

**ANALYSIS OF KURDISH NATIONALIST DISCOURSE IN MEHMED UZUN'S  
LITERATURE THROUGH THE ETHNO-SYMBOLIST APPROACH**

by

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*To my grandmother,  
İnci Derya*

## ÖZET

### MEHMED UZUN'UN ROMANLARINDAKİ KÜRT MİLLİYETÇİ SÖYLEMİNİN ETNO-SEMBOLİK AÇIDAN İNCELENMESİ

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** etno-sembolizm, Mehmed Uzun, milliyetçilik, Kürt milliyetçiliği,  
Kürt edebiyatı, Kürt sorunu

Bu tezde Mehmed Uzun'un seçilmiş olan dört romanı etno-sembolik açıdan incelenecektir. Bu doğrultuda, Uzun'un romanlarındaki Kürt milliyetçiliği söyleminin aynı kalan ve değişen noktaları, Türkiye'de görülen sosyo-politik değişimler üzerinden okunacaktır. Bu sebeple çalışma, ilk olarak Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son döneminden başlayarak Türkiye'nin sosyo-politik geçmişini özetleyerek başlar ve günümüzün Kürt sorunu ve Kürt milliyetçiliği olgularına dek devam eder. Bu tarihsel inceleme esnasında Uzun'un roman dilinde değişikliklere sebep olan önemli ve dönüm noktası niteliği taşıyan sosyo-politik olaylara özellikle yer verilecektir.

Kürt milliyetçiliği ve Kürt sorununun kavramlarının Türkiye'deki gelişimlerinin teorik ve tarihsel düzlemden incelenmesiyle beraber bu tezde, "Uzun'un seçilmiş olan romanlarında Kürt milliyetçiliği bağlamında hangi öğelere yer verilmiş ve bu söylemde zaman içinde bir değişim gerçekleşmiş midir?" sorularına yanıt aranmaktadır. Sonuçlar göstermektedir ki Uzun'un Kürt etno-sembolik değerlere sıklıkla yer verdiği roman dili zaman içinde belirli bir ölçüde değişmiş, çokkültürlülüğe vurgu yaparak etnik milliyetçilikten az da olsa uzaklaşmış ancak Kürt milliyetçi söylemini devam ettirmiştir. Görülen odur ki, etno-sembolik ve kültürel öğelerin yanısıra mağduriyet kavramı Uzun'un romanlarındaki Kürt milliyetçiliği söyleminin temelini oluşturmaktadır.

## ABSTRACT

### ANALYSIS OF KURDISH NATIONALIST DISCOURSE IN MEHMED UZUN'S LITERATURE THROUGH THE ETHNO-SYMBOLIST APPROACH

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**Keywords:** ethno-symbolism, Mehmed Uzun, nationalism, Kurdish nationalism,  
Kurdish literature, Kurdish question

This thesis aims at a critical investigation of Kurdish author Mehmed Uzun's four selected novels through the lens of ethno-symbolism. In this regard, by focusing on a lengthened period of time, attention is paid to shifting and also unchanging margins of the imagined Kurdish nationalism depicted in the novels of Uzun along with the changing socio-political atmosphere of Turkey. The study starts with socio-political account of Turkey, beginning from the last century of the Ottoman Empire, until the present situation of Turkish politics regarding the Kurdish question and Kurdish nationalism. Particular consideration is given to momentous turning points which also had an influence on the novelistic discourse of Uzun.

By analyzing the selected novels of Uzun concomitantly with the theoretical and historical setting of Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish question in Turkey, this thesis suggests answers to the question of "How are the exact elements used in the discourse of Kurdish nationalism utilized in the novels and did they change within time?" The overall analysis shows that, within time Uzun's novelistic discourse which was burdened heavily with Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements, changes within time with his focus on multiculturalism and relatively distancing himself from the ethnic understanding of nationalism, whereas he continues follow a Kurdish nationalist discourse. As a conclusion it can be said that with ethno-symbolic and cultural elements, also the concept of victimization forms the basis of Uzun's Kurdish nationalist discourse within his novels.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rise of nations and the world-wide appeal of nationalism on the one hand, and a continual concern regarding the victims and victimhood presented in various cultural testimonies for the past thirty years due to the recent memory boom on the other; urged me to ask the question why is it that so many people remain extremely attached to their ethnic communities and nations especially through ethno-symbolic elements which cannot be separated from the nostalgia for the past and an uncanny hope for a better future. In this regard, this thesis will focus on a lengthened period of time, involves seeking the shifting, also with the company of unchanging margins of the imagined Kurdish nationalism depicted in the novels of Mehmed Uzun along with the changing socio-political atmosphere of Turkey, through the lens of ethno-symbolism.

As any event enclosed by social, political and cultural collisions, trans-state ethnic conflict between the Turkish government and Kurdish elements engendered sides based on various criteria in the envisagements of individuals. Thus this study, by analyzing four novels written by Uzun, seeks answers to the question of how the Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements are utilized for the conceptualization of Kurdish nationalism, by the author in his literary works. As novels are analyzed in respect to the discourses of Kurdish ethno-symbolism in detail, the ways in which these discourses delineate and demarcate the notion of the national self are unveiled along with the dependencies between them.

During the initial step of this study I began by asking a number of questions and later on dwelled upon certain issues: Can Kurdish nationalism be analyzed through the ethno-symbolist approach? What is the importance and relevance of the discourse of victimization within the Kurdish ethno-symbolism? How definitions of victimization and establish a conceptualization of nationalism accordingly?

Within the selected novels discourse of Kurdish nationalism equipped with Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements comes to forefront noticeably and it undergoes an alteration within time. These common patterns expressed through ethno-symbolist components which can be seen in novels focusing on discontent and loss, turns out to be the repository stock of victim narratives. (Naqvi, 2007, p. 24) In the selected case, victimhood is intimately related to Kurdish ethno-symbolist narrative which paves the way for the dissemination of images of loss, melancholy and victimhood narratives

mostly dependent on the scenario of victimization. Furthermore a sense of community through victimhood arises which constitutes the firm base of the discourse of Kurdish nationalism, and repository of images for the inner world of Kurdish ethno-symbolism.

### **1.1. Methodological Focus, Research Questions and Delimitations of the Research**

In this study, Uzun's four selected novels written between the years 1984 and 2003 will be analyzed through the Turkish translations: "*Tu*" (1985), "*Siya Evine*" (1989), "*Bira Qedere*" (1995) and *Hawara Dicleye I, II* (2002, 2003). These four novels are chosen according to the significance concerning their expression of Kurdish nationalist discourse, and manifestation of the political culture in everyday practices throughout a period occupied with decisive social and political turning points in Turkey. Literature, especially Uzun's literature, is one of the feasible spheres where the nationalist discourse becomes visible as the emblematic antecedents of conceptualizations. Number of novels to be analyzed has been limited to four in order to make the reach of the study more manageable.

The study starts with socio-political account of Turkey, beginning from the last century of the Ottoman Empire, until the present situation of Turkish politics regarding the Kurdish question and Kurdish nationalism. Particular attention will be paid to momentous turning points which took place in Turkey and shaped the domestic and foreign policies accordingly within the mentioned time period which also influenced the novelistic discourse of Uzun. It should also be underlined that the major focus of the research will be on the conceptualization of this specific Kurdish nationalism within the selected novels of the author, rather than a conceptualization of Kurdish nationalism in general through an extrapolation of author's discourse.

According to Michel Foucault, power relationships which are embedded within the societal formations can be both expressed and read through the language. Truth, ethics and connotations are invented through explicit or implicit discourses. Composed out of signs, which carry specific signals, discourse is the information out there to be analyzed, similar to a broad sphere, encompassing various directions and structures. (1972, p. 27) Thus, following the theoretical origin offered by Foucault on the concepts of discourse and discourse analysis, this study develops upon the analyses of the discourses of Kurdish nationalism through ethno-symbolic elements. These texts

situated within distinct social contexts require detailed textual decomposition as well as the analysis of historical and contextual dynamics. As the research embarks on the analysis of the novels with respect to a specific theme, it looks for the engagements of within and between discourses of nationalism and ethno-symbolist understanding of nationalism. Moreover external alterations such as socio-political changes will be taken into account in relation to mentioned discourses under scope. In line with Foucault, Said (1979) also conceptualizes language as a ground where various actors race with each other for power and domination. Each and every construction of a specific discourse is dependent upon difficult combinations of the use of power. Literature in this regard, enables the encounter of the reader with the vast assemblages of discourses. Said mentions that how literature once seemed to be an ‘innocent’ sphere which means it being a sphere lacking any kind of discourse and later on he also realized that the society and literary culture can be understood together for a fruitful apprehension of the embedded discourses. Thus, pursuing the conceptualization of the term ‘discourse’ will be taken as explicit structure engaged with figurative interactions going ahead of literary script and arriving somewhere ahead of itself. (1972, p. 49). Through such an analysis, the specifics of the imaginings of the national self portrayed in the novels, as well as the defining lines and boundaries of social categorization will be uncovered.

Following Anthony D. Smith’s approach to nationalism under the term of ethno-symbolism, which is a synthesis of modernist and traditional views on the subject, I will focus on the Kurdish nationalism presented in Uzun’s literature from this specific angle. Based on the observation that the nations and nationalisms still being among the most powerful phenomena in the contemporary world, Smith asks the question: “Why do they continue to inspire such passion and attachments?” Ethno-symbolic approach paves the way to exploration of the roots of nationalism by examining the myths, symbols, and memories of an ethnic group. Myths of national descent; nation and ethno-space; chosen peoples; diaspora nationalisms are among the topics considered by Smith using this specific approach. Hence ethno-symbolist approach sheds light on the power of myth and memory to mobilize, define and shape peoples and their destinies. As the following two chapters of this study focus on the Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish question separately by examining the existing scholarly literature, ethno-symbolism is chosen as the heuristic tool in order to deconstruct the discourse of Kurdish nationalism offered within the novels of Uzun in the fourth chapter. It should be kept in mind that

‘Ethno-symbolism’ is not a scientific theory. In a certain degree, it should be seen as a particular perception on, and research program for, the study of nations and nationalism which offers an alternative model of study. (Smith, 2009, p.1) Focusing on the symbolic realm accompanied by the possibility of entering to the “inner world” of the author this mode of analysis contributes greatly to this study.

## **1.2. Historical Context**

In this study, two separate time periods will be employed for the purpose of providing a broad historical setting for this study, primarily a wide-ranging chronological periodization of the last century of the Ottoman Empire until today’s current socio-political situation of Turkey will be given. Secondly a specific emphasis will be placed upon the period, starting with Uzun’s first novel being published and ending with his death, which corresponds to the period between 1983 and 2008. First historical analysis will be helpful especially for the purpose of the literature review on the origins and development of Kurdish question and Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. Second specific periodization which covers relatively a shorter period of time will assist while analyzing Uzun’s shifting novelistic discourse on Kurdish nationalism through the victimization narratives, in relation to changing political atmosphere of the country.

Overall, this periodization is set according to the focal alterations in the socio-political atmosphere in Turkey. This periodization will be used throughout the study in order to provide insights into how author’s discourse of Kurdish nationalism which pays special attention to Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements have been maintained throughout time despite changing circumstances. It is also employed to highlight the shifts and transformations as well as the endurances.

## **1.3. Organization of the Study**

Last quarter of the nineteenth century was crucial for the development of Kurdish nationalism. During the reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909), as an opposition movement to the Pan-Islamism which was adopted for the survival of the Ottoman Empire, paved the way for local sheiks to turn into nationalist leaders of their own region. From this point onwards, following pages initially focus on the genealogy and the development of the Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish question in Ottoman Empire

up to the present day. For this purpose, in the second chapter origins and maturation of Kurdish nationalism within the given geographical space is elaborated upon. As I have mentioned, ethno-symbolist approach will be utilized while analyzing the details of Kurdish nationalism in depth.

The third chapter of the study focuses on the origin and development of the Kurdish question in Turkey, which is an example of a trans-state ethnic conflict according to Winrow and Kirişçi. In line with this conceptualization, conflicts occur due to interaction between two or more parties which may lead to violent or non-violent periods. The term ‘trans-state’ is preferred rather than the expression of ‘trans-national’ due to the general confusion regarding the use of term ‘nation’. Kurdish question in Turkey as an example of trans-state ethnic conflict had local and regional collisions which had enduring effects up to the present. (1997, p. 17-8) Following the periodical analysis held by tracing its developments from the end of the Ottoman Empire to the present day, origins and the evolution of the Kurdish question will be elaborated upon through the examination of events which took place before and after the establishment of the republic of Turkey. Historical analysis runs until today, whereas it should be also noted that for a better understanding of the Kurdish question in Turkey, regional context should be taken into consideration also.

Opening with the biography of Uzun, the fourth chapter is based mainly on the original analysis of the novels, and focus, respectively, on the discourses of nationalism, ethno-symbolism. Moreover the element of ‘victimhood’ in Uzun’s novelistic discourse which is embedded within his understanding of Kurdish nationalism will be briefly analyzed. By focusing on the nationalist discourse of the novels through the lens of ethno-symbolism and victimization, a unique analysis is aimed for. In this chapter, the main questions will be as the following: How are the exact ethno-symbolic elements used in the discourse of Kurdish nationalism utilized in the novels? What kind of variations took place in the conceptualization of Kurdish nationalism and form of victimization with respect to changes and transformations in the socio-political context.

In the conclusion, I will demonstrate how the changing socio-political setting of Turkey has inclined the conceptualization of Kurdish nationalism through the Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements throughout the novelistic discourse of Uzun.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ORIGINS OF THE KURDISH QUESTION IN TURKEY

#### 2.1. Genealogy and the Evolution of the Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey

One way to better comprehend the Kurdish question and the underlining nationalist discourse might be to examine the origins and evolution of the discourse of Kurdish nationalism in Ottoman Empire and Turkey. Kurdish nationalism had been studied from a variety of angles and disciplinary perceptions up to the present. First section of this chapter will show the origins of the concept chronologically. In the second section, Anthony D. Smith's conceptualization of key concepts such as nation, nationalism and *ethnie* will be portrayed. Following these specific conceptualizations, Kurdish nationalism will be analyzed through investigating Smith's dimensions of ethnic community (*ethnie*) and the focus will be on the 'ethno-symbolic elements' within the Kurdish nationalist discourse.<sup>1</sup> (Smith, 1998, pp. 6–7) Thus these specific components and their symbolic meanings within the Kurdish nationalist imaginary will be explored through a symbolist approach. Furthermore this chapter will provide the guidance for the search of ethno-symbolic elements within Uzun's literature in the fourth chapter. In this regard, this chapter should be considered theoretical and explanatory.

