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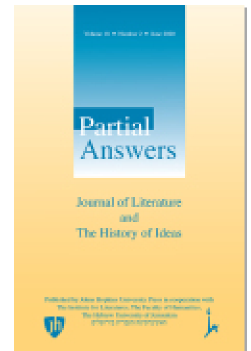

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Narratives of Korea and Dersim in Erendiz Atasü's *The Other Side of the Mountain*

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In her 1995 autobiographical novel *Dağın Öteki Yüzü* (*The Other Side of the Mountain*, 2000), Erendiz Atasü narrates her family history from the fall of the Ottoman Empire to the 1990s and laments that the armed conflicts in the Dersim region of Eastern Anatolia (1937–1938) and Turkey's entry into the Korean War (1950–1953) shattered her and her family's hopes for "the bright future" (51) of the Turkish Republic founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923. The novel ends with Atasü's "Letter to the Reader," explaining that Vicdan, one of the first Turkish students to receive state scholarship to study abroad, is based on her mother, and Raik, a math teacher from the Black Sea region, on her father. They both lost their fathers to Turkey's War of Independence (1919–1923) from the Allies of World War I and devoted themselves to Atatürk's secular Republic by working in teacher-training institutes. Atasü discovers the spirit of the past in her late mother's letters to her friends, husband, and brothers, upon which the novel is loosely based. "The letters unlocked a door for my own insights, intensified by the pain of loss" (2000: 277), Atasü writes; her novel reflects the unfulfilled aspirations of the young and eager Republicans who believed in Turkey's "miraculous resurrection" (80) from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Atasü, then, is Vicdan and Raik's unnamed daughter, a divorced mother in her forties, who visits her parents' grave in the early 1990s and contemplates their unrealized dreams for Turkey. "New deaths bring back memories of older ones" (277), Atasü writes in her "Letter"; Vicdan's death triggers her daughter's memory of her late uncles — Cumhur, Burhan, and Reha — who fought in Korea and Dersim. The link between the two combats in the novel counters the Western concept of history as "a gradual rise through a hierarchical progression" (Ferguson 176) on the scales of modernity. Indeed, the narrator-daughter describes history as "a vicious circle" (272). Her

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circular narrative that travels backward and forward in time portrays history not as progressive but as repetitive: three generations of her family connect through their shared disappointment in Turkey, which, they believe, has deviated from Atatürk's ideals of democracy. *The Other Side of the Mountain* narrates the "other side" of the not so bright Republic by recalling Turkey's entry into the Korean War and the armed conflict in Eastern Anatolia.

The daughter's time travel in history brings together multiple and even contradictory views of named and unnamed narrators, and real and fictional characters, none of which can be reduced to her standpoint. She self-reflexively comments that her multidimensional identity cannot be equated with one single character: "I can distinguish the strands I have inherited from my parents, and from others. They are within me, the Kemalists. At the same time, I am different from them" (271). She does not share her parents' unconditional national love and even denounces Turkey as her homeland due to its history of war. However, she has also inherited their love and respect for Atatürk, the Turkish leftist poet Nazım Hikmet, and the British novelist Virginia Woolf, who, as Vicdan explains to Raik in a letter, also envisions identity as plural:

> I am going through Virginia Woolf's 'The Waves' once more, after a gap of a few years, and wondering what the spell is in this novel which enchants me. It's been suggested that all the characters are in fact different aspects of Virginia Woolf herself. Do you agree, Raik, that we individuals are really more than one person? You, me, all people . . . How many Vicdans exist inside me, and how many Raiks inside you? (268)

As in Vicdan's reading of *The Waves*, the narrator-daughter contains multitudes due to her shifting narrative distance from the characters. In tune with Woolf's modernist techniques, her narrative travels between diverse historical periods, narrators, and genres (newspaper clippings, poems, letters, autobiography, history, and fiction). Among the myriad of voices, however, the daughter seems closer to the unnamed narrators of Dersim and the Korean War chapters, who attack the justification of war for national security and progress. Turkish history merges with her family history as the dark, unsettling air of 1937 Dersim prevails during the Korean War, as well as in 1992, the year Vicdan dies.

As early as in the first chapter, the daughter pictures Turkey as a decaying nation by recalling her eighty-year-old mother Vicdan dying of Parkinson's disease in 1992, as well as her friends attacked or murdered during the armed conflict between the right-wing nationalists and

left-wing communists that ended with the military coup in 1980.[1] Her comparison of the once graceful and beautiful Vicdan to "a fallen, dead seagull" (22) does not idealize but pities the early Republicans, who sacrificed their individual desires for national progress. Ironically, Vicdan's only reward for devoting herself to Turkey is a salver she receives for founding a teacher-training college in Istanbul, which she does not even remember due to her memory loss. Her physical and mental decay stand for the declining Republic where the daughter is "tired of attending funerals, losing people, shedding tears, feeling angry, tired of a life dogged by the fear of being killed" (13). "I am sick of playing a part in the bloodstained comedy that is being staged in this country" (13), the daughter says as she acts "the perfect hostess" to her husband's friends while grieving for the armed political anarchy. Due to the gruesome results of the coup, she finds it tragic that her parents were once dancing the tango to celebrate the Republic's anniversary. Turkey seems to be at a standstill: from Vicdan's hospital room Istanbul looks as grey and chilly as during its occupation days during World War I. The daughter's juxtaposition of the civil strife with her "childlike," "morose" (21) dying mother obliquely questions the alleged rebirth of the Republic as well as Vicdan's reward for her devotion to the nation.

