“INTERNAL ORIENTS”: LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF COLONIAL MODERNITY AND THE KURDISH “OTHER” IN TURKEY, IRAN AND IRAQ

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“Internal Orientals”: Literary Representations of Colonial Modernity and the Kurdish “Other” in Turkey, Iran and Iraq

Abstract

This thesis investigates selected Anglophone literary works about the Kurds. The works are four novels, Oya Baydar’s *The Lost Word* (2011), Sophie Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages* (2011), Laleh Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans* (2009) and *The Walking* (2013), one novella *The Sayings* (2003) by W. C. Scheurer, and eight poems in Choman Hardi’s poetry collection *Life for Us* (2004). It places postcolonial theory in dialogue with literary critical depictions of Kemalist, Persian and Ba’thist nationalisms in modern Turkey, Iran and Iraq. This study, in these texts, explores colonial discourse and praxis by Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi nation-states against the Kurds throughout twentieth century and in early twenty-first century. By means of investigating these works, the thesis argues that these states’ “adaptative modernities”, constituted by Western modernity in the Middle Eastern context, minutely embody Western colonialism. Correspondingly, the Kurds, and their homeland, represent “an Orient within” especially for Turkey and Iran, which construct Turkish and Persian “Western” subjecthood as a process of nation-state formation. In their portrayals of nationalist racialisations, the chosen writers explore how Turkish, Persian and Arabic history, culture and language are mobilised by means of this process. The Kurds are thus rendered colonial subjects within these states’ borders. This thesis interrogates the polarising ideology of nationhood which underpins these nation-states’ modernity and explores how the Kurds are inferiorised. The study examines the ways Kurdish literary characters are oppressed and murdered by means of state sovereignty’s inhumane laws and the ways they are rendered homeless inside and outside these countries. Finally, it explores literary depictions of nationalist patriarchy, which exploits women in general and Kurdish women in particular in the process of nation-making and nationalist struggles.

Hawzhen R. Ahmed
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Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality, for better or worse, and in general an inescapable one.

Gellner (1983, 48-9)

[W]here should the birds fly after the last sky?

Darwish (Bhabha: 1990, 291)

This thesis interrogates post-WW1 Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi Ba’thist nationalist paradigms in selected literary works. I will explore four novels, one novella and eight poems; W. C. Scheurer’s novella *The Sayings* (2003)\(^1\) and poems from Choman Hardi’s poetry collection *Life for Us* (2004).\(^2\) The novels are Laleh Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans* (2009),\(^3\) Oya Baydar’s *The Lost Word* (2011),\(^4\) Sophie Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages* (2011),\(^5\) and also Khadivi’s *The Walking* (2013).\(^6\) By means of these primary texts, this study examines Kurds’ marginalised status and – like these texts – makes critical interventions into Turkish Kemalist, Persian and Ba’thist discourses of racial exclusion. In so doing, I define and critique Turkey, Iran and Iraq’s notions of “adjusted modernities”, and associated attempts to create homogenous nations. This attempt, I argue, directs cultural denial, political and actual violence at the so-called non-Turkish, non-Persian and non-Arabic “Others”: the Kurds. These literary narratives are laden with the rhetoric of colonial

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modernity, which is propagated at the expense of nation-states’ subjects. The thesis provides a postcolonial reading of these texts in which Kurds are depicted as displaced and homeless and their native Kurdish language, culture and identity disavowed. They are always longing for a home(land) especially when they are forcefully obliged to leave their first home. Those whose status is most adversely affected, however, are Kurdish women, whose predicament is compounded by nationalism, Orientalist representations and patriarchal traditions both in nation-states and within Kurdish communities. In this study, I explore literary narrations of the historical and political actualities of modern nation-states’ colonial policy against the Kurds.

Critiquing nationalism, and the politics of nation-statehood, is central to my argument. Terms like nation, state, nationalism and nation-state are so contentious that is difficult to rest on clear-cut definitions for them in a general sense. Many scholars have dealt with the concept of nation – the idea of nation is the most unsettled term among others for being central to notions of nationalism, state and nation-state. Anshuman Mondal divides these scholars into two major groups; ‘culturalists’, who argue that ‘the nation is primarily a cultural category’, and ‘statists’, who contend that it is mainly ‘a political category’. By discussing Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson’s arguments, Mondal notes that the nation is a ‘cultural community’ for these culturalists, ‘exist[ing] above and beyond any political organization of it into a state’, and that cultural and ‘historical meanings’ play a major role in gathering individuals under the umbrella of a given nation. Mondal then explains that the nation, for statists such as Ernest Gellner and John Breuilly, cannot exist outside the nationalist formation of ‘modern state’. Moreover, both groups, as Mondal further notes, define nationalism from their culturalist and statist approaches. He says, ‘[f]or the statists the [nationalist] doctrine is an invention of nationalist politicians, who thus invent the nation,’ while culturalists believe that ‘[t]he doctrine is […] not an invention but an expression of the “core” values of the nation: an expression of “national sentiment” which is not nationalist but rather national, deriving from the objective pre-existence of a proto-national cultural

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7 I refer to ‘the subject’ in the sense of Michel Foucault’s interpretation of modern individuals, as subjects, who are constructed by modern power discourses (Peter Fitzpatrick, The Mythology of Modern Law (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p.119; Sara Mills, Discourse (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.15-20).
community." Specific contexts require unique approaches. While one approach may apply to one situation – for example the Scots, or Kurds, perceive themselves as nations without having a state of their own while the concept of French nation, Turkish nation or Iranian nation has been created since the establishment of the modern state – other contexts require a mixture of approaches. The researcher thus has to adopt an agile approach to suit particular historical and cultural circumstances. The idea of nation in Turkey and Iran is different from Iraq, since Turkish Kemalist and Pahlavi Persian nationalisms, as depicted by Oya Baydar, Sophie Hradach and Laleh Khadivi, closely link nation and state and politically use the cultural elements of Turkishness and Persianness to establish Turkey and Iran. Nationalism, then, puts Turkish and Iranian states in service of Turkishness and Persianness upon establishing the state. Yet, Ba’thism reflects on the Arab nation without returning to the state in the first place. Its nationalist ideology of Arabness treats all Iraqi citizens – as portrayed by Choman Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’ in Life for Us (2004) – based on the notions of pan-Arabism. In this thesis, I treat the concept of “nation” as a discursive construct conceived by Kemalist, Persian and Ba’thist nationalisms as represented by the culture, language, history, collective myths and “traditional practices” of Turks, Persians and Arabs, yet marginalising and denying the existence of non-Turks, non-Persians and non-Arabs; mainly the Kurds. In addition, by means of using the concept of state, I reference the political and governmental structure that has sovereignty over a geographical territory in which these nationalisms believe Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi nations live and they also impose the ideals of Turkishness, Persianness and Arabness. I problematise the notion of the nation-state for being a nationalist formation, exploiting – and inventing – the cultural and linguistic elements of “Turkish and Persian nations” to establish the “state” and using state sovereignty for serving the narrow definitions of Turkishness and Persianness in my chosen texts. In Iraq, however, the Ba’thist nationalism (1968-2003), which was preceded by a number of governments since Iraq’s formation in 1921, was not the first to establish the Iraqi nation-state like Kemalist and Pahlavi nationalisms that established Turkey and Iran. The Ba’th party, as was driven by its foundational origins,

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exploited the state apparatus for the sake of “the Arab nation” in ways that the superiority of Arabic culture, language, collective myths and history were considered prerequisite for Iraqi society. In all three countries, I treat Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi nation-states as producing and exploiting the concepts of nation and state against the Kurds.

“Postcolonial” nationalism, through its exclusions and inclusions, is colonialism’s heir. My claim is that nationalism in Turkey, Iran and Iraq (as in many other world countries) is dualist and its route convoluted. It appears nativist and yet is inspired by Western interpretations of statehood. By enforcing modernity, colonial discourse – which Homi Bhabha defines as ‘a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization’ – hierarchies are continuously reproduced in postcolonial Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The situation in these nation-states is deeply indebted to the Western colonial period. As Sankaran Krishna remarks, ‘postcolonialism’ represented the continuation of ‘colonialism’ following the period of ‘decolonization’ in the ‘third-world’.

Even though Turkey and Iran were not European colonies prior to the establishment of Middle Eastern nation-states, their political doctrines are depicted in the chosen writers’ texts as having adopted Orientalist discourses when referring to the Kurds. In his book The Colonial Present, Derek Gregory discusses the term “colonial present”, arguing that it maintains the structure of ‘the verb “to colonize”’, which he identifies as ‘the constellations of power, knowledge, and geography that […] continue to colonize lives all over the world’. In my thesis, nation-states are criticised for politicising their dominant ethnicities.

Establishing modern nations results in colonial Arabic, Persian and Turkish dominance over other social categories. I also explore literary examinations of the human body, a location where nationalism fulfils and enacts its desires and laws by rendering it as a domain of political performances. Instances of this process include torture and murderous acts in Iraq, while in Turkey and Iran, it takes

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12 In this thesis, I use the concepts of “ethnicity” and “ethnic group(s)” to parallel with social meanings in the sense postcolonial scholars apply. I do not imply them binaristically and, therefore, to emphasise and reinstate the dichotomy between “us” and “them”.

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the form both of torture and enforced unveiling or re-veiling. Buttressed by politically defined borders and boundaries, these modern states colonise Kurds’ geography, culture and language. The authors portray modern Iran, Turkey and Iraq in their literary works as being heavily influenced by identity politics, colonial formations and discursive subjectivisations. Thus, the narratives of colonialism take on new temporal and spatial shapes outside Western history and territory. The nation, in my chosen works, acts as a colonial agent, continually creating “differences” between “us” and “them” within state borders.

Narrating the Construction of Postcolonial Nation-States

There are limited Anglophone literary works featuring the Kurds. Currently, however, there is an emerging post-millennial literature about Kurdistan and the Kurds in English, and I hope that my thesis will encourage future research on Postcolonial Kurdistan in the Anglophone literary world. Literary works offer an intimate perspective that political and sociological commentaries cannot. They promote – possibly like no other writing – affective identification, solidarity and empathy with the Kurdish plight. The chosen texts represent a form of reflexivity by the writers such as in their portrayals of women’s status, especially Kurdish women. The examined works, which have been written by Kurdish and non-Kurdish writers, provide a form of counter-discourse, expressing sympathy with the Kurdish calamities in the postcolonial Middle East and being critical of the states’ nationalist policies. These literary texts are imaginative vehicles whereby Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi modern nation-buildings are expressed and national narratives interrogated. Although a portion of Kurdistan is also located in (northeast of) Syria and the Kurds have also been subjected to Syrian Arabic colonial policy, I have been unable to find any English literary text on this part of Kurdistan. This remains unstudied for

13 By “subjectivisation” I mean that these states are depicted as placing Arabs, Turks and Persians at the centre and the Kurds at the periphery (the same subject-formation is portrayed with relation to femininity in ways patriarchy regards masculinity as central and femininity marginal). The Arabic, Turkish and Persian entities are master subjects constructed by the nationalist sovereignties, whose subjectivisation is what constructs the existence of these subjects. As Peter Fitzpatrick argues: ‘The modern subject, as the individual, is not the noble, complete realization of an innate striving, one freed from the restraining ignorance and prejudice of the past. The individual subject is, rather, the product of disciplinary administration. Modern liberal administration embodies a particular coupling of power and knowledge which creates a particular subjectivity’. (Fitzpatrick, p.121).
future research about — emerging — Anglophone literary texts depicting the Kurdish life in postcolonial Syria. The chosen writers for this study go beyond nationalism’s idealistic formation of the nation. Their texts are postnational, they critique the fixed ideals of nation, and some of them cross their own nationalities. W. C. Scheurer is American himself. Yet, his *The Sayings* critiques the US policy towards the Kurds and steps beyond his own national background in being a transnational humanitarian voice. Despite this, because he is American, Scheurer has witnessed the inequalities imposed by the American governments towards the Kurds and his *The Sayings* reflects this experience of the American political mistreatment. Although Sophie Hardach, who is German Jewish, says that if a Kurd wrote her novel *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages*, it would probably look different, it is still another example of transnational solidarity with people from other backgrounds. However, Hardach’s Jewish background, which relates to a history of migration and displacement, is mirrored in the life of the Kurdish protagonist, Selim, in her novel. As far as Oya Baydar is concerned, she is Turkish and her novel *The Lost Word* speaks from an intellectual perspective. She tries to fight back the binaries created by Turkey and Turkish élites towards the Kurds. Having such Turkish voice in this study is important since it brings in friendliness and solidarity between Turks and Kurds, a process whereby *The Lost Word* resists all asymmetrical relationships and hostile polarities created between these two ethnicities for many decades by Turkish state. Other writers in this thesis, Laleh Khadivi and Choman Hardi, are Kurdish and they are directly influenced by the history and political lives of Kurds, however in different ways, they narrate in their works. Khadivi, who has no direct personal experience of the Kurdish political events and has lived in the United States since an early age, she has been influenced by her Kurdish parents’ lives in depicting the Kurds’ predicaments and displacement in her *The Age of Orphans* and *The Walking*. Choman Hardi, however, is different from others in the way she herself has lived the terrible history of Kurds and directly experienced the displacement she portrays in her *Life for Us*.

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14 Personal Interview with Sophie Hardach: 22 May 2015.
Elleke Boehmer notes Benedict Anderson’s argument that ‘the modern novel is a key site where the nation is articulated’. Although the novels and novella analysed in this thesis are not written only by Kurdish writers, these texts’ portrayals of modern nation-statehood affirm the validity of Anderson’s declaration. Moreover, Hardi’s poetry also falls into the same category, mostly narrated in the first person, as though to reveal a closer insight into the poet’s and other Kurds’ lives. In a BBC interview, Hardi describes how she uses poetry as a vehicle for story-telling, and the simple language of her poetry is extremely effective in telling the story of the Kurds. The rationale for choosing only eight poems out of Hardi’s collection *Life for Us* (2004) is to ensure a sustained, in-depth focus on those poems that are most relevant to the examined themes of my thesis. The novels, novella and poems I examine fictionalise and narrativise Kurdish political experience, attempting to articulate silenced Kurdish voices. These much-silenced voices have been frequently denied, especially in the twentieth century, yet a version of these is expressed through literary imaginations. The chosen writers narrate and question the nationalist constructions of the twentieth – and twenty-first – century Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi nation-states, often acknowledging this process as a journey towards the West. As I will contend, this journey is a journey of encountering colonialism. These nation-states are the products of a colonial modernity, which mobilises both racial exclusions and inclusions. The chosen texts critique the states’ presentation of Kurdishness as disruptive of Turkey, Iran and Iraq’s desire for national homogeneity. They support the argument of Anshuman Mondal that, ‘lying at the centre of nationhood is the “other” that is disavowed in the very constitution of the nation itself’. This study establishes politico-historical contexts for these literary portrayals alongside close readings of them. It has arranged its discussions of the literary materials thematically, in accordance with each chapter’s thematic focus.

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17 Mondal, p.9.
This study investigates Oya Baydar’s *The Lost Word* (2011), originally written in Turkish *Kayıp Söz* (2008),\(^{18}\) *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages* (2011)\(^{19}\) by Sophie Hardach and W. C. Scheurer’s *The Sayings* (2003) which portray the difficulties experienced by the Kurds in Turkey. These works criticise Kemalism\(^{20}\) for being a colonial ideology that Orientalises the Kurds in order to fulfil the Turkish Occidentalist dream. Scholars like Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit discuss the term Occidentalism as meaning going against Western values, modes of life and modernity in response to the Western Orientalism, by employing binaristic worldviews while imagining the West.\(^{21}\) Meltem Ahiska also notes that for some non-Westerners, Occidentalist has also been a crucial means of resisting ‘the colonising West’. However, Ahiska further puts it, scholars before Buruma and Margalit have argued that Occidentalist has an opposite connotation than that of anti-Westernism; it refers to Westernism.\(^{22}\) By using the terms Occidentalist and Occidentalism throughout this thesis, I mainly interpret them in the chosen literary works as referring to Eastern subjects constructing themselves in Western images. Occidentalism in the texts of this thesis pertains to the process of Easterners’ self-Westernisation. In the light of this, I employ Couze Venn’s discussion that ‘occidentalismand’ is embodying the trajectory of ‘modernity’, a combination of ‘capitalism’ and ‘European colonialism’. For Venn,

\(^{18}\) In this thesis, I choose the English text – *The Lost Word* (2011). By translating *Kayıp Söz* (2008) into English, in this age of globalisation, the novel opens up Turkey’s boundaries towards an English readership. I agree with David Damrosch’s discussion: ‘Increasingly complex patterns of travel, emigration, and publication make “national” languages and literatures more and more international in character’. (World Literature in Theory, ed. by David Damrosch (West Sussex: John Wiley&Sons, Ltd, 2014), p.2). However, *The Lost Word* tends to preserve Turkish names in places, such as writing the name Omer as Ömer, keeping the Turkish letter Ö, or keeping the letter ü in Hüseyin, or presenting the phrase of Başkent Büfesi for Ankara Kiosk. It is faithful to specific Turkish or Kurdish words when necessary. I treat *The Lost Word* as a new creative writing by which I mean that translation here is not considered to be ‘a secondary, second-class activity, as a derivative […] literary act’ in the way it was conceived in the past, as Susan Bassnett argues. But it is ‘a creative literary act […]’ (Susan Bassnett ‘From Cultural Turn to Translational Turn: A Translational Journey’ in Damrosch, ed., pp.234-245 (p.236)). For further discussion on how national literatures have been affected by different cultural encounters and how translation, in the metaphorical sense, is always present in the process of first writing, see Bassnett’s article.

\(^{19}\) I often abbreviate the novel’s title as *The Registrar’s Manual* throughout this thesis.

\(^{20}\) Kemalism is derived from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s nationalist doctrine on which modern Turkey has been founded in 1923.


‘occidentalism’ is a way of presenting oneself ‘modern of the world’ and ‘West of Europe’ by means of adopting ‘Western modernity’ as the most favourable structure of life. Thus, I use the term Occidentalism, and occidentalisation, as being mediums whereby colonial modernity is reproduced in non-Western spaces – in cultural terms – such as Turkey (or Pahlavi Iran). In Baydar’s *The Lost Word*, Turkish nationalism inferiorises Kurdish characters and Turkey’s southeastern region represents an Orient for modern Turkey. In this worldview, Kurdish land symbolises “the East” and Turkey represents “the West”. As critiqued in the novel, there is a sharp distinction created by Turkey between Turks and Kurds as well as the country’s geographical zones. Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual* depicts the Kurds as victims; the novel’s Kurdish protagonist, Selim, is obliged to escape state oppression. In his *The Sayings*, meanwhile, Scheurer attributes the Kurds’ homelessness to post-world war international mapmaking.

Throughout these literary works, Turkey not only deprives Kurds of their human rights but also “forgets” to include Kurdishness in constructing the nation. Everyone and everything is tainted by narrow definitions of Turkishness. This phenomenon of coercive integration comes into sharp relief when Kurdish literary characters are rejected as “bastards” and as a threat to the Turkish “mother culture”. According to Mesut Yeğen, ‘the Kurdish question’ was associated with modern Turkey’s problematisation of ‘Islam’, ‘traditional forms of social life’ and the ‘peripheral economy’. These experiences are common to Mahmut, Zelal in *The Lost Word* and Selim in *The Registrar’s Manual*. The lowly status of these characters’ language and culture is a lived reality in modern, nationalist Turkey. Turkey’s Prime Minister, Ismet Inonu – who also became second president of Turkey following the death of Atatürk in 1938 – stated in 1930: “The only nation in this country with the right to demand ethnic and religious rights are the Turks. No one else possesses this right.” As Turkey’s Minister of Justice, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt also asserted in the same year, “[t]he only master, the sole lord in this country is the Turk. Those not of Turkish descent have only one right in

24 First World War.
this country – the right to be servants or slaves.”

The repressive laws introduced by the Turkish state are adversely experienced by the fictional characters mentioned above. They meet with torture and death and are considered by the state as slaves who have betrayed their “true Turkish background”. They are rendered homeless and they sometimes choose exile as their homeland.