Even though Wadie Jwaideh (2006) claims that Kurds were conscious of their distinct ethnic identity long before the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, it has been also put forward that Kurds living in the region had no ethnic self-consciousness up to the sixteenth century by many other scholars. The main device for cleavages up until that time to differentiate Kurds from 'others' were generally based on social hierarchy, religious division of the Shi'i and Sunni groups, and economic-cultural classes between the mountainous, nomadic family or tribal gatherings. (Aziz, 2011, p. 157) Under the Ottoman legacy, within the *millet system*, Kurds belonged to the Muslim group as volatile elements of Anatolia. The traditional *millet* system which was based on social/political structure shaped by religion/sect divisions, guaranteed virtual autonomy

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<sup>1</sup> Smith's definition of ethnic community consists of six main elements: common proper name, myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, elements of common culture, link with a specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity.

in cultural and educational interactions. It was determined by Turkish-Islamic administrative tradition and Islamic *zimmi* law; state authorities formed their associations with the heads of religious communities through this structure. Apart from the dominant Muslim millet, there was the Orthodox millet, the Jewish millet, and later other denominations administered by their religious heads. (Mardin, 1973) Kurds belonged to the Muslim millet along with the Albanians, Arabs, Bosnians, Circassians, Pomaks and Tatars. Within this structure, the emergent sense of Kurdishness was not highly representative or significant across Kurdish society during the late Ottoman period; area was highly diverse and rural. Tribal chiefs, aghas, sheiks were influential in Kurdish politics and society; urbanized intellectuals in the cities were not prominent during this stage. (Natali, 2005, p. 74)

The political space in the Ottoman Empire was based on Islam and indefinite notion of ethnicity whereas the political sphere in modern Turkey, ethnicity was expressed. Within these contextually different spatial places, Kurdish nationalism also adopted different forms throughout time. In this regard I will start the chronological analysis of the origins and the development of Kurdish nationalism with the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876) since the inured center-periphery dichotomy under the Ottoman rule took a new shape in this era. With the Tanzimat reforms, center's attempt to control the periphery became evident whereas this time paved the way for a more ferocious clash between the two. After this period, relationship between these two groups never returned back to the normalized volatility which always ended up with a newly established balance after each incident. Several Kurdish uprisings were visible during this period also whereas those were mostly influenced by Mehmed Ali of Egypt and did not hold a nationalist discourse. According to the literature, nationalist feelings among the Kurdish intellectuals started to appear beginning in 1880s. This group of Kurdish nationalist men were known as *Efendiler* (Bozarslan, 2002, p. 844) During the 1880, while the newly applied reforms' consequences started to be felt among the society, Sheik Ubeydullah as a Naqshebandi-Halidi sheikh rebelled with his followers and tried to break free from the Ottoman Empire to set up a self-determining Kurdish entity. (Olson, 1989, pp. 1-7) The recent increasing interest in the academia regarding the Kurdish studies made sheikh's attempt as the most cited example of the first Kurdish arising with national objectives. As an example to this approach, Olson takes the origins of Kurdish nationalism back to this specific event as the first modern Kurdish

nationalist resistance. (1989, p. 1) In line with this argument it has been also claimed that Sheikh Ubeydullah was completely conscious of the existence of a separate Kurdish identity. (Bozarlan, 2002, p. 841) In response to these views, it has been asked whether the sheikh succeeded in raising a sense of Kurdish nationhood among the people who claimed to be of Kurdish origin. Winrow and Kirişçi point out that just as an average Arab, Albanian or Turk was not aware of his nationality, a Kurd living under the Ottoman Empire in the absence of an effective nationalist leadership, could not have built up a sense of otherness from the rest of the society. (1997, p. 78) There is also the view that there was no evidence that Ubeydullah had succeeded in establishing a sense of national consciousness among the Kurds because of movement lacking a concrete political agenda; it was a revolt limited to a small area in opposition to Ottoman authorities' obligation of a more centralized control. As a movement which abruptly appeared in the middle of such a responsive time, it received great interest. (Van Bruinessen, 1993, p. 137) Another point that makes this upheaval critical is the establishment of the Hamidian regiments as a political decision right after the event, under the control of Turkish officers in 1890. These regiments were designed as a vehicle for social engineering, socializing the children of the Kurdish elite as Ottomans. (Deringil, 1998, p. 220) Accordingly, Hamidian regiments composed a crucial stage in Kurdish nationalism from 1891 to 1914. (Olson, 1989, p. 12)

The political opponent group which occurred in this period of economic turn down, generally known as the Young Ottomans, was the earliest example of a popular Muslim pressure group whose aim was to force the state to take their interests into account. Result of their interferences, Young Ottomans successfully forced the regime to approve a constitution in 1876. Soon after, the deterioration in Ottoman society and economy moved towards enhanced circumstances. This change found expression in the configuration of an underground political organization in 1889 known as the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), shortly this formation led the movement to re-establish the constitution and accomplished the revolution of 1908. After the deposition of Abdülhamid in 1909, bureaucratic authorities maintained the policies regarding the Kurdish people more or less in the same way. Name of the Kurdish troops, the Hamidian Cavalry, was changed into *Aşiret Alayları*. In other words, through the Hamidian cavalry forces, center once more tried to mobilize Kurds as a consistent populace of Muslims, loyal Ottoman proto-citizens under their Turkification policies.

Under the rule of CUP, differences between different ethnic groups became more evident. Especially after the overwhelming defeats suffered in Libya and the Balkan Wars, Turkish nationalists became more anxious. With the loss of the Balkans, Anatolia began to be known as the “heartland of the Turks”. Accompanied with the continuous fear because of the socio-political and economic problems, the focus of the Turkish nationalist movement shifted from the CUP’s goal of saving the Ottoman Empire to constructing a Turkish national character. Apprehension was no longer about how to reform and revise the empire, but how to liberate Anatolia. During this time, governmental offices were under the domination of those who privileged centralization and the official use of the Turkish language. Paradoxically, this inclination had an immense impact on the progression of the cultural Kurdish nationalism, through the nascent opposition to the period’s Turkish nationalism, Kurdish nationalism gained followers. Thus these Kurdish groups turned away from Ottomanism and began to focus on ideas associated more with Kurdish nationalism. Therefore within the literature it has been claimed that the Kurdish nationalist thoughts started to surface as a response to the CUP-led Ottoman government policies which supported centralization and Turkification gradually. (Zürcher, 1995, pp. 130-135)

Ideas based on the Kurdish nationalist aspirations had been held up by some Kurdish intellectuals of the Ottoman elite in Istanbul as early as 1908 through recently founded cultural organizations which would in time support Kurdish national ideals but they mostly focused on demands rooted in cultural nationalism. In the beginning of the twentieth century, Kurdish press such as *Kürt Terakki ve Teaviin Gazetesi* (1908-1909) conceptualized Kurdishness within a renewed Ottoman contract. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p. 94) Publications and members of these organizations promoted modernization and education for the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The societies opened up by this group did not seek to mobilize a mass movement among the Kurds in the period leading up to 1923. Rebellions that broke out between 1908 and 1914 in Bitlis, Barzan and Soran, systematized their nationalist demands under the Ottomanist ideology. Throughout this period until the end of the First World War, Kurdish nationalism remained as a cultural one. Relatively more marginalized demands were to be proposed in the approaching years. While Kurdish nationalism remained in the form of a cultural nationalism during the reign of Abdülhamid II (1842-1918), it later on evolved into a form of political nationalism after the end of the First World War.

Starting from the final years of the empire, both the traditional elite and the nascent Kurdish intelligentsia tried to describe Kurds as an ethnic group. This move towards a political nationalism after the 1914 coincided with a move from imperial tradition to a nation-state system.

The Sevres Treaty was signed between the allied forces and the Ottoman government in August 1920, formalized the partition of the empire. This was considered as the ultimate resolution to the Eastern Question<sup>2</sup>. Some of the Ottoman elite and the population in Anatolia participated in a resistance movement which opposed to Treaty of Sevres' terms. (Zürcher, 1995, p. 214) Resistance movement was composed of Kurds and Turks, as well as other Muslim groups of different ethnic environments. In 1920, the National Pact was being adopted. Advocates of Turkish nationalism sustained emphasizing the value of Islam and the multiethnic character of the country. In March 1920 an assertion stressing Islamic solidarity and opposition to efforts to separate Kurds and Turks was signed by 22 Kurdish tribal leaders. The importance of the Islamic bond was also underlined by Mustafa Kemal soon after the opening of the Grand National Assembly. Kurds attended the war since Kurdishness was another way to show their Muslim and Ottoman belongings, defending Kurdishness was synonymous with shielding Islam and Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood. This complex relationship between the ethnicity and religion, explains Kurdish nationalism's marginal status during this period. Moreover, at the 1919 Erzurum Congress, 22 of the 56 delegates who attended were Kurds. The delegates focused on the need to stand firm against the allied forces to stop them from forming Armenian and Greek states in Anatolia. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p. 79) It is clear that for the time being, identity of Islam and the sense of belonging due to the Ottoman Empire were decisive for the Kurds. Accompanied with the initial steps of the politicization of the Kurdish nationalism, there were also Kurdish rebellions influenced by Şerif Paşa and the Kurdish nationalists living in İstanbul. Their lobbying influenced allied officials that a separate Kurdish group of people do exist. (Natali, 2005, p. 77) Whereas in 1920 disunited Kurds were scarcely aware of their common ethnic identity as opposed to tribal identity. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p.84)

Regarding the rebellions of 1921, the mobilization was at the tribal level. All of these attempts were disorganized; at the same time certain demands drew criticism from

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<sup>2</sup> European powers of the era conceptualized the Eastern Question as the diplomatic issue of the 19th and early 20th centuries by the fall and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, focusing on the competition for the control of Ottoman territories.

Kurdish tribal leaders. It was not likely to organize support among the Kurds due to lack of modern leadership and also tribal and religious loyalties and personal interests prevailed over any sense of actual nationhood. It was not probable to refer to the formation of a politicized Kurdish ethnic group in this period since the ethnic identity formation had scarcely been set in motion. The Ottoman Kurdish elite had one foot in nationalism and other foot in Ottoman and Islamic identities for a certain period of time. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p.85)

As a result of the resistance movement's success, a new government was formed in Ankara after it accomplished expelling the occupying powers from the country acquired international recognition of Turkey's independence. In 1923, Republic of Turkey was announced and Mustafa Kemal was elected as the first president. Declaration of the republic also pointed to the end of the agreement between the center and the periphery under the *zimni* contract. After the signing of the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 term 'minority' attained its connotation and current minority policy of the Turkish government is rooted in this agreement. Treaty employs the term "minority" only with respect to non-Muslim people living in Turkey. As it has been mentioned before, use of religion as the only criterion for the definition of a minority comes from the Ottoman *millet system*. Nationality in the Ottoman system was settled on the basis of a person's relationship in a religious community. Muslims belonged to the "community of Islam".

Consequently in the period up to the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Kurdish nationalists could not structure a united national movement. According to Winrow and Kirişçi, this was due to the lack of ethnic self-awareness among the Kurds. (1997, p.79) Ankara government's resistance against the terms of the Sevres Treaty contributed to the disunity among Kurds which led to prevention of the formation of an autonomous or self-regulating Kurdish movement. For the aim of identifying different sectors of the Kurdish community of the time, fragmentation of the Kurdish society into three segments is possible. First group was formed by Kurdish people whom remained loyal to the Empire and attended the resistance movement against the occupying forces. Secondly, remaining minor groups aimed for their own rule, or at least aimed for autonomy within an Ottoman or Turkish state. A third group incorporated influential tribal leaders going after the inspiration of creating their own statelets. Second and third Kurdish groups were incapable of co-operating and settling themselves into an effectual faction. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p.79)

Martin Van Bruinessen argues that Turkish authorities' stance towards Kurdish elements contributed to structure and form the Kurdish nationalism. (2003, p. 57). Furthermore Bozarslan questions the motives behind the appearance of a strong Kurdish nationalist movement right after the establishment of the Turkish republic. He asserts that it is hard to explain this phenomena just relying as a reaction to Kemalist policies. Although the government adopted a Turkish nationalist political agenda starting from 1922 and preparing *Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu* in 1924 in this direction, it is not much possible to assert that there was a systemized oppression against Kurds during this period. According to Bozarslan Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 can be seen as a turning point for the development of Kurdish nationalism. (2002, pp. 850-5) For the Kurdish elite it became apparent that the new government discourse will not rely on the brotherhood on Islam, but rather on Turkishness. Thus, they took a different stance. Moreover with the abolition of the caliphate, Kurdish resistance found another source. Republican inclination to leave Ottoman past and Islam aside concerned most of the Kurds, especially the Kurdish notables. Abolition of the caliphate was also perceived as the initial premises of the independence war. Whereas as Bozarslan underlines that the abolition of the caliphate meant a lot to Kurds: it meant the end of the Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood which led to the classification of Kurdishness with Islam before. Once more Kurdishness and Islam came together while this time in novel context. At this time Islam was not a regular and common point with the Turks but as a device to Turkishness and Turkish nationalism. (1992, p. 110) All of these developments resulted in a continuously hostile and antagonistic relationship between the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Turkish government and the Turkish state elite which led to an armed struggle in the late 1980s.

The time period between 1923 and 1938 is known as the period of Kurdish rebellions. Dersim rebellion which broke up in 1937 was suppressed by the Turkish forces within a year. In 1937, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan sign the Treaty of Saadabad to coordinate their action against rebellious Kurds. Following this turbulent period, the time period between the 1938 and 1959 is labeled as the 'years of tiredness'. (Bozarslan, 2002, p. 850) Twenty years of silence became apparent right after fifteen years of rebellions marked the period. The late 1930s and the early 1940s were burdened by the ramifications of the Second World War also. The end of the war in 1945 signified a new era for the world and also for Turkey. First multi-party elections, held in 1950, resulted in the landslide victory of Democrat Party (DP). Moreover, for

the duration of the rule of DP through waves of mass migration from eastern provinces to western cities, skilled and urbanized Kurdish youth became more radicalized and politicized whereas this steady development of ethnic awareness conflicted with tribal loyalties. Repeatedly more traditionalist and conventional Kurdish notables, still living in the countryside did not essentially share the views of urbanized and politicized youth which led to a strict dichotomy within the Kurdish population.

Severe financial problems and political volatility in Turkey ended in military's interference in 1960. Increase in the number of student organizations and proliferation of the civil society Kurds began to be attentive of their ethnic identity during this period whereas it should be kept in mind that the change was again gradual. Likewise, 1960s can be characterized by the emergence of numerous Kurdish organizations and magazines, focusing on the cultural rights of the Kurdish ethnic group. Radicalization of the Kurdish demands was observed in subsequent years. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p. 107) The period between the years 1959 and 1971 marks the Kurdish nationalist rhetoric's move towards Kurdish nationalist movement as a social opposition movement. In this regard, during the late 1960s, Kurdish nationalists started to give voice to cultural demands such as the use of Kurdish language as a medium in media, increase in the economic initiatives in the eastern regions. Aims of these organizations were to persuade the government to recognize the Kurdish language and grant cultural rights to the Kurds. Instead of religious, tribal and traditional themes which Kurdish groups had made use of in the inter-war period, the leaders of these cultural and student organizations would in time turn to more revolutionary, radical and secessionist rhetoric. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p. 109) It was argued that the pursuit of capitalist and imperialist policies had led to the denial of Kurdish identity and the lack of economic development in eastern Anatolia. Initially there was solidarity between Turkish and Kurdish revolutionaries. Federation of Turkish Revolutionary Youth, known as Dev-Genç, supported the struggle against imperialism including that of Turks and Kurds. In this case it can be claimed that Kurdish Marxists had more commonalities with the Turkish revolutionaries in contrast to traditional Kurds living in the rural areas. The radical Marxist rhetoric employed throughout the period and the escalating violence between left and right groups, increased the unsteadiness in Turkey. During the period between 1971 and 1984 Kurdish nationalist movement disintegrated due to the military intervention of 1971. Throughout the 1970s, Kurdish nationalists' inclination toward leftist discourses enabled them to attain a more international rhetoric and also had the

chance of placing themselves on the victimization list as the oppressed. In other words, Kurdish nationalism's affiliation with the left was providing it a different set of legitimization within the struggle of proletariat and the bourgeoisie, imperialism whereas it should be underlined that the movement never abandoned its rhetoric which was mainly based on the classical nationalist ideas.