Vicdan and Raik's celebration of Turkey's independence from foreign powers seems ironic as the novel recalls its alliance with the United States in the Korean War to join NATO (founded in 1949). The Korean peninsula, "previously under Japanese occupation for 35 years, had been split into Soviet and American spheres following the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II" (Brown 93). Under the rule of Kim Il Sung, the communist North invaded the South in 1950, which the United Nations condemned as a threat to world peace. Although Turkey was not threatened by the war, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes (1950–1960) sent troops abroad, for the first time in Turkish history, to support South Korea in return for NATO membership (see Brown 97), which he be-

[1] On September 12, 1980, a military coup ended the deadly fight between the left (communists) and right (nationalists/pro-Islamists). Nicole and Hugh Pope write that "government buildings, teachers' unions, police forces and, towards the end, even army boot camps became radically divided" (130–31), and "more than 5,240 people died in political violence during the decade" (127). The military overthrew the government that was incapable of stopping the escalating violence and sided with the nationalists. Gareth Jenkins notes that "fourteen thousand Turks were stripped of their citizenship and another 650,000 people arrested" (342). For a historical synopsis of the coup, see the works of Tanel Demirel, and Frank Tachau and Metin Heper.

lieved to be pivotal for Turkey's modernization.[2] Atasü's feminist stance is evident as she questions Turkey's involvement in the war on the basis of Vicdan's critical reading of patriotic texts, which are quoted from Eunkyung Oh's thesis on the depictions of the Korean War in the Turkish press and literature. The novel, however, counters the Turkish media's glorification of heroism as Vicdan reads her half-brother Lieutenant Cumhur's anxiety in between the lines of his fragmented letters from Korea. The war does not ennoble but emasculates Cumhur (who was named after Cumhuriyet, meaning "the Republic"), who loses his leg at the age of thirty and questions his national love and duty inspired by Atatürk. The daughter shares her parents' and her uncle Cumhur's disillusionment in the Republic by representing Turkey's efforts to join NATO and the military coup in 1980 as different acts of the same "bloodstained comedy" (13) staged in Turkey.

From the Korean War, the narrative moves backward in time to July 1935, when Vicdan and her brothers, Lieutenants Burhan and Reha, climb Mount Olympus, Uludağ (near Bursa, northwestern Anatolia), which in the novel stands for Atatürk's enlightened Republic (see Işıkdemir). Their climb of the steep mountain evokes the Republic's road to westernization as Atatürk eliminated the "backward" cultural, lingual, and religious practices of the Ottoman Empire: he institutionalized the state's control of religion by establishing a secular civil code based on the Swiss model, closed religious schools, banned polygamy and the Islamic headscarf, and mandated civil marriage. Atatürk's followers, Vicdan and her brothers, look up to the West as they sing the songs of their homeland Macedonia and pay tribute to the goddess Cybele, who, according to Greek myth, resides in Uludağ. As they reach the "inaccessible" summit, the siblings feel as if "there was no goal that could not be reached, no peak that could not be conquered" (85) for Turkey's modernization, which they imagine to be symmetrical, "moving from one stage of development to another" (Mitchell 8). However, the narrator subverts their faith in the progressive Republic by recalling Nazım Hikmet who, on the day of their ascent of Uludağ, was in Bursa jail due to his Marxist poems. Vicdan's recollections of her beautiful sunny day at the summit turn dark and gloomy as the narrative descends from Uludağ to the walls of the jail, where many, including Raik's cousin, are imprisoned for their communist beliefs.

[2] Here I am relying on Timothy Mitchell's argument: "In many uses, the modern is just a synonym for the West. . . . To become modern, it is still said, or today to become postmodern, is to act like the West" (1). Ali Karaosmanoğlu points out the commonly held assumption that NATO acceptance solidifies Turkey's "Western orientation by establishing a long-lasting institutional and functional link with the West" (209).

The novel, then, idealizes neither the Republic nor the siblings, as two years after their ascent of Uludağ, Burhan and Reha, graduates of the Kuleli military academy, fight against the reactionary feudal lords in Dersim, a Kurdish-Alevi municipality known as Tunceli in Eastern Anatolia. Although Atasü does not identify the rebels as Kurds, she nevertheless gives voice to the taboo subject of the Dersim Rebellion of the tribal chieftains against the Turkish government, calling for local autonomy.[3] *The Other Side of the Mountain* reveals Turkey's untold atrocities and dismantles the myth of heroism by portraying Vicdan's brothers as both perpetrators and victims of state violence. Burhan's guilty conscience connects the casualties of the Korean War to his murder of the rebels; the two brothers' dialogue in Dersim reveals Reha's rape of a woman, who might be a rebel. By bringing together Dersim and Korea in 1995, the novel represents Turkey as a non-progressive nation in an everlasting state of turmoil: as Vicdan climbs Uludağ, Raik waits in a "café facing the back yard of the Bursa jail" (215), and feels as if time has stopped in the hot, quiet city where not a leaf trembles. The time in the novel does not move forward either: the narrator repeatedly interrupts Vicdan's celebration of the Republic at the summit with the imprisonment of Nazım Hikmet and the fighting in Dersim and Korea. The collocation of diverse atrocities suggests that Turkey has never been a country on the mountain peak, as Vicdan and her brothers once assumed, but one that crawls on its steep way.