The literary materials which speak to the experience of Kurdish people in Iran are *The Age of Orphans* (2009) and *The Walking* (2013) by Laleh Khadivi. *The Age of Orphans* tells the story of modern Iran, when Reza Shah Pahlavi came to power in 1920s. The Pahlavi family – Reza Shah and his son Muhammad Reza Shah – rule Iran until the 1979 Revolution. My analysis will focus on modern Iran’s emulation of Western secularity, however, through ethnic exclusion and national homogenisation. In *The Age of Orphans*, Khadivi depicts how Iran is engaged in a modernising and civilising project while simultaneously protecting a sense of traditional Persianness. The novel implies that, under Pahlavi rule, modern Iran models its conception of nationhood on polarising colonial paradigms. The newly established state campaigns to rid itself of perceived impediments to this nationalising mission. In the novel, the modern Iranian (Persian) identity feeds on notions of Persians’ background of pre-Islamic “Aryan race”. Khadivi criticises Orientalist views towards Kurdishness, which is deemed “backward”, “uncivilised” and “tribal”. *The Age of Orphans* explores the state’s perception of Kurdish people as being nomadic as well as barbaric. It examines how Kurds are assimilated by the Pahlavis’ nationalist project. Kurdish literary characters are repressed in ways that challenge the rhetoric of an inclusive “modern” and “Westernised” Iran. The identity of the novel’s protagonist, Reza Khourdi – renamed after Reza Shah by the state – remains outside his grasp. The Persian language, values and culture are inculcated into him from an early age. As Ashis Nandy argues: ‘Colonialism minus a civilizing mission is no colonialism. It handicaps the colonizer much more than it handicaps the colonized’. The Kurdish characters of Khadivi’s novel are confused about who they should be loyal to in modern Iran. They are fully colonised and the gates of release from Persianified Iran are locked. Although the state attempts to forcibly erase

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27 Ibid.
Reza Khourdi’s Kurdish background, he still does not become fully Persian. Almost the same experience is enacted in Khadivi’s second novel The Walking. Reza Khourdi and his sons are similarly represented as being subjected to marginalisation by the new government of 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. The novel depicts the new Iran, when Pahlavi’s secular state is converted into an Islamic one. In The Walking, the new Iran has still sustained its ethnocentric worldview – as depicted by The Age of Orphans. However, its models are simultaneously constructed on state’s Islamic elements.

Choman Hardi’s poetry collection Life for Us (2004) is described by Nerys Williams as ‘a traumatic political history’. Scheurer’s The Sayings, meanwhile, is a literary exploration of the Kurdish situation under the Iraqi Ba’th (Resurrection) rule in the second half of the twentieth century. These writers bring to light the suffering of the Kurds under Ba’thist nationalism. They focus on the ways in which the nationalist Iraqi regime, led by Saddam Hussein, attacked the town of Halabja with chemical weapons. Also, they narrate the Anfal genocide, which, Khaled Salih remarks, ‘was a logical extension of nearly two decades of government Arabization of Kurdish areas’, and forced displacement. The attacks were ordered by Saddam’s cousin, Ali Hassan Al-Majid (known as Chemical Ali). Literary narrations of the Kurdish experience during Ba’th Party rule in Iraq emphasise the severe discrimination metered out by nationalism.

For Al-Majid, the Kurds were bestial. He also considered them disloyal to the Iraqi national territories. In a meeting with high-ranking Ba’th officials in the August of 1988, he angrily remarked ‘[w]e asked them [the Ba’th officials] to deport every Kurd who lives there and send them to the mountains to live like goats. Fuck them! …’. I discuss how Ba’thist ideology works in the way Gregory explains, namely that ‘pan-Arabism’

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30 On March 16th 1988, the Iraqi Baath Regime attacked the Kurdish town of Halabja with chemical weapons which resulted in thousands of casualties. The attack caused birth defects, and had both abnormal physical and psychological implications. The attack is known as Halabja Gas Attack or Halabja Massacre, which is considered as part of the mass killings of Kurds.
31 Anfal is the name of genocidal acts against the Kurds by the Iraqi Ba’th regime. During the Anfal campaigns in the late 1980s, the Iraqi state murdered and buried tens of thousands of Kurds alive.
fuelled the Ba’athist ‘war against the Kurds’. Furthermore, my discussion draws upon the literary depiction of the covert collusion of powerful Western governments with the Ba’athist political agenda. According to Krishna, the US taught the Iraqi government how to use deadly ‘weapons’ in ‘the 1960s’. Moreover, during Saddam’s use of chemical weapons against the Kurds, ‘[n]ot only did the United States provide annual aid to the extent of half a billion dollars a year to Saddam’s regime at this time’, but it also ‘repeatedly used its veto in the Security Council of the United Nations to prevent discussions of the use of chemical weapons by Iraq’. Inspired by such historical moments, the American writer Scheurer in *The Sayings* exposes and berates US cooperation with the Ba’th regime in targeting the Kurds. At the same time, the Kurds are depicted as longing for their lost homeland and this thesis studies the ways Hardi’s poetry conceptualises this homeland as having uncertain geographical coordinates. She uses her poetry as a tool for conveying Kurdish stories of instability and misery.

Together with these writers’ literary texts, I argue that racialisation is crucial for the state nationalists, who believe Turkish, Persian and Arabic “races” are unerringly superior. However, paralleling nationalism with racism contradicts Benedict Anderson’s argument that racism cannot be associated with nationalism, arguing that racism does not ‘cross national borders’, whereas nationalism is the manifestation of war between nations. Yet in the examined narratives of this thesis, I explore how nationalism, by means of the states’ ideological constructions, is manifested through racialisation, thereby viewing the Kurds as the “internal Other” of the nations. Nation-state building, critiqued in the works I consider, enforces this binaristic discourse. Accordingly, the Kurds are depicted as having been dispossessed of their own language and culture, especially in Turkey and Iran. According to Bill Ashcroft, ‘the colonizing language’, when used between the ‘colonizer’ and the ‘colonized’, is communicated ‘in the assertion that the colonizing language colonizes the mind of the colonial subject’. Seamus Deane observes that ‘colonialism is a process of radical dispossession’ and ‘[a] colonised people is without a specific history and even, as in Ireland and other cases,

34 Gregory, p.152.
35 Krishna, p.144.
without a specific language.’\textsuperscript{38} The Kurds have the same experience – if not worse – in these texts. Depriving them of their mother tongue is part and parcel of the colonising process. In The Lost Word and The Age of Orphans, the Turkish and Persian languages are considered by the state to represent cultural heritage, while Kurdish is not given the same status. Kurdish is annulled and Kurdish heritage flatly denied. Kurdishness thus brings catastrophe and misfortune.

The Turkish scholar Ismail Beşikçi describes Kurdistan as an ‘“interstate colony”’.\textsuperscript{39} He argues that the situation of the Kurdish people has been far graver than that of peoples who were colonised by the British and French. Beşikçi observes that British and French imperialisms created around fifty new ‘African states’ by delimiting their borders at the end of the ‘nineteenth century’\textsuperscript{.40} The Kurds, meanwhile, have been perceived – in derogatory terms – as ethnically distinct and in need of nationalistic and hegemonic rule:

In none of the countries [sic] where Kurds reside are they considered to be Kurds. In Turkey they are regarded as Turks, in Iran they are considered to be Persians, and in Iraq and Syria they are said to be Arabs. Naturally this means second class “Turks,” “Persians,” and “Arabs.”\textsuperscript{41}

Despite this statement by Beşikçi, the Kurds’ situation has been a little bit different in Iraq since they have faced ethnic rights’ denial to a lesser degree. Yet, they have encountered the ultimate cruelty by the Iraqi governments, especially at the hands of the Ba’th party. As far as Turkish and Iranian states are concerned, they have aimed to “civilise” the Kurds through assimilative ideologies and programmes. Unlike the African colonies – as Beşikçi claims – the Kurds were deprived of having an independent country in the wake of the global superpowers’ Lausanne Treaty (1923), a political event which has caused decades of problems for Kurds living in these states. Ralph Peters, a retired American Lieutenant Colonel and author, argues that ‘[t]he most glaring injustice in the notoriously unjust lands between the Balkan Mountains and the Himalayas is the

\textsuperscript{39} Beşikçi, p.23.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.20.
absence of an independent Kurdish state’. Despite this, Western Orientalist constructions, Christopher Houston notes, which deny ‘Kurdishness’, were actively working prior to and at the time of political mapmaking in the post-world war Middle East. I argue that – in these literary works – Orientalism and state Orientalisations, from both within and outside these states, cooperate in giving birth to Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish nation-states.

In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said explores the way the Europe has imagined “the Orient” through its various texts and modes of representation. For Said, Orientalism as an hegemonic notion is founded on the illusion of ‘an ontological and epistemological distinction’ ‘between “the Orient” and […] “the Occident”’. European colonial representations of India, China and the Middle East took this ‘distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind,” destiny, and so on’. Although Said did not often write about the Kurds, and postcolonial scholarship has mostly turned its face away, Turkish and Persian (and Ba’thist) nationalists feed on Orientalist constructions of “the East”. When I use the term Orientalism in this thesis, I do not only refer to the body of texts written by Western Orientalists in the past centuries, but also to those established constructions that have been treated as facts by Orientalist ideas. I use the term in the way nation-states, where Kurds have been living, draw on the vestiges of Orientalism’s ideological status. Edmund Burke III notes that Kemalist nationalism used ‘Leon Cahun’s’ Orientalist writings in constructing the modern nation. The Iranian ‘Pahlavi state’, meanwhile, took inspiration from the writings of the French Orientalist ‘Gobineau’, who promoted the idea of ‘the Persian origins of the ancient Aryans’. James Carrier observes that for many scholars ‘occidentalisms and orientalisms’ act ‘not just to draw a line between societies, but also to draw a line within them’. Carrier contends that ‘[t]his process is likely to be

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particularly pronounced in societies that self-consciously stand on the border between occident and orient’.\(^ {47}\) It is in this last respect that my thesis examines literary representations of internal colonisation of Kurds by means of both social description and political policy. Post-war Turkish and Iranian nation-states were caught up in twentieth-century political pressures to Westernise. Secular democracy was presented as an essential pre-requisite for Turkish and Iranian modernisations. Although the Iraqi Ba’th regime always defined itself as promoting anti-Western models of governance, it was nonetheless a colonial remnant and a postcolonial phenomenon. Postcolonialism itself is derived from Western colonialism.

According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, it was a clear image of the shared experience of ‘European imperialism’ and ‘third-world nationalisms’ that presented the ‘universalization of the nation state as the most desirable form of political community’\(^ {48}\). Moreover, “Third World” nationalists have actively participated in Orientalism. Arif Dirlik calls this phenomenon “the Orientalism of the Orientals,” referring to the way Third World nation-states have emulated Western Orientalist conceptions:

\[ \text{T} \text{he term Orientalism [...] needs to be extended to Asian views of Asia, to account for tendencies to self-Orientalization which would become an integral part of the history of Orientalism. [...] [T]he “Western” impact included also the impact on Asian societies of European ideas of the Orient. How EuroAmerican images of Asia may have been incorporated into the self-images of Asians in the process may in the end be inseparable from the impact of “Western” ideas per se.}\(^ {49}\)

The literary writers in this thesis represent Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi nationalist ideas as being influenced by Orientalism itself. As Burke claims, ‘nationalists’ esteem what ‘Orientalists’ argued that a nation needs, and he calls these nationalists ‘inside-out orientalists’.\(^ {50}\) This phenomenon entails internal colonisation which is consistent with that which Homi Bhabha maintains that colonial authority’s very existence depends on perpetuating policies of ‘discrimination, individuation and identity effects’, in order to ‘map out subject populations that are tarred with the visible and transparent mark of


\(^{50}\) Burke, p.495.
power’.\(^{51}\) Bhabha argues that colonial discourse is ‘a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles’.\(^{52}\) In the postcolonial contexts of Iran, Turkey and Iraq, the Kurds are denied an autonomous identity and are instead oppressed by the self-proclaimed superiority of their Turkish, Persian and Arabic contemporaries in the texts examined by this study.

**Depicting the Trajectory of Modernity**

Modernisation has taken many forms in nationalist policies. In Turkey, for example, it is expressed in terms of “Turkifying/civilising” Kurds. Leila Harris argues that Turkey’s ‘GAP’ (Turkish acronym for ‘the southeastern Anatolia Project’) mainly points to the Kurdish region as being ‘primary “anachronistic space,” seemingly stuck in a primal or prior, atavistic time’ in modern Turkey. Civilising the southeast helps Turkey to join European civilisation.\(^{53}\) Meyda Yegenoglu notes that ‘Enlightenment’ ideas provided the cornerstone of the Turkish state, yet at the same time ‘Islam’ was no longer perceived to accord a place in social and political lives since it was perceived to harm the civilising progress of the nation.\(^{54}\) In *The Lost Word, The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages* and *The Sayings*, Baydar, Hardach and Scheurer illustrate the ways through which Turkey conceives the Kurds as being malfunctioning organ in the body of the nation. The Westernised Turkish élite in the novels resemble Yegenoglu’s sense that ‘the Westernized indigenous elite’ modelled their worldview on ‘the principles of Western European Enlightenment thought such as science, rationality, and progress’.\(^{55}\) Modelling the pillars of modern Turkey on this ideology excludes the Kurds and Islam; both are deemed as representing “non-modern” aspects. Howard Eissenstat observes that Kurdishness was increasingly perceived as ‘threatening’ since Turkish identity was

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\(^{51}\) Bhabha, p.111.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Leila M. Harris, ‘Modernizing the Nation: Postcolonialism, Postdevelopmentalism, and Ambivalent Spaces of Difference in Southeastern Turkey’, *Geoforum* 39 (2008), 1698–1708 (p.1703).


\(^{55}\) Ibid., p.126.
further detached from Islamicness following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey by Atatürk.\textsuperscript{56}

Modern Iran concentrates on curbing Kurdish “tribalism”. Like Turkey, Reza Shah Pahlavi’s Iranian/Persian nationalism in Khadivi’s \textit{The Age of Orphans} is the instrument of modernisation. Fictional Kurdish characters meet with similar treatment by means of the Shah’s antipathy towards Iran’s micro-societies. Rudi Matthee maintains that the triangle of ‘modernization, centralization, and nationalism’ constructed Reza Shah’s nation-state.\textsuperscript{57} He also argues that ‘[i]f modernization was Reza Shah’s goal and centralization his method, nationalism was the ideology that legitimized both’.\textsuperscript{58} Alireza Asgharzadeh also observes that the advent of ‘Aryanist discourse’ led to Persian hegemony from the outset of Pahlavi rule. He claims that this discourse introduced ‘chauvinistic Farsism [Persianism]’, thereby entailing ‘the Persian/Aryan’ superiority as well as ‘marginalizing [...] non-Aryan’ “Others”. ‘Aryanism’, Asgharzadeh further states, therefore ‘became the basis of Persian identity and the Iranian nation-statism in the twentieth century’.\textsuperscript{59} Modern Iran’s ideology in constructing the nation in \textit{The Age of Orphans} resembles Turkey’s modular approach to forming the nation as depicted by Baydar’s \textit{The Lost Word}, although in different ways. According to Hamdieh Sedghi, Kemalist ‘modernization’ inspired Reza Shah’s nationalist plans. Although Reza Shah, like his Turkish counterpart, endeavoured to rescue Iran from Western invasion and from the clergy, he, unlike Atatürk, who attempted a divorce from Turkey’s ‘past’, was not inclined to depart fully from Iran’s history. Sedghi thus notes that Reza Pahlavi ‘exploited the Iranian Shi‘i tradition as a phenomenon unique in the Islamic history of the Middle East’.\textsuperscript{60} In \textit{The Age of Orphans}, it is apparent that Shiite values are preserved alongside “modernisation” projects. 1979 Iranian revolution brings no change to this state of affairs as represented in Khadivi’s \textit{The Walking}; the new state system does not

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p.139.
\textsuperscript{60} Hamideh Sedghi, \textit{Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Reveiling} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.64-5.
eliminate the established notions of nation-statehood as portrayed in *The Age of Orphans*. It modernises Pahlavi’s modernity by adding religious dimensions.

In Iraq, Ba’thism seeks to annihilate the Kurds. By discussing Hardi’s poem ‘The Spoils, 1988’, I will investigate the pathology of Ba’thist ideology as it was directed against the Kurds, examining its racialising discourse during the Anfal operations. History demonstrates that Ba’thist ideology towards the Kurds was ambivalent. It was racist in some ways but not in others. Ultimately it was totalitarian. Michiel Leezenberg argues:

Racism does not appear to be an obvious feature of either Iraqi society, Baathist ideology, or the perpetrators’ personalities. Although there have been, and are, occasional ethnic tensions among the different segments of the Iraqi population, there is no widespread racial hatred between Kurds and Arabs in Iraq.\(^61\)

This tentative statement reflects the author’s uncertainty about Ba’thist policy towards the Kurds, due to the changeable nature of Ba’thist discourse throughout its authoritarian rule. Leezenberg notes that the Ba’th party used racist discourse when necessary: ‘[R]acist language’ was mainly targeted ‘Iranians and Jews rather than Kurds’. Moreover, although Leezenberg does not deny the influence of notions of Arabness on the Ba’th, still he describes it as ambivalent in its treatment of the Kurds. Nevertheless, he does acknowledge racism within the 1980s’ Ba’th party:

[I]n the course of the 1980s, emphasizing one’s Kurdish or other non-Arab ethnicity was in itself increasingly becoming a criminal offence, if not an act of treason. For example, smaller ethnic groups, like Yezidis, Christians, and Shabak, were forcibly registered as Arabs, and when they changed their ethnicity to “Kurdish” in the 1987 census, al-Majid had them deported and their villages destroyed.\(^62\)

‘The Spoils, 1988’ narrates the Ba’thist racialisation behind the genocidal acts of the Anfal. I base my argument on the poem’s historically-informed documentation of this ideological paradigm through its poetic persona. Hardi clears up the question around Ba’thist racialisation and openly depicts Ba’thism as enacting racial ideas during its 1988 Anfal campaigns. By analysing ‘The Spoils, 1988’, I will explore the original Ba’thist ideology on which it was founded in the 1940s.


\(^{62}\) Ibid.
This study critiques these Middle Eastern states’ nationalist modernity, which is promoted by rendering itself an Occidental subject in the selected literary works. Nevzat Soguk describes non-Western Orientals as having a doctrine whose ‘identity’ is formed on two distinctive features; ‘the myth of “Europe”’ and ‘nativty’.63 He calls them ‘the “Orientalized Oriental”’ which has different forms, such as ‘the “Modern India,” the “Modern Turkey”, or the “Modern Iraq.”’ With its origins in doubt, ‘the “Orientalized Oriental”’ consists of ‘a Western and non-Western’ blend:

[It] is one who physically resides in the “East” and sometimes in the West, yet spiritually feeds on the West. S/he announces her/himself to be “post- Oriental,” or “postcolonial,” yet is a practicing member of the “orientalising” praxis in its daily operations in the interpenetrating realms of art, aesthetics, folklore, media, education, and so on. S/he is the non-Western subject who makes her/himself largely in the image of the West, its experiences, designs, and its expectations.64

The relationship between the Orientals (non-Westerners) and Orientalism stems from the use of colonial tools in “Third World” spaces. The Ba’thist deployment of its deadly power on the Kurds falls into this category. Soguk, who calls Atatürk ‘the sophisticated Oriental’,65 also contends that figures like ‘Saddam Husseins, Somozas, Mobotus, Reza Pahlavis, Miloseviches, and Fujimoris and their men/women, their diplomats, generals, and their teachers’ provide grounds for the survival of ‘hegemonic discourse’. This discourse signals the ‘continu[ed] power of Orientalist thinking.’66 When nationalism is constructed on dual identities – “Western” and “Eastern” – it produces a world of binaries, explored by the primary texts examined by my thesis. Iraqi Ba’thism, Persian nationalism and Turkish Kemalism are depicted as being founded at the expense of Kurdishness, without which their dominance and Occidental fantasies cannot be created.