In March 1971 the military clamped down and arrested many members of the previously mentioned organizations. When the pre-1971 radical organizations began to resurface in the mid-1970s after a general amnesty, it was clear that the ideological coalition formerly existed among the Kurdish and Turkish Marxists had been undermined. Many of Turkish leftists considered demands of the Kurdish nationalists as inappropriate rather than reactionary. As a result, Kurdish leftists wanted Kurds to be recognized as a separate ethnic group. (Gunter, 1990, pp. 63-8) Regarding the fragmentation of the Kurdish nationalist movement later on evolved into illegal organizations. Violence as a tool was not disregarded within the discourses. In 1977 TKDP which was active among the Kurdish artisans, ulema and villagers divided and KUK decided to get directly into armed struggle. Another organization formed after the division was the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan) under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan in 1978. PKK also decided to get into an armed resistance right after its foundation. As a result of this split, number of radical, illegal Kurdish leftist groups increased significantly. During the 1960s and 1970s Kurdish nationalists demanded economic aid and cultural rights either through pro-Kurdish parties or by pro-Kurdish media. Those demands were later on radicalized more with the adoption of violence by the PKK in the early 1980s. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p. 108)

Just as in any nationalism, also in Kurdish nationalism, there are many concealed tensions and disagreements. The pure and ideal national harmony is flawed by class conflicts, religious cleavages and regional divisions. Whereas unifying affective notions fueled by symbols and values are crucial and determinative. Starting from the first Kurdish uprisings under the Ottoman rule up to the present day, Kurdish nationalism is fed from certain patterns filled with ideals, morals and symbols. Ethnic myths authorize the fundamental cultural beings of social relations, they link past to the future and act as models; they seize exterior referents of contrast and judgment, they plot the space and time for the act, a specific territorial programme; they contain impulses for collective action and mobilizing people; lastly they are developmental

while assuming the possibility of change. (Smith, 1999, p. 82) In the Kurdish case, production of myths never came to a halt. In the next section I will identify the symbolical sources of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey.

## **2.2. Kurdish Ethno-symbolism**

Ethno-symbolism is a school of thought in nationalism studies the concept is Anthony D. Smith's contribution to the study of nations and nationalisms. Ethno-symbolism stands in opposition to the modernist approach by focusing on- the fundamental role of myth, culture, values and traditions within the formation of nation-states and shaping of the nationalist discourses. Smith in his own words characterizes ethno-symbolic approach as the following, "For ethno-symbolists, what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past has been, can be rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern intelligentsia. It is from these elements of myth, memory, symbol and tradition that modern national identities are reconstituted in each generation, as the nation becomes more inclusive and as its members cope with new challenges" (Smith, 1999, p. 9) Ethno-symbolism still accepts the "constructedness" of nationalism (similar to modernists). Whereas Smith refuses to associate this "constructed" nature with the modern era as instrumentalists tend to do.

Smith's theory of ethno-symbolism can be applied to this study of Kurdish nationalism in relation to the Kurdish socio-cultural milieu and present-day political subjects. This section is concerned with the investigation of the Kurdish nationalism in Turkey from an ethno-symbolist approach. This chapter focuses on the symbolic sources of Kurdish nationalism and their utilization through the nationalist discourse up to the present. Thus in the previous section the historical development of Kurdish national identity is contextualized within an understanding of Kurdish nationalism that spans from Tanzimat Period to the present time. Evolution of the Kurdish nationalist discourse and its link with the Kurdish question in Turkey will be analyzed in the next chapter.

According to Smith, nations are more than synthetic modern assemblages. Even though nations and nationalisms are modern phenomena, they have deep roots in

previous ethnic communities and *ethnies*. One of the central themes of Smith's scholarship is the relationship between the pre-modern ethnic communities (*ethnie*) and modern nations. *Ethnies'* relation to myths, symbols and values are resilient through time. This durability does not entail that myths and symbols have static or motionless meanings, whereas they create a myth of common origins. Without shared myths and memories of a territorial home which add to the sense of belonging, nationalist feelings and aspirations are inconceivable. Thus, Smith's conceptualizations of nation and nationalism depend heavily on ethnic and territorial formations. Ethnicity is the basis of national identity according to Smith's argument. People who share certain similar characteristics are entitled to form some sort of national identity. Ethno-symbolists also accept the constructed nature of ethnicity whereas they refuse to associate it directly with the modern era as instrumentalists tend to do. Movement that facilitates and brings nations into being is named as nationalism. Smith defines the concept of nationalism as an ideological faction with the aim of maintaining or attaining self-rule, unity and uniqueness on the behalf of a population, deemed by its members. It should be noted that Smith's conceptualization of nationalism as an ideology applies only to the nation, not the state. Smith formulates his well-known classification of the nation as 'a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (1991, p. 14). Thus Smith openly speaks in favor of an 'ethnicist' or 'culturalist' description of nation which conceptualizes the concept of nationalism as a result. To be able to base his arguments on a firm ground, Smith introduces the literature a new concept as *ethnie*, which is a unit of analysis used as a synonym for ethnic community. *Ethnie* is defined by a set of features: "A human community connected to a homeland, possess common myths of ancestry; shared memories one or more elements of shared culture and a measure of solidarity." (1986, p. 32) *Ethnie* serves to unite cultural authenticity with historical continuity. Importance of the *ethnie* is it being embedded in the 'myth-symbol complex'. This specific term indicates the key role of symbols and myths as embodying the body of attitudes and emotions which the members of ethnicity preserve and transmit to future generations. (Armstrong, 1982, pp. 8-9) Smith adopted John A. Armstrong's term in his studies.

Regarding the relationship of literature and ethno-symbolism for nationalist discourses, it can be said that literature opens a door on experience, teaching readers

what can be told indirectly. Moreover through the narratives which are embedded within the literary sphere can show a lot in addition to the factual contribution of political science. Hence some experiences are best understood not only through the straightforward acquisition of facts but through the course of discovering where and why conscious understanding and memory fail. (Caruth, 1995, p. 5) In other words literature functions as a channel of communication through which national consciousness, national symbols, shared cultural inheritance and group solidarity in a complicated but also a fruitful way. Thus in theories of nationalism, literatures shares this communicative function with other semiologies through signs such as rituals, parades and tradition as an object of symbolic representation. (Suleiman, 2006, p. 17)

Symbolist theory explores the subsistence, permanence and the significance of the historical memories, myths and the symbols, their utilization by the elite. According to Smith, the existence of those common past values is a requirement for being an ethnic group. Symbols of territory and community may take variety of forms: flags, totems, coins, rituals, hymns and anthems, culinary practices and costumes, representations of monarchs, deities and heroes. (Smith, 1999, p. 16) In this part, the roots and the development of Kurdish nationalism will be analyzed by examining Smith's six dimensions of ethnic community (*ethnie*) for the analysis of symbolic elements within the Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. These specific components and their symbolic meanings within the Kurdish nationalist discourse will be explored through an 'ethno-symbolic' approach. Of these symbolic elements, the most important for ethnic and national formations are myths of ethnic origin, belonging to a specific homeland, myth-memories of golden ages, and myths of heroic significance. (Smith, 2004, p. 199)

### **2.2.1. Collective Name**

The historical background of Kurds has been lengthily discussed in previous works by prominent scholars.<sup>3</sup> Kurdish nationalists believe that they come down from the *Medes*, a group of people incorporated into Persian Empire in the sixth century, while Kurds can be also seen as the mixture of Turkic, Armenian, Semitic, Turcoman, Persian and Assyrian tribes and more dominant Indo-European assemblages as the

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<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on the Kurds see, Izady, M. (1992). *A Concise Handbook: The Kurds*. Washington DC and London: Taylor & Francis.

outcome of the later raiders. Until the end of the First World War the majority of Kurds lived within the Ottoman Empire, remainder resided in Persia. All of these Kurdish communities were feudal and tribal in nature. Religious, tribal and linguistic dissimilarities have added to these partitions within Turkey. With reference to religion, Sunni-Alevi divide within the Kurdish groups has been vital. A number of dialects are spoken by these people depending on the region they come from which led to divisions based on linguistics. (Van Bruinessen, 1992, pp. 21-2) Tribal identity, on the other hand, always has been an important type of belonging for Kurds, especially for the ones living in the rural areas. In spite of modernization, tribal identities did not lose their significance for a long time. Local ‘aghas’ and chieftains, religious leaders of ‘shaiks’ turned out to be a motor force and created the Kurdish elite. In the early twentieth century some Kurdish communities within Turkey migrated to urban areas where they came under the pressure of Kurdish intellectuals and the specialized intelligentsia. Regarding all those divisions and dichotomies emerging as the outcome, Van Bruinessen claims that Kurds in Turkey have multiple identities. Whichever identity a Kurds may choose to emphasize is dependent on the context. (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 47) This fluidity of identity also turned the Kurdish question hard to define. In spite of internal divisions based on various numbers of indicators, the category of “Kurd” always has been vital for Kurds.

### **2.2.2. Myth of Common Ancestry or Descent**

Myths help us to understand the dynamic and the expressive nature of the ethnic identity and the nationalist discourses. (Smith, 1986, p. 211) Families and individuals map out and announce their family histories. This act also carries certain political power within. Tracing the family past may occur in two forms since the affirmation of lowly or highly origins service to different ends and legitimizations. While lowly origins are associated with puritanical ideology and a possible plea for egalitarianism; highly origins cater for something to be proud of. (Smith, 1999, p.59) Behind these ever-changing desires, there rests the query of individual identity which is profoundly related with the obsession for tracing origins. Kurdish nationalists give reference to certain dynasties and families who ruled various places in the region in pre-modern history as an example of search for highly origins. *Shaddadis* who ruled in 951-1174 in Transcaucasia, and the *Hasawayhids* who ruled in 959-1095 in Dinawar are among the

frequently given examples. Likewise *Merwandis* ruled in Diyarbakır between the years 1169 and 1250. Kurds also refer to the *Ayyubi* dynasty which was founded by a Kurd, Salahaddin Ayyubi. (Aziz, 2011, p.44)

Ethnic myths of descent propose associations between pre-modern and modern eras. Artists and writers in this case play a critical role since they have the means and resources to publicize events, narrate the atmosphere and heroic illustration of distant antiquated ages of the epics and sagas. Thus a bridge between the ‘golden past’ and the ‘golden future’ is constructed through these myths. Regarding this artistic process, the ethnic spokesman had to come up with a case which rests on the conviction of ethnic ancestry and common history. As an example, Ottoman reforms in the late eighteenth century provided the infrastructure which allowed the rebirth of the Kurdish intelligentsia set the process of nationalization in motion. Even there were all the elements of proto-nationalism existing, the task of nationalism was accelerated since the proto-national sentiments are mobilized. (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 78)

While analyzing the Kurdish nationalism regarding the myth of descent, I follow Smith’s categorization of the concept of ethnic myth.<sup>4</sup> (Smith, 1999, pp.62-8) Kurdish nationalists date community’s origins to place in time relative to other populations. Also this deed places the ‘ancestors’ in a specific and explicit place. Kurdish nationalists ask the question where they came from and how did it happen based upon the spatial origins. Moreover, the symbolic kinship between all members of the present generation of community, down to the common ancestor is frequently underlined by the Kurdish nationalists. This quest for genealogical roots within the group is transmitted to communal level and became symbolic. What is central in this case is the spread of cultural values through the lines of descent. History as a tool of rebuilding and renewal is essential in this regard. Qualities attributed to Kurdish heroes mainly dwell upon their strength, belief and determination in opposition to evil ‘other’. This dichotomous characterization ends in creating a wide and eternal polarization between ethnic communities within the discourse of the Kurdish nationalism, which will be also analyzed in the last chapter within the literature of Mehmed Uzun. Furthermore, golden age being left in the past signifies more. Alleged qualities here within the golden age of the past, has an authentic voice back then but unfortunately silent today. Golden age has

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<sup>4</sup> Smith analyzes the concept of ethnic myth under the sub-topics of: myth of temporal origins; myth of location and migration; myth of ancestry; myth of the heroic age; myth of regeneration.

its atmosphere and pleasing exclusivity according to Smith. An example of remembering heroes as mythical symbols is the Kurds' popular memories of Kaway Asinger, Mami Alan<sup>5</sup> and the ceremonies and celebrations of *Nawroz* on 21 March.

The celebration of *Nawroz* is historically related to the legend of Zuhak and of Kaway Asinger. Legend of Zuhak contains one of the several folk myths pertaining to the origins of the Kurds. According to the Kurdish written folklore, Zuhak was a tyrant. Satan appeared to Zuhak that he would be cured if he would feed the snakes on his shoulders with brains of two youngsters each day. The appointed executor took pity on the victims and each day spared one of them; substitute the human brains with the brains of sheep. As a result, survivors of this killing fled to the mountains, where they became the founding fathers of the new people, the Kurds. (Özoğlu, 2004, p. 22) The day Zuhak was killed by Kaway Asinger is celebrated as *Nawroz*. According to the Kurdish nationalist perspective, myth represents the existence of the ancient people of the region. Furthermore, defeat of the tyrant occupies a crucial place within the collective memory of Kurds. (Izady, 1992, p. 34) Furthermore the Kurdish nationalist discourse obsessively focuses on 'a myth of decline' and questions how they fell into a state of decay. Smith claims that for the nationalist myth-maker present alienation from the daily life is simply an inner exile of homelessness, or external repression which ends up in lack of self-rule. From the reading of the Kurdish nationalism, one observes self-blaming due to forgetting the past. Myth in this instance, informs the central concept of nationalism, together with the notion of authenticity. Smith claims that these notions can only represent ideal states, unattainable in an imperfect world; they must always remain unfulfilled for the continuation of the nationalist rhetoric. Thus, this unattainability and the ideal remaining as a dream-like utopia, brings people together. These ideals were psychologically compelling even if they are logically incoherent. Even though Kurdish nationalists anchored on the similar myths of descent and myth of the golden age, they utilized various myths of regeneration. Whereas finding the Kurdish essence remained as a constant element. In other words, re-enacting the early drama of liberation and the subsequent golden ages has been crucial for the Kurdish nationalist discourse. As a sum, the myth of common ancestry within the Kurdish nationalist discourse provide not only the means to collectively locate the group in

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<sup>5</sup> *Mami Alan* or *Mam u Zin* is an epic that Ahmadi Khani (1650-1706) refers to in 1696. Mam and Zin are two lovers whose union is prevented. Mam dies. Zin falls dead of grief while mourning the death of her lover.

today's world, moreover they charter for the community's self-understanding which explains its origins. (Smith, 1981, p. 24)

### **2.2.3. Shared Historical Memories**

Almost every ethnic group in the world justifies its existence through the evidence related to their myths, old symbolic values and traditions which are all embedded within their shared antique history. Memory is an essential part of the ethnic identity. Memories are also common pool for the wisdom and ideals; therefore they contribute to the ethnic fusion and commonality. (Smith, 1999, p. 13) According to Smith, national symbols which are inherited from the shared historical memories are derived from the mythical ethno-history. In this regard nationalist elite plays an important role in rediscovering and constructing the ethnic existence. Regarding the Kurdish nationalism, local 'aghas' and chieftains, in more recent times religious leaders of 'shaiks' turned out to be a motor and created the Kurdish elite. In the early twentieth century some Kurdish communities within Turkey migrated to urban areas where they could come under the influence of Kurdish intellectuals and the professional intelligentsia. These actors functioned in the process of the circulation of the shared historical memories between generations.

