Exploring Turkish Cultures

Exploring Turkish Cultures:
Essays, Interviews and Reviews

By

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Part III: Film

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

I had been planning to collect my writings on the Turkish Republic–that includes theatre, film and book reviews, extended analyses of landmark films and theatre productions, as well as critical analyses of the growth and development of English Studies–for quite some time. Until recently, however, I was well aware that while the essays were interesting in themselves, the book as a whole lacked a conceptual framework–that is, until I read a recent letter to the editor of the London *Independent* newspaper arguing against the Turkish Republic's proposed entry into the European Union. The writer strongly believed that the nation was "culturally alien" from the rest of Europe, and dominated by a political divide between "extreme nationalism and growing Islam," which apparently invalidates its "democratic and secular claims." The only way to maintain social stability is by means of the army, which staged "periodic coups" against the elected government (the last of these took place in 1980). Turkish society is riddled with intolerance, especially against Shia Muslims and Christians ("Turkey Has No Place in Europe" 2010, 42-3). Such observations are not much different from those expressed by western intellectuals in the eighteenth century: M. E. Yapp shows how many people at that time criticized the Ottoman Empire for its lack of industry and its despotic style of government which was considered "inimical to progress" (Yapp 1992, 154). Nonetheless some politicians believed that the Empire could change for the better: Lord Palmerston wrote in 1839 that it might become "a respectable power" by creating "a partnership of people, one in which Muslims and non-Muslims should work together as equals: (qtd Yapp 1992, 155). The partnership metaphor reappears in contemporary articles on the future of the Turkish Republic and the European Union: John A. Scherpereel's "European Culture and the European Union's 'Turkey Question'" claims that there exists a considerable degree of "cultural overlap" between Turks and citizens in the EU:27. Both employ soccer imagery and Hollywood movie allusions to interpret current political events (Scherpereel 2010, 826). Meanwhile "a professional, well-connected core of Turkish policymakers" strives to work with the EU so as to increase their citizens' mobility as well as attracting investment "to bolster their [the policymakers'] political positions and/or

promote national development." The Turkish Republic/ EU partnership does not emphasize cultural convergence, but rather integrates the Republic into the EU's "deeply institutionalized policy-making apparatus" (Scherpereel 2010, 827-8).

All these comments invoke familiar binaries–tolerance/ intolerance, west/east, religion/secularism, nationalism/ Islam, Europe/Asia–which reveal the orientalist mentality that dominates western writing about the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.[1] As Orhan Kemal Cengiz complains in a recent collection of essays, western Kemalists–or those who claim to understand Kemalism–simply do not understand: "[They] disregard the particularities of Turkey and try to understand it from an orientalist viewpoint as a result of their misconceptions" (Cengiz 2008, 5). If we are to understand anything about the Republic's past, present and future, we have to set aside these oppositions and accept that there are different versions of Turkishness defined by numerous factors including race, gender, class, religion, history and geography. These constructions change over time, as well as involving concepts that might seem unfamiliar to western commentators–for example nomadism, or a belief in the interconnectedness of past, present and future. Through a series of essays, reviews and interviews with prominent figures from the worlds of theatre, films and academia, this book provides a series of snapshots of the different ideas, values and belief-systems that have dominated the Turkish cultural agenda over the last eight decades. I do not aim to be comprehensive; nor do I analyze in any great depth issues of politics, culture and identity. Such issues have already been covered in numerous books in both Turkish and English.[2] Rather my aim is to understand instead how the present has been influenced by the past and vice versa. For example, in a series of case studies I focus on the work done by policy-makers in the mid-twentieth century to try and disseminate Mustafa Kemal

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[1] See, for example, the BBC reporter Jonathan Head's analysis of the recent referendum in the Republic, which endorsed the reforms of the judiciary. Head's reading is couched predictably in binarist terms: "[Prime Minister] Erdoğan has governed Turkey with a strong parliamentary majority for the past eight years, yet in that time he has not found a way to bridge the gulf of mistrust that divided secular and religious Turks, or those who love and hate him" ("Referendum Result Fails to Mask Turkey's Divisions," *BBC News Europe*, September 13, 2010. Accessed September 14, 2010. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11288360.
[2] See, for example, Gönül Pultar and Tahire Erman (eds.), *Türk(iye) Kültürler*i [*Turkish Cultures*], (İstanbul: Tetragon İletişim Hizmetleri A.Ş., 2005), or E. Fuat Keyman (ed.), *Remaking Turkey: Globalization, Alternative Modernities and Democracy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