The ideas of European modernity have been adopted by Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi nation-states, both directly and indirectly. As far as the territories of today’s (Western) Europe are concerned, Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben state that Christianity was what formed its ‘identity’ prior to the creation of the concept of ““European””. Europe’s ‘modern societies’ paralleled ‘the construction of the language, the images, and symbols

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., p.377.
66 Ibid., p.370.
which defined these societies as “communities” and set them apart, in their represented differences, from others’. David Held similarly argues that the establishment of European ‘states’ helped to shape ‘a distinctive “European” identity’. This European ‘states system’, by means of ‘European expansion and development’, crossed European borders and became a ‘political’ model for the rest of ‘the modern world’ to emulate.

The West’s modernity has inferiorised many “pre-modern” and “undeveloped” non-Western regions. The transformation of this Western perception into the non-West is strongly linked to what could be named postcolonial colonialism in the world outside Europe. Nandy calls these colonial relations a ‘colonization of the mind’, through which ‘the modern West’ could be deployed ‘from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category’. The effect, he argues, is that ‘the West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds’. This political and social reality in the Third World further leads Nandy to argue that ‘colonialism’ has outlived the ‘empires’. Gurminder Bhambra, meanwhile, critiques notions of modernity, arguing that ‘modernity can be seen as resting on a basic distinction between the social formations of “the West” and “traditional” or “pre-modern” societies.’

Correspondingly, Western modernity is acclaimed at the expense of the perceived non-West’s lack of modernity. As Bhabha indicates: ‘The “other” is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously “between ourselves”.’ The figure of “the Other” has emerged from the ideologies of non-Western sovereignties which have tried to perceive themselves as “Westerners”. Represented by Baydar, Hardach and Khadivi, postcolonial Turkey and Iran are unmistakably “good” imitators in this regard. As Alev Çinar remarks, ‘secularism, Turkish nationalism, and a West-oriented modernity’ constituted the ideological practices of Atatürk who once said:

68 David Held, ‘The Development of the Modern State’ in Ibid., pp.72-125 (p.72).
69 Nandy, op. cit.
70 Ibid., p.170.
If our bodies are in the East, our mentality is oriented toward the West. We want to modernize our country. All our efforts are directed toward the building of a modern, therefore Western, state in Turkey. What nation is there that desires to become a part of civilization, but does not tend toward the West?  

The reflection of Atatürk’s ideas not only exists in Baydar’s and Hardach’s literary depictions of Turkey, but such notions are also widely described in Khadivi’s narrations of modernity’s trajectory in Iran and, however differently, in Hardi’s and Scheurer’s representations of Iraqi Ba’thism.

This type of modernity, in Middle Eastern states, is the founding fiction whereby nationalist Iranians and Turkish Westernists, and to a lesser degree the Ba’thists, define as modern everything which they oppose to “backward”, “traditional” and “a-modern” elements of society. Couze Venn links Occidentalism and modernity by claiming that Occidentalism is, in one way or another, a process of rendering oneself modern that is modelled on the ‘West of Europe’. He criticises modernity for creating ‘a heroic subject’ and for its failure to fulfil its ‘promises’. Modernity, he suggests, has been ‘unable to reconcile the diversity of cultures, for it could not separate its avowed goal of universal emancipation and liberation from its own history of subjugation’. This characteristic of modernity deeply resembles ‘colonialism’, which for Piyel Haldar, ‘offers us a history – a history of a legally instituted subjectivity’. Haldar argues that constructing ‘Occidental legality and subjectivity’ is maintained when ‘the East’ is perceived to ‘perform[…] a transgressive function’. This colonial idea of non-West’s “lawlessness” is reflected in an interpretation of modern law that has its roots in ancient history. Lawlessness is associated with savagery; ‘the Greeks and Romans’ and ‘the medieval world’, Fitzpatrick observes, also related lawlessness with being ‘uncivilized’, ‘wild’ and sub-human. Supported by Enlightenment ideas, this notion, which was embedded in colonial thought and praxis, was employed for the purposes of “regulating”

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74 Although the Ba’th ideology apparently rejects everything affiliated with the West, Chapter Two examines its nationalist doctrine in Choman Hardi’s poem ‘The Spoils, 1988’ as being shaped by European ideas of nationalism.
75 Venn, p.8.
76 Ibid., p.15.
78 Fitzpatrick, p.72.
this “transgressiveness”, and “civilising unruly” people. Paul Gilroy argues that ‘enlightenment’ has gone hand in hand with mythmaking projections in order to present the idea of racial superiority.79 The construction of such racial prejudice through “reason” and “knowledge”80 is an active apparatus whereby the discrimination of the Kurds is justified. Examining how these ideas are generated by the writers of the selected literary texts between Turks and Kurds, Persians with Kurds and Arabs with Kurds is the focus of this study. My argument is that these literary works illustrate the same structural relationship between West and non-West inside Turkey, Iran and Iraq. However, these nation-states have been selective in deciding what to copy (and what not to copy) from the West. I investigate the ways in which the conceptions of modernity introduced by the nation-states in my chosen texts are inspired by both Western and Eastern interpretations of them. This is because they have tried to create a kind of “modernity” – Turkish modernity, Iranian modernity and Ba’thist modernity – which is unique to their own nation-states. Iranian/Persian (Eurocentric) modernity along with preserving the nativist Islamic Shiite discourses in *The Age of Orphans* and *The Walking*, and Ba’th’s exploitation of the Islamic Sunni discourses in the “Anfal” campaigns in ‘The Spoils, 1988’ are clear examples, respectively. Like Kemalist and Pahlavi nationalisms, Ba’thism and Iranian 1979 Islamic Revolution’s worldviews are also Eurocentric, albeit in a different mode. The West always exists in their agenda, since Ba’thism and the 1979 Revolution are depicted as founding their ideologies and justifying their actions by means of their opposition to the West. Secular Ba’thism and the post-Pahlavi Iran’s brand of nationalism reject the Western political system and its associated ideological values. Ba’thist secularity is a means of opposing the West, yet secularity is primarily a Western creation. As far as post-1979 Iran is concerned, the new state uses discourses that counter Western modernity. All these conflicting ideologies help the modern nation-states in viewing Kurds’ claim for independence as transgression. In my chosen literary narratives, Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi states thus engage in forming discursively ambivalent nationalist identities.

80 For arguments over the relationship between the Enlightenment myths of racial superiority by means of “knowledge and reason” see Fitzpatrick, pp.63-72.
This, nevertheless, does not dislocate the position of the Western secularity, which is incessantly adopted as being the best model of modernisation, especially in Turkey and Pahlavi Iran. Ali Mirsepassi cites Marshall Berman’s argument that modernity and modernisation need not only be interpreted from a Western point of view. They can also be understood within different geographical and cultural contexts.81 Despite the fact that ‘modernity’ is originally ‘Western’ for Anthony Giddens, Mirsepassi also explains, ‘he believes that the globalization of modernity across the world introduces new forms of world interdependence, in which, once again, there are no “others.”’82 Yet, this thesis argues that modernity and modernisation have been defined from a Westocentric worldview by Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Modernity and modernisation are, nonetheless, localised according to the cultural and political ingredients of Turkishness, Persianness and Arabness. Jürgen Habermas admits that the promise of human happiness was one of the Enlightenment’s messages, yet ‘[l]ittle of this optimism remains to us in the twentieth century.’83 However, modernity for Habermas is an ‘unfinished project’ in the sense that instead of ‘abandoning modernity and its project’ he suggests giving up improper utilisation of modernity.84 Habermas’ defence of (Western) modernity, and the spirit of Enlightenment, seems to be unsuccessful in the Third World due to the effects of colonialism. Thus, Mirsepassi criticises Berman, Habermas and Gidden’s interpretations of modernity for ignoring its legacy when colonialism is at issue. He notes that modernity appears as an incentive in the history of colonialism for ‘dominating’ the lands outside Europe.85 In the chosen narratives of this thesis, the writers represent the nation-states as viewing modernity through the lens of colonialism, and modernity is misappropriated to destroy Kurdishness. The colonial ideas of nation-states ensure that modernity cannot be realised – in Habermas’s sense – in Turkey, Iran and Iraq, where Kurdish literary characters are excluded. Baydar in The Lost Word

82 Ibid., p.4.
84 Ibid. p.51.
85 Mirsepassi, p.4.
portrays the idea that Kemalist modernisation campaigns have been utilised for the sake of culturally and geographically polarising Turkey and its southeast.

At the same time, Western colonial ‘domina[tion]’ transforms into Western-style ‘hegemon[y]’ in postcolonial states, as Abdul R. JanMohamed observes. The West’s ‘entire system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions, and, more important, mode of production’ are approvingly adopted by postcolonial nations. In The Sayings, The Lost Word, The Registrar’s Manual, The Age of Orphans and The Walking, postcolonial Turkey, Pahlavi rule and 1979 revolutionary Iran are showcased by Scheurer, Baydar, Hardach and Khadivi to have implied Western-style modernity to birth “developed” nation-states. Mirsepassi argues that the Iranian Islamic Revolution was characterised by a discourse that countered Modernity, arguments that were shaped by Western critiques of modernity such as Martin Heidegger’s views. I analyse in these literary texts how these states suffer from such huge philosophical mistakes that modernity itself is hardly identifiable. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar argues that modernity’s birthplace is ‘the West’, yet it has been a worldwide movement. Its capital city is ‘the West’; however, it is now in residence everywhere. He proposes the concept of ‘creative adaptation’, whereby modernity is adapted for cultures around the world. This process is, nevertheless, not a simple adjustment:

Creative adaptation […] is not simply a matter of adjusting the form or recoding the practice to soften the impact of modernity; rather, it points to the manifold ways in which a people question the present. It is the site where a people “make” themselves modern, as opposed to being “made” modern by alien and impersonal forces, and where they give themselves an identity and a destiny.

For my discussions of Turkey, Iran and Iraq’s modernities, I will base my discussions upon questioning what Gaonkar calls the ‘present’ above. Discomfort with the present is

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88 Mirsepassi argues, while rejecting the Western secularism, ‘many Islamic’ scholars have only focused on the sort of despotic ‘secularism’. This ideology has created a kind of ‘political’ Islamic philosophy, such as the Islamic movement of Iranian 1979 Revolution, which has constructed its view on counter-Western modernity debates already promoted by some Western thinkers such as Heidegger (and Nietzsche). The Iranian political Islamic Revolutionists were inspired by Heidegger’s claims that ‘the West’ is ‘the single source of modern inhumanity and a general loss of cultural and existential meaning in a Manichean universe’ (Ibid., pp.4-5).


90 Ibid., p.16.
central to Turkish and Persian nationalisms in the literary texts that I examine. I argue that Turkey and Iran’s treatment of “the present”, in order to bring in a more progressive future, is a way of “forgetting the past”. The Kurds, who are associated with the (Oriental) past, have their existence denied, allowing states to enjoy their fantasy of modernness.

Although Turkish and Iranian nation-states adopt distinct methods of fulfilling their political agenda, their policies are almost identical. Gaonkar summarises his idea of the creative adaptation, by the twentieth-century postcolonial ‘non-Western metropolis’, by observing that the rubric ‘modern’ is attached to every visible object. In my thesis, Iran’s capital of Tehran in The Age of Orphans illustrates this colonial process. Laleh Khadivi represents Tehran as having “modern identity”, “modern women”, “modern shops”, “modern streets” and “modern lifestyles”. At the same time, this nationalist modernity is not unconsciously introduced by the state in the novel, but is the visible face of nationalism’s hidden ideological agenda. As Gaonkar explains:

Those who submit to that rage for modernity are not naive; they are not unaware of its Western origins, its colonial designs, its capitalist logic, and its global reach. In haphazardly naming everything modern, they are exercising one of the few privileges that accrue to the latecomer: license to play with form and refigure function according to the exigencies of the situation. Thus, in the face of modernity one does not turn inward, one does not retreat; one moves sideways, one moves forward. All of this is creative adaptation.

I will argue that nationalist modernity jeopardises the lives of Kurds. Every step towards such “progress” – in Gaonkar’s sense – disadvantages the Kurdish fictional characters, who are rejected by the states to suit the newly fashioned modernities. Turkish and Persian nationalisms have the quality of Janus in the literary works, adopting Western identities on the one hand, while indulging Turkish and Persian histories, languages and ethnic entities on the other. In Hardi’s poetry, Ba’thist discourse is also dualist, both secular and religious. Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi modernities thus take different journeys but arrive at the same destination: the modern nation-state.

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91 Ibid., p.17.
92 Ibid.
The cruel treatment of Kurds in the chosen literary texts, being viewed as ‘internal enemies’ by the nation-states,\(^93\) signals the bases on which modern states are formed. Siniša Malešević notes:

It was the arrival of modernity – and its most enduring creation, the Enlightenment inspired nation-state – which generated an environment for the systematic mass extermination of human beings. Not only did ethnic cleansing appear on the historical stage with the birth of a modern nation-state, but mass scale violence is also often unwittingly triggered by the processes of democratisation, liberalisation and modernisation.\(^94\)

The interpretations of modern laws are pregnant with racial dichotomies of colonial ideologies which have caused the violence Malešević refers to. Fitzpatrick observes that colonialism, ‘from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries’, transformed European ‘law’ into ‘despotic’ rule outside the European territories.\(^95\) “Eastern” states have inherited European colonial despotism in their treatment of Kurds throughout the twentieth century, and early twenty-first century, in my chosen narratives. I focus on the literary expressions of the relationship between modernity – in the form of the nation-state – and punishment. Torn between West and East, newly established political institutions and racist attitudes oblige Turkey, Iraq and Iran to invent new methods of repressing imagined threats to their societies’ manufactured homogeneity. The Kurds embody this threat. Perceived as primeval in Iran and Turkey, they also represent “unfaithfulness” to Iraqi borders. Thus, they are killed, Anfalised, and exterminated in these narratives. The textual examples of Mahmut in Turkey, the Kurds in Iran and the annihilation of Kurdish families in Iraq explore the nexus between the politics of death and the exclusion of Kurds. Michel Foucault states:

\begin{quote}
In the biopower system, […] killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not in a victory of political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or the race. There is a direct connection between the two. In a normalizing society, race or racism is the precondition that makes killing acceptable. \(^96\)
\end{quote}

\(^{93}\) Salih, p.81.  
\(^{95}\) Fitzpatrick, p.107.  
For Foucault, biopower has emerged in modern times. He argues that the ‘biopower’ system is a strategy which is always justified through its claim of creating and preserving life for a given social group. This claim helps the modern nation-state impose death on its own outlaws. Foucault argues that the equation of “make” live and “let” die’ is the production of biopower. Applying biopower technology, the nation-states, portrayed by the writers in this study, destroy the Kurds, in aid of purifying the nation. The states draw power from “the Kurdish difference” through which they torture and kill “the dehumanised” Kurds.

Kurdish literary characters resemble the ancient Roman figure homo sacer who, Giorgio Agamben explains, ‘may be killed by anyone’. Their lives, in all three countries, concur with Anna Secor’s study in which she argues that Kurds in Turkey live in the state of exception whereby the state applies its violent power. The image of fascist treatment in repressing the Kurds in Turkey comes into realisation in the literary works featured in this thesis. These literary depictions reflect the claims of a Turkish official during the early days of the Turkish Republic: ‘We see both our past and our future in the enthusiasm of Fascism’. As far as Iran is concerned in The Age of Orphans, Khadivi’s depictions of Iran’s history align with Alireza Asgharzadeh’s contention that ‘European fascism and Nazism’ heavily inspired the Shah’s racial outlooks. For the Shah, the Iranian social groups should have been integrated into ‘Aryan/Persian culture and language’ since he perceived that only ‘Persians’ descended

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97 For further discussions on Foucault’s biopower see Ibid., pp.239-63.
98 Ibid., p.241.
100 According to Agamben, the state of exception oscillates ‘between politics and law’, arguing that various authors define the state of exception as the state of urgency, ‘given its position at the limit between politics and law’. Agamben observes that the state of exception has a ‘paradoxical position’ which ‘appears as the legal form of what cannot have legal form’. In the state of exception, ‘the law employs exception that is the suspension of the law itself’. He also puts it, the state of exception is: “[T]he preliminary condition for any definition of the relation that binds and [...] abandons the living being to the law” (Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p.1).
from a civilised past. Similarly, in Khadivi’s *The Walking*, this dichotomising ideology is practised by the post-1979 Iranian sovereignty by means of suppressing Kurds’ demand of independence.

For Agamben, the historical bases of the state of exception characterise the modern age. The depictions of sovereign states’ dealings with the Kurds by Oya Baydar (Turkish), W. C. Scheurer (American), Sophie Hardach (German Jewish), Laleh Khadivi and Choman Hardi (Kurdish) quite similarly illustrate the deployment of the condition of exception (or suspension), as the rule of law. The Ba’thist imposition of exception during the Anfal operations closely resembles much discussed sovereignty’s modes of destruction and humiliation. In order to perform the Anfal operations, the Ba’th regime imposed its full military domination and control over the Anfalised spaces which the Ba’th called the banned areas. Achille Mbembe examines modern sovereignty’s absolute divine power in relation to creating concentration/death camps by the Nazi forces, the apparatus of colonialism such as in South Africa at the hands of ‘the apartheid regime’ and also by the late colonial powers such as Israel’s destruction of Palestinian houses and its killing and intimidating of Palestinians. The chosen writers of this thesis, who are from Kurdish, Turkish, Jewish and American backgrounds, represent the same acts of terror by the Ba’th regime, as well as by Turkey and Iran, in controlling the lives of Kurds. With reference to sovereignty’s physical occupation in the places he refers to, Mbembe defines the process by which sovereign power ‘exercise[s] control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power’. What these discussions have in common is a sense that modernity has increasing control over the mortality of its subjects, whether by means of technology or by law (as with homo sacer and totalitarian regimes). Agamben claims – as Stephen Humphreys notes – that the state of exception originated during the ‘French Revolution’, gradually becoming more powerful by the time of the ‘First World War’, and reaching its peak ‘by the mid-

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103 Asgharzadeh, p.87.
106 Ibid., p.12.
20th century’ before becoming a standard model.107 I will argue that Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish states behave in ways outlined by Foucault whereby ‘the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death.’108 This is played out in the fictional domains of my chosen literary narratives. The poetic personae and subjects of Hardi’s poetry, for example, live in a state of exception within Iraqi political borders. They are terrorised by the Ba’thist strategy of ‘legal recognition-actual elimination’, which was a hybridised version of Britain’s ‘verbal recognition-actual domination’ policy towards the Kurds at the time of forming modern Iraq.109

The Kurdish literary encounter with these nation-states’ modernities is not only mirrored in the nationalist discourse of Westernisation/modernisation, racial exclusion and violence, but is also reflected in spatial mapmaking and depictions of Kurdish statelessness. These literary narrations of Kurdistan’s borderlessness directly relate to the Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi colonisation of the Kurds. As Ashcroft puts it: ‘In the European engagement with, and reconstruction of, colonised space the ocularcentrism of Western thought [since the Greeks] has played a critical role’.110 By means of Enlightenment philosophy, this ocularcentric culture is umbilically connected to Turkey, Iran and Iraq’s adoption of Western modernity. To summarise Ashcroft’s argument, the Enlightenment is closely related to colonialism, which controls the colonised by means of visual perceptions. The Enlightenment deals with “seeing” through its key concept “lightening”. Western thought has historically focused on the action of seeing that has been synonymous with knowing (which then leads to knowledge-production). This idea of knowledge, Ashcroft observes, has resulted in mapmaking. For him, the Enlightenment inspired colonialism’s visual imagination and cartographic strategies.111 In so doing, I maintain – with close reference to my selected works – that through expansionary mapping of their territories and by annexing Kurdistan (its land, language

107 Humphreys, pp.677-8.
109 Salih, p.85.
110 Ashcroft, p.127.
and culture) into their nation-states’ spaces, Turkey, Iran and Iraq have promulgated and deployed their “adaptative modernities”.