This article analyzes the way Atasü reveals the other side of the Republic by revisiting Turkey's controversial decisions to send troops to Dersim and Korea. Few studies mention the role of Korea and Dersim in the novel: Hülya Işıkdemir (1998) and Çimen Günay (1999) rightly argue that the novel's title stands for the unquestioned atrocities in Turkish history. Barry Tharaud's 2003 review notes that Vicdan's brothers participate in the Korean War and "in a slaughter of Kurdish rebels" (90). Pınar Dinç (2018) briefly states that Atasü distances herself from the debate of whether the events of Dersim should be regarded as a rebellion

[3] In her "Letter to the Reader," Atasü uses the terms "Dersim Rebellion" and "the armed Kurdish uprising" (280). There is a controversy whether to define Dersim as an uprising, a massacre, a genocide, or an ethnocide: Suat Akgül, Necmi Günel, Tuğba Doğan, Gani Engin Ulusoy, and Ali Kuzu see it as an uprising of the feudal lords; Cafer Solgun refers to Dersim as a massacre; Yusuf Baran Beyi, and Bilgin Ayata and Serra Hakyemez see it as genocide. Martin van Bruinessen defines the government's "civilizing mission" to eliminate the "backward" religious leaders as "ethnocide, the destruction of Kurdish ethnic identity" (6–7), and Pınar Dinç as "ethnic cleansing" (144).

or a massacre. Literary critics often disregard the novel's critique of Turkey's involvement in war and primarily focus on Atasü's portrayal of changing female roles from the last years of the Ottoman Empire to the 1990s. Derya Şayman Kaylı (2017) examines representations of motherhood; Mine Özyurt Kılıç (2002) reads the novel as a "female bildungsroman" in which Vicdan discovers her sexual desires; Nil Korkut-Nayki (2014) situates the novel in the feminist project of undermining patriarchal dichotomies. Nazan Aksoy (2014) focuses on Vicdan's efforts to meet Atatürk's ideal of a secular, educated, and virtuous Turkish woman. However, these studies often ignore the ways in which Atasü's feminism extends to men: Vicdan's brothers suffer from traditional male roles, as their mother Fitnat despises them for crying like women and enforces ideals of heroism by calling them her "lion" sons (104).

The valuable studies listed above primarily focus on the theme of female repression and do not investigate the politics of evoking "seemingly disparate memories of violence within" (Sanyal 3) the novel. In *Memory and Complicity*, Debarati Sanyal writes that "literature and film can bear witness to violence and atrocity by bringing together ostensibly different histories through a reflection on complicity," which she defines as "participation in wrongdoing, or collaboration with evil" (1). The contact of Korea and Dersim in Atasü's novel suggests that war is often legitimized for modernization: whereas Burhan supports Turkey's fight against the communists and for NATO membership, the anti-Korean War Vicdan, who despises the chauvinistic war narratives, turns pro-war with her endorsement of the military operation against the reactionary sheiks in Eastern Anatolia. The images of sickness and death, however, counter the assumption that war leads to progress: Cumhur loses his leg in Korea; Burhan becomes a murderer; and Reha a rapist. Vicdan and Raik's idol Atatürk is humanized as a fifty-five-year-old man, suffering from cirrhosis. The following two sections examine how the novel voices the silenced "other side" of the Republic by narrating the daughter's family history of pain and loss in the aftermath of Dersim and the Korean War.

The Untold Story of Turkey's NATO Membership: The Korean War and the Myth of Progress

The unnamed narrator of "The Veteran" chapter represents the Turkish-American alliance in the Korean War as a doomed project by starting with an anonymous quote, "*We are damned to a cold, dark hell*" (131),

which readers later discover is from Cumhur's letters from Korea to his sister Vicdan. The referents of "we" and "hell" in the quote change as the chapter connects diverse historical periods, countries, characters, and genres (newspapers, poems, and letters). The anonymous "we" simultaneously refers to Turkish soldiers in Korea, Vicdan and Raik grieving for the casualties of the war, and to the unnamed narrator and the daughter, who attack the government that forsakes lives for NATO membership. The unidentified location of the "dark hell" encompasses Korea, Turkey, and the US, as the narrator connects the atrocities committed in 1953, the year of the ceasefire between North and South: Cumhur was wounded on May 15, 1953; Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed in the US for spying for the Soviet Union; and Turkish protestors supported the death penalties of the "godless communists" (Örnek 119; my translation). The ceasefire, then, does not seem to be in effect, as the narrator pictures the US, Korea, and Turkey in a perpetual state of war. The horrors of 1953, however, are silenced in Vicdan's collection of newspapers that legitimize Turkey's involvement in the war as an entry ticket to NATO, which will presumably grant military and economic advancement. However, NATO membership does not bring prosperity but political turmoil to Turkey, where many leftist writers are imprisoned. Indeed, the narrator laments the day in 1946 that planted the seeds of Turkish-American alliance, when the US warship *Missouri* arrived in Istanbul to support Turkey against the Russian threat. The interconnectedness of space and time renders the post-World War II Korea, Turkey, and the US as equally oppressive and questions the advancement that Turkey hopes for by entering the Korean War.

Korea emerges as "a cold, dark hell" as the narrator starts the chapter by giving voice to the bullets that are not heard in Cumhur's letters: he silences "the sound of a bullet splitting the air," "the gush of a broken artery," the "warm voice of blood" (131), and the explosions in bunkers to convince Vicdan that he is safe in the American military base in Ch'unch'on, where planes take off to bomb North Korea. However, his short sentences with gaps and pauses hint at his restlessness in the bunkers, which he describes as luxurious hotels: "I shall be brief . . . I am fine, and continue to do my duty in the best of spirits. Our boys are having the time of their lives in the bunkers" (147), he writes but "skips the crucial bits" (140), such as his fear of death and longing for home. The narrator fills in the blanks in Cumhur's letters by paraphrasing his journal that reveals his suffocating experience in the bunker: "[w]aiting for the enemy attack in the cold, dark confines of the bunker. . . . The

body, its movements restricted, in some strange way exuded longing and anxiety" (158). As the narrator observes, "words and meaning are drifting in different directions" (152) in Cumhur's letters as his descriptions of the secure military base clash with his fragmented writing that hints at his restlessness.