Atatürk's views on secularism and westernization by translating western classics into Turkish. I subsequently look at how such views have continued to dominate the translation agenda, while being challenged by creative translation strategies that seem more in tune with popular tastes. Other case studies examine how western classics and/or western-formulated critical theories have been used both to reaffirm and challenge Kemalist beliefs in secularism and national unity. In another set of case studies and reviews I look at the work of the Village Institutes and their supporters such as the academic Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, and why the government eventually closed them down. Even though it is nearly sixty years since the schools closed down, their influence lives on, as Turkish educational theorists search for more creative approaches to learning. This becomes more and more significant as the years pass: in an interview with documentary filmmaker Öznur Doğan, I look at how his film *İki Dil Bir Bavul* [On the Way to School] (co-directed with Orhan Eskiköy) (2009) criticizes current government policy for its insistence on maintaining a monolithic view of Turkish culture, and thereby excluding minority interests (for example, the Kurds).

Other case studies look at how *Yeşilçam* cinema of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s set behavioral and cultural standards for popular audiences. Stars like Ayhan Işık (1929-79) functioned as role models of masculinity, as well as re-invoking systems of belief dating back to the thirteenth-century mystic poet Rumi. Türkân Şoray (1945-) provided an example for young women to follow; she has been a star for over five decades now; with of her major achievements being her ability to reinvent her screen image in line with prevailing views of femaleness and femininity. In another essay I look at the experiences of Turks abroad during the early 1970s as represented in Tunç Okan's *Otobüs* [The Bus] (1973).[3] Although circumstances have changed significantly since then for migrant Turks in Europe, their experiences today remain similar in many ways to those experiences by Okan's characters: many people find it difficult to cope cultural adjustment, and have created new versions of "Turkishness" in response.

Despite the diversity of subjects, the majority of the essays in this book engage with issues to do with cultural policy. Ever since the creation of the Republic in 1923, successive governments have instituted hegemonic strategies of citizenship–through education, cultural policies or by funding film and/or television productions through the Ministry of Culture (now the

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[3] Throughout this book, I will try as much as possible to give both the Turkish and English versions of the titles of plays, books or films quoted in the text.

Ministry of Culture and Tourism)–designed to unify the nation through ideology. However the thinking behind such strategies has always caused considerable critical debate, with attention focused specifically on what "Kemalism" actually means. In this book I follow Hasan Bülent Kahraman's view that it represents "*a cultural ideology disguised in politics*," which is simultaneously innovative and conservative in approach (Kahraman 2007, 55). On the one hand Kemalism likes to associate itself with progress, in the belief that it is the Republic's responsibility to catch up with modern (understood in this context as western) civilization by accommodating notions of cultural pluralism. This is evident in various cultural spheres: in the selection of plays for performance by directors of the State Theatre, or the choice of subjects for exhibitions by museum curators. On the other hand Kemalism is often highly conservative in outlook, particularly in its insistence on a top-down style of government and the restriction of alternative ways of life. In fact, it can be considered retrograde in its desire for the Republic to return to the so-called glory days of the 1930s when Kemal Atatürk was alive and in power. The contradictions of Kemalist ideology are clearly evident in two case studies of museums in the Turkish Republic–the Military Museum in the Harbiye district of İstanbul and the Antalya Museum. The displays in the Antalya Museum illuminate the Mediterranean region's cultural pluralism by paying tribute to great civilizations of the past (Greece and Rome), while celebrating the local village cultures that continue to survive in certain areas. In contrast the İstanbul Military Museum promotes a feeling of patriotism and national identity by recounting great Ottoman and Turkish victories over the past one hundred and fifty years, concentrating in particular on Atatürk's achievements during the first two decades of the Republic.

While this unified view of national identity has held sway in official circles (it provided the justification for the military interventions of 1960, 1971 and 1980), it has been repeatedly challenged by writers, actors, directors or academics, as well as through the politics of everyday practices-the tactical trajectories through which members of different cultures past and present trace their own stories within and against an imposed political terrain. In recent years governments have tried to neutralize such responses by reviving what Yılmaz Çolak describes as an Ottoman approach to pluralism, involving the peaceful co-existence of different ethno-religious and cultural communities under an overarching political umbrella (Çolak 2006, 557-8). However the future of this strategy has been questioned not only by conservatives (who regard any form of cultural pluralism as a potential threat to national unity), but by those who

believe that governments have not gone far enough in the direction of acknowledging minority rights, including speaking one's native language (Kurdish instead of Turkish, for instance). By examining these issues in more detail, I show how many artists and intellectuals in the Republic have endeavored to create what the sociologist Nilüfer Göle recently described as "a new public constellation," independent of government interference, that brings to light new codes of habitation and interaction (Göle 2009, 291).