The question of a Kurdish homeland is problematic in the literary narrativisations featured in this study. This lost homeland is articulated according to a range of affiliations. Kurdish literary characters and writers constitute the community of outcast Kurds when the question of land, language and culture is at issue. They have had no geographic, linguistic or cultural dwelling place, and have been constantly forced to seek refuge within and beyond the politically-defined borders of these states. Unlike Turks, Persians and Arabs, dispossession of Kurdishness in my chosen texts is the hallmark by which the Kurds are recognised. Chris Weedon remarks:

National identity [...] is defined in an exclusive relationship of difference from others that is most often tied to place or lack of it, as for example, in the demands of the Kurds in Iraq, Iran and Turkey for their own state. It is also linked to language, history and culture. (my emphasis)\textsuperscript{112}

In my thesis, I link the Kurds’ lack of a homeland to language since “homeland” represents both geographical space and cultural identity. Hardi’s poetry and Scheurer’s \textit{The Sayings} describe the puzzling way in which Kurdistan has historically had no geopolitical space on the world map – Chapter Four investigates how this political mapmaking is tied to colonisation and modernity. Moreover, this lost homeland is embodied by assimilated Kurdish language and ethnic identity in Baydar’s \textit{The Lost Word} and Khadivi’s \textit{The Age of Orphans}. Baydar narrates this Kurdish dispossession from a Turkish viewpoint. As a Turkish humanitarian voice, she criticises Turkish élites’ nationalist ideologies for mistreating Kurdishness and inferiorising Turkey’s southeast area in support of Kemalism. For depicting the policy of Pahlavi’s modern Iran, Khadivi, who herself has not been living in Iran since she was around two years, says she has benefitted from ‘the generous storytelling’ and ‘memory’ of her ‘aunts, uncle and father’ in writing her \textit{The Age of Orphans}.\textsuperscript{113} I will discuss how the creation of Turkish and Persian subjectivities has a direct relationship with this linguistic assimilation, as in these texts Turkish and Persian languages play key roles in constructing “the nation”. Weedon notes that ‘language’ creates ‘[s]ubjectivity’; what


\textsuperscript{113} Khadivi, \textit{The Age of Orphans}, p.291
helps us to ‘take up positions as speaking and thinking subjects and the identities that go with them’ is speaking or thinking in a ‘language’.114 Obliging Reza Khourdi to abandon his native Kurdish tongue in Iran in The Age of Orphans and Turkifying the Kurds in the southeast of Turkey as witnessed by Ömer, the Turkish protagonist in The Lost Word, denies Kurdish subjectivity. This disavowal through language perpetuates Turkish and Persian self-fashioning. The Kurds are rendered second-class Turkish and Persian subjects.

It is difficult to decide where Kurdish literary protagonists belong. These protagonists’ lives are steered by the self-reflexivity of the chosen writers in representing Kurdish experiences of migration and displacement. Although these Kurdish literary characters, and writers, escape Kurdistan and migrate outside Turkey, Iran and Iraq, they are challenged by the ideals of conventional family life and nostalgic feelings and are also excluded by the Western asylum laws. I will investigate the strategies whereby Hardi’s poetry depicts displacement, homelessness and nostalgia. Although Khadivi – unlike Hardi – has no memory of her “original” homeland in Iran, and left the country when she was only three, her life is still affected by her parents’ migration first to Germany, then to Canada, and finally ending up in the United States. Khadivi’s experience of “unbelonging” is close to that of Hanif Kureishi. Kureishi, who was born in Britain, has ‘an English mother and a Pakistani father’. In Britain, Kureishi is not easily viewed as “English” as he narrates his school experience saying one of his teachers ‘refused to call’ him by his name: ‘calling me Pakistani Pete instead’.115 Having no life experience in Pakistan and visiting it as a young man, Kureishi meets his Pakistani relatives who evoke ‘anti-British remarks’ to him of which he notes: ‘made me feel patriotic, though I only felt patriotic when I was away from England’. Yet, he observes: ‘I couldn’t allow myself to feel too Pakistani. I couldn’t rightfully lay claim to either place’.116 Khadivi remarks that being a global soul is interesting; her life would be completely different if she stayed in Iran and did not migrate with her family when she was only a very little child. Feeling similarly like Kureishi, when she is reminded of Iran

114 Weedon, p.18.
116 Ibid., p.17.
she thinks that her ‘soul belongs neither there nor in the United States, but some open free space in-between’, a condition which has made her thinking beyond fixed borders of citizenship. As far as her writings are concerned, she says that every single experience of her family’s migrations is reflected in her works:

> I don’t think I could write the book that I write if I hadn’t grown up the way I grew up. Every single moment that I have lived accumulates in those works because you have to draw so heavily on experience and the subconcious and dreams, and all of my nights of sleeping in various countries, in geographies, have only built this great library in my head from which I draw every time I go to fiction. […] [I am also] trying to understand why don’t some people leave?! I am envious of them. Like the bombs in Syria are falling and they stay. Their livelihood is a stay […], they hold to their land, and the Kurds which I write about a lot in the same way.¹¹⁷

Despite Khadivi urges a global understanding of home and identity in her statement, she draws Saladin’s life as being out of place. Since she says that her life events have heavily influenced her writings, Saladin’s difficulty in coping with life in America is undoubtedly affected by Khadivi’s own experiences. Saladin’s migration in Khadivi’s *The Walking* is costly as he suffers from unsettledness. His failure of making a home in America is indebted to Khadivi’s reflection constructed through her mother. According to Khadivi, her experience of Iran and migration are closely related to her mother’s experience, rather than her father’s.¹¹⁸ Her mother’s partial failure in building a fluid, hybrid, identity influences Khadivi’s insights in portraying her literary characters’ lives such as Saladin’s. Selim in Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual* is nostalgic about his homeland; he misses his mother, his sister and the rest of his family and community. I will explore Selim’s oscillation between Germany and “Kurdistan”, belonging to neither. He belongs to Germany neither culturally nor – for a long time – legally. I will analyse the literary depiction of his experience in exile, as well as the challenge of seeking asylum: he is excluded everywhere. As David Farrier claims, ‘the boundary becomes crucial in determining what is waste, or rather what is to be included or


excluded’. As a result, the boundary functions to determine who does not belong to the body of a nation. For Selim, his original Kurdish homeland simultaneously represents slaughter. After gaining German asylum, he revisits Kurdistan. However, he returns to Germany since he finds out that the existence of an ideal Kurdish homeland, which he used to think about in Germany, is no longer possible. His existence now comes into realisation only on the – cultural and geographical – borderlands between Kurdistan and Germany.

Robin Cohen proposes different ideal types of diasporas such as victim, trade, labour, imperial and deterritorialized. By victim diaspora, Cohen refers to the historical migration of Jews forced by the Mesopotamian Empire around ‘586 BC’, Armenians’ displacement at the hands of the Ottoman Empire during the WWI, African victims of slave-trade, Irish people during the mid nineteenth century famine and Palestinian dispersal following the formation of Israel in 1948. With regard to other types of diasporas, Cohen discusses how trading and commercial ties, seeking better financial conditions, settler colonies and multiple displacements resulting in practical loss of homelands, all create different types of diasporas. However, Cohen does not force scholars to conform their diasporic examples under research to his ideal types:

The key point […] is not to take an ideal type too literally, but to assume that deviation is normal because the real interrogates and deflates the ideal. The ideal is a yardstick, an abstraction and a simplification […].

Examining the Kurdish diasporic experiences of my chosen writers and their works’ literary characters shows that Hardi, Khadivi’s mother, Saladin and Selim are victims, who have been displaced from their homelands and wish to return to it. Kurds are not labelled as victim diaspora in Cohen’s list due to the fact that ‘time has to pass to see whether [migrants] return to their homelands, assimilate in their hostlands, creolize or mobilize as a diaspora’. Yet, Kurds, as my selected texts illustrate, are mobilized diasporas for whom Kurdishness and (Iraq’s, Iran’s and Turkey’s) Kurdistan – as their homelands – exist in their collective imaginations. Experiences of migration and

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121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., p.161.
123 Ibid., p.18.
diasporic lives among the Kurds take on both positive and negative discourses. Khalid Khayati discusses that the victim diaspora discourse among the Kurds is popular as it sympathetically argues that the Kurds are “oppressed nation”. For the Kurdish scholar living in diaspora Abbas Vali, this “discourse of oppression” is ‘largely primordial and ethnicist’ which is used by ‘Kurdish mainstream’ nationalism. However, Khayati discusses that given different social, cultural, geographical and political situations make the experiences of Kurds oscillate from negative victim discourse into positive ‘transborder citizenship’ perspectives. As far as the writers and literary characters featured in this study concerned, the discourses of Kurdishness, Kurdish homeland and nostalgia, which all make Kurdish diasporic lives challenging, are a means whereby Kurds position their place in the world. Hostland discourses of unbelongings, lost family lives, forced displacements and traumatic experiences characterise the literariness of the chosen texts and the Kurdish writers’ personal backgrounds. For the Kurdish writers and literary characters, homeland is lost and is often longed to be inhabited again, despite their attempts to construct a home in the countries of residence.

I discuss Selim’s attempt of constructing a diasporic home of his own, yet it sounds painful and obligatory. Commenting on her The Registrar’s Manual’s Kurdish protagonist Selim, Sophie Hardach argues that he seems to be able to build a hybrid identity for himself after his marriage to a Kurdish woman and set himself free from affiliations of faith and ethnic community, since he often wants to be Selim and nothing else. According to Floya Anthias, the notions of original home agitated by ‘diasporic discourse’ are problematic as they are ethnocentric, and for Yasemin Nugoˇglu Soysal this discourse is nationalistic. In addition to these, Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg observe: ‘[cultural, national and spatial] binaries have radically distinguished as well as hierarchised “home” and “abroad”, the West and the Orient, the centre and the margin,

124 Khalid Khayati, From Victim Diaspora to Transborder Citizenship?: Diaspora Formation and Transnational Relations Among Kurds in France and Sweden (Linköping: Linköping University, 2008), pp.3-4.
125 Ibid., p.5.
126 Personal Interview with Sophie Hardach: 22 May 2015.
and the subject of study and the disciplinary object of study’. I have already discussed that one of the characteristics of modernity is having a mechanism for change; modernity is dissatisfied with the present. The notion of fixed home is also subject to change in modernity. Nikos Papastergiadis argues that home is conceived not as a stable place but a mobile one, noting: ‘modernity promises a sense of the present which is open, encourages mobility over stability, promotes difference as the stimulus for novelty’ and it problematises ‘the rooted practices of being and belonging’ as well as the sense of traditionalism. However, the poststructuralist deconstructive discourse, Lavie and Swedenburg remark, has ‘ignored power relations, the continued hegemony of the center over the margin’. Given the literary representations of the Middle Eastern Kurdish migration experiences in the West, one has to consider that Selim’s identity is not only constructed by Selim, but others also decide on his position in the world. His non-German background cannot be separated from him since the host country’s discourses of nationhood put barriers in front of Selim’s hybrid identity. As John McLeod argues with relation to Stuart Hall’s discussions in his essay ‘New Ethnicities’ of Black British diasporic representations, it often creates ‘a sense of belonging for migrant people’ when diaspora communities construct ‘an essentialised diaspora subject or homogeneous diaspora community’. Despite Homi Bhabha’s and Salman Rushdie’s suggestions of migrants’ creation of hybrid subjectivity, I will argue that this identitarian process is more difficult when experienced than discussed by these scholars. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan remarks that the Western hegemony and Western “protective” discourse of “the West” prior to breaking out the recent wars, such as that by the United States, are what characterize the cultural fashion of postcolonial period. Radhakrishnan scrutinizes the concept of hybridity as he makes distinctions between metropolitan hybridities and postcolonial hybridities. For him, the former are ‘characterized by an

130 Lavie and Swedenburg, p.3
intransitive and immanent sense of *jouissance*, the latter are expressions of extreme pain and agonizing dislocations’. He notes: ‘whereas metropolitan hybridity is ensconced comfortably in the heartland of both national and transnational citizenship, postcolonial hybridity is in a frustrating search for constituency and a legitimate political identity.’\(^{134}\)

This coincides with the observations by Virinder S. Kalra and et al, who argue that the recent ‘global war on terror’, as an example amongst others, is a way of rendering the attempts of hybrid subject formation more difficult and challenging by the West’s putting further binaristic policing of cultural limitations.\(^{135}\)

Accordingly, given Radhakrishnan’s discussion of the postcolonial period, the postcolonial hybrid is a formation hugely shaped by the Western modes of identitarian definitions since the Westocentric discourse is dominant in terms of identity formation. Correspondingly, Selim secures a diasporic “home” for himself where he can settle down away from fear and Turkey’s persecution, yet he encounters cultural loss since the colonial modes of dominance are actively underway through integration, assimilation, asylum challenges and national-cultural exteriorization in Germany. In addition, Kurdish migration is characterised by forced displacement as both Kurdish literary characters and writers are obliged to leave Kurdistan. They participate in demonstrations by Kurdish diasporas against the governments’ atrocity and marginalisation of the Kurds. For example, Selim goes to Kurdish protests against Turkish government in Germany. Narrating the stories of Kurdish sufferings, and defending the Kurds through various means, are the concerns of Kurdish diasporas as Hardi’s poetry bring the Kurdish history into the global attention.

In addition, this thesis explores women’s situation and nation-state policies in the examined literary works. In response to Kristen Holst Petersen’s and Anna Rutherford’s concept of ‘double colonization’,\(^{136}\) Robert Young urges recognition of the growing similarities ‘between patriarchy and colonialism’.\(^{137}\) As nationalism borrows from

\(^{134}\) Ibid., p.159.
colonial discourse and praxis, the chosen writers depict nationalisms as having a patriarchal character. In her *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*, Boehmer contends that despite patriarchal marginalisation, women are always pertinent to the formation of nationhood. Postcolonial states are designed to be ‘consumers of modernity’, to use Partha Chatterjee’s words. Yet, Chatterjee disagrees with the argument that ‘anticolonial nationalism[s]’ have only imagined the world through standards created by the West. These nationalisms, he argues, have reimagined ‘the world’ through ‘the material and the spiritual’. The material contains those perspectives adopted from the West by Eastern (Asian and African) nationalisms, whereas the latter refers to those domestic elements nationalisms have preserved to demonstrate their difference from the outside world. Femininity has therefore been the focus of distinct domesticities that have been used by Third World nationalisms. Despite this, women rarely play a key role in mapping nationalist frameworks. Nonetheless, they are utilised by nationalisms, as explored by Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans* and Baydar’s *The Lost Word*. Urvashi Butalia argues that, although ‘women’ have been used in forming the nation and in demarcating the states’ ‘borders’, they are rarely given space to participate in national decision-making. In Turkey and Iran, women represent the dividing line between the “modern present” and the “backward past” for Kemalist and Pahlavi nationalisms. They also symbolise Iranian state ideology, as in Khadivi’s *The Walking*. Womanhood is considered the spirit of the nation while nationalism has granted women an inferior position in comparison to their male counterparts.

I examine the nationalist exploitation of women, who are charged with representing both the modernisation and nationality of Turkishness and Persianness. Literary depictions of patriarchal paradigms deal with what Azadeh Kian and Gilles Riaux describe as Iranian nation-state nationalism for which ‘[t]he nation, politics and

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138 Boehmer, op. cit.
knowledge were identified with the male gender, whereas the homeland was identified with the female gender. Women are viewed as territory to embody nationhood and to be protected in a paternalistic way. Their symbolic position as passive terrain also suggests that they provide the ground on which men can actively construct the nation. At the same time, I will explore how Turkish and Persian women – although the victims of state ideologies – are used to reinforce the colonial divide with Kurdish women. Kurdish women suffer most of all as they struggle to remove yet more layers of oppression. Nationalist ideology, Orientalist worldviews, state violence and ethnic denial all centre on Kurdish women, who are the primary victims of patriarchy in these texts. In The Registrar’s Manual and The Lost Word, Hardach and Baydar portray Kurdish women as being subjected to Orientalist domination and legislation and by exclusory conceptions of nationhood. Kurdish women protagonists are also oppressed by Kurdish men. They are defined by the legacy of colonial discourse yet at the same time elevated to the status of guardians of Kurdish honour. In the Iraqi context, Hardi’s poetry depicts Kurdish women as carriers of the burden of Kurdishness following the Anfal campaigns. Nationalism’s ideologies are perpetuated at women’s expense.

**Thesis Outline**

Chapters One and Two explore the Orientalist dimensions of Turkish, Persian and Ba’thist nationalist discourses. They examine the subjection of the Kurds to the states’ colonial “Othering”. Chapter One investigates, in Oya Baydar’s The Lost Word and Sophie Hardach’s The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages, Turkish Westernisation, in which Turkey figures as “the West” in relation to its “Oriental” Kurdish southeast. In both novels, I examine the nature of Kurdish exposure to Kemalist racialisation, as it is perceived as giving birth to a Turkish Western identity. In Chapter Two, I analyse Laleh Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans and The Walking, which concentrate on Persian secularity and Islamic perceptions of modernity and nation-state formation. In these novels, nationalism is critiqued by Khadivi as having a dual character. Both forms of nationalism, however, exclude Kurds from the nation. This

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chapter also explores the racial drives of Iraqi Ba’thism during the Anfal campaigns in Choman Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’ in *Life for Us*.

Chapter One: Representations of Occidentalist Constructions and Racialising the Other

[...E]nlightenment pretensions toward universality were punctured from the moment of their conception in the womb of the colonial space.

Gilroy (2000, 65)

“There was … still is… a Turkish expression, ‘stupid as a Kurd.’” Jackson spit out a terse retort of sympathetic sarcasm. “So much for bilingual education.” Saladin looked back at him. “They used to call us ‘boy’ whenever they spoke to us … even the men.” “So you were the niggers?” Jackson was making a connection […]. “Worse. We were the crackers. The poor white trash.”

The Sayings (2003, 93)

Oya Baydar’s The Lost Word (2011) depicts the Turkish state and its élite as perpetuating Orientalist constructions of Turkey’s southeast. Chapter One explores Turkish nationalist ideology towards the Kurds, investigating this novel’s critique of modern Turkey. I refer to Turkey as Occidentalist, in the sense that the non-West attempts both to adopt and compete with European dominance whilst imagining itself as Western. This creates an ambivalent, Westernised subject, which is, however, non-Western in the eyes of Western characters in The Lost Word. The state’s Orientalist perception of the southeast, I argue, quenches Turkey’s desire to be the “developed” Occident, in relation to what Kemalism depicts as its “Orient” in the southeast. In the novel, Turkish perceptions of Europeanness themselves rely on a sense of Kurdish “Orientalness”. This chapter explores European literary characters’ sense of Turkey representing as “the East”, thereby splitting the identity of modern Turkish literary protagonists between the so called West and East. I also examine Turkish racial paradigms in The Lost Word and in Sophie Hardach’s The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages (2011). This chapter suggests that Kemalist racialisation in these narratives is inspired by nineteenth-century European colonial discourse. It analyses the racial impact of Kemalism in
viewing the Kurds, arguing that this helps Turkish literary characters to perceive the “purity” and “superiority” of the “Turkish race”. I conclude that Turkish racialisation aims to consolidate Turkey’s Occidental status.