### **2.2.4. Common Culture and Cultural Symbols**

Elements of shared culture, serves to attach the members of the Kurdish community within the Turkish context. Celebration of Nawroz, Kurdish epics and myths, can be given as examples. One of the most prominent Kurdish cultural symbols is the celebration of the Nawroz and the myth which constructs its basis. Other than the Nawroz, the legend of *Mem u Zin* of 1692 is another essential cultural symbol for the Kurds. Historical book of Sharafaddin Bitlisi, the *Sharafname*, is another prominent element of the Kurdish cultural imaginary especially regarding its depiction of the geography of the region. According to Smith, not every community was exactly as much as fortunate as the other regarding the preservation of the ethnic ties and the past into to modern era, whereas some others felt the necessity to re-invent those ties and myth which had dissolved and forgotten. (Smith, 1999, p. 34) In this regard, Kurds emphasized the cultural values and their practices. Kurds under the Ottoman rule and within the millet system was living as part of the Muslim community. Their

identification during this period was mostly based on their Islamic belonging. The abolition of the caliphate in 1924 undermined the religious ties between the Kurds and the Turkish government. (Zürcher, 1994, p.178) The Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 was the initial sign of the Kurdish people's discontent with the reforms concerning the religious institutions. Thus the abolition of the caliphate and the following changes during the early republican era paved the way for the Kurdish separatist demands. Efforts to weaken the role of religion in Turkey encouraged Kurdish secessionism in this period. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p. 101) Kurdish language has been another part of the Kurdish culture. References to the preservation and usage of Kurdish language have been made especially by the cultural organizations. After the establishment of the republic in 1923, by the 1924 Constitution, Turkish became the official language of the republic. With the Law for the Unification of Instruction (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu) in 1924, the traditional Islamic schools were closed and Turkish became the only linguistic medium in education. (Van Bruinessen, 1994, p. 148) According to Mardin, main aims of these reforms were to exterminate the religion's impact on the society and social life. It was not the work of unpleasant bourgeoisie nor had the support of the peasants to change the feudal structure. Reforms were against Ottoman old regime. (Mardin, 1971, p. 202)

#### **2.2.5. Association With a Specific Homeland:**

For romantic nationalists nations were products of nature and thus explained by the characteristics of land they work. (Hutchinson, 2004, p. 113) According to the Kurdish mythology, until the centralization policy of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmut II in 1848, Kurds lived in the southeastern part of Turkey. During the republican period, migration of Kurds to western cities between the 1950s and 1970s resulted in urbanization. In the first phase, these myths related with the territory were utilized to uphold cultures as it was in the case of Kurdish nationalism being a cultural one until the end of the First World War, during the early republican era nationalist discourse radicalized and politicized. Degree of marginality of the members, in the eye of the Turkish state also increased.

#### **2.2.6. Sense of Solidarity**

Kurdish belonging is a way of presenting their ethnic identity and political solidarity. Although there are divisions within the community based on various

indicators, they are bypassed through this eternal and flawless sense of solidarity. Thus, within the Kurdish nationalist discourse, concept and the feeling of solidarity is idealized and romanticized and played a crucial role in the consolidation of Kurdish identity. Smith claims that the initial step for the quest for the ethnic core of the group is to trace its social and political roots relying on the idea that ethnicity is deeply related with the concepts of unity and distinctiveness, which in turn draws much of its potency and durability from a conviction of ethnic solidarity. (2009, p. 45) Thus customs, symbols and idealized morals within the Kurdish nationalist rhetoric provide powerful means for creating unity and a sense of harmony and cohesion among large numbers of people.

### **2.3. Conclusion**

Until this point I have tried to give the origins and the genealogy of Kurdish nationalism through milestone events within the ethno-symbolist approach. Regarding the argument concerning the timing of the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, I portrayed different views focusing on late Ottoman period and early republican period. The transformation of Kurdish nationalist discourse from a cultural to a political one also has been pointed out. Focus was on the concern of labeling Kurdish movements prior to First World War as nationalist. Scholars agree on the fact that Kurdish nationalism as a political movement originating from the end of the First World War. In the next chapter I will analyze the progression of the Kurdish question in Turkey, starting with the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 up to today's 'Solution Process' which was initiated by the current government, Justice and Development Party.

## CHAPTER III

### KURDISH QUESTION IN TURKEY

Somer argues that the Kurdish question and the Kurdish conflict should be differentiated from each other for an enhanced consideration of the phenomena where the latter could not be possible outcome without the existence of the former. The Kurdish question emerged as soon as a number of people in areas where Kurds lived developed nationalist ideas and aspirations. Later the Kurdish conflict emerged due to the policies followed during and following the early republican period regarding the issue. In accordance, Kurdish ethno-political movements made their nationality claims predominantly through violent rebellion, which reinforced the distrust between them and the state. (2011, p. 254-5) In this chapter I will analyze the utilization of Kurdish nationalist discourse through the evolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey briefly.

In the past twenty years the Kurdish question has been altered under the impact of a variety of factors - demographic, economic, and geopolitical with the inter-play of differing political and social actors. The trans-state nature of the Kurdish question has had significant consequences on Turkish politics and has been a lingering affair which cannot be understood without taking into full account the role played by Kurdish nationalism in general, and that of the emergence of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in particular following 1984. As a result, Kurdish question has occupied both the domestic and foreign policy of Turkey to varying degrees for over eight decades.

#### **3.1. Origins of the Conflict**

It can be argued that the roots of the Kurdish question date to the Ottoman Empire and local Kurdish uprisings at the end of the nineteenth century which flourished as a result of the activities of Kurdish cultural organizations established after 1908. These organizations' cultural nationalist rhetoric and demands evolved into much more radicalized demands within the political Kurdish nationalism. Under the impact of those ideas which were publicized through various mediums, in the early years of the Turkish Republic, eighteen Kurdish rebellions took place. Rebellions were conceptualized by the republican elite as an opposition to the modernization process which formed the basis of the republican ideals of the period. However, the conflict became distinctly "Kurdish" after 1984 with the emergence of the PKK as a separatist group within Turkey, when it first attacked Turkey's state apparatus in Eruh and

Şemdinli on 15 August 1984 and launched continuous violent attacks in southeastern Turkey. Ever since, the conflict has extended to various spheres of daily life through the intense usage of media especially with the opening of private channels in 1989. In 1987, the government declared emergency rule in thirteen provinces which signaled the significance of the issue for the country. The conflict peaked from 1991 to 1999, when the highest number of deaths occurred due to violent attacks carried by the PKK. Although the political and social sphere have been calm until the beginning of 2000s, in the mid-2004 PKK attacks aiming at civilians and military forces started again. This volatile political sphere with intense and calm periods of violent attacks traumatized the population and also accelerated the polarization of the country among strict ethnic sides. The conflict became internationalized in late 2007 with the Turkish Army's operations for the PKK camps within the territory of northern Iraq. Between 30,000 and 40,000 people are estimated to have died during the conflict. (Çelik, 2010, p. 153-4)

### **3.2. Parties Involved**

One of the difficulties regarding the nature of the Kurdish question is that parties involved define the character and nature of the clash differently according to their own standing point. Since nothing is static, as the conflict has extended; accordingly it has created new actors and issues which turned everything into more complex position. In this section, attitudes of different groups - the armed forces, PKK, the Turkish state, and secondary parties will be analyzed.

Taking the PKK's attack on Eruh and Şemdinli on 15 August 1984 as the origin point, it can be said that the armed struggle against the PKK has been going on for the past 29 years under the name of 'the war against terrorism'. The PKK's decision in 1984 to begin its 'armed struggle' pushed large parts of the region into violence and vastly increased the armed presence of the Turkish army, gendarmerie, special forces, police, and intelligence elements. (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 42) As expected, Turkish armed forces have been one of the vital actors of the conflict since question turned into a struggle against a terrorist group and its international factions. Until the 2000s, high-ranking soldiers in the field used to claim that their responsibility is narrowed down to the military feature of the issue, leaving all remaining aspects to other segments of the bureaucracy and society. It has been believed that it was the job of the civil authority to manage the additional aspects of this conflict such as the advancement of the living circumstances in Kurdish areas. With a change in the view, during the late 1990s, the

military invited the private sector to invest in the region, on the grounds that without such local-level investment which was crucial for the economic and social development of the region. (Beriker-Atiyas, 1997, p. 442) In the following period, conflict was internationalized with founding of the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq and operations held by the Turkish Army in the northern Iraqi territories. (Çelik, 2010, p. 169)

With the formation of PKK in 1978 Kurdish question took another shape. Even though the conflict is rooted in an earlier period of imperial rule, the Kurdish question crystallized after the coming out of the PKK as an armed faction within the Republic of Turkey. Özcan claims that it is obvious that the social base of the movement is not working class even though the name is the ‘Kurdistan Workers Party’ since the working class of the region remained distant from the mass activities. (2006, p. 235) First attack of PKK took place in Erzurum and Şemdinli, on 15 August 1984 and conflict intensified since then with the start of an operation of violence. The Turkish state declared the PKK to be an illegal organization whose cadres are fed by Kurds. Over the years, the PKK’s positions have changed whereas the chief defining features of the PKK-led movement have been its secular orientation, anti-traditionalist stance and support it gained from the newly urbanized and university-educated Kurds. However, its secular strand has been interrupted by local, sectarian and class identities. (Yavuz, 2009, p.176) Recently with the impact of the latest developments, Kurdish nationalists started to emphasize the importance of freeing” the Kurdish language in public, by making education in Kurdish available in Turkey, and by “securing” the Kurdish identity through constitutional guarantees. Around half of Turkey’s six to twelve million Kurds (estimates differ) have moved out of the southeast and into the western cities of Turkey. Large numbers of Kurds have immigrated to Europe. (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, p. xii) With the grave impact of globalization, the conflict is not restricted within the boundaries of Turkey any longer. Today the Kurdish question inflates far beyond the geographic boundaries that are presumably directly associated to the Kurdish conflict (Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran) Kurdish question got linked to Europe with the activities of the Kurdish diaspora activists. Kurdish diaspora expressions of nationalism in Europe pressure and form the public dialogue on the future of the Kurds in Turkey, whereas the diaspora share a personalized and customized adaptation of ethnic nationalism since they focused especially on cultural and linguistic expressions of identity rather than an obsession with territorial boundaries. Kurdish civil society actors in Europe identified pioneering

political spaces, pursued alternative options of collective action and articulated less nationalist principles; focus has been on the cultural recognition. Thus, the demands for a territory-bound Kurdish homeland are fading away in Europe. (Eccarius-Kelly, 2001, p. 290-1, 315)

The Turkish state, as the actor within the Kurdish question since it became critical for the Turkish politics, named the conflict as a “terrorist act”. Especially regarding the rising violence and aggression of PKK, the state’s emphases have been security and territorial integrity and security of its citizens. Since 1984, various governments with the representation of differing political parties tried to come up with specific solution programs. Boldest step has been taken by the AKP after its promise to address the Kurdish issue in 2002 general elections. AKP claimed that the Kurdish question should not be reduced to a mere nationalism issue, but rather the focus should be upon the compulsory secularism and Turkish nationalism of the type imposed by Kemalist ideology. Party leader and the members sincerely believed that through shared Islamic ties and brotherhood, enhancement of the country (*memleket*) can be possible and also conflict can be stopped. Party’s leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s stance regarding the issue moves between a civic understanding of citizenship for all inhabitants of Turkey and importance of unity and the security of the country. As a result of this chaotic phase government took a bold move with the initiation of the ‘Solution Process’ in 2009. There had been high expectation that the AKP government would address the Kurdish question and end further communal discrepancy between Turkey’s two main ethnic groups. (Somer, 2011, p. 270) Accordingly government has offered its own solution “Islam as cement” to end the societal polarization of Turkey. (Yavuz & Özcan, 2006, p. 103) Within time most of the Turkish officials became aware that a peaceful solution of the Kurdish question in Turkey would improve Turkey’s representation and improve the predictions for Turkish entrance into the European Union as a full member also.

How western governments have perceived and countered to policies accept by the authorities in Ankara with regard to the Kurdish question in the country, and how Turkish officials in turn have responded to these reactions is a complex issue. In this point, under the category of ‘third group’, European Union (EU) and the United States can be shown. Both of them also recognize PKK as a ‘terrorist organization’ whereas their positions differ contextually. On the basis of the Copenhagen criteria which entail complete realization of the existence of minorities, the EU asked Ankara to reform its

legal system and provide minority rights for the Kurds. (Yavuz & Özcan, 2006, p. 103) United States became another significant actor after the formation of the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, which harbors PKK camps which also signaled the internationalization of the Turkey's Kurdish question. After the Turkish military operations in northern Iraq, the United States became the focus of bilateral communications on the issue US position shifts according to developments in the Middle East. (Çelik, 2010, p. 157) Throughout this process, official Turkish actors have been responsive to any outside conflict-resolution interference.

### **3.3. Evolution of the Conflict**

In the previous chapter chronological unfolding of the events has been portrayed whereas mostly focused on the consequences in relation to evolution of the Kurdish nationalist discourse in Turkey. In this section, focus will be on the consequences in regard the evolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey, following the same chronology.

With the establishment of the Turkish republic, as the new regime quickly embraced everything conceptualized as 'modern', accompanied with the centralization policies and the aims towards secularization. Through this process, Kemalist government reinvented the Turkish *ethnie*. (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 9) In this regard, Kurdish rebellions between the years of 1923 and 1938 signified challenges against the Turkish state discourse which were stamped out by the state. The Sheikh Said rebellion was the initial step. The rebellion was eventually suppressed by Ankara with a great deal of force and violence. The Sheikh Said rebellion represents a major turning point since it implies an alteration in the regime's position. (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, p.11)

In relation, Kurds and their children whom migrated to western provinces found themselves within a complex identity paradox in the following years. The "Kurdish question" assumed a new form in the mid-1980s with PKK's attacks on Turkish military posts starting in 1984. By the late 1980s, the Kurdish question emerged onto the political scene with full force. The year 1984 the appearance of PKK out of the radical Turkish left, marked a new start for the contemporary manifestation of the Kurdish problem on the Turkish political agenda. Since then the conflict has persisted in the form of limited warfare between Turkish forces and the PKK. The position of the government has been that the protection of the unity and the territorial integrity of the country. The PKK's declared aims, on the other hand, ranged from cultural and political rights as an identity group to federalism with the heavy emphasis on the violence as a

tool. Undoubtedly, the most extreme and violent symptom of Kurdish nationalism in contemporary history has been the PKK. (Yavuz, 2009, p. 171) Starting from 1984 in a more organized way, The PKK took up arms against Ankara, waging violent attacks in the southeastern Turkey. The violent conflict in the southeastern part of Turkey escalated to the point of “low-intensity war” in the 1990s. Turkey put thirteen provinces under a state of emergency rule, increasing the military initiative in the southeast starting from 1987.

Developments beyond Turkey have had considerable impacts on the Kurdish question. The massive migration of refugees from northern Iraq in 1991 at the end of the Gulf War and the Turkey’s candidacy for the EU had affected the political and social sphere in relation to trans-state nature of the Kurdish conflict. With the end of the Gulf War Turkey’s relations with the Iraq, Iran and Syria has been complicated due to the Kurdish question (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p. 157) At the same time, western governments began to take a growing interest in Turkey’s performance because of the candidacy process. Throughout the 1990s, the EU increasingly became an actor in Turkish politics; civil society, political parties and state institutions either got closer to or found themselves within EU networks. Consequently, politics in Turkey entered a new phase at the end of the decade as Turkey became a candidate for inclusion within an expanded EU. Regional integration in Europe and Turkey’s application to the EU for full membership status also dominated the scene in the 1990s. In 1992, The Turkish army initiated a major air and land operation against PKK bases in northern Iraq. A year after the ceasefire with the PKK broke down. The Democracy Party (DEP), the continuation of the People’s Labor Party (HEP) after the latter had been closed by the Constitutional Court in June 1994, met the same fate as its predecessors. Reason of the closure was supporting the PKK and advocating separatism. In 1995 a major military operation was held against the Kurds in northeastern Iraq which 35.000 Turkish troops involved. Same year coalition of Çiller collapsed; pro-Islamist Welfare Party won the election. Due to lack of support to form a government, coalition was made with two major center-right parties. The failure of the ANAP-DYP coalition to form a stable government led to the formation in summer 1996 of another coalition of Welfare Party (RP) and True Path Party (DYP). Necmettin Erbakan as the head of RP became the first Islamist Prime Minister of Turkey who made people to think whether his government will be able to appeal to Islamic solidarity to attempt to reach a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey. Moreover, taking the risk of the opposition of the military,

President Demirel and RP, DYP, prepared a package of measures for southeastern Turkey which included lifting of restrictions on Kurdish radio and television. According to this package, mobilization of the public resources for the economic and social development of the region was prioritized. Although the struggle against terrorism continued on full force, still the emphasis on Kurdish question not being only an issue of terrorism whereas including social, cultural and other various aspects has been made. (Winrow & Kirişçi, 1997, p. ix-x) In 1997 Mesut Yılmaz won the general elections, following year WP was banned and Yılmaz resigned, replaced by Bülent Ecevit. In 1999, PKK leader Öcalan was captured in Kenya received a death sentence several months later commuted to life imprisonment. This event affected the Kurdish nationalist movement and after this period for a while, PKK did not mount violent attacks in Turkey. In February 1999, Turkey was having problematic times regarding the relation with the outer world and especially with its neighbors. Kurdish question added more stress to the government and also individuals got much tenser. Nevertheless the permanent Kurdish problem was central to this state of affairs. In the early 2000s Turkey's candidacy for EU membership and the recent establishment of a federal Kurdish state in northern Iraq have furthered the complexity of the issue. (Mesut Yeğen, 2011, p.245) In 2000 Ahmed Necdet Sezer took over the presidency from Süleyman Demirel. In 2002 Islamist-based Justice and Development (AKP) won a landslide election victory.