The book is divided into three sections. The first looks in general terms at issues of cultural policy. Inspired by my own experiences of working in Turkish departments of foreign language and literature, two case studies look at the birth and growth of these departments; how they were established on the principles of westernization and secularism, designed to create successive generations of learners who would be loyal to the Republic and its principles. Prominent among those who helped to establish these departments was Halide Edip Adıvar (1884-1964), one of Atatürk's closest allies, who headed the Department of English Literature at İstanbul University from 1940 onwards, and later wrote a comprehensive history of English Literature in Turkish. I also show how a concern for the national culture remains of paramount importance to members of these departments-which helps to explain their tendency to accommodate new constructions of literary and/or cultural theory into a Kemalist model. The Group for Cultural Studies in Turkey [Türkiye Kültür Araştırmaları Grubu] was created in 1999, with founder members (including myself) originating from departments of literature, sociology and anthropology. Its specific remit was to promote research into different cultures within the Republic, and thereby act in the national interest. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism provided funding for their researches. In another case study, I argue that such activities have led to the creation of culturally-specific notions of postmodernism that reaffirm a commitment to westernization, while rejecting western-inspired forms of postmodernism that place emphasis on cultural relativity.

Turning to more general issues to do with education, another essay looks at the work of the pedagogical theorist İsmail Hakkı Tonguç (1893-1960), one of the architects of the Village Institutes. Although his work has been somewhat neglected–especially by the Ministry of Education–his ideas form an ideal basis for more innovative pedagogies of teaching language and literature at school and university levels. Through a case study of my own teaching experiences with trainee teachers of English, I suggest that Tonguç's ideas could form the basis for an approach to

learning that expands the boundaries of the possible–to set aside
preconceived objectives and engage in a process of discovering how texts
are produced and reproduced in different contexts, as well as encouraging
active rather than passive reading.

However to express such notions in the public sphere can be
dangerous–particularly in contexts dominated by those in power who
profess to be democratic or independent-minded, even while suppressing
dissenting voices. In a review-essay I look at some recently published
books in English translation, celebrating the work of intellectuals such as
Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, who spent most of his life fighting against those
hegemonic forces which tried to restrict freedom of expression. He was
eventually expelled from his post at the University of İstanbul in 1960 for
harboring anti-government views; although he was found not guilty and
offered the chance to return, Eyüboğlu chose to teach art history at İstanbul
Technical University instead, while continuing to oppose any policies or
ideas he considered undemocratic. Eyüboğlu's experiences are still
significant today in a context where activists such as the Turco-Armenian
Hrant Dink lose their lives for commenting on contentious issues, both past
and present.

The section concludes with a look at official cultural policies both past
and present, showing how they have changed over time. I include an
extended piece on Talât Saït Halman, including a long interview where he
looks back on his long career as an academic, record-shop proprietor,
translator, poet, ambassador and politician (he was the Republic's first
Minister of Culture). He discusses his own career, as well as looking at
issues to do with translation and westernization. In a revealing series of
observations, he also explains the difficulties involved in constructing an
effective cultural policy–particularly when dealing with fellow-ministers
who might not appreciate the potential of cultural education, whether direct
(in the form of classes) or indirect (in the form of concerts and plays).

The book's second section looks at aspects of Turkish theatre, both
past and present. Following on from Halman's interview, I include two
pieces focusing on approaches to translating western texts in the Turkish
Republic. I contrast what might be described as the 'official' translation
policy, established by the government-sponsored Translation Office-which
encouraged target texts to keep as close as possible to their original
sources, with the 'unofficial' translations produced by independent
publishing houses, which adopted a more irreverent approach to their
sources by rendering them in more idiomatic terms. This was particularly
evident, for instance, in the popular renderings of Conan Doyle or Mickey

Spillane, which incorporated elements derived from Turkish folk-tales. I subsequently profile Cüneyt Gökçer, a former director of the Ankara State Theatre, as well as a great Shakespearean actor, who throughout his career attempted to implement official state cultural policy-in other words, encouraging the idea of a unified national identity. But this did not stop him criticizing the government whenever he thought it necessary; in his 1981 revival of *King Lear*, for instance, he implicitly questioned the military junta's repressive strategies of imposing order on the country in the wake of the military takeover of September 12, 1980.