**Nationalist Self-Fashioning in Oya Baydar’s *The Lost Word***

*The Lost Word* (2011) opens with its protagonist, the renowned author Ömer Eren, feeling emotionally detached from his wife Elif, as he awaits the Istanbul bus in an Ankara coach station at midnight. He seeks the inspiration, described in the novel as “the lost word”, for his next novel. At the same time, an elderly, mad woman at the coach station asks Ömer to say he has witnessed her child getting lost while crossing the Danube to Budapest. This perplexes Ömer; he has not seen her before and has not witnessed any such accident. As he ponders this, Ömer is distracted by a scream and notices a Kurdish couple, Mahmut and Zelal. Zelal is bleeding after being hit by a stray bullet fired at random by young Turkish soldiers in the coach station. Ömer takes Zelal to hospital. Zelal has lost her unborn child to the bullet. She, who was raped by an unknown group, and Mahmut, who used to be a Kurdish guerrilla but left the Kurdish resistance movement in the mountains, are on the run from the state, the Kurdish resistance movement and from Zelal’s family code of honour. Mahmut gives Ömer the addresses of his family and Jiyan, the chemist, who is working for women’s organisations in the Kurdish region. He asks Ömer, if he ever happens to be in the southeast, to tell his family that he, Mahmut, is safe and to ask Jiyan to help Zelal, in case something bad happens to Mahmut. Ömer decides to go to the southeast where he meets Mahmut’s father (Hüseyin Bozlak or Hüseyin Dayi) in the first town and Jiyan in the second. Spurred on by the human suffering he witnesses, Ömer finds the creative inspiration he was seeking. In the southeast, Ömer finds the Kurdish land strange, eccentric and oppressed by suffering. He falls in love with Jiyan, whose physical beauty attracts him. Meanwhile, Deniz, Ömer and Elif’s son, who lost his Norwegian girlfriend Ulla in an Istanbul explosion, has escaped the area’s violence and settled in a remote Norwegian island at a cottage-like hotel named Gasthaus. Deniz has worked as a photographer in Iraq, during and after the 2003 war, where he witnessed terrible human
predicaments. He rejects his parents’ ambition to restart life in Turkey, preferring a calm life on the island. The scientist and professor Elif, meanwhile, travels to Europe where she participates in a scientific conference and visits Deniz. On her journey, Elif is defined by Europeans as an “Easterner” and she meets an English scientist who invites her to a restaurant. After visiting Deniz, a group of racists set Gasthaus on fire because of their bitterness towards Elif. This incident changes Deniz, who now believes that violence is everywhere. He returns home with his mother. In the end, Ömer also returns to Istanbul after finishing his job in the southeast of Turkey. Below, I explore the various trajectories of Turkish nationalism in the novel, its colonial worldviews and the role of the Turkish élite in Orientalising the Kurdish region in Turkey’s southeast.

Historically speaking, Kurdishness has been denied since the creation of modern Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923. The Turkish state has envisaged the Kurds as hampering the establishment of a “civilised”, “progressive”, “Europeanised” country. This ideology has spatial and temporal dimensions in the sense that Kurds and their territory have been regarded as belonging to a “pre-modern” past. Yet Kurdish resistance to this ideology has been interpreted both as separatism and as a transgression of Turkey’s nation-statehood. From the novel’s beginning in an Ankara coach station, Ömer Eren hears ‘the shouts, cries, the chanting of familiar marches and the general commotion’ of an enthusiastic group of Turkish boys:

A coach, with a large flag hung at the front and its windows adorned with paper flags displaying the star and crescent [...]. It has a banner stretched the length of one side on which is written, ‘Our soldier is the greatest soldier’. Thirty or forty boys [...] [f]lushed with excitement [...]. Mesmerised by their voices they make the sign of the wolf’s head with hands raised and eyes almost popping out of their sockets. It is one of the familiar send-off ceremonies for the soldiers that everyone is used to.¹

These ardent soldiers describe themselves as the ‘greatest’ because they are guardians of Turkishness. As Nergis Canefe notes, modern Turkey is founded on the putative superiority of “the proud and self-assured “Turk””.² The soldiers regard Turkishness as the country’s sole identity. The novel captures the spirit of the Kemalist ethnocentrism. According to the Turkish nationalist doctrine, symbols of the nation-state, such as the

¹ *The Lost Word*, pp.12-3.
national flag, must be protected for the sake of “unity” as ‘boys rending their throats and
the night with cries of ‘Love or leave’, ‘Death to the leader of the separatists’, ‘The flag
will not be lowered’, ‘Our homeland will not be divided’. Conveying a mixture of fear,
love and hatred, the soldiers target the Kurds, who are perceived to contaminate patriotic
notions of modern, “homogeneous” nation. In so doing, Kemalist nationalism comes
into sharp relief; the greater its self-esteem, the more it abhors the Kurds.

West vs East

Turkey has strategically adopted Western modernity, and with it the Orientalisation of
Anatolia, in order to become a member of European Union culturally and politically.
However, it cannot fully overcome the dividing walls between “West” and “East”. As a
result, it remains stuck in-between. Here, I do not refer to the geographical space of
Turkey, but to its culture and history. In The Lost Word, “the East” refers to many places,
such as Turkey’s southeast, ‘Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan’. The marginalisation and
exclusion of “the Kurdish Other” is confined within Turkish Occidentalism in the novel.
According to Meltem Ahiska, Occidentalism has long been interpreted in different ways
as standing for both ‘Westernism’ and ‘anti-Westernism’; it ‘is a means of performing
Western modernity, while at times resisting its colonising move.’ For her, Occidentalism ‘is primarily a discourse of power, flexible enough to hold sway in the
form of displaced resentments, fears, anxieties and oppositions’ and she argues that by
employing it Turkey aims to separate itself from the Middle East. Thus, sourced from
political ideologies, Occidentalism is a disorderly psychological status. In Turkey’s case,
as Baydar’s The Lost Word depicts, Occidentalism is a method whereby Turkey
represents itself as part of the West by welcoming Western modernity and denying its
own Ottoman background, yet ambivalently retaining its past when it comes to Turkish
glorious history, language and culture. The Occidentalist ideologies resulted from
Kemalist nationalist project appear at the beginning of Ömer’s journey in Ankara before
he sets off for the Kurdish region in Turkey’s southeast in The Lost Word. The

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3 The Lost Word, p.13.
4 Ibid., p.178.
geographical space of Ankara is itself highly symbolic in the novel, because Ankara has historically been a central locus of Turkey’s “civilising mission”. Ahiska argues that one of the state’s decisions to make Ankara the capital city was a means of imagining it as ‘the “ground zero” of the nation, at an equal and necessary symbolic distance from both the West and the imperial past’. She cites Halide Adivar who argues that Ankara’s Anatolian location was thought to help the state to civilise “backward” Anatolian places. Ömer sets off for the southeast from Ankara. His journey symbolises the élite’s Western-leaning attitudes towards the Anatolian portion of the country. Sezai Ozan Zeybek remarks that, the “less civilized” and “infantile populations” mostly from an Islamic background have been perceived as “their own East” by the modernised ‘members of the Turkish national elite’. Thus, Oya Baydar, as a famous Turkish writer herself, criticises the state’s dichotomous lines between “civilised” Turks and the “East’s non-modern” people by means of Ömer Eren’s journey in the novel. Welat Zeydanlioglu argues that ‘the Kemalists’ imagined ‘the Anatolian’ population as uncivilised ‘backward, primitive and infantilised Others’. This resulted from the state’s “enlightened” mission, which emphasised contrasts between the country’s ‘modernising urban elite and the subaltern rural population’. Though Ömer is not Kemalist, he represents the Westernised élite whose ideologies, whether consciously or not, are deeply influenced by Turkey’s version of modernity and “development”.

Ankara seems tedious to the Istanbulite Ömer, who seeks literary inspiration: ‘Empty words of praise attached like labels to his name, laying siege to his identity [...]. Yet there is only emptiness inside him’. In order to overcome this emptiness, Ömer leaves Ankara towards the southeast, a journey symbolises Kemalist route of nationalising the country. The novel thus depicts the political actuality of nationalist activism in Turkey. As Ahiska observes:

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7 Ibid., p.18.
11 *The Lost Word*, p.7.
Ankara provided an empty space for the construction of the nation. [...] The conception of the town as ‘empty’ was in many ways similar to colonial ideology, which notoriously refused to acknowledge already-existing ways of life in the colonised territory as civilised.\(^{12}\)

As a Turkish intellectual, Ömer’s sense of emptiness represents Anatolia’s lack of Westernised modernity. He thus decides “to explore” the southeast. Bill Ashcroft argues that the colonised spaces were regarded by European colonialists as ‘empty spaces’ in need of civilising.\(^{13}\) Ömer’s attempts at discovering his word suggest that he represents Turkey’s colonialism. Later on in the novel, he unhappily discovers that he is a typical Orientalist, whose behaviours come to the fore in his journey to “the (south)East”. He heads towards the Kurdish region to inform Mahmut’s family that Mahmut is safe and to meet pharmacist Jiyan, for Zelal’s sake. However, Zelal does not hide her suspicions of Ömer’s help and she questions his kind-heartedness: ‘Why are you doing all this? You are not a family? You are not a relative. You aren’t even Kurdish. Why?’ Ömer answers: ‘Because I’m a storyteller. I write stories. Perhaps I will write your story one day.’\(^{14}\) But Zelal hastily replies: ‘Even if you are a storyteller, you are a storyteller of another world. You can’t write our story. You can understand it in your mind, but you can’t feel it in your heart.’\(^{15}\) By saying ‘another world’, Zelal means that Ömer, as a Turkish intellectual, lives in a different world from Kurds, referring to the dividing line between Turks and Kurds inside Turkey where Turkishness is associated with Europeanness and Kurdishness is related to the “Orientalness” by the state. She suggests that those who write on Kurds, such as Ömer, must not believe in the perceived, and constructed, West/East polarity and have to break down this polarity instead of enforcing it. Correspondingly, as a Turkish author and intellectual, Baydar warns Turkish intellectuals – represented by Ömer in *The Lost Word* – to eradicate the fictional dichotomy between West and East in order to sympathise with Kurds – and other non-Turkish groups. Ömer offers Mahmut and Zelal a humane assistance. Nevertheless, he does not hide the fact

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\(^{12}\) Akiska, pp.18-9.


\(^{14}\) *The Lost Word*, p.118.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
that personal interest is his driving force. For him, “the East” is a source of inspiration. The southeast is alluring, in an exotic\textsuperscript{16} way.

The “Oriental” nature of the southeastern region is an established idea in modern Turkey. Ömer draws an ontological borderline between Turkey-as-“the West” and non-Turkish-area-as-Turkey’s “East”. Despite all his critiques of state policy towards the Kurds, he cannot shed his Westernised perspectives. Baydar depicts Ömer as being self-confident in imagining the southeast as Turkey’s “East”. Ömer told Elif as much on the phone: “I’m going to the east, to the south-east.” He had implied intellectual bragging, of being ready to pay the price and make a sacrifice for his art, together with a degree of western arrogance.\textsuperscript{17} Ömer has written critical articles about the suffering of the Kurds in Turkey’s southeast, yet he plays the Orientalist role of a Turkish intellectual. The Turkish self-Occidentalisaton is an Orientalist institution in Turkey:

Ömer Eren is going to the east. To the most eastern part of the east. The title of his last book was \textit{For the Light Rises in the East}. It was a phrase borrowed from the Bible, from the faith of the western world. It rose rapidly on the bestseller list, and literary circles and thinkers praised it to the skies. He admits to himself that when choosing the title he had looked for a reference that could be translated into English and French. We take our bearings from the west and write about the east. We are eastern Orientalists.\textsuperscript{18}

The “We” that stands for Turkey, its writers and intellectuals, rests on the “they” who is subjected to Turkish Orientalist gaze along with nationalising and “civilising the nation”. The phrase ‘eastern Orientalists’ is a reminder that modernity needs its doubles. As Ahiska observes, the internal borderline which positions Turkey’s Western part against ‘the “backward” East, contaminated by Arabic, Kurdish and other cultures’ resembles the borderline between ‘Turkey’ and the ‘Middle East’.\textsuperscript{19} On the other hand, Ömer himself questions his search for his lost inspiration when he is in the southeast since his journey renders the ideological dividing line between Turkey and its southeast increasingly visible: ‘I had come here to look for the word I had lost […]. Was I just in pursuit of the word I had lost? I don’t know’.\textsuperscript{20} He realises that he has come here

\textsuperscript{16} Chapter Five will examine the exoticness of the southeast that is embodied in Jiyan’s female sexuality for Ömer.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{The Lost Word}, p.30.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.34.
\textsuperscript{19} Ahiska, p.15.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{The Lost Word}, p.154.
because his “Western” gaze needs its object in the southeast. His emptiness is solely filled in “the East” by means of exploring and discovering things about “Others”. While Ömer is among the mountains in the Kurdish region, Elif tries to contact him from Europe. Elif’s description of the East as “uncivilized” stems from its lack of technological development:

This time Ömer answered his phone. At last he had managed to reach a civilized place where mobile phones had a signal! She had grown fed up with hearing the message ‘The number you have called is unavailable. Please try later’ [...]. He had said on the phone that he was going east. Where is the east? Van is east and so is Tunceli and Hakkari, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan ... The east is everywhere.21

Elif’s thinking is influenced by the state’s idea that modernisation is synonymous with wealth and technological progress. She confuses poverty in the southeast with a lack of “modernity”. Her perception of the southeast as pre-modern reflects the ideology which drives Turkey’s internal colonisation in order to introduce “modern” modes of life – defined from Kemalist worldview – in the southeast.

The Oriental Colony Within Turkey

Turkey’s method of Orientalisation as well as colonisation of the Kurdish region is a prominent theme in Baydar’s *The Lost Word*, having mental and physical dimensions. Not only has this method existed in the minds of Turkish protagonists, Kurdish characters also internalise this reality when they meet Ömer. In his first encounter with the first Kurdish town’s residents, Ömer is rebuked by a Kurdish teenager, who challenges Ömer’s egalitarian rhetoric:

The boy looks at him suspiciously, mistrustfully. ‘You are not from us. What are you looking for? Why would you come here?’
‘Why not? Isn’t this our country – yours and mine?’
‘It is my land and your colony.’22

Although Ömer has visited the town partly to help Mahmut, the teenager confidently identifies him as a representative of Turkish colonialism. The language of equality – which sounds like platitudes in the context of the teenager’s suspicion – ‘Isn’t this our country – yours and mine?’ rings hollow, especially when the teenager critically

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21 Ibid., p.178.
22 Ibid., p.124.
intervenes in Omer’s notions of equality, suggesting that he understands the reality to be very different. Turkey’s nationalism represents the imposition of colonial system. As in reality, nationalism and colonialism have intertwined historical roots. According to Jyoti Puri, ‘nationalism’ urged ‘colonialism and colonial expansions’ in nineteenth-century Europe.\(^{23}\) The teenager perceives the colonial aspirations of Turkish nationalism. He draws on the resemblance between nineteenth-century European treatment of the colonies and Turkey’s policy in the southeast. This literary imagination creates a space for exploring actual historical roots. As Ahiska notes, Turkey, for the sake of applying ‘Westernisation’ within its territories, espoused the Western ‘colonial’ method of establishing its domination, which resulted from introducing the ‘Western modernity’.\(^{24}\) To shape its own Occidental subjecthood, Turkey creates the very differences that this teenager highlights; the metropolis represents progress, rationality and modernity while the colony stands for backwardness, irrationality and primitivism. Accordingly, the southeast occupies the position of a colony.

After being in Jiyan’s town for a while, Ömer is confused about the context of his knowledge of the Kurdish region. He acts as a “European” explorer discovering a new land: ‘Ömer felt as though he had discovered a completely new continent. Yet I knew every inch of this land, or I thought I did’.\(^{25}\) Soon afterwards, he doubts himself and says: ‘I don’t know these lands any more. I, too, am a stranger here.’\(^{26}\) In order to adopt the role of “European explorer”, he has to forget his prior knowledge of Kurdish lands. The idea of “forgetting” is directly associated with constructing the modern (Turkish) nation that I will explore in Chapter Four. Forgetting Kurdishness consolidates Turkey’s homogeneity since its establishment by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923. However, Ömer already knows the land from his youth, when he was a communist. He describes his past familiarity with the southeast:

> In our youth, in the years of our revolutionary ideas, we had argued not a little, were frequently divided as to whether we should lay siege to the cities from the countryside or whether we should go from the cities to the countryside and save the peasants, with the working class taking the lead. Were not cotton pickers of


\(^{24}\) Ahiska, p.13.

\(^{25}\) The Lost Word, p.148.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.
Söke and Çukurova, the landless villagers of the east, the labourers [...] waiting for us to come and save them?27

These thoughts pertain to the 1960s when there was a proliferation of Marxist and Socialist groups. These groups urged the state to recognise Kurds within Turkey’s territories because the left-wingers, as Ömer remembers, endorsed Kurdish rights in their manifesto. According to Hugh Poulton, the Turkish post-1960 military coup entailed establishing ‘socialist parties’ and ‘the Marxist Turkish Workers Party (TIP)’, which took the ‘Kurdish cause’ into account, opening their offices in the Kurdish area. Poulton notes that attacking the ‘capitalist-bourgeoisie state’ was a means of defending Kurdish rights.28 Moreover, the Marxist groups, of which Kurdish figures were also members, engaged in fierce fights with the right-wingers until the 1980 military coup.29 Ömer recounts these historical events at the novel’s beginning, when he starts his journey to the southeast:

‘In our twenties we were burning revolutionary fires on the Nurhak mountains, in the Söke plains and the surrounding towns in the Çukurova countryside. The east was on our agenda [...]. Those who lived there were our people – our shame because we left them destitute, our source of pride because they resisted oppression, and in whose name we went to prison for using the word “Kurd”, thus salving our conscience. [...] We knew deep inside that they spoke another language; but, still, they were our people; they were us. We were revolutionaries; our enemies and friends were the same. Our grievances concerned the military police, the state, the landowners and the bosses, as well as imperialism in general.’30

Ömer’s position has changed. He currently says: ‘Now I’m the famous author Ömer Eren’.31 Baydar’s The Lost Word criticises the élite, already considered by Ömer as a ‘self-opinionated elitist circle’,32 who despite not keeping an eye on the state’s policy also practise it. Baydar superficially differentiates between Ömer and the Kemalists. In so doing, she represents the élite as being the performative site through which Kemalism applies its pedagogy.

27 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p.212.
30 The Lost Word, p.31.
31 Ibid., p.135.
32 Ibid., p.10.
In Jiyan’s town, the nationalist Garrison Commander invites Ömer to the military barracks. He imagines Ömer as a Turkish – therefore “Western” – author who is a specialist in this ‘distant’ Orient:

The commander of the Garrison is sitting in his office behind a solid desk between the Turkish flag and standard in front of the large photograph hanging on the wall of Supreme Commander Mustafa Kemal, walking thoughtfully at Kocatepe before the Great Offensive. ‘[…] You are our window to distant regions, Ömer Bey.’

Although Ömer visits the Commander unwillingly, he can nonetheless be considered part of the apparatus of colonial rule. This is because, when the Commander meets Ömer for the second time and denigrates Jiayn’s ethnic and family background, Ömer joins him. He therefore describes himself after the meeting as follows:

I said, ‘this region’, displaying all my white Turkishness. These strange lands that we believe harbour every disease known to man! I used the Commander’s language. I betrayed Jiyan. I got caught up in the story, and I began to contribute to it. Instead I should have shut the man up immediately. (my emphasis)

In the novel, the élite are bastions of Kemalism. Ömer’s description of Jiyan’s past life and his association of the phrase ‘white Turkishness’ with himself represents a critique of the élites’ “White Turkish Man’s Burden” in the southeast. As Zeydanlioglu argues, the élite’s treatment of ‘Anatolian society’ in Turkey equates to the “‘White Turkish Man’s Burden’”. The Commander involves Ömer in the nationalist agenda, because the élite are the backbone of state doctrine. In the Turkish context, Ömer plays the same role as the Orientalists, whose works endorsed and sustained colonialism. His last remark ‘I should have shut the man up immediately’ is a form of self-criticism. It stresses the need to avoid participation in nationalist ethnocentric parochialism, and also promotes the condemnation of Turkey’s colonial policy.

