she was appointed to a professorship by the University of Cyprus. But as it turned out, I too would be succeeded by another scholar, Béatrice Hendrich, when I was given a position at the University of Hamburg just six months later. Also among the participants of the conference in 2006, Hendrich went on to organize a workshop on “Policy of Remembrance in Turkey” in October 2008, and one of the papers presented at that workshop is included in this collection as well (see Dilek Altunkaya). I would like to thank all of them—Sagaster, Hendrich, and Kirchner—for their excellent, cordial cooperation, despite the distances between Gießen, Nicosia, and Hamburg.

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## Preface

The emergence of Turkey as a nation-state at the beginning of the twentieth century was accompanied by a radical alienation from the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire and its multicultural heritage. This break resulted in a gap in the collective memory of Turkey, turning the country's recent history into a "blind spot" reflected as well in Turkish literature, which for decades was largely marked by the absence of any mention of the country's multicultural past. It was only in the years following the coup d'état of 1980—when the political and cultural situation gradually became more liberal—that the tendency towards re-discovery of "multiculturalism" as a literary theme, based on the Ottoman and Turkish past, emerged, resulting in the development of a new cross-social discourse that continues still today.

The contributions in this book are the result of an international workshop held as part of the University of Gießen's Collaborative Research Center Memory Cultures (SFB 434). They cover theoretical as well as sociopolitical aspects of cultural memory within the Turkish context and include comparative and transnational analyses of the theme in Turkey's recent cultural production. The collection covers significant ground, from the "Turkification" policies of the early Republican Era (Ayhan Aktar) to Yaşar Kemal's epic depictions of the aftermath of the Turkish-Greek population exchange (Erol Köroğlu), as well as Diyarbakır's multicultural life as remembered in works by the Turkish-Armenian author Mıgırdic Margosyan and multilingual Kurdish author Mehmet Uzun (Nüket Esen). However, the proceedings at hand also show that the subject of Turkey's multicultural past—or rather, its lost multicultural past following the ethnic cleansings at the beginning of the twentieth century—may still appear as a highly sensitive subject in the context of the official negation of an

Armenian genocide or the unresolved Kurdish problem. Therefore, the tones and perspectives you will find in this collection vary. After all, the individual authors all write in their own voices, from their own points of view, and though this is an edited collection, the editor has in no way meddled with the tone or content of individual contributions.

Readers are advised to read the contributions in the order they are presented. Part 1 covers theoretical background (Béatrice Hendrich, Ayhan Aktar) and general literary tendencies. Here Hercules Millas provides an overall view on the theme of multiculturalism in Turkish literature, while BÖrte Sagaster concentrates on it as a medium for cultural memory. Part 2, "Multiculturalism as a Literary and Cinematic Theme," forms the main section of the book, and includes contributions not only on recent literary trends, but also upon the paradoxes of memory in Turkish cinema (Asuman Suner) and a retrospection of the works of Sait Faik (Nedim Gürsel). Finally, cross-cultural aspects are incorporated as well, with pieces addressing Turkish-German authors Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Feridun Zaimođlu (Mark Kirchner) and Cyprian author Taner Baybar (Matthias Kappler) from a comparative perspective.

For better readability, and for the sake of keeping the number of pages to a reasonable minimum, in most cases original Turkish texts are substituted by English translations. Though the Turkish originals have often been omitted, detailed references are provided, so that those who wish to refer to the original texts can easily do so.

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