This section also includes a series of interview-essays with leading personalities-Yıldız Kenter, Genco Erkal and Nesrin Kazankaya-who represent different aspects of the contemporary Turkish theatre. Throughout her long career as an actor, director and producer, Kenter has emphasized the social and educational aspects of theatre; it can not only help to train people, but it can tell audiences a lot about the importance of national values in the past, present and future. By contrast Erkal's work has focused on more politically committed theatre; inspired by Brecht, he has always tried to produce plays that directly criticizes government policy. Kazankaya believes that theatre should encourage audiences to think for themselves; to become independent-minded citizens with a social conscience. With this belief in mind, she has moved outside the confines of the State Theatre to establish a private theatre company of her own. I conclude the section with two case studies looking at how classic American plays such as Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* have been received in different contexts, and how the subject matter of both plays might address contemporary issues of particular interest to Turkish learners.

In the final section I shift the focus to look at aspects of Turkish cinema past and present. One case study discusses Lütfi Ö. Akad's 1952 film *İngiliz Kemal Lavrens'e Karşı/ English Kemal Against Lawrence*, a boys-own adventure yarn in which the eponymous central character (Ayhan Işık) outwits the British led by T. E..Lawrence (Muzaffer Tema). I suggest that Akad deliberately tapped into the patriotic mood of the early 1950s, when the Republic had just emerged with credit from the Korean War, as well as obtaining membership of NATO. By comparing *İngiliz Kemal Lavrens'e Karşı* with David Lean's 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), I show how Akad turns Lean's orientalist view on its head; it is the British who are the demons, threatening Turkish territorial integrity. In another essay focusing on recent Turkish historical films (*Giden Yol 1914* [1914 The Way Home] (2007) and *Son Osmanlı Yandım Ali* [Knockout Ali The Last

Ottoman] (2007) being two examples), I show how directors have reinvoked this opposition as a way of emphasizing the importance of Turkish national integrity at a time of significant social and political change, as the country strives to enter the European Union.

Other case studies look at Turkish popular cinema (known as *Yeşilçam*) and its legacy. I survey the career of Ayhan Işık, showing how his star image was reinforced both on and off-screen through fanzines like *Ses* and general interest publications such as *Hayat*. Another essay contains the first major interview ever published in English with Türkan Şoray, who not only looks back on her early career as an actor, but also tries to explain her enduring popularity with audiences. From her experiences we learn that while the majority of *Yeşilçam* melodramas were cheaply-made, recycling familiar plots and themes, everyone involved in making them–actors, directors, and producers–felt they were involved in creating a new national cinema that proved highly popular with filmgoers of all social backgrounds. There was a feeling of excitement at that time–a belief that Turkish filmmakers were making creative use of indigenous cultural traditions rather than simply imitating Hollywood models.

Turning to the present, this section contains a length piece looking contemporary documentaries such as *İki Dil Bir Bavul* and Pelin Esmer's *Oyun* (2005), looking at how the respective directors have sought to recapture this spirit of enthusiasm and creativity. In two interview-essays Özgür Doğan and Pelin Esmer assert that mainstream cinema has become too predictable, too obsessed with making money and hence avoiding contentious issues. Their response is to produce low-budget films recording ordinary people's experiences–a group of women in the Mediterranean region producing a play for themselves, and a teacher from the west of Turkey trying to adjust to a new life in Demirci, a remote village in the east of the country. By doing so both films show how everyday practices often challenge official government policies in the areas of equal rights and education. This section also contains another interview-essay with Tolga Örnek, a filmmaker whose documentaries include *Atatürk* (1998) and *Gelibolu* [Gallipoli] (2005), and who has subsequently branched out into feature films such as *Devrim Arabaları* [Cars of the Revolution] (2008). Like the other directors, Örnek challenges what might be described as "official" historical interpretations of the Gallipoli campaign or of Kemal Atatürk's contribution to the development of the Turkish Republic.