By juxtaposing Cumhur's fear of death in Korea with the atom bomb that the US dropped on Japan in 1945, the unnamed narrator represents the US not as the liberator of South Korea but as a perpetrator of violence. She despises the Turkish media's efforts to seek public approval of the anti-communist war by recalling the Russian dictator Joseph Stalin's forced labor camps: "[f]orget the atom bomb! Think of Stalin's labour camps! The executions of the Thirties in Moscow" (131). The daughter-narrator does not let the readers forget the atom bomb: her narrative opens with her memories of the early 1950s when the world was "being rebuilt under the piercing glare of the atom bomb, to the rhythms of rumba, samba and cha-cha, backed by stifled voices echoing from instruments of death" (11). The daughter's fragmented memory subverts the notion of the American dream by having the cheerful music of Latino immigrants interrupted by the noise of the atom bomb and electric chairs. Likewise, the unnamed narrator dismantles the myth of the US as the land of the free by recalling the executions of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953 for "committing espionage for the Soviet Union": "[t]he sound of the electric charge; the snakelike hiss of the current searing flesh. The creaking voices of bolts locking jail cells" (131). The sounds of the electric chairs and jail cell locks cast not North Korea but the US as a threat to world peace. The collocation of the atom bomb in 1945 with the American army's invasion[4] (in Vicdan's terms) of Korea and the death penalties in 1953, render the US as dark and as dangerous as the Korean battlefield.

By joining "the sound of the electric charge" in the US with "the sounds of dread, distrust" (131) in Turkey in 1953 (a year after NATO membership), the narrator counters the assumption that a Turkish-American alliance during the Korean War would bring national advancement. Indeed, "rage sweeps across Turkey" (132), where protesters call for death penalties to communists, who allegedly wish to confiscate their

[4] Bruce Cumings states: "Most Americans seem unaware that the United States occupied Korea just after the war with Japan ended, and set up a full military government that lasted for three years and deeply shaped postwar Korean history" (104). He writes that the United States "carpet-bombed the North for three years with next to no concern for civilian casualties" (149).

property. By shifting from 1953 to 1946, the narrator traces the anti-communist sentiments to the aftermath of World War II, when the Soviet Union demanded the concession of Kars and Ardahan in Eastern Anatolia, joint control of the Straits, and "a base in the area of the Dardanelles" (Blechman and Kaplan 193). The juxtaposition of the two dates also explains how Turkey embraced the US as the liberator: on April 5, 1946, the US battleship *Missouri* arrived in Istanbul to convey the remains of the late Turkish Ambassador to Washington, Mehmet Munir Ertegun, and thus expressed its support of Turkey against Russia. Whereas the President İsmet İnonü (1938–1950) regards the siren of *Missouri* as a sign of friendship, the narrator describes the American soldiers' arrival to Istanbul as a break-in: "[t]hey have broken into the twilight, dull life of the Turks, in the aftermath of the Second World War!" (132). In the novel's original Turkish version (1995: 188) Vicdan complains that the country "has become the brothel of American sergeants" and represents the newly formed friendship that allows the US access to Turkish airbases as prostitution. For the narrator, nothing has changed since the *Missouri*'s arrival, and Turkey's restlessness due to Stalin's demands in 1946 prevails in 1953 despite membership in NATO, which presumably stands for the ideals of enlightenment and democracy (see Yılmaz and Bilgin 48).

The Turkish-American alliance against the communists does not bring light to Turkey, where many leftist writers are imprisoned or murdered. The narrator's voice merges with the daughter's and her family's to lament the government's betrayal of Atatürk's democracy by silencing the Marxist poet Nazım Hikmet (1902–1963) as well as Sabahattin Ali (1907–1948), famous for his novel *Madonna in a Fur Coat* (1943). In the passage below the pauses stand for the censorship of the two writers, who attacked poverty, starvation, and imperialism:

> Could your homeland betray you like this, like a faithless lover? She could . . . The longed-for day would never dawn . . . Prose was hushed, verses were shattered . . . they shot the Marxist writer, Sabahattin Ali on the border, Nazım was forced to flee at the precise moment when hostility towards the Russian bear was rearing its head . . . (152)

The narrator extends the scope of the anti-communist war from Korea to Turkey by recalling the unsolved murder of Ali on the Turkey-Bulgaria border and the imprisonment of Hikmet, who was released in 1950 but stripped of citizenship for not fulfilling his compulsory military service. The political turbulence of the 1950s extends to the 1990s as the daugh-

ter ends the novel by quoting "the 'fire and treachery' of Nazım Hikmet's poem" to reflect her disdain of the "dreadful, bloody scenes" of the late 20th century (273). In the novel, Hikmet bridges the generation gap between the early Republicans and the daughter with his "hope-inspired verses" and his complex identity as a communist devoted to Atatürk (207). Nazım's, Atatürk's, and Vicdan's birth city, Salonika, however, problematizes "the quintessence of Turkishness" (161) in Vicdan's selection of nationalist poems, which praise the so-called "mighty" "Turkish blood" that "the foe can't resist" (142). By evoking the censorship of the two left-wing writers in the chapter on the Korean War, the narrator suggests that the fight against communism does not bring peace but retracts the freedom of thinking.