This announcement indicating the end of the unilaterally declared cease-fire of PKK followed by the explosion of a bomb in August 2004, in a minibus in the highly popular Aegean tourist resort of Kuşadası. Attacks increased significantly up to 2007. As of early June there were 50 military personnel and 15 civilians who had died as a result of direct PKK attacks during the course of 2007. These numbers continued to increase through the summer. The accompanying funerals became populist manifestations of a rising tide in Turkish nationalism and growing demands for a military intervention in northern Iraq (Kirişçi, 2007, p. 4) This change in the attitude of PKK came as a shock to the public and a reminder of the violence of the 1990s at a time when stability and economic growth was just beginning to be taken for granted AKP's victory in the national elections in 2007, and offered an important opportunity for making progress with respect to the Kurdish question. Same year, Ankara allowed the limited use of the Kurdish language in state television broadcasts. Within this turbulent

and unstable period, AKP' victory in the general elections of 2007 offered a new possibility for a solution to the long-lasting Kurdish question in Turkey.

Clashes between the PKK and the military forces increased with the beginning of 2004, when the PKK ended its unilateral cease-fire and intensified its attacks on civilians and military forces in 2007. Thus the clashes with the PKK which had particularly stopped since the capturing of Öcalan, restarted after 2004. (Somer, 2011, p. 271) Kurdish question's impact on the psychology of the resident of Turkey has been analyzed in various works. It should be added that, other than this continuous state of struggle, volatile character of the conflict which included several calm years in a row and then fierce and deadly attacks following; traumatized the individuals. In 30 September 2006 PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire in operations against the military. However, the decisive victory that the AKP won in the national election of July 2007 together with the resolution of the crisis with the election of the new President in Turkey offers an important opportunity for making progress with respect to the Kurdish question. In 2007 parliament allowed for military operations in Iraq in pursuit of Kurdish rebels. In December, Turkey launched a series of air strikes on fighters from the Kurdish PKK movement from Iraq. During the course of at least two past years Turkey had been experiencing a distinct rise in both Turkish as well as Kurdish nationalism. Most importantly, the last two years saw the periodic increase in violent PKK attacks on civilian and military targets accompanied by emotional funerals held for the victims. (Kirişçi, 2004)

In 2009, The Turkish government announced a "Kurdish initiative," a package that seeks increased rights for the minority. Solution Process has been initiated by AKP in 2013. With the committee of wise men (*akıl adamlar*)<sup>6</sup>, it was believed that the solution can be achieved through mediation. Kirişçi explains the primary goals of the Kurdish Opening initiative as mitigating the grievances of Turkey's Kurdish population, taking measures to foster trust between Kurds and the Turkish state, reducing Kurdish militant activity, and enacting broader constitutional reforms for the further democratization of Turkey. Kirişçi concluded by stating that, despite significant criticism from Turkey's opposition parties, the Kurdish Opening initiative will likely succeed as long as Turkey maintains both its engagement with the EU. (Kirişçi, 2013) In December 2009 government introduced measures in parliament to increase Kurdish

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<sup>6</sup> Later on named as *wise people (akıl insanlar)*

language rights and reduced the military presence in the eastern regions as part of its “Kurdish Initiative”. Murat Somer affirmed that the Kurdish Opening initiative implies not just increased concern for the Kurdish issue in Turkey, but rather, but also an overall movement in the country towards increased democratization.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, in December 2009 Constitutional Court considered whether to ban the Democratic Society Party over alleged links with the PKK. In July 2010, PKK declared that they are willing to disarm in return for greater political and cultural rights for Kurds living in Turkey, Turkish government refused to comment. In August 2011, Turkey launched retaliatory military strike against Kurdish rebels in the mountains of northern Iraq. In October, PKK killed 24 Turkish soldiers near the Iraqi border which turned out to be the deadliest attack since the 1990s. Cyclical nature of the Kurdish question showed itself once again.

Turkey’s Kurdish conflict went through several periods between its formative period and the present whereas the post-2007 period signified a crucial time for the Turkish politics. Initial rhetoric of the Kurdish opening in 2009 pointed to a major shift in the AKP’s policy away from militarization. On January 1, 2009, Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) began broadcasting in Kurdish under the channel called TRT 6 which symbolized the recognition of the Kurdish language by the state authorities. In the summer of 2009, the ‘Kurdish Opening’ initiative has been manifested by the AKP government. This keen intention has been followed by meetings with leaders of civil societal organizations, intellectuals and popular Turkish artists under the name of ‘*wise people (akil insanlar)*’. Importance of dialogue and conciliation has been emphasized several times by the AKP government during this process. After twenty-five years of terror and violence as well as human tragedy and misery the Kurdish question started to be discussed for a resolution within the parliament. This specific spatial place, the parliament, is significant since it signaled the possibility of dealing with the Kurdish question through democratic deliberation which would bring end to the use of violence. (Kadioğlu & Keyman, 2011, p. 319-20)

### **3.4. Conclusion**

After the 1950s Kurdish question took a new form with the formation of the Kurdish movement which can be dated from the early 1960s when Kurdish intellectuals

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.mei.edu/transcripts/what-does-kurdish-opening-turkey-entailcomparative-and-political-perspectives>

joined the growing left in a struggle for equality and cultural autonomy, and a demand for greater economic development in the eastern provinces. As the movement became more militant in the late 1960s, it encountered greater state opposition. By 1979 many provinces in the east were under martial law. Throughout the 1980s, there have been regular clashes between the army and the PKK which intensified during 1990s. (Ahmad, 1993, p. 218) Undoubtedly, the worst symptom of the Kurdish ethno-nationalism in contemporary history has been the terrorist activities led by the PKK. Turkish soldiers have battled the PKK in the southeast since 1984, a conflict that has resulted in an estimated 37,000 fatalities. It has also retarded the democratization process of Turkey. (Yavuz & Özcan, 2006, p. 102) The “Kurdish question” has been a long-standing problem of the Republic since its foundation. Important progress has been achieved beginning with the new century. The EU’s engagement with Turkey has greatly contributed to the reform process. Nevertheless, the AKP appears determined to achieve some progress on the Kurdish question. (Kirişçi, 2007, p. 32)

As a result it can be said that the Kurdish question in Turkey is a highly complex and sensitive issue and the domestic Turkish politics has been going through major changes since the 1990s. Certain developments were followed by escalation of military clashes between the Turkish military and the PKK militants. Due to this trans-state nature, events taking place in the international arena are also causing additional complications for Turkey. Outcome is still remains to be seen while I write these lines.

## CHAPTER IV

### ETHNO-SYMBOLIST READING OF MEHMED UZUN'S LITERATURE

In the second chapter, the origins and the genealogy of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, from Ottoman Empire up to the present have been analyzed. In the third chapter, development of the Kurdish question in Turkey and its evolution through the rhetoric of violence and terrorism of the PKK has been dwelled upon. After providing the necessary theoretical background, in this chapter I will analyze the discourse of Kurdish nationalism within the four selected novels of Mehmed Uzun through the ethno-symbolist approach adopted from Anthony D. Smith. I argue that each ethno-symbolic element within the selected novels of Uzun is linked to the victimhood rhetoric which also feeds the Kurdish nationalist discourse of Uzun. As a conclusion, in the next chapter, I will analyze the changing novelistic discourse of Uzun, depending on the shifting socio-political context of Turkey since the 1980s.

#### 4.1. Biography of Mehmed Uzun

Uzun was born in Siverek, a town in Urfa province in 1953. Diyarbakır has been the place where he lived until the age of 17. At the age of 17, he was sent to Diyarbakır Military Prison, where spent two years and learned Kurdish. He went to Sweden in 1977 to avoid imprisonment decision charged upon him. His career as a writer started with the publishing of his first novel "*Tu*" in 1985 in Sweden, during the exilic years. After the military intervention of 1980, Uzun lost his Turkish citizenship and lived an exilic life until 1992. He took role in the administrative board of International PEN clubs, and also became a member of Sweden and World Journalists Associations. Uzun decided to end exile in 2005 and hospitalized in Diyarbakır. In September 11, 2007 he died due to stomach cancer. Until 2000, he wrote the following novels in Turkish, Kurdish and Swedish: "*Mirina Kaleki Rind*" (1987), "*Siya Evine*" (1989), "*Rojek Ji Rojen Evdale Zeynike*" (1991), "*Bira Qedere*" (1995) and "*Roni Mina Evine Tari Mina Mirine*" (1998), collection of essays such as "*Hez u Bedewiya Penuse*"(1993), "*Nar Cicekleri*" (1996), "*Bir Dil Yaratmak*" (1997) and "*Dengbejlerim*" (1998), and prepared an anthology of Kurdish Literature named "*Antolojiya Edebiyata Kurdi*" in 1995. Uzun's works started to be translated into Turkish in the late 1990s. In his later works from 1998 till his death, Uzun published two volumes of *HD* novels in 2002 and 2003. His essays published under the title "*Zincirlenmiş Zamanlar Zincirlenmiş Sözcükler*" in

2002, Uzun's last finished literary work during exile is "*Ruhun Gökkuşığı*", which was published in Turkish in 2005. He passed away while he was working on his new novel in Kurdish, "*Heviya Auerbach*".

#### **4.2. *Tu (You)***

*Tu* is Uzun's first novel, published in 1985 and it carries the signs of the politically unstable period of Turkey during the 1970s and 1980s and narrates Uzun's imprisonment in Diyarbakır Military Prison through the nameless prisoner as the protagonist. Themes of loneliness, social segregation and misery are central in this literary work. Protagonist is a young, intellectual Kurdish man who enjoys both Western and Eastern literatures.

There are two narratives in the book; the first one is the 'I-narrative' where Uzun depicts the prison experience through the dialogues between himself and the imaginary ladybug. Ladybug is the precise metaphor for the Kurdish oral tradition which is directly related with the nameless prisoner's grandmother. Furthermore it is also the communication tool with the world beyond his cell. Frequently he remembers his childhood, his grandmother's stories which are rooted in the Kurdish myths. He lives within these myths rather than just believing them. (1985, p. 59) Through these flashbacks, prisoner reaches back to the mythical Kurdish golden age where the nationalist ideals are alive and explicit. Second narrative is the 'You-narrative', where the reader gets exposed to protagonist's experiences taking place in the police center. This transition between the first person narrative and the second person narrative creates a duality for the reader. Uzun through this kind of a dual narrative questions the possibility of an experience to be shared among individuals. Reader's possible identification with the nameless prisoner paves the way for apprehension of the importance of the ladybug metaphor which is directly linked to Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements of the novel. Thus to be able to understand the novel entirely, readers should follow Uzun's authoritative voice without any further questioning.

Turning back to Uzun's portrayal of Kurdish experience as an implicit and a closed one, a detailed analysis of the duality of narratives within the novel is necessary. Within the second person narrative, the protagonist is placed within the prison cell and he interacts with the cops. Those interactions are mostly in the form of a monologue.

Within the first person narrative he has another monologue, with the ladybug which is inherited from his grandmother's stories. Ladybug being one of the elements of the protagonist's grandmother's tales has significance: it is closed for a 'foreigner's' understanding. Once again, Uzun turns Kurdish experience into something implicit and only understandable for Kurdish individuals. This attitude of the author fits to classical nationalist schemes while he deepens the polarization between ethnic camps to increase the internal group solidarity. Thus, to be able to understand the nameless protagonist's experience, one has to be part of this community. Moreover in this case being a Kurd is not enough, experiencing the turbulent times and being a witness is necessary. Through the sacralization of this specific experience, Uzun utilizes this dual narrative technique to converge the 'alien' other to come close to the state of victimhood, knowing that it is impossible to sense without the experience. Once more the difference between the victim and the oppressed is portrayed through the narrative. In *Tu*, Kurdish ethnic identity is utilized as the only common denominator between the Kurdish individuals.

Other than the change of narratives, Uzun takes the otherization process into another level via placing zoomorphic elements within the depictions of the Turkish 'other', which strengthens the oppressed-oppressor dichotomy. Lady bug, with its naiveté and fragility, represents the protagonist's link with the distant past and ethnic roots. This 'feminine' insect also signifies innocence and victimhood. Uzun narrates the scene of nameless prisoner being taken under custody, with the metaphor of foxes plundering the chicken coop. Turkish police commissioner's depiction with the emphasis on his voice being similar to voice of a bear, eyes of a frog, distances him from being a human being and makes reader to question Turkish authority's humanity. With these descriptions, Uzun diminishes the human qualities of the oppressor with the aim of deepening the contrast between Turkish and Kurdish sides. Rather than reading this dichotomy as a one between Turkish and Kurdish sides, it can be also interpreted as Kurds versus the Turkish authorities, different than the former dichotomy, which leaves the ethnic conflict at the individual level aside. Furthermore it can be said that with the literary creation of the nameless, Faulkner-reading Kurdish intellectual as an opposition to animal-like Turkish officials, Uzun reverses the internal Orientalism which used to be projected on the Kurds since the establishment of the republic. Whereas this reversal does not pose a new stance, rather recreates the divisions among the society through hollow labels, leaves no space for the alternative forms of existence of individuals.

Prison as the spatial place plays a vital role in Uzun's novel regarding the ethno-symbolist approach. As I have mentioned in the first chapter, within the literature of ethno-symbolism, the myth of the golden past is followed by the myth of decay where nationalists question the reason of this decay. Prison can be seen as the deepest point of this decay through the narration the nameless prisoner. Thus, *Tu* can be read as a national allegory, as a projection of the fate of the nation onto the life of an individual. (Jameson, 2000) Within Uzun's novels, 'points of failures' determine the course of the events. In *Tu*, breaking point is signified by nameless prisoner's realization that he is no longer the hero of his grandmother's stories, but rather a prisoner. This exact moment can be shown as the personal trauma turning into a question of the community's condition. Later on looks for guidance from the ladybug which symbolizes his grandmother. Connection with the ancestral ties is explicit through prisoner's relationship with his grandmother during his childhood. During the story telling sessions, on the lap of her, he believes that he is protected from all the evils. This protective ancestral shadow also brings by the respect and gratitude for the mythical ancestors under the present image of the grandmother.