Another interview-essay looks at the work of the Turkish Cypriot director Derviş Zaim, whose "guerilla filmmaking" not only possesses a

social conscience, but also encourages us to focus on the relationship between past, present and future. Through films such as *Cenneti Beklerken* [Waiting for Heaven] (2007) and most recently *Nokta* [Dot] (2009), Zaim delves into the country's Ottoman past to demonstrate how individuals cannot divorce themselves from the past, despite the government's best efforts to do so since the creation of the Republic in 1923. This is also true in Cyprus: a film like *Çamur* [Mud] (2005) shows how any future strategies designed to unify the Greek and Turkish communities must inevitably acknowledge the consequences of past struggles.

In putting this collection of essays together, I realize that the experience has been one of personal as well as intellectual growth. Although I have spent nearly two decades living and teaching in the Turkish Republic, it was not until I started talking to people that I understood the significance of different ways of thinking as a way of understanding how a country works. As the psychologists Alfonso Montuori and Urusa Fahim have suggested in a 2008 article, it is only through cross-cultural encounters such as mine that one comes to understand "the extent to which we are in and from a culture, and that culture is in us." More importantly, through the experience of working with and talking to members of other cultures, individuals can transcend what they perceive to be their facticity and "open up the possibility of new ways of being-in-the-world" (Montuori and Fahim 2008, 263). I hope that this collection has gone some way towards fulfilling this aim.

PART I:

EDUCATION, CULTURE, POLITICS

CHAPTER ONE

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: DOES IT EXIST?[1]

The subject of intercultural competence has been one that has preoccupied me, ever since I started teaching British and/ or Comparative Cultural Studies at Turkish universities in the early 1990s. In a paper originally presented at the 2nd Warwick conference on British Cultural Studies in 1991, I tried to show how the study of a text such as Terence Rattigan's *Separate Tables* coupled with a video version of the play (John Schlesinger's well-known adaptation from the mid-1980s starring Alan Bates), could be used as a basis for comparative intercultural studies, which gives learners an insight into how certain elements of British culture have penetrated their own culture, while demonstrating that there are important differences in contexts of cultural interconnection (Raw 1992, 17-22). In another paper, I suggested that this kind of study could be enhanced by deconstructing what Alan Sinfield described as those "stories" by which we make sense both of ourselves and the foreign culture (Sinfield 1989, 23). Stories are lived and experienced; they appear comprehensible to us because we have been or are currently involved in them. By investigating the foreign culture through the medium of their own cultures, learners might be able not only to come to terms with differences between the two cultures, but also change their view of the world by exposing their own cultural identity to the contrasting influences that the foreign culture and language might exert. I also pointed out that for a course like this to succeed, there needs to be considerable negotiation about what constituted suitable material for inclusion on the course, and the ways in which the course should be taught not least because such a process might help the learners and the educator alike to come to terms

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[1] This essay was originally presented at a conference-"Looking into England"-held at the University of Warwick from September 24-30, 1999. Reprinted with revisions.

with intercultural differences. A course created in this way could reveal the different stories upon which individual British and Turkish cultures are based, and thereby promote an understanding of how intercultural knowledge and understanding derives as much from the resources of the group as from reference to specific texts.

What seemed acceptable at the time no longer seems so today. Greater exposure to different groups of learners at a variety of levels in countries other than Turkey, ranging from upper-intermediate learners of English, to graduates taking courses in comparative cultural studies, have made me understand how the development of intercultural competence is a great deal more problematic than I had first assumed. In this chapter I will suggest that teaching and learning culture in the Turkish context involves contending with difference, which may not only be intercultural but intracultural. This kind of pedagogy demands that difference should be looked at not only in terms of binary oppositions (self/ other, occident/orient, source/target cultures), but requires us to look for the specificities of difference within given cultural contexts. It is this engagement with difference that should prompt reflection not only on what is being learned, and how it is learned but also most significantly on *why* learners learn.

The term intercultural competence carries different associations in the Euro-American context. It can be used to describe an understanding of behavioural rituals different from one's own–a 1989 book *Turkish Culture for Americans* offers a series of imaginary cross-cultural encounters, comprised of prose texts plus supplementary questions, each of which "illustrates a Turkish cultural point which may be confusing to Americans" (Dindi et. al. 1989, vii-viii). If readers discover the "correct" answer (as constructed by the authors), then they might be able to experience Turkish culture more immediately. Intercultural competence can also encourage deeper understanding of the ways in which cultures work, and how they are similar to or different from one's own culture. There are other forms of intercultural competence, which involve a process of decentring, or relativizing self and other in an effort to understand both on their own terms (Kramsch 1997, 5-6).