In 1953, Turkey emerges as a muted nation, where Vicdan and Raik can no longer recite Nazım's poetry and the thirty-year-old Cumhur takes "refuge in silence" (162) after returning home as a disabled veteran, a "half-man" or a "living dead" (Açıksöz 249), dependent on his wife and daughter. Despite his loss of manly pride and mobility, Cumhur cannot publicly ask whether the government could have found another way of "inducing the West to accept Turkey than by partaking in the war" (162). He considers holding a grudge against Turkey "close to treason" and suppresses his anger at the government with a smile (162). The narrator renders Cumhur's unspeakable thoughts as he questions his unconditional love for Turkey while staring at the portraits of himself in uniform and of his hero Atatürk hanging on the walls of his flat:

> These two men stared distantly from their frames at Cumhur Bey who was now over sixty years of age. He loved them, probably more than anyone or anything, but could not reach them . . . He could not understand them any more . . . Still he felt very close to them . . . But was he really? There did exist a fragile bond between the three of them, linking those who had been exposed to identical wrongs . . . That was all . . . (163)

Once a national hero and now a needy husband, Cumhur feels equally distant from his brave young self and from Atatürk, who both risked their lives for Turkey. The three are "exposed to identical wrongs" in the sense that their self-sacrifices seem to be forgotten (163): the young lieutenant writes to Vicdan that Turkey neglects the wounded soldiers in Korea; the handicapped Cumhur feels invisible in the house; and Atatürk's foreign policy not to enter war outside Turkey's borders is dismissed with Turkey's entry into the Korean War. Indeed, Cumhur dies an unheroic death as his heart suddenly stops while resting in his armchair and watching his daughter perform household tasks. His fragmented words before death,

"home-land . . . Na-tion . . . the F-lag" (165) reflect his broken faith in the nation. His last words are unheard and he sinks "slowly into the sea of forgetfulness" (163), which also implies the national forgetfulness of the costs of Turkey's NATO membership.

Ironically, what interrupts Turkey's atmosphere of silence in the novel is the military band that welcomes survivors of the Korean War to İzmir (a city on the Aegean coast) in 1953. While waiting for his brother-in-law Cumhur at the port, Raik sadly observes how the public dances to the patriotic songs that justify war and heroism in the name of national progress. The narrator does not join the homecoming party but subverts it by juxtaposing the loud ceremonial music with Cumhur's letter to Raik, which expresses his shame in meeting Vicdan as a disabled (that is, emasculated) man.

> *I should prefer to postpone meeting my mother and sister for a while; I don't think I could stand women pitying me.*
> That is what he wrote to Raik. . . .
> The band is playing, an excruciating blare of trumpets erupts. . . . Flashlights, like great lamps compressing the heat, explode. The atmosphere resembles a wedding celebration. The survivors have come home. (150)

The military band stands for the Republic's dominant voice that celebrates NATO membership and suppresses the discordant sounds, revealing the soldiers' unheroic feelings of anxiety and humiliation. Cumhur's insecure voice, however, jams the patriotic songs as the chapter places his letter to Raik prior to the account of the homecoming party, which the journalists photograph to divert attention from the casualties of the war. Ironically, the atmosphere resembles not a "wedding" but war as the trumpets "erupt" and flashlights "explode" like bombs. The narrator shares Raik's agony as she asks, "What festival is being celebrated?" while the 1950s Turkey is "oppressed by silence and poverty" (151). The multi-vocal narrative interferes with the band's authoritarian marching music by bringing together multiple and even contradictory voices, such as Vicdan's collection of nationalist war reports, Nazım's lament of poverty and starvation, and Cumhur's loss of his manly pride due to his disability.

The Other Side of Mount Uludağ: The Unheard Groans from Eastern Anatolia

Years after the Korean War and her husband's death, the narrator Vicdan nostalgically thinks of the day when she and her brothers, Burhan and

Reha, climbed to Mount Uludağ in Bursa in July 1935: "[h]ow beautiful life was, on the day we climbed Uludağ. I treasure the memory of that day in my heart, fresh and unspoilt. Some part of my soul always remembers the day at the summit" (191). The novel, however, "spoils" her dream by traveling from the beautiful day at the summit to two years forward in time, when Burhan and Reha fight against the rebels in Dersim (1937–1938). As the narrative descends from Uludağ to Eastern Anatolia, "the lucid blue air" (98) of the mountain is replaced by the blizzard in Dersim, the brothers' vitality by their fear of death, and their sexual potency (symbolized by the mountain peak) by the shrunk penises of frozen corpses. The narrative that shifts back and forth between Uludağ and Dersim idealizes neither the Republic nor the early Republicans, strong and erect as the summit: Reha turns into a rapist and Burhan into a murderer in Dersim; the anti-Korean War Vicdan becomes pro-war with her endorsement of the military operation against the reactionary sheiks in Dersim. Indeed, the Republic seems to be deteriorating as Reha, thinking that he has cancer, commits suicide, Burhan and Vicdan lose their memory, and their idol Atatürk dies of cirrhosis. The alignment of Dersim with Salonika and Korea also suggests grief over Turkey's untold history of loss and violence.