In *Tu*, Uzun underlines the importance of intellectuals for the protection and circulation of the 'true' knowledge, which is also evident in Smith's narration of ethno-symbolist understandings of nationalist discourses. The city is depicted as little and desperate, role of the wise men is crucial. Uzun narrates these wise men as the shadow of the heroes of the past who holds on to the Kurdish ideals. Golden past was gone and the city was quiet because of the fear of the others. (1985, p. 19) "Yes... clever men of the city, they are the wealth of this city. City becomes a city with them. They have seen a lot... Most of them were dengbejs<sup>8</sup> and story tellers. If there were writers next to them, today most of the things would be better understood" Uzun underlines the importance of education for the establishment of the national and ethnic consciousness and the role of the intellectuals in the preservation of the 'true' history. Within this ethnic consciousness of the novelistic discourse, 'other' is openly named as the 'enemy'. Every action of the 'other' is categorized under the hostile deeds. (1985, p. 17) In addition to the already existing myths, symbols and values; each day new symbols were being added to the Kurdish imaginary. One of them was the graffiti on the wall

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<sup>8</sup> The term dengbej is a Kurdish term for a man or woman reciting traditional epics, stories and myths to the listeners. Dengbej tradition is a crucial part of the Kurdish culture for over centuries.

saying “Electricity and roads for the west, gendarmerie and police station for the east” (1985, p. 22) Moreover, as in many nationalist discourses, Uzun conceptualizes women as the mothers of the young generations. “Their foremost aim was to raise their children. They were happy and joyous with their kids. Those sorrowful, sad women were the foundation of our society. Because they were the mothers of our kids” (1985, p. 24) Within the narrative of *Uzun*, women evolves into an ethno-symbolic element who foster the feeling of solidarity. On the other hand, religion is another source which accompanies nationalist aspirations and provides guidance for the Kurds in *Tu*. Prophet Muhammad’s sayings is part of the daily life and elements for guidance.

*Tu* can be conceptualized as a national allegory. Uzun narrates them openly through explicit sides based on ethnicity. Similar to Smith’s concept of following the lowly ancestral origins for the utilization of the victimization discourse for the present, Uzun’s nameless protagonist talks with a ladybug which comes from the past, lowers himself to the level of insect and expresses the obvious victimhood. Through the stable meaning of victimhood through the text, consequently it can be said that with the aim of retelling the ‘genuine’ history, Uzun falls into the trap or recreating the binaries which are rooted from polarizations embedded in nationalist discourses. Kurdish nationalist discourse does not only feed from symbols, values and traditions that are Kurdish in essence, it also creates a stance against non-Kurdish elements. Signs of the Turkish state in the city such as the mansion of the city’s mayor, police stations, Turkish flag, national anthem and the celebrated national holidays make Kurdish people once more remember the difference.

As a result it can be said that *Tu* is the story of a nameless man, stuck between dualities of interior and external space, oppressed and oppressor, I-narrative and you-narrative. Since Uzun writes this novel depending on his own experiences, it becomes a solid evidence and chronicle for the upcoming generations. Second dichotomy has been utilized for the formation of the clear boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’ which strictly contributes to the sense of solidarity among ethnic communities. The last binary questions whether it is possible to experience one’s oppression through reading. Uzun uses this technique whereas the underlying idea within the novel is that it is not possible. Symbol production for and from nationalist imaginaries is a continuous and a multi-faceted process. In this point Uzun comes out as the one to transform the oral Kurdish culture to a written form due to his belief that oral form is not more effective

against the institutionalized state discourse. Moreover, *Tu* being the first published novel of Uzun creates the legitimacy basis for his writing. Unfortunately he recreates rigid binaries based on ‘us’ and ‘them’ and no further step is taken regarding reconciliation and forgiving each other. In conclusion, ethno-symbolic elements of the Kurdish nationalism are widely apparent in this novel.

#### **4.3. *Siya Evine (Under the Shadows of a Lost Love)***

*Siya Evine* (hereafter referred to as *SE*) was published in 1987. Uzun in this novel focuses on the concept of exile, homeland and the state of continuous loss with a melancholic tone. Novel starts with the dream-like narration of the main character in his deathbed and goes back in time to convey his story to the readers. Story with all its sub-stories ends with Memduh Selim’s expected death. His death is passed on to readers as a mission which is accomplished, since the story which turns out to be the “real” history. Memduh Selim is the absolute authorial voice and Uzun shares his authority in this regard.

Memduh Selim’s exilic life begins with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Novel can be also read as the biography of Memduh Selim which covers the time period between 1900 and 1976. The protagonist, the exilic Kurdish intellectual spends his days constantly missing his lover Feriha and his homeland which are both far away by now. Throughout this period he finds himself at crossroads, always trying to choose one of the alternatives: between his country and exile, between nationalist aspirations and his lover. Interestingly his every decision turns out to be the worst possible outcome in each and every scenario which turns him into an eternal victim within the imaginary of Uzun. Until the last days of his life, loneliness and desperation dominate this individual tragedy.

In 1927, Memduh Selim and his friends establish a national organization under the name of Khoybun. *SE* dwells upon the Mount Ararat Rebellion which took place in 1930 under the leadership of Memduh Selim. With the support of the Bedir Khan’s Khoybun League in Damascus and Armenian Revolutionary federation (Tashnaksoutioun), Kurdish nationalists rebelled and formed a temporary government and an army in Mount Ararat which was crushed by the Turkish army. (Natali, 2005, p. 85) Throughout the novel, Uzun offers two narratives; narrative of the fight for the Kurdish people and narrative of the fight for love. Due to Memduh Selim’s plans for

revolt at Mount Ararat, his lover Feriha has to wait for the already belated marriage. After a while she marries to an Arab feudal lord. Following the loss of her love, Turkish army tears town the rebels at the Mount Ararat. Memduh Selim runs away from the mountains and establishes a new but a dull and darksome life for himself. Within this state of dual loss, Memduh Selim becomes weary of life. One of the most explicit examples of Uzun's utilization of Kurdish nationalist discourse as a tool against Turkish nationalism is the social construction of the enemy in *SE*. This method strengthens the characteristics of group identification, group solidarity and most importantly the orientation of the discontent towards the Turkish administration. This idealized form of enemy turns out to be the catalyst of the aggressive tone which accompanies both Uzun's and novelistic characters' discontent. (Stocchetti, 2009, p. 130)

*SE* can be also read as a national allegory. Thus this novel is crucial for a reading with an ethno-symbolist approach which clarifies certain key points and symbols for the Kurdish nationalist discourse. Memduh Selim's life is laden with decisions which can be conceptualized as the decisive points for protagonist's placement on the scale of victimization. Each decision without any other options leads to state of victimhood with differing features. Memduh Selim is a well-educated, Western and Eastern literature admirer. With this profile he creates, Uzun tries to break away from the already existing 'Kurdish stereotypes'. Feudal Arab lord whom Feriha marries to is placed within the narrative to strengthen this comparison. In other words, Uzun continues to create the beastly other in order to break away from the stereotypes which he believes that Kurds are associated with. The Arab feudal lord who marries to Feriha, the Iranian state which cooperates with the Turkish state, Russia and other European powers which stays neutral throughout the unfolding of the events merges with the absolute evil, 'the Turkish side' due to their collaboration. The polarization through the 'us and them' and 'us versus them' dichotomies deepen the cleavages among ethnic communities. Again, as in the case of *Tu*, this dichotomy can be read between Kurds and the Turkish state, rather than a conflict among Kurdish and Turkish civilians. This specific kind of reading is dependent on the reader's point of view. The narration of the armed struggle at the Mount Ararat explicitly marks the sides once again as the eternal struggle of Turks against Kurds and vice versa. Within this narrative of resistance 'the cult of leadership' is also emphasized which is crucial for the ethno-symbolist approach since rebels call Memduh Selim "Alexander". Those so called heroic connotations which are

rooted in the past also establish the firm ground to be the legend for the upcoming generations. According to Uzun what increases the value of this heroism is Memduh Selim's decision to fight knowingly that in the end he will lose. Rather than having a rational reason, this paranormal situation paves the way to the belief that there is no escape from death. End is known and the point itself, according to both Memduh Selim and Uzun, is in this desperate fighting. Concept of victimhood within the novels of Uzun is directly linked with Memduh Selim's personal misfortunes. Moreover through the narrative, with protagonist's passive standing and naïve voice, a common belief regarding that all misfortunes coming from some unnatural source appears. This tendency in interpretation of the external world is directly linked with the deadly catastrophe without any agency and human participation. Simultaneously this attitude is utilized while questioning the end of the long-gone golden age, another element that binds people along nationalist lines.

Each chapter of the novel starts with a specific place and time. Uzun's, or in this case Memduh Selim's obsession with these two parameters tells a lot in relation to the Kurdish nationalist discourse. Memduh Selim's case of being the *man without land* is tried to be supplemented with this tendency. In fact the line dividing personas of Uzun himself and Memduh Selim is blurry throughout the novel. Spheres of belonging are also kept in memory through photographs. Preserving individuals and places adds to Memduh Selim's capability of writing/creating history which is constructed over specific geographical locations. Role of intellectuals in the novel is also crucial.

Memduh Selim's obsession with writing/re-writing history is crucial which can be linked with his desire to become a competent witness and the authoritative voice for the nationalists of the next generations. It is obvious that his interest is something more complicated and converges to a desire of encapsulating memory and history. Regarding the his experiences, this obsession with keeping track of events evolves into something linked with readdressing the trauma in order to include and make sense of the experience through saying reader what has really happened. Sleep is another metaphor Uzun dwells upon. "All sound asleep, all in abysmal dreams" (1995, p. 38) Waking these people from their never ending sleeps is the role of the intellectual in this case. This role of awakening people from their sleep (ignorance in this instance) is synonymous for indoctrinating them with the nationalist and ethnic consciousness. Since the separating line between the personas of Uzun and Memduh Selim is

ambiguous, it can be claimed that Uzun acknowledges one of his main motives as a writer, which is to enlighten his readership.

One of the greatest fears of Memduh Selim was being forgotten which can be directly linked to being physically remote from his homeland whereas in the end we see a twist which leads him to die in peace. Through the end of the novel Memduh Selim's home turns into a holy place which welcomes visitors all around the world whilst he becomes an object of history, evolves into a symbol for the Kurdish nationalist imaginary. Memduh Selim by being the authorial voice finds the chance to tell the "real" story to people. This condition of being the savior of all the victims, once more conceptualizes Kurds as people to be saved within Uzun's literary imaginary.

The divide between the oppressed and the oppressor is evident in *SE*. First, Uzun normalizes the process, especially the exile. "Tradition of thousands of years is once more repeated. Victorious wards off the loser" (1995, p. 38) This normalization also brings a scenario where the sides are eternal and rigid. More in a religious tone, whatever fate brings is accepted. Memduh Selim always identifies himself with the oppressed side whereas simultaneously he is the protector of victims through the side stories of the baby bird which was fallen out of his nest and the young girl trying to sell matches in the snowy Istanbul night. He makes them go to their home safely in both cases. In the larger scope, Kurds are left alone within Uzun's imaginary; they do not have a Memduh Selim-like figure. Iran supports Turkish army and European powers stay neutral which is commented as powerful states supporting each other for their own sake and prepared to sacrifice Kurds. Memduh Selim does this in a rather passive way, trapped in his own little world; his way of opposition is far different than Alexander the Great, in Uzun's words. Nurdan Gürbilek's analysis of literary figures in his book *Mağdurun Dili* may be helpful. "Since he is forgotten just like that in the corner, he will recede in his shell just like a snail; he will try to live the life which has been forbidden by bad doings of fate." (2007, p. 25) "Once again what happened happened to us, the oppressed. Once more we are defeated." (1995, p. 52) In line with Gürbilek's view, in Memduh Selim one can see two desires simultaneously: to be left alone in his darkness forever and enjoy the condition of being the righteous oppressed and at the same time, desire to be seen, heard and listened. This compound psychological situation's complexity converges to the overall complication of the Turkey's experience with the Kurdish question.

Uzun in *SE*, through the victim-perpetrator dichotomy puts groups, communities into rigid borders identifying them with certain acts and characteristics. According to Memduh Selim territory is crucial, each individual belongs to a certain piece of land and it is where they can fully prosper. There is no place for alternative forms. Emphasis on authenticity, territory and also the polarization of victim and oppressor adds to reproduction of the ethno-nationalist stance. Uzun does idealize a form whereas totalization of the victim and the oppressor reproduces the rhetoric of counter nationalism based on unchangeable cultural essences. At the same time these details brings Uzun's narration close to cultural essentialism embraced with ethno-symbolic elements of nationalism. Another example to this situation may be given as Memduh Selim's prejudice regarding non-Kurds to understand the condition of Kurdish community. For him, words do not mean much, for one to comprehend these specific events, he or she must experience personally, and in other words being a Kurd is a prerequisite. This point leads us to specific group essentialism unfortunately and to a set of hierarchy based on victimhood.

#### **4.4. *Bira Qedere (Well of Destiny)***

*Bira Qedere* (hereafter referred to as *BQ*) was published in 1995. *BQ* is summarized by Uzun as an exilic figure, Celadet Bedirhan's return to his own language, culture and identity within his both adventurous and melodramatic journey. (2002, p. 55) In this novel, similar to *SE*, Uzun narrates the life story of Celadet Bedirhan, one of the most prominent figures for the Kurdish nationalists. Uzun notes that *BQ* was the novel which Celadet Bedirhan himself wanted to write some day, due to his death he could not finish. Interferences of Celadet (written in italic with first-person narrative) throughout the narrative reminds the readers that this is not only a literary work, rather it is his story. In this regard Celadet Bedirhan transmits the authorial voice to Uzun. This novel can be also read as a national allegory. Once again the author focuses on the themes of homelessness, exile, loneliness and exclusion. Different than all other literary works, Uzun in this novel- knowingly or not, portrays the social class differences among the Kurds since Bedirhan family is one of the richest and prominent families of the Kurdish people living in Turkey.

Novel focuses on Kurdish intellectual Celadet Bedirhan's elite life in Istanbul and exile years in Damascus. Poverty, misery and death follow later on. Uzun as the

authorial voice narrates the life of Celadet Bedirhan, as the holder of the ‘true’ history once again. Novel starts with the scene of Ruşen Hanım giving birth to Celadet, which once more signifies the role of women within the nationalist rhetoric as the mother of the community. Woman is once again an ethno-symbolic element within Uzun’s Kurdish nationalist discourse. Moreover throughout the novel, women of the Bedirhan family are burdened with telling the ancient myths to their children in Kurdish, burdened with narrating the ‘glorious’ past of their grandfather Mir Bedirhan. Anne McClintock (1993) claims that all nationalisms are gendered and all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender. Despite the general rule of classical nationalisms, as the idea of popular unity and solidarity, nationalisms historically invested in the institutionalization of gender difference. In line with this gendered nature, Uzun follows this widespread tendency in his literary works, especially in *BQ*. A certain type of woman image is embedded within Uzun’s novelistic discourse which resembles to the conceptualization of woman in classical nationalisms. In this regard, Kurdish women are the bearers of new generations, one who teach children Kurdish and tell them myths and epics. The ultimate aim is to locate Kurdish children within a specific national context. Throughout his life, Celadet is compared to his grandfather Mir Bedirhan. Family never forgets that they are coming from the descent of him, which burdens them with a specific responsibility. Within the family, Celadet is called as *Ceco*, Kamuran as *Kamo*. These transformations can be given as the example of the ethnicisation of the given names within their closed community. Novel also turns into the literary space where Kurdish nationalist figures of different events meet. Celadet and Memduh Selim get together and talk about the politics of their day. Under the dominance of the masculine characters of the novel, Uzun’s novelistic discourse takes shape in accordance to general lines of classical nationalisms.