However until the early 2000s there appeared to be little enthusiasm for an intercultural approach to teaching foreign languages in the Turkish education system. Partly this could be attributed to the belief, shared by many schools and university departments of English language (known as *Hazırlıks*, or preparatory schools, designed to prepare learners for their undergraduate courses, as well as providing extra courses in English for

learners already taking undergraduate courses), that any focuses on the cultural aspects of language detracts from the "real business" of language teaching. At the high school level, most learners work with textbooks that omit references to foreign cultures, preferring instead to use examples drawn from mainstream Turkish culture. In subjects that require extensive knowledge of foreign cultures, such as English and/or American Literature, intercultural competence is largely defined as acquiring information about the foreign culture–its history, political and social institutions, and its leading artists and/or writers. Little or no attention is given to how a literary text relates to social practice, which might lead to an understanding of how cultural realities are represented and re-represented.

But perhaps we should take care when considering what intercultural competence actually means in a mainstream Turkish educational context. In Western Europe it might be defined as the promotion of "tolerance of a culture similar yet subtly different from our own […] [which] involves acceptance of others, refraining from wishing to destroy them or at least to banish them because they destroy us" (Byram 1989, 88-9). In the Turkish education system intercultural competence might be defined as a two-tier process serving to promote the national culture. At its most basic level, learners are made aware of the ways in which a foreign language can contribute to this process–hence the absence of references to other cultures in high school textbooks. The origins of this strategy can be traced back to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who wanted to draw on foreign models yet reinterpret them in the light of native traditions. While introducing the Latin alphabet in place of the Arabic script, he described it as being composed not of "European characters," but "new Turkish characters" (qtd Sonyel 1989, 121). Once learners have acquired competence in the foreign language either at high school or in *Hazırlıks*, they can pursue a course of intensive study of the foreign culture in English or American literature, or International Relations courses. This strategy makes both economical and educational sense in a country that since the late 1980s has undergone a radical expansion in tourism and trade, while the politicians at the same time have tried to preserve a distinct Turkish identity (Robins 1996, 74). The need to train graduates who are not only fluent in the foreign language but possess a knowledge of other cultures provides the foundation for this policy, and helps to explain why the number of universities expanded radically throughout the 1990s and 2000s in both the private and public sectors. To expect Turkish learners to acquire intercultural competence, as defined by Byram, is nothing more than a form of educational colonialism similar to that described by Homi K. Bhabha with reference to the British

in nineteenth century India: "[This process figures] those ideological correlatives of the western sign–empiricism, idealism, mimeticism, monoculturalism […] that sustain a tradition of […] authority" (Bhabha 1994, 166).

If any course is to be intercultural in focus, I suggest that one of its principal aims should be to investigate more closely what the term involves. This may involve an analysis, however brief, of the socio-political history of relations between the Turkish Republic and the west, and how they are articulated through binary oppositions. Further research should reveal how the terms of such oppositions are differentially weighted so that one element in the dichotomy is more valued or powerful than the other. Jacques Derrida argues that power operates between the two terms involved in any binary opposition in such a way that there is a necessary imbalance of power between the two terms (Woodward 1997, 36). This is clearly evidence, for example, in the way in which Europe was given a higher priority than Asia in the former Turkish President Süleyman Demirel's claim, made in 1995, that "we [Turks] are Europeans […] We would like to share the values of European civilization;" and the British journalist Richard Falk's observation that "Turkey is not so much stranded at the European doorstep, but confined to the servants' quarters in the European house" (qtd Robins 1996, 65).

Yet it is not sufficient just to point out the existence of such oppositions. Byram defines intercultural competence as simply the promotion of "*tolerance* of a culture similar yet subtly different from our own" (emphasis mine): in the Turkish educational context, a more radical framework is required that not only encourages tolerance, but enables educators and learners alike "to cross [their] memories, to exchange [their] memories" (Ricoeur 1992, 122). This means acknowledging the existence of pluralism in the classroom–and thereby resisting the policies imposed by the Turkish Ministry of Education and the Higher Education Council (YŐK), most of which are designed to foster a belief in monoculturalism. This issue has been addressed in the American context by Kramsch, who calls for a critical foreign language pedagogy that seeks not to erase difference, but rather establishes "a dialogic context in which the vital necessity to continue dialogue ensures a mutual base to explore the sometimes irreducible differences between people's values and attitudes" (Kramsch 1997, 6).