The chapter "At the summit" shatters the siblings' faith in the young Republic by ending with Vicdan's later realization that they were ignorant of the upheaval in Dersim: "No, we have not heard the groans coming from the East" (99). They are deaf to the voices from the east because they look towards the West, as they sing Thracian folk songs and recall Greek mythology. The quoted lyrics of a song of the Vardar plain in Macedonia precede and mute the cries from the East. One of Atatürk's favorites, the song of a girl's longing for home during the Ottoman's siege of Skopje, stands for their sadness in leaving Macedonia due to the Ottomans' loss of its European territories during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) against Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro. In singing the song, they vicariously connect with Atatürk, who was also born in Salonika, and embrace their multicultural heritage at Uludağ, the home of the Anatolian mother goddess Cybele, "called Artemis on the Aegean islands, Demeter where the sea opens into the Mediterranean, Isis at the Nile delta, Lat in the Arabian desert" (83). However, while celebrating Cybele's hybridity, connecting Egypt with the Aegean, Vicdan reduces Turkey to what lies to the west of Uludağ. Indeed, she imagines her personal and national history vis-à-vis Homer's *Iliad*: Atatürk allegedly took revenge on Agamemnon who once "sneaked the wooden horse"

filled with soldiers into the city of Troy (83–84), and she and her brothers are making peace with Zeus by climbing Mount Olympus. Vicdan's anecdotes from Greek mythology and Macedonian songs suggest that she looks up to Europe, just like Atatürk did when he founded a nation geographically positioned between East and West. The chapter, however, prevents the readers from being enchanted with the stories of Troy and Cybele and breaks the "magic spell that hovers in the air of Uludağ" (97) by concluding with the mournful voices from the East.

The link between the unheard groans from Dersim with Burhan's birthplace, Salonika, suggests that the early Republicans, including Vicdan, cannot embrace Cybele's multicultural identity that connects East and West. Vicdan ignores the cries in Dersim in 1935; Burhan, a rich lawyer in the 1950s, denies his origins to attract nationalist clients. Vicdan is furious to find that Burhan's identity card names İzmir rather than Salonika as his birth city: "You have forgotten, this is the land of Cybele! You have forgotten the legend I told you on the top of Uludağ" (197). Ironically, Vicdan herself forgets that Cybele's homeland, Anatolia, is multiethnic as she believes that the "uncivilized" rebels should be eliminated from the Republic. In the novel's original Turkish version, she blames the rebels for taking Turkey backward and describes the uprising as "gerici" (1995: 189; translated as "reactionaries," 2000: 175), which derives from the word "geri" meaning "back." While being humiliated due to his "provincial accent" of the Black Sea region (180), her husband Raik, too, looks down upon the rebels as "the children of relentless winters and isolated plateaux" and "nomadic tribes liv[ing] in a different age" (2000: 229). The novel, however, does not support Vicdan and Raik's discrimination against the tribal lords; instead, it embodies Cybele's multicultural character by connecting the geographically distant Dersim, Salonika, and Uludağ. The contact of the three cities extends Turkey's national borders to Thrace and Macedonia and questions what it means to be a Turk. By bringing together Dersim and Salonika, the novel opposes regionalism and judging citizens on the basis of their ethnic origins.

Salonika and Dersim further connect with Korea in 81-year-old Burhan's stream of consciousness to portray history and memory as asymmetrical and not progressive. Denying the presence of the past, he once advised his comrades to forget Dersim after the military operation was "successfully completed" (102) in 1937: "You can't live looking back at the past, . . . life always lies ahead. . . . As soon as we leave Dersim, the experience will be consigned to the past. . . . It's absurd to get

entangled in the past, when new deeds await us" (103). However, the past haunts him as he lives with the burden of killing the rebels as well as erasing his birth-city Salonika from his identity card in order not to be judged as "less Turkish" (69). Vicdan once blamed him for forgetting Dersim and Salonika and anticipated the day when he could no longer deny his past; on his death bed, Burhan's diminishing memory connects Cumhur's return from Korea with his return from Dersim and Salonika:

> Memory works like this, sometimes leaping, sometimes skipping back. Memories mingle with imaginings . . . Cumhur . . . I met him . . . on his return . . . from where . . . from Dersim . . . by ship . . . from Korea . . . I have . . . mur-dered . . . fighting . . . command-duty . . . the dead . . . far-a-way . . . cold . . . snow . . . white . . . bl-ue . . . sea . . . ma-ma . . . ho-me . . . my ho-me . . . s..a..lo..n..i..KA! SALONIKA!!!! my ho-me . . . Sa . . . lo . . . nika . . . (199)

Burhan's suppressed memory of Dersim, Salonika, and Korea stands for the national forgetfulness of past atrocities. Vicdan laments in the early 1950s that Turkish soldiers in Korea are almost forgotten; Burhan's old-time friend Lieutenant İzzet rightly suspects in the 1930s that the Balkan Wars as well as "what they had experienced in Dersim would be consigned to oblivion under the weight of a deafening silence" (110). Michael Rothberg describes memory as "*multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing" (3) — Burhan's fluid memory that skips and leaps among the three campaigns awakens the taboo subjects in Turkish history. "What happens when different histories confront each other," Rothberg asks (2), and the narratives of Dersim, Salonika, and Korea question the Western concept of history as a symmetrical movement forward in time and render Turkey's history as not progressive but circular.