The story of the Bedirhan family is told in the novel through photographs, each chapter begins with a photograph and a name of a place. Both of these details may be counted as the tool of the author against the forgetting and homelessness. Moreover, as long as individuals take place in the photographs, it means that they are alive. In other words, both for the protagonist and Uzun, photographs are the symbols of eternal life. This obsession of memories is apparent also in the other selected novels of Uzun since he objects personal stories to be forgotten with the death of the person. This tendency is followed by Memduh Selim writing letters to his lover Feriha, his deceased father and

the leader of the unsuccessful rebellion; even though they are long-gone or dead. Furthermore, it can be said that *BQ* is a national awakening novel which is one of the most common examples of national literature accompanied with the examples of national awakening moments. After hearing that Armenians are referred as *Zos* and Kurds as *Los*, Celadet names himself as a *Lo* in a way which converges to a romantic nationalist tone can be given as an example. (1995, p. 124)

In *BQ* it is evident that Uzun attempts to conceptualize how history writing should deal with the feelings of loss which Celadet Bedirhan experienced during his exilic life. Author uses this as an opportunity to convey it to his readers as a life story filled with Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements rather than narrating it was a life of an ordinary Kurdish individual, Uzun turns Celadet Bedirhan's life into a memorial, a memorial which is composed out of Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements and turns into a symbol itself at the end. Regarding the ethno-symbolic elements, *BQ* is a fruitful resource. Kurdish community's shared characteristics are commonly emphasized through the features shared by the Bedirhan family's members. Family members share the similar facial features, behaviors and actions. Grandchildren of the family are named and identify themselves as the 'children of the exile' and 'children of Mir Bedirhan'. They all have the aim of becoming 'the Mir' when they grow up. In other words, family members carry the importance of being the sons and grandsons of the prominent Kurdish figure Mir Bedirhan. Another important metaphor of the novel is the well. With every house Celadet and his family moves in, they find a well at the garden; their lives are shaped around those wells. Within time wells turn into depositories of the family history just as Uzun creates the *BQ* as the depository of Celadet Bedirhan's life.

For the Kurdish nationalist discourse of the characters of the novel, it can be said that Celadet's discontent centers upon the early republican period. He and his family members tend to remember post-1908 Ottoman rules as calm and relatively peaceful. Whereas the new regime forbids them to return back to their 'homeland' (1995, p. 180) Link between the past is constructed through the story-telling of Amojna Siti, she is one of the most important characters of the novel. She is the respected storyteller of the family, a *dengbej*. In other words, Amojna Siti is the witness of history, metaphor for the traditional Kurdish oral legacy, the educator of the children of the Bedirhan family. Amojna Siti is a semi-mythical character which enables her narrations of ancient myths to the young generations. Through his stories the notion of Kurdishness becomes

consolidated within the imaginaries of the young members of the family. Definition of Kurdishness plays a crucial role in *BQ*, especially after the printing of the journal *Hawar*. Kurds are defined as the admirers of manners and customs, they are kind, they are trustworthy, they never gossip, they know their friends and enemies, they do not talk much, they are ambitious. (1995, p. 58) This manifestation in a culturally essentialist tone tries to define Kurds. The failure of Mir Bedirhan's revolt in 1846 and the following exile is continuously told in the family, thus the grandfather's failure is heroized. The exile place Crete of Mir is later on added to the list of affective spaces which Bedirhan family feels attached to. Territory is once again significant in this novel. In addition to its general usage which is associated with the notion of homeland, it gains a different meaning with the burial of the dead. Uzun problematizes burial of Kurds in 'foreign' lands.

Utilization of the victimhood rhetoric by the Uzun for nationalist ends is once more evident in *BQ* and becomes even more apparent in the last chapter which also shows the last photo; a captured gazelle and Celadet by her side. Gazelle looks sad and so does Celadet. After this scene, also as the last act of Celadet before his death, turns out to be a visit to his grandfather's grave which is depicted as a modest shrine by Uzun. During this visit, he summons all the figures in his life and memories back. As a result it can be said that melancholy is dominant in *BQ*. Celadet, especially during his older years, mentions that their (Bedirhan family, Kurdish community) destiny is always the same, it is written in their fate to lose everything they have. This despair leads Celadet to a state passivity in his older ages. (1995, p. 323) The belief in the idea that history is repeating itself, Uzun's narrative and also Celadet sticks into the state of victimhood rigidly. The Kurdish word *Bir* has two meanings. It signifies both the well and memory. Celadet's life is shaped around each well of the houses he lived in, symbolically. Those wells also kept the memories. Uzun in this regard wrote them to save them from being forgotten. Celadet's last conversation with his wife contains the famous Latin idiom "*Verba volant, littera scripta manent*".<sup>9</sup> This explains the role Uzun which is transforming the Kurdish oral tradition legacy into a written form.

Besides the mentioned ethno-symbolic elements in the novel *BQ*, there are also several changes within the Uzun nationalist and novelistic discourse, he distances

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<sup>9</sup> Spoken words fly away, written words remain.

himself from the rigid definitions based on ethnicity partially. The ‘other’ of the novel is again the Turks, whereas this time, Uzun portrays Armenians as the old friends of the Kurdish community. (2005, p. 24) Moreover, Uzun criticizes the feeling of hatred “Do not forget, those who build a future for themselves from hatred, one day, drown in that hatred” (1995, p.124) Unfortunately, it can be said that this novel also does not distances itself a lot from *Tu* and *SE* and keeps utilizing Kurdish nationalism as a tool against Turkish nationalist discourse.

#### **4.5. *Hawara Dicleye (The Voice of Tigris)***

*Hawara Dicleye* (hereafter referred to as *HD*) is of two-volume novel as “*Dicle’nin Yakarışı (The Cry of Tigris)*” and “*Dicle’nin Sürgünleri (Exiles of Tigris)*”, published in 2002 and 2003 respectively. Narrative takes place in Botan. Uzun in the first chapter claims that his aim in this novel with the claim of reminding the voice of forgotten elements of Anatolia. Crucially with this aim, Uzun does not only concentrate on the tragedies of the Kurdish people whereas widens his scope. Armenians, Chaldeans, Nasturis, Assyrians and Yezidis also take their place within the narrative.

In *HD* Uzun assigns agency to the characters which are not visible to this degree in his previous works. Characters have specific features, they are more than their ethnic identity, and they resemble the ‘real’ people. In other words, their motivations and acts are not solely centered upon nationalist aspirations. This attained agency alienates characters from the stable condition of the victimhood also. In relation it can be said that in *HD* compared to his previous novels, Uzun no longer utilizes Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish nationalist discourse as a tool in direct opposition to Turkish nationalism whereas he still holds onto the Kurdish nationalist discourse, this time the rhetoric is less exclusive. Still, one cannot mention a nationalism-free novelistic discourse in *HD*. The novel is not the story of only Kurds, but other ethnic elements of Anatolia are also recognized. *HD* cannot be read only as a national allegory.

Felman claims that the inimitability of the narrative act of the testimony in effect proceeds from the witness’ unique performance of the act of seeing. (2007, p. 297) Participants of the historical experience, Büro, and Uzun as the author, challenge the sacredness and the unspeakability of death. Dengbej Büro is the central character in *HD*, the narrator who sees everything. He narrates the story of the region throughout the nineteenth century within the traditional Kurdish oral legacy. He appears as the

storyteller who cannot be questioned or doubted due to his moral superiority, he is the eternal, trustworthy witness of all times. Uzun, who depends to the authorial voice in his previous novels, shares this literary authority with Biro in *HD*, similar to his coordination with the voice of Celadet Bedirhan in *BQ*. Novel starts with the statement of dengbej's conceptualization of the relationship between history and victory. According to him, they are forgotten because they are defeated. (2001, p. 17) At the same time he does not expresses himself through violent acts, Biro in contrast to previous characters from Uzun's novels is not interested in war. Intense use of violence by the prominent figures of the Kurdish community he belongs to separates Biro from the community and the ideals which are associated to them.

Concept of territory is once more important in this novel since it also signifies the Dicle River which is the metaphor of depository of memories, similar to the symbol of well in *BQ*. A departure from the rigid understanding of territory always associated with homeland is visible in this novel. Another ethno-symbolic element, the long-gone golden past and national heroes are conveyed to the reader in a different form compared to Uzun's previously analyzed novels. In *HD* Uzun leaves a space for characters' disillusionment from the national heroes, such as Mir Bedirhan. Initially Mir Bedirhan, the ruler of Botan is portrayed as the peaceful leader. All the ethnic communities are living in a great harmony side by side. This ideal is shattered with Bedirhan's declaration of war to another Kurdish tribe under the rule of Sait Bey. Although this disillusionment is due to the damaged sense of solidarity, still Uzun shows an example of a 'bad golden age' and a relatively less-respected national hero through Mir Bedirhan. First volume of the novel ends with Dengbej Biro finding Bedros' sister Ester and saving her from Mir Bedirhan's evil and terror. Biro openly declares against the Mir Bedirhan's decision of killing all the Chaldeans. Within time Botan turns into a military zone, whereas Dengbej Biro continues to tell the 'truth'. Biro's honesty and his criticisms regarding the community himself belongs to, are among the strategies to strengthen the trustworthiness of Uzun's authorship and narration.

In the previous selected novels of Uzun, it can be said that being a victim was the part of the Kurdish identity, a part which was not shared with the member of any other ethnic groups. In *HD* it is apparent that being a victim is more inclusive category which is not monopolized by Kurds living in Turkey only. The narrator, Dengbej Biro is sensitive and reactive to tragedies and trauma of the members of different ethnic groups.

According to Biro's narrative, a 'good' Kurd feels more close to another 'good' person not depending on his or her ethnic identity. Moreover, Uzun shows that Kurds can be the victimizers in certain cases, as it was in the case of Mir Bedirhan's massacre of Chaldeans, which is closer to the reality. Cultural and ethnic essentialism which used to be dominant in his previous books is less apparent in *HD*. Kurdish nationalism is relatively less glorified, in fact 'being human' is the most crucial thing within this narrative. Biro's anti-militarism and his escape from war signify that Uzun also thinks there should be alternative forms to continuous struggle. His standing point regarding to militarism and war indicates a departure from being a passive victim. Uzun voices criticism on the issue of victim becoming a victimizer. In this respect it can be claimed that he questions the cultural essentialism and dogmatic ideals of nationalist *discourse*. Thus *HD* can be separated from his previous literary works. As a result, Uzun undertakes an alternative attempt for narrative of the past. Not only Kurds' but also other ethnic communities' stories are narrated. Moreover, compared to *Tu* and *SE*, in *HD* not only one individual's story is told but rather a heterogeneous group of people is evenly important.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

In this chapter I analyzed the Kurdish nationalist discourse within the four novels of Uzun, through the ethno-symbolist approach. As a conclusion of this chapter it can be said that within the narrative of Uzun, different forms of literary acts of the novel character turned into the foundational mythos of the nationhood. Shared memories of the Kurdish people provided the basis for Uzun to utilize Kurdish nationalist discourse as a tool against the Turkish nationalism. This tendency whereas yielded to another form of nationalism. With the publishing of *HD*, it is clear that Uzun relatively and partially abandons his Kurdish nationalist discourse which relies on ethnic understanding of nationalism and converges to a civic understanding of nationalism with his focus on multiculturalism. Thus, one cannot claim that Uzun leaves a nationalist stance within his literary sphere with the publishing of *HD*, whereas it can be said that the form of the nationalism he employs changes.

Samuel Durrant claims that the concept of tragedy enables a survival of time, enables traumatized people to survive the phenomenal erosion (2012, p. 96). Author's obsession with writing events down in case of forgetting, urged him to categorize

people into groups based on their ethnic identities and activated nationalist rhetoric. Thus this understanding turned Kurdish people into a homogeneous group of people independent of their sex, age, social class, religious sect and language. Through the narration of ‘losers’ history’ in *Tu*, *SE* and *BQ* Uzun points out modes of suffering, ways of fulfilling his and his people’s tragic destiny as a way of self fulfilling prophecies. Those events carry performative effects as they are told by Uzun to reconstitute the very community. Applying Durrant’s argument which was originally based Chinua Achebe’s literature to Uzun’s early literary works, it is plausible to claim that Uzun, unable to turn the history of what happened into more straightforwardly active heroic epics, instead turns to the more ambiguous terrain of tragedy, where every action seems to turn in upon itself and become a mode of suffering. Events unfold in a narrative time that is simultaneously governed by the internal logic of prophecy and the external logic of the acts of ‘others’. Thus events in Uzun’s literary works deliberately echo historical events. Given this fusion of historical and prophetic time, the survival or overcoming of time’s fatality cannot take place at the level of the plot but rather must occur at the level of aesthetic reception. (Durrant, 2012, pp. 96-7) This is the complex task Uzun undertakes through his literary works, bridging the rupture between the golden age and the age of decay at the same time he re-invents the act of writing as a sacred ritual which signifies the transformation of the Kurdish oral tradition to a written form. The act of writing and the concept of novel turn into a sphere of formation of nationalist discourses.

With his later works, Uzun included members of other ethnic groups to his literary sphere as characters. His departure from analyzing the Kurdish question as the eternal war between the ‘good’ and the ‘evil’, he focused more on the positive sides of the multicultural features of Turkey. To some degree the lives of the Kurdish characters in the later novels of Uzun were no longer regulated by the beliefs of their ancestors; they have become estranged from their very indignity, especially after the publishing of *HD*. In *Tu* and *SE*, and partially in *BQ*, for Kurds to become an ethnic group, they had to find a way to become kinsmen. Whereas this situation changed in *HD*, ‘being a good person’ turned out to be the main determinant for the relationship between the individuals, in line with the civic understanding of nationalism. On the other hand, concept of ‘poetic justice’ has been another vital theme in Uzun’s writings until the publishing of *HD*, beyond human understanding, beyond the observable terrain of

history, there is a cosmological level at which apparent injustice is reconciled with the aim of the justification of the misfortunes experienced. Later on Uzun left a considerable amount of space for peaceful negotiations rather than getting even with each other. In conclusion it can be said that Uzun's narrative operates as the mouth, speaking of the unspeakable suffering retrospectively. In his early works, he does this through authoritarian tone through being the only reliable witness. In his later works, this witnessing does not only focus on the Kurdish elements but focuses on the collective memories of other ethnic groups also. In conclusion it can be said that within time, under the impact of personal and socio-political changes, Uzun abandoned the Kurdish nationalist discourse as a tool against the Turkish nationalism whereas still utilized nationalism in a different form, in the form of civic nationalism.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In this study I tried to analyze the ethno-symbolic elements within Uzun's Kurdish nationalist discourse and looked for the alteration of his novelistic discourse depending on the socio-political context of Turkey. In this regard I initially summarized the origins and the evolution of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey starting from the Ottoman Empire. Since I adopted Anthony D. Smith's ethno-symbolist approach, I tried to mark out ethno-symbolic elements within Kurdish nationalist imaginary throughout this period. In the third chapter I focused on the evolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey into an armed struggle between the Turkish military and PKK. It can be said that those two chapters constituted the theoretical and historical background for the analysis of Uzun's four selected novels in the third chapter. In the fourth chapter initially I tried to analyze novels by focusing on the Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements embedded in Uzun's novelistic discourse. In this chapter, I will try to clarify the reasons behind this alteration in Uzun's discourse under the impact of changing socio-political context of Turkey, the ways in which it is restructured and how it is utilized.

*Tu*, the first novel of Uzun was published in 1985, several years later his release from the military prison and his exile to Sweden. Regarding the early years of Uzun's exilic life it can be said that *Tu* carries crucial signs with deep connections to the author's personal experiences in the post-1985 period and also the socio-political condition of the country. His exile years in Sweden also paved the way for Uzun to re-conceptualize the notions such as homeland, identity, and belonging. This time also plays a critical role in terms of his affection towards Kurdish, and how he actualizes the language through literature and politics. At the same time being an exilic was added to his identity, next to being Kurdish. On the larger spectrum, 1980 was marked with another military intervention. In this regard in *Tu* author utilizes Kurdish nationalist discourse full with ethno-symbolic elements, to burden the 'evil other', the Turkish side with negative aspects in the novel, after another military intervention. Furthermore as I have mentioned earlier, *Tu* can be read as a national allegory. Furthermore, Uzun's deployment of second person narrative also widens the divide between the notions of perpetrator and the victim created by Uzun. Portraying Kurds as the eternal victims, the ethnic identity and the notion of Kurdishness is compressed between borders signifying

a homogeneous group of people by the author. Through the narrative backed up by ethno-symbolic elements, Uzun aims at using Kurdish nationalist discourse to counter Turkish nationalism which paves the way for the reciprocal otherization processes for the Turkish and Kurdish communities. To be able to understand this antagonistic and aggressive tone of the author in his first novel, analysis of the socio-political condition of 1980s should be remembered once more. In the midst of these events, PKK launched its first terrorist attack on August 15, 1984 on Eruh and Şemdinli. Two days later PKK once more attacked a police station in Siirt. In this chaotic and vicious period when PKK explicitly announced its confrontation to the Turkish military forces and the consequences of the military intervention, Uzun's first novel unsurprisingly took shape under these conditions. Author had to express his side, I believe that is why the representation of the perpetrator has been so significant and explicit; a clear cut dichotomization of perpetrator and victim sharply displays the author's side as well as the side the reader should take. Until the publishing of *HD*, Uzun's literary tone and language continue to converge to a Kurdish nationalist stance, under the heavy impact of Kurdish ethno-symbolist elements.