Europeanness at the Crossroads

In The Lost Word Turkey acts as “the West” to the Kurdish area, yet at the same time it is the Europe’s “East”. Ömer journeys to “the east of the east” but Elif travels to the West, first to Copenhagen, where she participates in a scientific conference and then to Norway, where she visits her son, Deniz. In Ankara, when Ömer decides to go to the

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34 Ibid., p.259.
35 Zeydanlioglu, p.158.
southeast, Elif tells him on phone: ‘You’re going east? What a coincidence! I’m going west next week, to Denmark’ and Ömer describes the situation as: ‘Me to the east and you to the west ... we are gradually drifting apart!’ Since the dawn of the Republic, Canefe argues, Turkish nationalists aligned themselves with the principles of ‘Western modernity’ rather than with the ‘Ottoman’ inheritance. Baydar’s *The Lost Word* portrays Western perceptions of Turkey as hampering this Turkish ambition of becoming Western. Turkey’s identity is culturally, socially and politically torn between Asia and Europe in the novel. Ahiska observes that Turkey has represented the ‘bridge between East and West’ from ‘the nineteenth century’ onward, and this concept of ‘the bridge’ explains ‘the dynamics of Occidentalism’. She quotes Peyami Safa, who describes Turkey as “the wedding bed” between Asia and Europe. Turkish literary protagonists, such as Elif, attempt to cross this bridge to settle on its Western side. However, their efforts remain fruitless. Elif often regards herself as a “Westerner”, whereas she is viewed as an “Easterner” by Europeans.

An example of this complicated formation of national identity emerges when Elif worries about her academic standing in the Copenhagen international scientific conference. Prior to the conference, Elif looks at her paper’s images on the laptop screen, guessing: ‘This may not result in a Nobel Prize but a lesser award, a European Woman Scientist award, for example. So why am I crying? Surely not because I killed a mouse.’ Elif’s scientific tests were on mice but she now specialises in ethics in gene technology science. Perceiving herself as a “European”, she now aligns with notions of Western progress and science. This seems to be the characteristic not only of Turkishness, but of the Occidental institution that has depended on the ideas of modernity. Paul Gilroy argues: ‘Universality, reason and progress, modernity and enlightenment: these glorious ideas were once the sturdy cornerstones of an all-conquering Occidental mentality’. Although Gilroy refers to the European notions of

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36 *The Lost Word*, p.20.
37 Canefe, p.135.
38 Ahiska, p.15.
39 Ibid., p.17.
41 *The Lost Word*, p.22.
progress that helped in endorsing colonialism, *The Lost Word* depicts the West as still using the same ideas when imagining the East. For ideological constructions like this, Elif identifies with Europeans and wants to receive a European prize, yet she later recognises that she is still counted as an “Easterner”:

She closes her laptop. That’s enough. I can’t make it any better! Most of the papers of those self-important men and women are much ado about nothing. It’s as though they are on holiday. They come unprepared and, apart from one or two brilliant contributors, most of them present unoriginal research and stereotypical views within their specialist areas. We put them on a pedestal because of our inferiority complex towards the west. And they with their western arrogance – ‘Let’s see what this Turkish woman has to say!’ – listen to me out of curiosity. They mostly pay more attention to my uncovered head, my smart western clothes and my good English than to the science I have to present – although increasingly my papers are receiving prominence and getting noticed.43

Elif’s remarks reveal the Turkish counter-response to Orientalism, she models her Turkish self on a Western ideal, expressed through Elif’s “modern” style, her ‘uncovered head’ and ‘western clothes’. At this juncture, Occidentalism has a dual axis in non-Western spaces. It is both Western-leaning and anti-Western. Nevertheless, Elif’s Orientalness remains the focal point for the European participants. Turkishness represents “the Orient” to the “Western” gaze.

Ahiska contends that Turkey’s uncertain position – ‘especially in the international political discourse’ – between “East” and “West” is to do with ‘Islam’. For Kemalists, she argues, Islam accords neither with ‘Westernisation’ nor ‘modernity’ in Turkey.44 Although Elif is not a nationalist, Kemalist concepts still construct her social and cultural life. Dressing in a Western style symbolises the rejection of Turkey’s “Orientalness”. Yet Elif imitates the “Europeans”, who she herself describes as arrogant. The scene enacts her entrapment between the so called East and West. The novel critiques the idea that instead of connecting East and West to each other, Kemalism puts them in opposition to one other. Turkey’s ambition to become “the Occident” is fantasy that needs constant attention and hard work. In the southeast, Jiyan tells Ömer that his – Turkish – Orientalisations, inculcated into him by Kemalism, make him want to prove his Europeanness. But despite these nationalist endeavours, Turkey’s modernisation

43 *The Lost Word*, p.266.
44 Ahiska, p.16.
remains an illusion. As well as the European scientists Elif meets at the conference, other Europeans exclude Elif from “their” community. She visits Deniz, who lives with his girlfriend Ulla’s grandfather (Bestefar) and grandmother (Bestemor) in Norway. Bestemor tells Elif:

‘Modern life has changed everything, [...] now television brings the world to our homes. Even tiny children no longer believe in elves and fairies. They pretend to believe – just for fun. In the east, presumably fairytales and myths are still popular. Everyone knows *The Thousand and One Nights*, don’t they?’

Bestemor renders Turkish identity ambivalent. She positions Elif as an “Easterner” and assumes that she is superstitious. However, Elif hastily reminds Bestemor that she is a “European”, not an “Easterner”:

‘The situation is not so different in our country,’ Elif replied. ‘The world has become small now. As you say, technology has broken the spell. And there is this fact, too: Turkey is not really the east. We feel closer to Europe. Geographically we are, in fact.’ God knows, these Norwegian villagers probably think that in Turkey all women live in harems and men wear fezes and smoke hookahs.

By means of its geographical location, emotional affiliation and technological development, Turkey wants to affirm its closeness to Europe. Yet, as Elif discovers, the legacy of culture, civilisation and history identifies somebody as “European”. Fezes (traditional Ottoman hats) and hookahs are no longer used, since Turkey aims to become part of Europe. Bestemor’s Orientalist ideas of Turkey reflect Bernard Lewis’ pathologising views of “the Middle East” inhabitants that being regarded as part of ‘the modern world’, Turkey needs to go beyond merely using ‘modern technology’ to decide whether its location is Middle Eastern or Western. In trying to convince Bestemor that Turkey is aligned with the culture and traditions of Western modernity, Elif realises she is ashamed of the Ottoman past. She communicates the idea to Bestemor that Turkey is no longer part of the Ottoman past, but is a Europeanised country. Yet Turkey, embodied by the figure of Elif, wishes Europe to consider it as a rightful offspring of the West, but the door to Europe remains firmly closed. Turkey has to wait for European consent to enter.

45 *The Lost Word*, p.165.
46 Ibid.
48 Ibid., p.48.
As discussed above, Europe’s gatekeeping adversely affects the lives of the novel’s Turkish protagonists. Deniz and Elif are separated; one is in the East, the other in the West. Elif, now in tears, asks Deniz to leave Gathaus and return to Turkey and Deniz rejects the idea. Moreover, Turkish protagonists’ spiritual and social relationships are severed: He [Deniz] wants to embrace his mother [Elif], to hug her, but he cannot do so. Why is it so hard to overcome the distance, the lack of communication, between them? Helplessness settles on the table, a heavy silence’.\textsuperscript{49} The novel’s Turkish characters are unable to unite their scattered and fragmented selves. According to Nevzat Soguk, ‘the Orientalized Orientals’ – an expression Soguk uses for non-Western nationalists – ‘suffer[…] from a “double estrangement” – estrangement from his native self and estrangement by the Western other.’\textsuperscript{50} Elif, Deniz and Ömer experience this estrangement, creating the need for social and cultural reconciliation. For this reason, Ömer and Elif remark:

‘You to the west and me to the east. We are gradually drifting apart,’ Ömer had said. Elif feels a pang of sorrow. We must come together again, reunite our hearts. Hearts unite when they walk the same path. We must find a path that we can walk together.’\textsuperscript{51}

By means of this illustrative example, the novel suggests that Turkey needs to rescue itself from its problematic modernity and its attendant consequences. Elif rejects “modern” Turkishness and seeks to rewrite the rules of belonging by uniting and reconciling Turkish Eastern and Western portions. Thus, the novel attempts to break down the constructed East/West binary.

Finding a new path requires reformulating, rewriting and restructuring that which is deemed as “modern” in Turkey. Reimagining the phenomenon of modernity immediately affects the way Ömer, the public and the state conceive and treat the Kurdish region. This reconciliation in the novel accords with a much-described passage in a Turkish comic magazine, which depicts a ‘train metaphor’:

The comic strip shows a “typically” dressed Kurdish man lazily sitting in a forlorn train station looking at a “typically” Western-style dressed young woman waiting for the train with a big suitcase. He says, “The last train has long gone, Miss. So,

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{The Lost Word}, p.168.
\textsuperscript{50} Nevzat Soguk, ‘Reflections on the “Orientalized Orientals”’, \textit{Alternatives: Global, Local, Political}, 3 (Summer 1993), 361-384 (p.374).
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{The Lost Word}, p.163.
marry me.” The message is clear: The train metaphor is functional to deploy the desire for a Western future embodied in the figure of a Western-looking woman, yet the present is the problem-stricken Turkey unable to deal with its Kurdish or other ethnic-identity problems.\textsuperscript{52}

The woman in the cartoon resembles Elif, dressing in a European style and competing with Western academics to win the European Woman Scientist Award even while the novel’s Kurdish characters suffer in modern Turkey’s own territories. The “Europeanisation” project drives Turkey’s “Othering” of the Kurds. Kemalists imagine that Turkey’s self-Occidentalisation helps them join the “modern” world of which Turkey perceives itself to be a member.

“The East” as a Western Creation

Baydar’s *The Lost Word* presents Turkish perceptions of the southeast as creations of Turkey’s Orientalism rather than as facts. These formations resemble colonial discourse in the way Zeydanlioglu argues that ‘Kemalist discourse constructed Kurdistan, the hidden and invisible “Orient” of Turkey, as a region of dissent and banditry, ruled by superstition and in need of a heavy dose of civilisation’.\textsuperscript{53} Soon after Ömer sees Jiyan, he essentialises her. Everything that affiliates her with the southeast quickly fixes in his mind:

He thinks that she must be one of those small-town interfering women who are too clever by half, who have studied a little and moved up the social ladder by opening a chemist’s shop; and, to top it all, the daughter of a clan leader – whatever that means – and a Kurd to boot. All the Europeans trying to keep in with the Kurds, this mission or that commission, look her up first.\textsuperscript{54}

However, as time marches on in the southeast, Ömer becomes self-reflective and self-critical. When he thinks of the southeastern area, which is supposed to inspire Ömer to locate his lost word, his mental constructions are exposed as follows: ‘[T]o think that the springs in these parts gush more freely and are purer and cooler, isn’t that some sort of intellectual romanticism? Isn’t this also an eastern myth that we have created?’\textsuperscript{55} He thus begins to locate his ideas as founded in questionable and outmoded European ideals. The

\textsuperscript{53} Zeydanlioglu, p.166.
\textsuperscript{54} *The Lost Word*, p.135.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.155.
dominance of Kemalist thought forms the intellectual pillars of élites such as Ömer, who begins to recognise this as a problem.

The southeast appears as a strange, unknown and “eccentric Orient” for Ömer. His journey alerts him to his disconnection from the region: ‘Why can’t I perceive my experience here as real life? […] Does the reality of other lands, other folk, other people always seem to us like a frightening or a seductive fairytale?’ His method of seeking knowledge resembles what Edward Said argues in his Orientalism (1978), as Ania Loomba maintains, that Western “knowledge” about non-Europeans’ intended to dominate them through Western ‘power’. This is because this “knowledge” about “the Orient” went hand in hand with European ‘colonial “power”’. The southeast for Ömer is now both ‘frightening and seductive’, a paradoxical construction originating from his colonial thinking. As Homi Bhabha explains, the association of colonial discourse with its inherent ‘ambivalence’ renders “the Other” ‘at once an object of desire and derision’.

For both Ömer and Jiyan’s stepson, Diyar, the Kurdish land is doubly colonised. Diyar, who has grown up in Sweden, refers to the invisible location of the Kurdish homeland as a typical “Orient” for the Western Orientalist gaze: ‘In one of his books he [Diyar’s father] mentions this region as “the most east of the east”’. For Diyar, Ömer is a European whose intention in visiting Kurdistan is ambivalent just like other “Westerners”:

‘I wanted to write something about the area.’
‘Every sympathetic westerner wants to write about the region and our problems. […] In Sweden people who consider themselves intellectual are curious about our region, the Kurds and Kurdistan. Some just from sympathy, from their devotion to human rights, to pay blood money for the prosperity of the west; some to manipulate the balance in the region. […] Not just the Swedes, of course, I mean all westerners. Please don’t be offended, I wasn’t referring to you.’

Diyar sees some Westerners’ writings about the southeast as well-meaning, but ineffective. He demonstrates that Kurdish land is occasionally subjected to Western hegemony by making statements about it. This is by means of Orientalist approaches to

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56 The Lost Word, pp.275-6.
57 Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism, 2nd edn (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p.43.
58 Ibid., p.42.
60 The Lost Word, p.278.
61 Ibid.
seeking knowledge – like Ömer’s pursuit of mystery in the southeast. Loomba argues that ‘[k]nowledge is not innocent’, because it is deeply related to ‘the operations of power’.

Knowledge thus leads to controlling “Others”.

The search for the inspirational word in an increasingly demystified land challenges Ömer, who is estranged as a foreigner: ‘Fatigue and weariness sweep over him. […] Now Jiyan is shutting me out. Everything and everyone unite against the stranger.’ Jiyan is resistant to Ömer’s demand “to discover” more; she knows that a complex ideology underwrites his “discovery”. She accuses Turkish intellectuals, the state policy and military officers of imposing European colonial model on the Kurdish region. In his discussions about colonial articulations of knowledge and “Otherness”, Bhabha argues that discursive constructions of ‘colonial discourse’ render ‘the colonized’ ‘an “[O]ther” and yet entirely knowable and visible’. For Bhabha, this is the moment when the colonised is constructed as “a fixed subject”, and he further observes that this discourse is heavily affected by ambivalent colonial image-making in which the colonised is both desired and rejected.

Ömer’s excessive curiosity about the southeast makes him fatigued by his search to know more, since the region, represented by Jiyan, resists his quest for knowledge over it:

‘I wanted to explain to you. I wanted to say that there is no secret, that everything is so simple that it would disappoint you. […] I am sorry that I have to disappoint you, Ömer Eren, but I cannot contribute to your vision of the “mysterious east”.’ […] ‘There are no secrets, […] [y]ou create the secrets. The vision of the “mysterious east”; the fictionalized portrayal of woman that ranges from images of the harem, concubine and courtesan to Kurdish woman and me.’

Jiyan exposes these ‘secrets’ as fabrications. Ömer’s quest for a non-existent “mysterious thing” helps to create an “Orient” for himself as for Kemalist Turkey. However, Jiyan informs him about his mythic constructions of the southeast. This brings us back to Zelal who told Ömer – before setting off for the southeast – that Ömer is from ‘another world’ and, therefore, cannot write Kurds’ stories. After Ömer is shown the reality of Kurds’ lives by Jiyan in the southeast and grows self-critical of his own –

62 Loomba, p.42.
63 The Lost Word, p.288.
64 Bhabha, pp.70-1.
65 Ibid., p.82.
67 Ibid., p.118.
constructed – “Western” subjectionhood, he understands and feels Kurdish plight, in ways the world is no longer dichotomised into “West” and “East”. Thus, he understands that all individuals are living in the same world and the so called eccentric East is merely a ‘myth’ as he already told himself. Ömer now is different from the time he met Zelal in Ankara; he is able to write Kurdish story. As in the end of the novel, he receives a mobile message from Jiyan while packing his stuff to return to Ankara: ‘You have found the word, so now be our voice’. When he reaches Ankara coach station, he once again meets the mad, elderly, woman and tells her that her lost child and ‘[a]ll lost children will return’. He finally says: ‘I want to […] cry my heart out. For those who come from the east and the west and lose their way […] I was looking for a word, I heard a voice. […] I now have a word to say. From now on, Ömer acts not as a “Western Orientalist”, but as an intellectual belonging to a world with no artificial boundaries.

Nationalism and Kurdophobia in Baydar’s The Lost Word and Sophie Hardach’s The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages

I have explored that Turkey’s Kemalist project is built on Orientalisation and colonisation of “non-Turkish Other” in The Lost Word. Although Benedict Anderson argues that ‘nationalism’ inspires ‘love’ of one’s own ‘nation’ but rarely introduces hatred, David Mertz rejects this claim and observes that excessive “love” for one’s own nation entails resentment towards others. In The Lost Word and The Registrar’s Manual Turkish self-love inspires a phobia of Kurdishness. Baydar portrays in The Lost Word that the Kemalist adoption of biological and cultural racism repeatedly humiliates the Kurds. Turkish nationalism is deeply influenced by nineteenth-century racial hierarchies. Racism overshadows the characters’ lives in the novel. Not only Turkey, but the whole world, is depicted as being full of racial hatred. Racist worldviews transcend Turkey’s boundaries. Although Deniz has fled Turkey for a faraway Norwegian Island,

68 Ibid., p.155.
69 Ibid., p.346.
70 Ibid., p.348-9.
he cannot escape the racism which his mother, Elif, experiences. During a festival on the Island, both Elif and Deniz are subjected to the racist hatred:

She does not understand the words but senses they are some kind of greeting, a welcome. Then, a different sound is heard from the corner where a group of youths in strange attire and with motorbikes have congregated – [...] – ‘the foreigner’s mother! The foreigner’s mother’! She understands what they are saying and that they are not friendly.73

The contemptuous group of tattooed skinheads symbolise the inescapability of racism in the modern world. Despite the modern developments of which Bestemor is so proud – as I discussed previously – racial hatred remains stubbornly present. In fact, modernity has occasionally motivated racist ideologies. Couze Venn and Paul Gilroy both argue that modernity has failed to deliver equality and fraternity among different groups.74

Bestemor’s optimistic view of modern life is presented as myth. Modernity, as Deniz sadly notes, creates no difference between racists in the East or in the West, past or present:

‘They are the same everywhere. Whether Turk or Norwegian, German, English or Greek ... The primitive prejudice and their grudges are always the same. Everyone is a foreigner in this world! Everyone is an enemy to one another.’75

Racism everywhere has the same ideological dimensions. As Deniz explains to Elif: ‘Every island, every community, needs foreigners. Is it to prove their own local identity, to strengthen their tribal self-confidence?’76 These comments do not solely refer to the racism on the island but indirectly criticise Turkish racialisation of the Kurds. The novel is primarily focused on Kurdish suffering and rebellion especially since Turkey’s 1980 coup d’état. Yet, Turkish racial discourse is depicted as being augmented by Kemalist ideology since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Consequently, Kemalism and racism become one and the same. As Étienne Balibar puts it, ‘nationalism’ is the cornerstone of ‘racism’.77 Racist ideologies target Zelal, Mahmut, Hüseyin Dayi, their Kurdish language and culture, resembling Victorian notions of social Darwinism and

73 The Lost Word, p.181.
75 The Lost Word, p.182.
76 Ibid., p.183.
treatments of Jews in Nazi Germany. Howard Eissenstat notes that ‘the Turkish elite’ has inclined towards the West’s ‘discourse’ of ‘scientific racism’ in post-World War One, in order to implement Turkey’s ‘radical Westernization and state-building’.

Racialisation Inside Turkey

*The Lost Word* contains many examples of state’s scientific racism. The Kurds are reported by Turkey to have tails. Zelal tells Ömer that Kurds are viewed as animals in Turkey: ‘[B]ecause they used to say Kurds have tails we used to check to see if we really did have them.’ The story of “tailed Kurds” in the novel reflects a Victorian-style of categorising physiological differences. Robert Young remarks that categorisation of ‘human beings’ since ‘the eighteenth century’ resulted in classifying African people as semi-humans, ‘next to the ape’. Modern Turkey similarly classifies Zelal and other Kurds. Mahmut remembers his schooldays, when he once read a poem heralding the Turkish race:

‘I am a Turk. My religion and my race are great’; or every morning before lessons began, ‘I am a Turk, I am just and I am hard-working … May my existence be a gift to the existence of Turkey.’