While awakening the national memory of loss, the collocation of Dersim and Korea renders both combats equally meaningless: the novel does not justify the government's decision to send troops to Eastern Anatolia. In her conversation with Burhan, Vicdan regards Turkey's fight for the geographically and culturally distant Korea as "unjust and unnecessary" (173), but supports the suppression of the uprising in Dersim. Although she considers Cumhur a murderer rather than a hero of the Korean War, she approves of Burhan "hurt[ing] other people" (176), namely the rebels,[5] for national security. Burhan, however, demystifies the alleged

[5] Annika Törne writes: "Between 1937 and 1938 the Turkish air force and ground troops indiscriminately killed a total of 13,806 civilians and armed rebels, according to official figures, although other estimates place the number of victims at 70,000" (72–73).

glory of fighting against the rebels in Dersim, as opposed to the North Koreans, by claiming that soldiers kill for survival rather than national love:

> Dear sister, remember, we all fought in the past.
> That was different.
> How different exactly?
> It was to put down a rebellion by reactionaries. . . .
> Sister, do you imagine that the reason for the fighting has any meaning for men in the front line?
> But it should!
> That meaning only exists for those who are safe at home. It only exists for you. . . . Only death exists. Killing or being killed. That's all. So whether it's Dersim or Korea makes no difference. Either you obey orders and murder, or you are murdered. . . .
> Dearest Burhan . . . You shouldn't think this way. In private life we're sometimes forced, in spite of ourselves, to do things that hurt other people, on the grounds that, if we don't act now, the problem we're faced with will do even more harm, and it's the same for nations that are sometimes forced to use violence. You can't separate violence from its cause. (175–76)

The anti-Korean-War Vicdan criticizes the cause of violence but not the violence itself. She recalls Atatürk's motto "peace at home, peace in the world" to question Menderes's support of Korea but not the role of the CHP (Republican People's Party founded by Atatürk in 1923)[6] in the suppression of the rebels. Atasü, however, does not justify Dersim; she protests the civil strife by writing in her "Letter to the Reader" that "we are all children of the same mother nature" (282). Burhan's friend Lieutenant İzzet also laments in 1937 that "the rebels and government troops have inflicted wounds on each other which will never heal" (102). Unlike Burhan, he cannot legitimize the military operation by "an emergency situation" and asks: "how justifiable is it, from the point of view of history and the individual as well, to dismiss what's happened?" (103). By recalling the forgotten Dersim and Korea in 1995, the novel boldly tackles the two problematic subjects in Turkish history and renders all war, inside or outside national borders, equally non-heroic, unjustifiable, and meaningless.

[6] Onur Bakiner explains why the CHP cannot be held solely responsible for Dersim: "The memory of Dersim brings into question the CHP's role in the atrocities, but given that the CHP represented a coalition of different political ideologies as the nation's only legal party in the 1930s, responsibility for the massacre also falls upon many politicians who later formed the opposition against the CHP in the multi-party period" (702).

Unlike Vicdan, the narrator does not legitimize the cause of violence in Dersim and presents Burhan not as a hero but as a murderer. "Nobody treated the fighters on that particular campaign [Dersim] as heroes" (115) the narrator writes; Burhan does not emerge as a hero due to his abrupt change from a reciter of Nazım Hikmet's poems on diversity and plurality to a perpetrator of state violence. Burhan's eyes radiated hope when he declared to Raik that Turkey would rise and shine after the fall of the Ottoman Empire: "Turkey will progress, young people like us will create life out of the bare stones!" (230). Dreaming of a democratic Republic, the young Burhan recited Hikmet's poem that challenges British colonialism: "I come from the East / I come crying the East's revolution / I have run with the winds blowing northwards / Along the roads of Asia / And have reached / You / Come, open your arms / Embrace me" (230–31). Due to lack of information on the poem's publication date and the identity of the speaker, the "East's revolution" seems to connote the Kurds' fight for their right to practice their language and culture.[7] Paradoxically, having once recited a poem that imagines an "embrace" between diverse ethnic groups,[8] Burhan strikes the rebels in cold blood. Indeed, his blue eyes, which ironically remind Vicdan of Atatürk's, no longer radiate hope but rage and resentment in Dersim: "Reha watched his brother. Burhan's eyes, like blue lightning, threw out bolts of vengeance as the soldier spoke" of the rebels' attack at the checkpoint (102). Unlike Vicdan, the novel is not grateful for Burhan's fighting in Dersim and grants him an ignoble death as the daughter compares her "worn-out, doomed" uncle to "a creature in . . . a state of disintegration" (189).

As the handsome Burhan dies not as a hero but "a creature," the presumably "docile" and "gentle" (84–85) Reha commits suicide, bearing the burden of raping a woman with dark features, possibly a rebel. "The peak of Uludağ was shaking violently" (109) on the day Burhan and

[7] Martin van Bruinessen writes: "The turkification program announced by Inönü [second president of Turkey] was embarked upon with characteristic vigor. The Kurdish language, Kurdish dress, Kurdish folklore, even the very word 'Kurd' were banned. Scholars provided 'proof' that the 'tribes of the East' were of pure Turkish stock, and that their language was Turkish, though somewhat corrupted due to their close proximity to Iran" (9).

[8] Nazım Hikmet wrote a letter to the Kurdish writer Kamuran Bedirxan (1895—1978), praising the brotherhood of Kurds and Turks, who fought together for Turkey's independence from the Allies of World War I. Currently preserved in the Paris Kurdish Institute, the letter calls for a democratic Turkey that would grant equal civil rights to all ethnic groups. (Evrensel.net, "Nazım Hikmet'in Kamuran Bedirxan'a Yazdığı Mektup," June 4, 2017, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/322208/n-zim-hikmetin-kamuran-bedirxana-yazdigi-mektup (August 17, 2019).