Four years later Uzun published *SE* in 1987, just like *Tu*, it can also be read as a national allegory with characters defined through their ethnicities, emphasis given on the essentialist definitions of the ethnic group and polarization of the Turkish and Kurdish communities. Loss is the main dominant theme which is narrated through the young and intellectual Kurdish protagonist. The 'other' is once again defined through the ethnic lines and Kurdish nationalist discourse is heavily emphasized upon. Militarization and fighting are sacralized. Regarding the alterations in the socio-political context of Turkey, within four years since the publishing of *Tu*, conflict between the PKK and the Turkish military forces had increased. *Tu* was written a year after the PKK's establishment. In the aftermath of the military intervention of 1980, political sphere was much more complicated compared to the early 1980s. The most relatable sensations of that time for the inhabitants of the country were fear, anxiety and lack of security. Due to the increased number of attacks held by the PKK, on July 19, 1987, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey declared the civil state of emergency in eleven provinces in the southeastern region of Turkey. Under the increased initiative of military within the region Uzun reminds the readers the life of Memduh Selim in *SE*, a melancholic national hero. Parallel to the period's ongoing armed struggle between the

Turkish army and the PKK, in *SE* Uzun once more reminds the Mount Ararat rebellion which was pacified by the Turkish army in 1930. Since the socio-political sphere of the country was intensely polarized among the 'us' and 'them', dichotomies based on ethnicity and victimhood were once again apparent in *SE*. This time it can be said the most dominant theme of the novel has been 'loss' in relation to the socio-political context of Turkey.

Following the overall literary tone of *SE*, *BQ* was published in 1995. In the six years periods since the publishing of *SE*, political prisoners' decided to went on hunger strike in Diyarbakır. In 1990, Turkey's first pro-Kurdish political party the People's Labor Party (HEP) was formed. A year later, with the new regulations, the ban on the use of Kurdish language was lifted. In the same year, the Gulf War out broke. In 1992, Turkish military forces launched an operation to the northern Iraq. In 1993 PKK declared a unilateral cease-fire. In the following years conflict outgrew, resulted with the death of many soldiers and civilians. In this highly volatile socio-political context, *BQ* did not differ from *Tu* and *SE* regarding the Uzun's utilization of Kurdish nationalist discourse as a tool against the elements that are non-Kurdish. Although it did not directly change the discourse of Uzun, lift off of the ban on Kurdish language and representation of Kurdish people in the parliament through democratic channels has been positive remark regarding the Kurdish question in Turkey. Same year the *BQ* was published, Uzun acknowledge that his relationship with the Turkish language got better and is added to his beloved languages. (1995, p.93) Moreover he explicitly admits that beginning with the 1995, he started to believe that the new century will be a better and a peaceful one. (2002, p. 8) This expression can be taken as a signal of a more reconciliatory and peaceful novel *HD*.

*HD* was published in 2002 and 2003, as two novels. In this novel decline and gloom is not the whole story, narrative does not necessarily follows a downward path. There is also love and other joys of life narrated by Dengbej Biro. Space itself is uneven in *HD* compared to previous works of Uzun where things are predictable along the lines of certain dichotomies, mostly ethnic ones. Thus even in the midst of melancholy, some other affective states also emerge out of such negativity. Territory does not change in *HD*, region is familiar to the readership of Uzun, whereas the actors and all other markers seem to have undergone a modification which creates a new discourse and a tone for Uzun, an optimistic and welcoming one. Thus it can be said that Uzun with

*HD*, partially ends taking historical ruins as his subject and making a culture out of displeasure and victimization. Beginning with 2000s, Uzun's novels started to be translated into Turkish and popularized in the local book market. Although the armed conflict continued on and dominated the Kurdish question in Turkey, at the personal level Uzun revised his relation with Turkey, Turkish language and the people. Apparently, this change of attitude was mirrored in his literary work. With his partial divergence from Kurdish nationalist discourse, he also distanced himself from the Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements up to a certain degree. Moreover the ceasefire period between the 1999 and 2004 had an impact on his novelistic discourse also. More importantly he modified his view on the use of violence as a tool after the renewed insurgency period starting with the 2004 and attained a more anti-militarist rhetoric while focusing on the model of people from different background living in a harmony in Turkey through the idealization of multiculturalism. Furthermore it cannot be claimed that Uzun leaves his nationalist aside where it is apparent that it changed its form, converging to a civic understanding of nationalism and ethnicity. According to this understanding, which has been introduced by Ernest Renan and later on studied in a detailed manner especially by Will Kymlicka, nationalist discourse is more centered upon the idea that the essence of the group or community is not solely based on ethnicity. Renan (1882) defines the nation as the 'daily plebiscite' which is defined by the individuals' will to live together. In line with this assumption, Kymlicka (1995) assumes that these specific conceptualizations of nation, nationalism and citizenship are necessary for the development of liberal democracy efficiently within the political system. This civic concept of nationalism dwells upon tolerance, equality and individual rights. In contrast to ethnic understanding of nationalism, membership to the community is voluntary and borders dividing the 'us' and 'them' are less rigid, more porous. Identities of individuals are not solely determined by the ethnic group they belong to. In this regard, Uzun in *HD*, focusing less on the aspects belonging to ethnic nationalism and centering on the cultural aspects of the Kurdish identity, alters his tone as a result.

I initiated this study with my initial observation after reading novels of Uzun. While reading the novel *HD* I inspected explicit signs of change within the discourse of Uzun regarding the long-lasting Kurdish question. Based on the suggestion that an author's novelistic discourse is receptive to the socio-political contextual changes, I designed this study. It is apparent that depending on the socio-political context of

Turkey and his exilic life in Sweden, Uzun's conceptualization of Kurdish nationalism, Turkish nationalism and victimization changed. In his early literary works, formation of a Kurdish identity under the conditions of extensive social, economic, cultural, linguistic and geographic dispersion enabled Uzun to form a literary language which fostered the solidarity and eased the application of ethno-symbolic elements. Within time, under the impact of socio-political change in Turkey, author survived the trauma of helplessness through writing whereas his tone changed and moderated. In conclusion it can be said in *Tu*, *SE* and *BQ*, the most significant ethno-symbolic element within Uzun's Kurdish nationalist discourse has been the inheritance of tragic hero, of the memorialization of this individual's life which is also a national allegory. There is not a single moment for reader to distance herself or himself from the tragic hero. Memory was utilized essentially to address and impress the reader, perhaps to make it bear witness whilst appealing to Kurdish community. Thus in his early works Uzun's readership was mostly composed out of Kurds, his books were written and published in Kurdish language. Later, he started to write in Turkish and his books were simultaneously published in both Turkish and Kurdish. Nevertheless, in *HD*, the novel where his change of novelistic discourse is most explicit, Uzun altered his focus, included individuals from various ethnic backgrounds to his narrative. Victimization on the other hand turned into something shared by all humans rather than a backbone for his Kurdish nationalist discourse. Also, in *Tu*, *SE* and *BQ* Uzun takes on the role of the messenger from the 'outside' who sees the 'inside', revisits and bears witness and tells it to his readers. However, within time Uzun left the idealized judgment day concept beside and focused on one-to-one dialogues between actors, making politics possible and attainable. Sun, Peretz and Baer note that the paradox of the literature as it giving voice to the voiceless as voiceless, and not by transforming the voiceless to voice. (2012, p. 1) In *Tu*, *SE* and *BQ* Uzun undertakes the role of telling the stories of heroes within the Kurdish nationalist imaginaries. While doing that he focuses on the individual tragedies through the authorial voice, whereas they remain as already dead and silent actors. Later on, with *HD* he qualifies the action of being the voice of the voiceless by not just focusing on Kurds but rather includes including many individual with various ethnic backgrounds, moreover gives them voice of their own. In his later works, by distancing himself from the culture of disappointment, melancholy and victimhood which also forms the basis of his ethno-symbolic Kurdish nationalist discourse, Uzun allows history to surprise himself and his readers, opens a door for an

unbreakable peace for Turks and Kurds. As a result it can be said that Uzun finds a form of mourning through the discovery of a specific language where moving forward is possible.

In conclusion it can be said that with the publishing of *HD*, the narrative which lauds the triumph of 'our side' and the 'victim narrative' which relates its sufferings comes to a halt. Personal tiredness of the violent struggle between the Turkish and Kurdish sides, being alienated from violent discourses led to a change of discourse. Uzun's simplistic universe of morality through the images of cultural history evolved into a more inclusive discourse within time. Rather than erasing the differences of the other and conceptualizing it as a monolithic entity, author places them within his literary works for a better understanding. Other than the solid evidences from the Kurdish question in Turkey, Uzun attributed a symbolic meaning to the year 2000 as the beginning of a new century, names it as a blank page. (2002, p. 15) Until his death in 2007, appearance of Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements in his novels which strengthened the narratives of Kurdish people as the eternal victims diminished and yielded to a more multiculturalist understanding of co-existence of ethnic groups.

Is there a way to move to beyond dichotomies based on nationalist discourses, a point which is equally distant to the cultural and social camps or a view that will not create and re-create those previously mentioned dichotomies? According to this study, Uzun fails to do so, fails to find a new tone regarding the competing nationalisms discourse. His Kurdish nationalist conceptualizations take shape contextually under the light of events taking place in Turkey whereas he continues to utilize Kurdish nationalism as a tool against whatever he identifies as non-Kurdish. For that he demarcates communal boundaries, authenticates the ethnic and cultural differences within the moral frameworks determined beforehand. Thus one cannot mention a nationalism-free novelistic discourse in Uzun's literary works throughout his career whereas it can be said that the nationalist discourse within his literary works transformed from ethnic nationalism to civic nationalism. Uzun says that Euripides' famous idiom *omnis hominum vita est plena dolore*<sup>10</sup> is hanging on the wall of his study room. He continues by claiming that it is not there to suffer but rather to enrich the sorrow, to take lessons from it, to transform it into happiness somehow. (2002, p. 83)

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<sup>10</sup> Human life is full with sorrow.

Here I believe it is possible to argue that Uzun's early literary works initially instrumentalized this suffering as a focal point of national imagination and collectivity. This reciprocal relationship between literature and politics takes another form in *HD* however, the vicious circle of victimhood and lack of agency relatively withers away in another possibility. For Uzun, misery which has been a tool in order to represent the Kurdish question and condition now lies at the very heart of the human condition, paying if not none, little attention to ethnic precursors.

It is ambiguous whether Uzun began to be concerned with the literature and the politics at the same time whereas it is obvious that the act of writing interacted with the contemporary politics throughout his career as a writer. His literary works aspired to shed light on the current socio-political situation through the employment of various Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements rooted in the distant past. Calvino (1993) claims that when politicians and politically minded people pay too much attention to literature it is a bad sign for the literature, once than the literature is in danger. (p. 93) In other words, political mindedness limit the author, narrows down his or her horizons and sets various obstacles for the realization of the complexity of the 'things'. In line with this argument regarding the politics and literature, Uzun's aesthetic creativity is hampered down by his obsession with narrating the past, enlightening his readers and being the authorial voice who narrates the 'real and true' story. For the sake of telling the socio-political past of the country, within his novels briefly, he falls into the trap of oversimplifying the events.

Writers always have the chance of filling the space left by any political discussion. Uzun performs this role rather in a dominant tone where he backs up his authority in his literary sphere on 'being the victim'. This victimization rhetoric, which can be explicitly seen throughout his literary works is fed by cultural essentialism, ethnic polarization and endless 'otherization processes' which are to be performed through his novel characters. Calvino (1993) questions whether literature can be seen as a common ground where negotiations and dialogues can take place. This plausible idea is blocked by Uzun's literary discourse since it recreates the dichotomies based on ethnic traits. Thus, more or less the same problems and malfunctioning within the society regarding the Kurdish question are once more recreated in the literary sphere this time.

Stendhal in his well known novel, *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839) writes, “Politics in a work of literature is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing which is not possible to refuse one’s attention”. Uzun in his novels, whether he tells the story of a tragic love or an exile, politics stands right between the text and the reader, averts the reader from any other alternative interpretation than Uzun dictates. Following Stendhal’s line, politics in Uzun’s novelistic discourse is rather than a minor element to be recognized, it is almost the only element as a whole within the text in an unfruitful way. Sensational statements triggering the Kurdish ethno-symbolism and victimization discourse sticks into the rather dull rhetoric of classical nationalisms. Calvino (1993) points out a bad usage of literature as seeing it as an assortment of eternal human sentiments which are usually overlooked by the politics. Uzun in his novels attains himself the role of narrator of the untold stories of the victims, which paves the way for him adopting a dominant voice. By this way also the concept of literature and the act of writing is emptied since literature is seen as the depository of a given truth. In this regard, literature confines itself to a tool of consolidation and preservation. In other words, Uzun’s claim that his literature should voice the truth, a truth which cannot be challenged by the reader, turns the concept of literature into a dull sum of political acts and facts.

Literature is regarded as a mirror held up to the world, as the sphere of expression of feelings. It should also be kept in mind that what books communicate remains unknown even to the author due to various numbers of interpretations of the readers. In Uzun’s literary works there is not a space for readers to interpret. The act of reading can be completed as long as the reader accepts the points which author places throughout the text. Thus, it can be said that Uzun breaks down the act of reading in accordance to his authorial voice. Turning back once more to Stendhal’s lines, Howe (1957) asks what happens to the music after the burst of a loud voice. Intrusion of politics to the literary imagination reduces Uzun’s literary tone into narrating the events which carry certain significance for the Kurdish ethno-symbolism, through socio-political facts. One can question whether Uzun’s novels can be included into the category of a ‘political novel’. Howe defines this concept as a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting. (1957, p. 17) On the other hand, for a literary work to be qualified as a novel at all, it must contain the representation of human behavior, affections and the feelings. Conflict

is inescapable in any political novel. Anything political incorporates an ideology within itself and ideologies compared to affections and feelings, are more exclusive and general which paves the way for monolithic depictions and narrations of homogeneity. Turning back to Uzun's literature, although he aims at portraying the 'human condition' since he does this through overly political tone, he cannot escape from dull generalizations and cultural essentialism which deepens the polarization between ethnic groups living in Turkey in his literary works. Howe underlines the following, "No matter how didactic or polemical his purposes may be, novel cannot finally rest on the idea 'in itself'" (p. 21) The criteria for the evaluation of a novel is based on the portion it illuminates the 'real life'. Whether Uzun portrays the reality or not, what is important here is that he recreates the fallacies of classical nationalisms, and falls behind at saying something new, something that will foster a possible dialogue between ethnic groups. By being intensely focused on the Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements, Uzun writes with certain borders which do not leave a place for a peaceful dialogue among ethnic groups.

In conclusion, through the analysis of Uzun's four selected novels I came up with the result that his literary tone on the conceptualization of Kurdish nationalism through the ethno-symbolic elements which converged to an ethnic understanding of nationalism transformed into a civic understanding of nationalism with his novel *HD*. In addition to Kurdish ethno-symbolic elements the victimization rhetoric also formed the basis of Uzun's understanding of Kurdish nationalism. In line with the overall change in his novelistic discourse, rhetoric of victimization turned into a concept which is not only for Kurds to employ within their identity formation but a possible condition of human beings regardless of their ethnic identity.

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