Turkish nationalism thus separates Turks and classifies them as a different “race”. In the context of racism, John Downing and Charles Husband observe, ‘identity formation’ is the practical outcome of blending ‘race and ethnicity’. The state’s categorisation of Turkey’s citizens by the ideals of racial differences represents the Turkish state’s method of excluding “inappropriate” peoples.

Balibar argues that the state mobilises ‘modern racism’ in ways racism is “a conflictual relationship to the state which is “lived” distortedly and “projected” as a relationship to the Other’. Baydar’s *The Lost Word* problematises Turkey’s state

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79 *The Lost Word*, pp.50.
discourse, which is indebted to Western colonial racialisation. As Étienne Copeaux argues, the Turkish nation-state is the offspring of European Orientalism’s worldview.\(^84\) Turkey’s use of the concept of ‘race’ in the novel endorses Eissenstat’s idea that Turkish nationalists acted under the influence of ‘late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries’ racial discourse by blurring the boundary between ‘race and nation’.\(^85\) The inculcation of Turkish ideals into the children of modern Turkey is the state’s strategic plan to instill every single person with notions of race. As Eissenstat notes, a few years after establishing the republic, ‘[t]he First Turkish History Congress and First Turkish Language Congress’ insisted on promoting secular values nationally:

The basic thrust of this new ideology was that Turks were the first and greatest of nations and that Turks brought civilization to the great civilizations of that past, including those of ancient China, India, and more importantly, Greece and Rome. Through this historical fancy, Turkish appropriation of Western rooms and modes could be framed as a “return to its own roots” rather than a capitulation to a foreign culture. It would also place them squarely within Western (and White) civilization, a point that was of some importance for Atatürk, who detested reading studies, which included Turks among the “yellow” or “Asiatic” races.\(^86\)

This typology of Turkish superiority aims at accomplishing the Occidentalist fantasy – by teaching the “greatness of Turks” – to present the nation as inhabited by a superior “White race”.

Cultural racism has been actively practised alongside its biological counterpart. Kurdish\(^87\) language, culture, clothes, traditions and history are synonymous with backwardness. Mahmut is ashamed of his Kurdish background, which he tries to hide:

He learnt that Kurdishness was shameful, was a lie, that some traitors convinced the mountain Turks that they were Kurds, that everyone living in this country was Turkish and that to claim otherwise was a betrayal of the homeland and the flag.\(^88\)

Calling the Kurds “mountain Turks” helps the state to invent another group of Turks, namely “civilised Turks”, allowing the “Kurdish race” to be designated as an inferior class of humans. Mahmut is always afraid that the students will see his mother in traditional Kurdish clothes: ‘He knew he would be humiliated if she came to school

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\(^85\) Eissenstat, p.251.

\(^86\) Ibid.

\(^87\) Chapter Four discusses how nation-building projects oblige the state to “Turkify” Kurdishness.

\(^88\) *The Lost Word*, p.203.
dressed like that. He would be ashamed of his mother, then ashamed of himself for being ashamed of her."89 Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis maintain that ‘[t]he notion of cultural difference has largely’ replaced ‘the notion of biological difference, as a basis for excluding or inferiorizing, both in discourse and practice’.90 One example of cultural racism in the novel is the verbal abuse Zelal faces from a Turkish woman patient who shares the hospital room with her:

‘How can I wait until a single room is free? How can I lie here among peasants – Kurds to boot?’ she wailed. She cursed the hospital management and the insurance company, asking every nurse when she would be able to move to a deluxe single room. ‘Do you know who I am?’ she demanded and would cry when no one paid attention to her.91

The old patient classifies Kurds as peasants, and has the confidence to debase Zelal’s Kurdish background because she has been indoctrinated with ideas of Turkish greatness. In the context of national grandiosity and paranoia, Richard Koenigsberg observes that ‘The nation’ is ‘a symbol of the narcissistic ego [...] which is shared in common by a nation’s citizens’.92 The old woman in the hospital embraces this narcissism in imagining the “Turkish nation” as superior. As Koenigsberg further argues, the way ‘the nationalist’ asserts ‘his own ego’ parallels the way he perceives his own ‘nation’, sustaining ‘the purity of the nation’ consequently becomes the nationalist’s central desire.93 The old woman thinks that the nation can be rendered “pure” if the Kurds are excluded from it. For Balibar, nationalism’s excessive focus on purity is embedded within racist ideologies because it is considered possible to contaminate it. He remarks that this notion classifies ‘social groups’ as different races, thereby ‘set[ting] up’ a ‘stigma of exteriority and impurity’.94 The woman tells Zelal: ‘Before long you will be driving us out of our land, our own hospitals. You Kurdish separatists!’95 To her, as to the nationalists who inspired her outburst, the Kurds threaten the ideals of statehood. Despite this, later on in the novel, the woman’s son and daughter-in-law apologise to

89 Ibid.
91 The Lost Word, p.213.
93 Ibid.
95 The Lost Word, p.214.
Mahmut and Zelal for the woman’s rudeness in ways that promote the countering of the state’s century of racial policy. *The Lost Word* thus embraces the ideals of coexistence.

**Racialisation Outside Turkey**

While Baydar’s *The Lost Word* addresses racial discrimination against the Kurds within Turkey, Sophie Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages* depicts the Kurds as being unable to escape Turkish racism, even beyond the country’s borders. The novel’s Turkish characters are profoundly affected by Kemalist values whether in Turkey or elsewhere. The novel is narrated by a nameless German woman who is working in the Paris Town Hall where marriages take place. She is dealing with a complicated marriage and is unsure whether to authorize the legal contract. The marriage is between a Kurdish couple. The narrator requests the bride’s presence at the signing of the marriage contract, but the bridegroom does not comply. The reader does not know whether this is for traditional or legal reasons. The complexity of the Kurdish couple’s marriage reminds the narrator of her experience 15 years before with Selim, who is described as a skinny and unfortunate Kurdish boy. The novel opens with Selim in a traumatic escape from Turkey to the shores of Italy. At first, he imagines that he has finally reached a safe destination where he will have a peaceful life. However, his life as a refugee is no less painful than his life in Turkey. Selim ends up in Germany, where he is taken to a refugee detention centre with Nigerians, Liberians, Palestinians, Egyptians and others. He is registered as 13 years old. His case is not decided until he reaches 18. He cannot forget those left behind in his homeland being tortured in Turkey’s prisons. Life in exile cannot erase his past or the memory of his people. When he reaches 17, Selim is introduced to the novel’s narrator, a politically radical teenager, who decides to marry him in order to avoid his deportation to Turkey by the German government. It is only a marriage on paper. The narrator heads to France afterwards to pursue her university degree. Selim is granted permanent residency after six or seven years and he and the narrator get divorced as they previously agreed. As Selim awaits the confirmation of his residency, the attacks of September 11th, 2001 take place. The attacks are depicted as exacerbating the struggles of refugees, especially that of Selim. Finally, however, he is granted the German residency which enables him to return
Kurdistan – in Turkey’s southeast – where he marries a local Kurdish girl before going back to Germany where he lives with his Kurdish bride.

I focus on Selim’s experiences with racist Turkish boys and a Turkish bureaucrat. As in The Lost Word, the Turkish-Kurdish relationship is predicated on ethnic hatred and denial in The Registrar’s Manual. Selim makes eye-contact with Hakan, a Turkish boy, the first moment he enters a German classroom. The encounter between these two boys symbolises “racial” contention between Turks and Kurds:

The next one [chair] was occupied by a broad-shouldered boy in a black T-shirt. The boy leaned over and jerked his chin in a questioning way.
‘Adin ne?’ the boy said.
‘Selim. Seninki?’
‘Hakan.’ They gave each other a brief nod.

Hakan’s behaviour illustrates that something is wrong between the two boys, even though they have not met before. Selim sits in the back row of the classroom, his seating representing the Kurds’ position in the world: ‘[T]he back row was always trouble, everywhere, in Kurdistan as in Turkey as in Germany. An unwise choice for a skinny, bespectacled young Kurd.’ Selim’s back row experience is a sympathetic depiction of the Kurds’ predicament both inside and outside their homeland. The novel’s pessimistic tone suggests that Selim cannot escape trouble, regardless of his whereabouts.

The relationship between Turkish popular culture and the Kurds is emphasised by the inequalities perpetuated by Turkish Orientalisations of Kurds. This relationship is not only portrayed through Hakan’s questioning eye-contact with Selim; it also escalates into a physical attack on him. Selim is beaten by Çengiz, another Turkish boy in his class, who appears to have been educated into nationalist doctrine from an early age:

One day, as Selim was leaving school with Flo, eating an ice cream from the nearby shop, a group of mainly older boys blocked his way. At the centre of the human road block stood Çengiz, the Turkish boy from the back row of Selim’s class.
‘Selim, komm her, lan.’
Selim smiled and shrugged, motioning to Flo to go away.
‘Gel lanburaya!’ Çengiz called out, louder this time.
[…]

97 Ibid., p.75.
The boy wrested it [the ice cream] out of Selim’s hand and crushed it on his face. The cone fell off and pink blobs slid down his cheeks.\(^98\)

This treatment of Selim arises from an inbuilt sense of unwanted Kurdishness on the part of the Turkish boys. The presence of a group of (Turkish) boys and the solitude of Selim, when heading towards the group, enacts the Kurdish experience of being outnumbered and overpowered. The ice cream is a symbol of childhood memories, and symptomatic of the wish to live an innocent life, free of trouble or hatred. Moreover, there is a kind of knowingness about Selim’s thoughts, a rapid understanding of what is about to happen to him. This understanding could only come from the repeated, earlier experience of similar violence. He knows that his Kurdish background alone provokes the Turkish boys’ resentment. In the next scene, ‘[t]eenagers were streaming out of the gates, some stopping and watching, others looking away hurrying off. Flo lingered, uncertain what to do, then disappeared’\(^99\) and Çengiz teases Selim:

‘Nice friends you have. So, what you’re going to do now is you’re going to run around in a circle until I say you can stop and then you’re going to sing, “Çengiz is great, Çengiz is the boss, and I am a Kurdish wanker.” Right, run.’ Selim did nothing. Çengiz gave him a shove. Selim began to walk in a circle. ‘Run!’ Selim broke into a trot. ‘Sing!’ Selim repeated the Turkish words.\(^100\)

The circle of Turkish boys, within which Selim is running, presents collective “racial boundaries” of which Selim is exteriorised. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis argue, inclusions and exclusions from group identity take place because of perceived racial ‘boundaries’.\(^101\) Çengiz’s awareness of his own collective Turkish identity and his exclusion of Selim causes him not only to inferiorise Selim but to view Europeans in a racist way, calling them ‘potatoes’: ‘In German, you idiot! So these potatoes here can understand you.’\(^102\) The German audience watch the Turkish boys’ humiliation of Selim, embodying a global audience witnessing the Kurdish status as “servants” in relation to their Turkish “masters”. When Selim says: ‘I don’t know how to say it in German’\(^103\) Çengiz punishes him to demonstrate that Kurds are ruled by the Turks: ‘[… Selim] took the blows as he had taken most things in his life, silently, in the expectation that this, too,

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98 Ibid., p.93.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., p.94.
101 Anthias and Yuval-Davis, p.1.
102 The Registrar’s Manual, p.94
103 Ibid.
would pass.’

Selim has only two choices: either to accept being racially discriminated against or to be vulnerable to violence. The novel explores Selim’s inner physiological world while he is receiving ‘blows’. He accepts the blows and waits for the pain to pass.

Inspired by the politics of the Turkish republic, The Turkish boys reject every attempt at Turkish-Kurdish friendship. The German teacher wants to teach students about Kurdish-Turkish brotherhood. The Turkish students do not listen to these “boring lessons”, which raise Kurds to social positions of Turks:

[I]n his leather briefcase, he [the teacher] carried a stack of photocopied A4 sheets, the pages of a brief story about a football-loving Kurdish boy who, against all odds, makes friends with a football-loving Turkish boy. To be fair, the class did not immediately explode. For one, the back row was busy making paper planes and penis sculptures out of the pages and therefore ignored the words. Then Dwayn Olshevsky loudly objected to being given a story about gays. Then Dynasty Schmidt told Dwayn Olshevsky to shut up. That it’s a story about kids and stop being such pervert.

Olshevsky thus awakens Turkish boys about this friendly relationship. The politics of nation-statehood stimulates the Turks’ racial drives and they refuse to view Turks and Kurds on the same level. This is because Turkish-Kurdish racial equality disadvantages Turkish superiority in “the modern developed world”. Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood argue that ‘race’ is a misleading method of classifying groups since human categorisation is driven by politics rather than science. The politics of race, in the form of the fake scientific evidence, motivates Murat, who is worried about sharing the same racial and political status with Kurds, in the classroom:

The trouble started when Murat, intrigued by Dwayn’s comment, unfolded his paper plane, read the first line of the story and stood up to share his opinion. ‘The Kurds don’t have any land and that’s where the trouble starts and why they’re all dreck,’ he announced calmly. ‘At least we came here as Gastarbeiter but they’re asylum fakes and scroungers and there’s no way I’m going to read a story about a PKK brat.’

Murat refuses to become involved in the Kurdish-Turkish story, and instead emphasising his Turkishness. Not only does he oppose Kurds in actual life, but he resists them in the fictional world. This ideology reiterates the fact that Murat’s racialisation is driven by

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104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., p.96.
Turkey’s Westernisation, a representation also explored in The Lost Word. An obvious example of Turkey’s self-Occidentalisation is found during Çengiz’s quarrel with Dynasty, the German girl in the classroom, in which he stresses the visible dichotomy between wealthy Turks and poor Kurds:

‘In Turkey,’ Dynasty, who considered herself neutral, said slowly, deliberately: ‘[…] The Kurds are not allowed to learn Kurdish in Turkey, even though the Turks are allowed to learn Turkish in Germany’.
‘Yeah but it’s Turkey, Turkey pays for our lessons and mosques here, with my taxes and good money!’ Çengiz yelled.
‘Çengiz, you don’t pay any taxes,’ Dynasty pointed out.
‘Whatever. Ask your PKK pimps and junkies to send over cash to pay for your Kurdish lessons if you’re so fucking keen.’

Çengiz perceives himself as equal to the Germans rather than the Kurds. He tries to keep the dividing line which differentiates Turks with Kurds in an inferior way. As Charles Wilson argues, ‘difference is equated to inferiority’ for the racist. However, Dynasty exposes Çengiz to criticism since Çengiz says that he pays taxes even though this is unreasonable for a teenager his age.

Although the teacher asks both Murat and Çengiz to show ‘respect’, Çengiz continues to humiliate the Kurds: ‘… And fuck all Kurds. FUCK ALL KURDS** and Hakan screams to Selim and other Kurdish boys in the classroom: ‘YOU ARE SLAVES! YOU ARE OUR SLAVES!’** Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ‘in the Turkish Hearth (Türk Ocağı) in Akhisar [a Western district of Turkey] on 10 October, 1925’ publicly announced: ‘Gentlemen, uncivilised people are doomed to be trodden under the feet of civilised people’. Turkish racial ideology, Soner Cagaptay remarks, stems from the perception that ‘the Turks belonged to the white race’. This ‘was deeply rooted in Atatürk’s personal convictions’ and ‘his offence at Western racism’, which considered the Turks as ‘“the yellow race”’. This wound is only healed by denying the Kurds’ humanity in the novel. In the Turkish embassy where Selim and the narrator go to

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111 Ibid., p.98.
112 Atatürk’s speech in the Turkish Hearth (Türk Ocağı) in Akhisar on 10th October, 1925 (cited in Zeydanlioglu, p.155).
complete the marriage paperwork, Selim is again humiliated but takes it silently. Yet, because she is European, the narrator cannot accept any insult. She grows angry with the Turkish bureaucrat:

He [the bureaucrat] mumbled an aside to a young clerk at the back of the room. I felt Selim stiffen, but he pretended not to have heard the remark, the insult. And I felt a rush of anger, an urge to shout at the official, No, you’re the stupid one, you’re the one who doesn’t get it, I know exactly what I’m getting into.¹¹⁴

Unlike the German girl, Selim is accustomed to racist humiliation. She, who has never been vulnerable to racism, finds such treatment inappropriate:

Appearing insincere and sinister before a bureaucrat, that would not have affected me. I would even have quite enjoyed it. But being studied with that kind of pity laced with disdain, or disdain laced with pity, being marked as stupid and malleable, that hurt my pride in a way I had never before considered possible. In fact, I had never before considered the importance of pride, or honour, had never realised they meant so much to me.¹¹⁵

The novel’s German narrator deeply empathises with Selim. She observes that unless one feels the situation of vulnerable victims to racist behaviour, understanding Selim’s experience of being racially devalued is difficult. She notes that, for Europeans, subjection to racism is not an experience, but a phenomenon to be observed. The “Western subject” is largely shielded from racial mistreatment, whereas Selim’s life “must be” one of humility, as Kurds are derogatorily viewed by Turkey.

Chapter Conclusion

I have examined the ways in which Baydar’s The Lost Word and Hardach’s The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages expose colonial discourse as integral to the nationalist ideology on which modern Turkey is founded. Baydar depicts the state’s methods of becoming “the West”, a process I have referred to as the self-Occidentalisation of Turkey. Yet at the same time, the state perceives the southeastern region as the Orient. This idea is also propagated by the Turkish élite. The Turkish writer Ömer Eren, The Lost Word’s protagonist, and his wife, the scientist Elif, view themselves as Westerners in contrast to the Kurds. The “modernity” of the state

¹¹⁴ The Registrar’s Manual, p.179.
¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp.179-80.
implements a hierarchical system, whereby Turkey stands for modernity, rationality and the present, while the southeast represents the nation’s anachronistic and backward past. These novels critique Turkey’s exclusion of the Kurds, linking this exclusion to the fantasy of becoming European. *The Lost Word* exposes the idea that Turkey’s domination over the southeast is mediated through and empowered by the Occidental position of Turkishness. It is the state’s Westernisation which gives Turkey the right to act in the name of modernity to oppress the “uncivilised” East within its territories. Ironically, however, Turkey’s Ottoman past denies it access to European territories. Turkey is considered by Europeans as culturally distinct from the West. In *The Lost Word* and *The Registrar’s Manual*, identity is founded on contrast between Occident and Orient. Both writers criticise the role of racial ideology in bolstering the state’s self-fashioning as “Western” by emphasising dichotomies between “the races” of Turks and non-Turks. Classifying Turks as Europeans is a Turkish Orientalist strategy. This Orientalism is adopted by the novels’ Turkish literary protagonists as a means of perpetuating the view that Kurds and their region are culturally inferior. Finally, Baydar – by means of Ömer Eren – critiques Turkey’s perception of Kurds as “pre-modern”, and their land an “empty space”, for the modern state to perpetuate its “civilising mission”.


Chapter Two: Portraying Modernity’s Ambivalences, Nationalist Dualism and Ethnic Rejection

A feature of nationalist discourse that has generated considerable consensus is its Janus-faced quality. It presents itself both as a modern project that melts and transforms traditional attachments in favour of new identities and as a reaffirmation of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a presumed communal past.