Reha were posted to Dersim; the earthquake shakes Vicdan's fantasy of her brothers as honorable officers like Atatürk. As Reha, in later years, remembers the earthquake, his "cherished memory of that wonderful summer day" at the summit "tatters like an old photograph" (109). He considers that hopeful day "reckless" as he weeps for the murdered soldiers left to freeze in Dersim. Unlike Burhan, Reha feels "empty, drained" (115), and suffers from pain and anxiety as he witnesses the fight in Dersim. However, he overcomes his initial inability to kill the rebels and regains his virility by recalling the woman he raped: "Though she had resisted at the outset, she had opened up . . . yielded . . . taken him . . . Blood surged to the muscles of his body, his virility stirred, his right arm found its former strength. . . . He struck" (123). He strikes the rebels only after regaining masculine ideals of power and courage by recalling the pleasure he took in assaulting a woman. Her glowing eyes, however, haunt Reha right before he shoots himself because of the alleged threat of cancer. The crimes of the brothers erase the glamorous view of the young Republic from the mountain peak; their sicknesses, both real and imagined, cast Turkey as a weakening nation.

The narrator, then, represents the combat in Dersim as sickness by narrating it in parallel to Atatürk's death from cirrhosis. The chapter "The Other Side of the Mountain" reveals the not-so-heroic side of Vicdan's idol Atatürk, who is an alcoholic just like her stepfather. Her mother Fitnat worries that if this gets public, his drinking habits might shatter his powerful and trustworthy image as the father of Turks: "Fear, caution . . . Walls have ears . . . Somebody might hear . . . The neighbours might report you . . . How can you do it, Gazi Kemal? . . . How can you drink? . . . Disappointment and tears . . . Like a low-down drunk . . . " (240). Whereas Fitnat, like Turkish media, silences the 55-year-old Atatürk's drunkenness, the narrator uses capital letters to highlight his suffering from cirrhosis. The narrator shatters Vicdan's and her brother's hopes for the Republic by abruptly shifting from Atatürk's plans to secure Turkey's future to his physical pain and the uprising in Dersim:

> Mustafa Kemal loved his study which caught the morning light. He was in the habit of contemplating fresh enterprises in this room. . . . Turkey's future should be planned. . . .
>
> MUSTAFA KEMAL WAS IRRITATED. HE WAS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO HIS BODY'S INSUBORDINATIONS.
>
> Very soon the problem existing in the east would be solved once and for all, the uprising put down. A country damaged from within was like an

> organism harbouring an incurable illness, and would not be able to survive a probable world war.
>
> THE ACHE IN THE BELLY WHICH HAD BEEN CONTINOUS FOR SOME TIME NOW, ERUPTED TIME AND AGAIN INTO VIOLENT PAIN. . . . HIS BODY, ONLY FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OLD, BATTERED BY TWO DISASTROUS CENTURIES, WAS DESERTING HIM. (243–44)

As the "morning light" and "fresh enterprises" in Atatürk's study give way to his illness, the narrator suggests that Turkey's future may not be so bright after all. The narrator discredits her own statement that the problem in the East will be solved forever by portraying Turkey as "a country damaged from within," just like Atatürk's weakening body with its violent pain. His "incurable sickness" (244) serves as a metaphor for national decay as, in the words of Atasü's "Letter to the Reader": "fellow-countrymen, forced to oppose each other in armed conflict, and secretly carrying the wounds of that experience throughout their lives, like an internal hemorrhage" (280). The parallel narration of Dersim and of Atatürk's symptoms of "the ache in the belly," "violent pain," "endless exhaustion," and "dizziness" (244) questions Turkey's resurrection from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, "the sick man" of 19th-century Europe.[9]

The chapter "The Other Side of the Mountain" starts with Vicdan's mother Fitnat's disappointment in the Republic that "was supposed to be the remedy for all ills." "Where is my remedy, where?" (235), she asks after losing her home in Salonika and her husband to Turkey's War of Independence. As Fitnat's family history parallels national history, the narrative shows how the Republic has failed to be a remedy for the past, her youth having "vanished in a series of exiles, migrations, deaths, and poverty" (235). The daughter-narrator represents history as a "vicious circle," as Fitnat's sons too suffer due to their ambivalent roles as victims and victimizers in Korea and Dersim. Thinking of her brothers, Vicdan asks, "what is life, if not a long remembering" (189); ironically, she seems not to have lived at all as she, in her eighties, loses her memory, including her memory of her self-sacrifices for the nation. Like Vicdan's Parkinson's disease and Atatürk's cirrhosis, Turkey's illness seems "incurable" as the country repeatedly sacrifices lives for national advancement: the suppression of the rebels in Dersim is justified for the idea of national security and the involvement in the Korean War for NATO membership.

[9] See Aslı Çırakman for an extensive discussion of 19th-century representations of the Ottoman Empire as the sick man of Europe.

While lamenting Fitnat and her children's lost dreams for the Republic, the novel refrains from offering a cure to the weakening nation. Even Atatürk, who is represented as a desperate and lonely man yearning for a child or a female body, is not the remedy for the daughter's "suffering, bleeding, miserable" country (274). The decaying body of Atatürk stands for the deteriorating Republic where weeping and frightened soldiers do not know what they are fighting for, in Dersim or Korea. Indeed, "the other side of the mountain" is not Atatürk's ideal of democratic Turkey but one of repression and turbulence as the narrative interweaves the deaths of the early Republicans, including Atatürk, with the campaigns in Korea and Dersim.

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