Such an approach can provide the framework for the exploration of cultural differences, both intercultural and (more significantly) intracultural. In the higher education context, learners originate from a variety of

backgrounds, both urban and rural, but hitherto they have little opportunity to explore such backgrounds. The only question might be this–how can this type of learning be accommodated in an educational context that places such a high priority on the learning of foreign languages and/or cultures, but offers comparatively little space for cross-cultural analysis? One solution might be to look at the notion of linguistic distance–in other words, the extent to which source and target languages are removed from one another. The greater the distance between the source language (i.e. the learners' native tongue) and the target language, the more difficult it might be to learn the target language (Snoeck 1990, 118). A good example of this is provided by John Berger's description of a Turkish worker's (*Gastarbeiter*'s) first experiences of living in Germany:

> How opaque the guise of words […] He treated the sounds of the unknown foreign language as if they were silence. He learnt twenty words of the new language. But to his amazement at first, their meaning changed as he spoke them. He asked for coffee. What the words signified to the barman was that he was asking for coffee in a bar where he should not be asking for coffee. He learnt girl. What the word meant when he used it, was that he was a randy dog. Is it possible to see through the opaqueness of these words? (Berger 1975, 26)

What emerges from this cross-cultural encounter is that the distance between German and Turkish is not simply linguistic: words mean little in this situation–as a non-European living in a western European country, it is highly likely that the Turkish man would be both excluded and insulted. Calling the Turk a dog is not simply racist (only Europeans are permitted to be human); the comment represents a more complex form of social fantasy, defined by Bhabha as "the desire […] [for] the Stranger, whose languageless presence evokes an archaic anxiety and aggressivity by impeding the search for narcissistic love-objects in which the subject can rediscover himself and upon which the [white man's] group's *amour propre* is based" (Bhabha 1994, 166).

Berger's anecdote reveals that the concept of difference separating German from Turk is ambivalent, having both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, establishing distance–linguistic or otherwise–between cultures leads individuals to symbolically close up ranks and dismiss anything they consider 'impure' or 'abnormal.' This explains why non-European immigrants to Germany were historically termed *Gastarbeiter*–temporary residents not qualified to obtain a German passport, even if they were domiciled there. On the other hand, the

presence of someone different is also very powerful and attractive, as it poses a threat to the established socio-cultural structure. Once this notion of differentiation has been understood as the basis of the binarism that lies at the heart of the relationship between the Turkish Republic and the west, then perhaps there would be a chance to create a pedagogy occupying a space somewhere between the source and target cultures.

This model of an intercultural pedagogy is based on two premises–first, that any dialogue between cultures can only be established once learners and educators learn to communicate with one another. This means, for instance, that in the foreign language class, communication should be in both source and target languages. Even is the class is designated as an English Language or English Literature class, taught in an English-medium institution (several private universities in the Turkish Republic pride themselves on offering this kind of education to learners–at a price, it must be noted), there is no reason why the lesson shouldn't be conducted in Turkish, or any other language, if teachers and educators agree to do so. Secondly, this pedagogic model places less emphasis on the acquisition of intercultural competence and more on the investigation of difference. Learners might have to acquire an understanding of intercultural issues (particularly if they hope to get a job working with a foreign company, or with a local company dealing with foreign clients), but rather than acquiring a set of skills to achieve proficiency in this form of communication (i.e. becoming "competent"), they should feel happy occupying a space in between cultures, in which the ideological, social and political bases of difference can be investigated.

To do this, however, it is important for learners and educators to acknowledge the importance of pluralism. This means setting aside one's belief in the national culture and acknowledging the right of everyone in the classroom to think differently. This struck me quite forcibly as I read accounts of the experiences of second-generation Turks in Belgium and Australia. According to the author of a report published in 1990, Turkish children in Belgian elementary schools, most of whom originate from central Anatolian villages around Konya and Eskişehir, have only limited experience of the outside world: "[They] grow up in an impoverished and rather isolated environment, with very little encouragement and stimulation from their parents [....] [and] hardly speak or understand French despite the fact that this is the dominant language [...] The rather isolated situation of the Turkish community and the sometimes explicit resistance to integration account for this' (Snoeck 1990, 1l6-7). In another report published the same year, an educator from Melbourne, Australia insisted that while it

was important for Turkish children to participate in an English-speaking community, they also "need to be aware of traditional Turkish family and cultural values if they are to return to Turkey, often to villages, to live. A female student interviewed, soon to return to Turkey herself, also made this point on the value of learning Turkish at school" (Kalantzis et.al. 1998, 83). The "traditional Turkish family and cultural values" are associated with life in rural Central Anatolia. Such differences are seldom if ever explored in the Turkish educational context: one Turkish Cypriot learner with twelve years of learning English behind her at school and university, expressed her frustration with the fact that, in the foreign language classroom in Turkey, it was considered unimportant to reflect on the relationship between language and culture. Foreign languages were "objective:" once you had acquired competence in them, and thereby become the kind of person who could contribute to the development of the national culture it was not necessary to conduct any further inter- or intracultural research (Giritli 1997, 1).

For any kind of cross-cultural investigation, it is important to recognize the significance of both inter- and intracultural differences: all learners speak from particular subject positions, determined by background, age, gender, and education level. In an article developed in the British context but applicable to other contexts, Avtar Brah conceptualizes and addresses such differences in four ways: (i) *Difference as experience*, defined as "[the] practice of making sense [...] [of] material conditions and their meaning; (ii) *Difference as social relations*, which should prompt reflection on the circumstances in which 'difference' becomes an expression of cultural identity; (iii) *Difference as subjectivity*, which focuses on the interaction between social and psychic realities; and (iv) *Difference as identity*, which focuses on the relationship between personal and collective experiences (Brah 1997, 140-4). While this theoretical model might not be appropriate for the classroom, except at a higher educational, it can nonetheless provide a framework for the investigation of difference. Once learners understand the importance of difference as experience within their own lives, they can start to trust in their own opinions (which might help them to become more proficient in the foreign language). More importantly, this skill can help to forge a more collaborative learning environment, in which teachers and learners alike find out more about one another. Investigating difference as social relations, and difference as subjectivity could prompt reflection on exactly what constitutes one's identity (whether local, regional, or national), and how such constructions might challenge stereotyped binary oppositions. To investigate difference

as identity should prompt learners and educators alike to reflect on (and hopefully question) their own position as representatives of an education system dedicated to promoting the national culture. In this way, both teachers and learners should be able to create a pluralistic approach to the analysis of both the home culture and the foreign culture, as a basis for exploring differences between people's values and attitudes.

To many academics, especially those brought up to believe in the certainties of the Kemalist national culture, this approach might be considered subversive, in that it appears to contradict the unifying impulse which has formed the backbone of the education system since the foundation of the Republic. On the other hand this kind of learning acknowledges the realities of the contemporary Turkish Republic, in which ethnic diversity and diversity of geographical origins have become increasingly recognized and appreciated […] 'lost worlds' and 'lost homelands' have suddenly been rediscovered (Robins 1996, 74-5). Successive governments have acknowledged such changes–at least in theory–in the late 1980s the then President Turgut Özal proclaimed that a "mental revolution" was about to take place, while more recently Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has pursued a cultural policy designed to accommodate minority groups. There is still some way to go, however: the present government currently refuses to allow the use of names and titles characteristic of the Kurdish alphabet, like "w," "q," and "x."

Through this case study of language and culture learning, based on my experiences of teaching in high schools and universities throughout the 1990s, I propose a shift of focus from learning language towards pluralism and diversity, which might help learners and educators alike to understand the importance of differences at both national and local levels. In 1992 I was preoccupied with universals, asking learners to focus on the text of *Separate Tables*–in both its written and visual form–to understand how the English middle class behaves, and how such behavior might differ from that of the Turkish middle class. In its place I suggest that we should encourage learners and educators alike to value the individual point of view as a basis for dialogue and the revaluation of one's cultural identity. What this chapter has also suggested is that for this kind of approach to be a success, educators should perceive themselves both as facilitators and participants within the cultural learning environment. In 1992, I saw myself as the performer, the focus of learner attention as I pointed out possible cultural differences between Britain and the Turkish Republic. Now I see myself as an educator engaged in the collaborative process of reflecting not only on my own culture (whatever that might be, after two

decades of living in the Turkish Republic) but also on the academic culture I am involved in. Perhaps we should get away from the idea that the main purpose of learning a foreign language or culture is to acquire intercultural competence, and rather endeavor to acquire the kind of open-mindedness and fluidity of viewpoint, in ourselves and in our learners, that might form the foundation for the (re)-negotiation of cultural differences.