Kandiyoti (1991, 431)

This chapter examines Laleh Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans* (2009), which depicts the Pahlavi Dynasty’s post-war Iranian nation-state building starting from 1921 until 1979. The novel encapsulates the inherent contradiction of Reza Shah and his son’s Persian nationalism. Nationalism resists Western domination in the novel, yet welcomes its “modernity” and adapts its Orientalism so as to claim that only “civilised” Persians belong to modern Iran. I examine the Persian nationalist adoption of Western Europe’s (mainly Britain’s and France’s) secularity in establishing the state while hailing the historical origins of the Persian nation. This chapter investigates the novel’s critical depictions of nationalist discourse, which presents the nation and the state as synchronic. I argue that twentieth-century Iranian nation-statehood is founded on colonial binary oppositions. I also analyse the ideologies of 1979 Islamic Iran in Khadivi’s *The Walking* (2013) and explore Iranian opposition to Western secularity in the novel. The new republic sustains Pahlavi’s exclusion of Kurds, who seek liberation from Iran. I argue that narrow definitions of nation-statehood – which was originally Western and applied by Pahlavis – create the same dichotomous world – as in *The Age of Orphans* – in *The Walking’s* Iran. This chapter also examines the poem ‘The Spoils, 1988’, in Choman Hardi’s poetry collection *Life for Us* (2004), which explores the Iraqi Ba’th’s pan-Arabism. ‘The Spoils, 1988’ narrates the story of the Anfal atrocities committed against the Iraqi Kurds in the late 1980s. I will not focus on the Anfal operations in the poem, but concentrate instead on the ideological discourse which led to the Anfalisation of the
Kurds. I examine the poem’s third stanza in which Iraqi “secular” Ba’th philosophy actually exploits Islam to wipe out Kurdish villagers. My investigation of the poem informs my discussion of Ba’thist nationalism’s European foundations. As the poem illustrates, the Ba’thist notion of Iraqi society’s Arabic character is partially a colonial remnant.

**The Europeanist-Nativist Juncture in Laleh Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans***

Laleh Khadivi’s debut novel *The Age of Orphans* (2009) focuses on the life of a Kurdish orphan in modern Iran using a range of voices and characters. The novel begins in 1921 with Reza Shah Pahlavi’s rise to power, his establishment of the modern state and his reign and that of his son until 1979. Khadivi fictionalises the history of the Pahlavis, whose Persian nationalist ideology excludes non-Persian ethnic groups through national modernisation/Westernisation. The Kurdish boy is born among the southern Zagros Mountains and is orphaned after Reza Shah’s army massacres his family, who resist the army’s intrusion onto their land in Kermanshah. The boy is later taken to the army barracks and conscripted. He is given a new name, Reza Pejman Khourdi. The state sends Reza to Tehran, where he finds a “modern” and “civilised” Tehrani girl to marry before he is promoted to captain. The state then returns him to his original home, Kermanshah, where he is responsible for repressing the “tribal” and “backward” Kurdish “rebels”. Reza grows increasingly aware of his hidden Kurdish identity during his life with his Tehrani wife, Meena. At the end of the novel, Meena dies and Reza is a lonely man, disconnected from his family, history and homeland.

Modernity promotes dissatisfaction with the present. It is a system of thought that critiques the nation’s past and present, for the sake of a “progressive” future. On the other hand, modernity has led to the assignment of nationalist identities by imposing cultural limitations inspired by the past. This historical ‘ambivalence’, as Homi Bhabha argues, is embedded within the spirit ‘modernity’,¹ which is the creator of the modern nation. Nationalism, thus, has been an effective ideology in modern times, but has proven an ambivalent doctrine, oscillating between the past and the present. There is a

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¹ Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation’ in *Nation and Narration*, pp.291-322 (p.294).
clear tension between nationalism’s indebtedness to traditional values and its self-fashioning as intrinsically modern. Khadivi critically depicts the Iranian/Persian nationalist architects as looking back at the past which has shaped the nation’s history, language and culture. However, Bhabha notes that ‘[n]ations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye.’

Modern Iran in *The Age of Orphans* considers that only Persians constitute the nation. Yet, all social groups, not solely Persians, have lived on Iranian soil. Non-Persians are deemed pre-modern, a phenomenon that hampers their membership of the “modern” country. The novel’s contemporary Iran presents itself paradoxically, as both historical and modern/Western-leaning. Alireza Asgharzadeh argues that Persian nationalists were motivated by the idea of Persian superiority constructed for them by European Orientalism:

Not only is the Iranian historiography a faithful replica of Orientalist/Western historiography, more importantly for the most part, the history of Iran has been constructed and produced by the institution of Orientalism’.

In *The Age of Orphans*, Reza Shah’s nationalism claims that Iran and the West have common historical roots. As Ali Ansari notes, Reza Pahlavi’s nationalism paradoxically urged citizens to adopt European lifestyles in order to embrace their Iranian origins.

Khadivi’s novel depicts nationalism as encouraging Persian characters to view themselves as superior to Kurds and other ethnicities. They consider themselves as descendants or kinsmen of “the White race”. Resembling Kemalist ideology in *The Lost Word*, Persian nationalism adopts the idea of Western modernity’s progress, whereby modern Iran eliminates what is perceived to be non-modern in *The Age of Orphans*.

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4 Asgharzadeh, p.82.
Partha Chatterjee discusses John Plamenatz’s analysis\(^6\) of the types of nationalism, observing that the “‘eastern’” nationalisms of ‘Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America’ have blatantly applied Western Europe’s models of ‘progress’ as a measure of their nations’ development. Chatterjee states that these models ‘were based upon a set of ideas “about man, morals and society”’.\(^7\) In the novel, Persian nationalism accommodates Western secularity while jeopardising different cultural identities within Iranian borders. An ambivalent Iran comes into existence; it applies Western political and cultural hegemonies, yet rejects its dominance. A Persian sergeant, teaching Persia’s history to young cadets in the barracks, proclaims Iran’s current independence from foreign powers:

*Ahead again, on and on, until 1795, the Qajars came to power, [...] our tobacco to Russia, our coal to England, our gold all over, wherever, to whomever. And we are a raped whore, sniveling on the outside and torn apart on the inside by barbaric tribes.*\(^8\)

Alongside criticising the regime before Reza Shah, the sergeant rejects European dominance over Iran. The cadet boys are laughing behind their desks at him, undermining the nationalist discourse that appears flimsy, tenuous and baseless. Although Persian nationalism figures in nationalist rhetoric as secular – in the European sense – the sergeant opposes Europeans. Moreover, nationalism marginalises all (non-Persian) groups, including those who share the same religious values with Persians. Shiism is integrated into secular ideologies, helping the nationalists to emphasise their distinctive Persian identity. The Kurds, such as Reza Khourdi’s family and relatives, also have Shiite affiliations: they murmur ‘Ya Ali’.\(^9\) But despite Kurds and Persians sharing the same religious faith in the novel, Shiism is still depicted as being concerned only with Persianness. In a letter to his mother, Jamsheed Ehaladan, a Tehrani Persian cadet in the military barracks, asks her to pray for the Shah: ‘[Y]ou should pray for him anyway when you go to the mosque this Friday, after all your regular prayers and after

\(^8\) *The Age of Orphans*, p.91.
\(^9\) Ibid., p.16 (Ali is the cousin of Prophet Muhammad. ‘Ya Ali’ is an expression used by Shi’a Muslims to seek refuge in Allah through Ali).
the prayers for my arms to get thicker’.\footnote{Ibid., p.110.} Participating in Friday prayers and praying for the Shah are obvious signs of nationalist Persians’ cultural religiosity. However, Ehaladan’s second demand for “a thicker arm” symbolises Persian nationalists’ determination to establish the “Iranian” nation-state’s principles by means of eradicating any obstacles that lie ahead.

I thus examine the novel’s critical assertion that the Shah’s nationalism endorses historically ideological notions of Persian identity. Even so, this nationalism hails that it embraces Western notions of secular democracy and scientific development. Persian nationalism, as represented by Ehaladan and the sergeant lecturer, is placed in opposition both to Iran’s non-Persian groups and to European powers. In his class, the sergeant refers to the tribes as disgusting and describes Reza Shah’s rise to power as an honour:

\textit{Ahead now; 1921 comes upon us like a miracle.}

\textit{He pants.}

\textit{Our glorious king, Reza Shah Pahlavi, rose out from the Cossack ranks to oust the imbecile Qajars from their ruinous throne and determine our Persia be an independent thing, a solid thing, belonging to no one aside from herself. Not the British or the Russians or the Austro-Hungarians, not the dirty tribes or their imbecile aghas.} \footnote{Ibid., p.92.}

Resembling Touraj Atabaki and Erik Jan Zurcher’s discussions on Reza Shah’s amalgamation of modernisation and Westernisation,\footnote{Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernisation Under Atatürk and Reza Shah, ed. by Touraj Atabaki and Erik Jan Zurcher (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003), p.5.} the sergeant promotes the modernisation of Iran as a desperate measure. Modernisation and Westernisation – both concepts almost mean the same since being “modern” is perceived by the nationalists to be Western (or Westernised) – help to eliminate the legacy of non-Persianness yet also to put an end to the European control of Iranian territories. The sergeant’s rejection of European dominance illustrates nationalism’s inbuilt contradiction. This is because, ironically, eliminating Iran’s ‘dirty tribes’ is itself based on the nationalist discourse of Westernisation. In addition, the sergeant familiarises the cadets with the expansion of Persia’s territory on world maps.\footnote{The Age of Orphans, pp.109-10.} He regards so highly the idea of nation-statehood by means of mapmaking that he “forgets” that it is a Western invention.
Despite the sergeant’s rejection of Western domination, one Persian lieutenant admires European culture. In Tehran, Reza Khourdi – the Kurdish boy in the beginning – is advised by the lieutenant to marry a Tehrani girl because Tehrani women have a European education. These conflicting nationalist attitudes about the West correspond with Plamenatz’s discussion about ‘“Eastern” nationalism’ that has taken root among those nations that encountered foreign ‘“civilisation”’. Yet, the foreign cultural values and modes of life were different from the Eastern ones. At the same time, Eastern nationalism lacks a suitable environment within its national culture to employ the derivative set of ‘standards of progress’. Therefore, Chatterjee notes, ‘Eastern’ nationalism’s task lies in reconstituting and altering the nation’s cultural forms and creating a ‘distinctive identity’. Nevertheless, Chatterjee further puts is, it has been seeking to re-establish ‘the national culture adapted to the requirements of progress, but retaining at the same time its distinctiveness’. As explained previously, the nationalist sergeant in his history class asserts Persia’s independence from the West, a perception which demonstrates Chatterjee’s point that ‘nationalism sets out to assert its freedom from European domination.’ However, the lieutenant’s suggestion that Reza Khourdi marries a Westernised Tehrani woman concurs with Chatterjee’s sense that nationalism is a ‘prisoner of the prevalent European intellectual fashions’. Persian nationalists in The Age of Orphans correspondingly belong neither to the East nor to the West. Yet, both East and West merge in their ideological domains.

Taking pride in their national identity, nationalists adopt colonial approaches towards non-Persians. Non-Persian histories are perceived to be no longer valid. The novel’s depictions overtly critique this contradictory process. As Chatterjee discusses in relation to Plamenatz:

The [Eastern nationalism’s] attempt [of adopting European cultures yet emphasising the nation’s ‘distinctive identity’] is deeply contradictory: ‘It is both imitative and hostile to the models it imitates …’ It is imitative in that it accepts the value of the standards set by the alien culture. But it also involves a rejection: ‘in fact, two rejections both of them ambivalent: rejection of the alien intruder and dominator who is nevertheless to be imitated and surpassed by his own standards,

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14 Ibid., p.160.
15 Chatterjee, p.2.
16 Ibid., p.10.
17 Ibid.
and rejection of ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity’.

The novel illustrates the dualism of Persian nationalism. Two different nationalist attitudes clash; they are both anti- and pro-Western, espousing cultural values which inform Iranian/Persian modernity. Ernest Gellner argues that nationalism imitates ‘a high culture’ even while asserting its desire to protect ‘folk culture’. These traits in *The Age of Orphans*’s representations of Persian nationalism accord with Ansari’s sense that ‘[a]ppeals to a sense of Aryan ethnicity and a pre-Islamic Zoroastrian heritage were echoed in the sentiments and actions of Reza Khan’. In novel, historical heritage figures as a European creation that is adopted by Persian modernists, who wish to embrace Iran’s non-Islamic identity. The Persians are proud of their historical literary texts such as Shahnameh in the novel. Meena’s brother tries to educate his brother-in-law, “the illiterate” Reza. Among the books he uses for teaching is ‘Shahnameh’. Another Tehranian lieutenant irritates Captain Reza Khourdi because of the lieutenant’s excessive “nativist” feeling and Westernised behaviour in the military barracks in Kermanshah: ‘[H]is tireless reciting of the Shahnameh; his odious habit of speaking French at any opportunity’. Reciting the Shahnameh irks Reza since it is all about “the greatness” of the Persian race and Persian kings. The Tehranian lieutenant is thus described as ‘clumsy’, ‘heavy and brusque’, as though he embodies the nationalist ideology of the modern state.

The book of Shahnameh, which is a Persian epic, is a reference to an actual historical and literary book by the famous Persian poet Ferdowsi (940 – 1020 CE). Asgharzadeh notes that Shahnameh was an attempt to glorify the superiority of ‘Persian race, culture, and language’ over other ‘non-Persian and non-Aryan races’. Nationalists in the novel exploit Shahnameh’s themes in order to construct their national identity.

18 Ibid., p.2.
20 Ansari, p.32.
21 Asgharzadeh notes: ‘The word Shahnameh literally means the Book of Kings. Its theme is an imaginary story of Fars/Persian race and its rulers, from the very beginning up to the Islamic-Arabic overthrow of the Sasanid dynasty in the seventh century’ (Asgharzadeh, p.57).
22 *The Age of Orphans*, p.192.
23 Ibid., p.239.
24 Ibid.
25 Asgharzadeh, p.57.
Despite this national nostalgia for Persian history, the Persians consistently take pride in their familiarity with English and French. During Reza’s marriage proposal to Meena (the Tehran girl, daughter of the late bookseller Iraj Ebadi), her mother conflates smartness and Europeanness:

_This is Haleh, the youngest. […] Not as smart as her sister. Meena can speak French. You know her baba [dad]. God bless his departed soul, was determined they both become “modern” Iranian women. But I said nah, nah, nah. One at a time. Who knows how long this modernity is going to last. Best be safe._  

Modern sophistication in the novel is indicated by Meena’s French language competence. In the context of Reza Shah’s Westernisation, Atabaki and Zurcher refer to Iran’s intelligentsia’s demand for ‘blind submission to the Western civilisation’. Meena’s shorts are French and when the Shah delivers the New Year’s speech ‘[t]here is a small orchestra of European instruments’. The school dresses are Europeanised too. One of Meena’s sons quotes her: ‘Our maman [mum] said, _Now this is how little boys and girls in England dress, you should be proud, they are very smart._’ The son further talks about Meena during the time of military parades in Kermanshah:

> Our maman came to the parades with red color on her lips and cheeks in a very tight jacket and skirt, like a man’s suit for a woman, but so tight that she couldn’t breathe very much. She would sit under a parasol with the men from the modernising committee, who wore dark suits and oil in their hair […]. Our maman did not talk to Nivad’s [Kurdish] mother […]. Our maman talked only to the men on the modernising committee, who held her parasol and lit her cigarette.

Wearing tight clothes, sitting under parasols and women smoking cigarettes are not Middle Eastern traditions during Reza Shah’s formation of Iran. Here, I do not deny the fact that traditions are – and could be – made and unmade. My point is that Pahlavi nationalism, as it appears in the novel, imposes Western dress code in order to look “modern”, aiming to inferiorise non-Persians. Ansari observes that Reza Shah’s enforcing of a ‘dress code’ was a means for modern nationalists to push people to ‘think’ in the way Europeans do. This policy was ideologically defended, ‘by an appeal to

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27 Atabaki and Zurcher, p.7.
29 Ibid., p.200.
30 Ibid., p.231.
31 Ibid., pp.234-5.
ancient Iran, arguing that since, as Western historians had discovered, Iran and the west shared common historical origins.\textsuperscript{32}

“Thinking about” Europe substantially feeds Persian nationalism as Meena dreams of establishing a ‘modern country to be proud of in this modern world’\textsuperscript{33} Hiedeh, one of Reza’s daughters, describes Meena at bedtimes:

Every night before we fell asleep, Maman stood in front of the map, [...] she pronounced the names of oceans, seas, mountains, countries. It was our trick to avoid sleeping, to sing back her pronunciation of \textit{Amree-kah! Rusee-ia! EE-ta-lee-ah!} and her trick to have us dream outside of what we knew.\textsuperscript{34}

Persian nationalism thus encourages dreams, in the form of mythmaking about the nation’s future. These dreams, for Meena, are realised by means of a Europeanised Iranian lifestyle. Despite this, Khadivi’s \textit{The Age of Orphans} depicts people as being uncomprehending of the European cultures they are embracing. Reza’s son says:

When I was six, baba ordered that a cinema be built in our town [Kermanshah]. When they showed the film \textit{The Great Ziegfield} a man from the modernising committee walked up and down the aisle shouting, \textit{Imagine those buildings, imagine those cars! Kermanshah of the future could look just like that.} [...] [T]he audience shouted back at him, \textit{Choke up! Be quiet! We are watching cinema!} The frustrated state employee yelled back, \textit{Choke up yourself! What do you need quiet for? You can’t even understand English!}\textsuperscript{35}

The incident illustrates how individuals act in blind submission to general principles laid out by the Pahlavis. They are merely parroting Western cultures in accordance with the constructed ideals of Iranian modernisation. Moreover, the scene in the cinema represents Persian nationalism’s unconditional adherence to other cultural values and practices as imitative rather than innate. Most seriously, the audience’s uncomprehending adherence to another culture reveals the emptiness of nationalist projects.

\textbf{Modernity and Non-Persians}

For the novel’s Persian characters, the Shah’s “modernisation” is a blessing. However, non-Persians are pessimistic due to their marginal status in Iran’s Persian-focused

\textsuperscript{32} Ansari, p.47.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{The Age of Orphans}, pp.178-9.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p.268.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p.232.
modernity. In one of the novel’s sections entitled ‘The Baker’s Son’, Karaj, who is a non-Persian conscript, narrates the Kurdish boy’s first moments in the barracks when he was brought in by a Persian sergeant. He trains the boy in the complicated amalgamation which constitutes the state’s modernity. Although Karaj is not a major character in The Age of Orphans, his attitudes represent non-Persian perspectives on the Iranian nation-state’s modernisation:

Listen, I tell the Kurd boy. Do you see that cadet over there? The one with the sandbag cheeks and big behind? He farts so massively in his sleep that you will want to pinch your nose tightly and breathe only through your mouth.\textsuperscript{36}

The hot air and immovability of sandbags symbolise the emptiness and artificiality of the Shah’s projects. Karaj’s own conscription occurred after the Shah soldiers burned down his father’s bakery and the school in his home town, Ramsar, in the mountains north of Iran.\textsuperscript{37} Karaj ironically and teasingly outlines the Shah’s nationalist projects to the Kurdish boy. As with Turkey, the establishment of Iran’s “modern” regime thus rests on locating non-Persians outside the nation’s modern limits.

Ansari argues that ‘modernity’ is seen by many as the predecessor of ‘nationalism’ in Europe, whereas it was nationalism which gave birth to ‘modernisation’ in Iran. Nationalist ideology, Ansari suggests, perceives modernising projects as shoring up ‘the nation’. He maintains that Reza Shah exploited nationalism’s enthusiasm ‘to forge a modern army through conscription and enforce Iran’s national integrity by eliminating those forces which appeared to harm the power and authority of the state’.\textsuperscript{38} The conscription of orphans such as Karaj and the Kurdish boy not only strengthens modern Iran, but also promises its Persianification and Westernisation. But it must be remembered that non-Persians “must be grateful”, no less than Persians. As Karaj ironically says:

The lies exhaust me and I close with a flourish. Service to the Shah is an honor full of rewards you cannot imagine! Today is the first day of your blessed existence. Befaymin! With all my heart the army of the Shah of Persia, soon to be Iran, welcomes you!\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.68.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p.69.
\textsuperscript{38} Ansari, p.17.
\textsuperscript{39} The Age of Orphans, p.70.
Purging the Kurdish boy of his non-Persian background is the king’s supposed “reward” for modern Iranians. Karaj’s ironic portrayal of the state’s “purification” of the Kurdish boy is part of the triangulation of Reza Shah’s nationalisation which resembles that which Shahrzad Mojab calls ‘centralization of state power, Westernization and modernization’.\footnote{Shahrzad Mojab, ‘The Solitude of the Stateless: Kurdish Women at the Margins of Feminist Knowledge’ in \textit{Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds}, ed. by Shahrzad Mojab (California, USA: Mazda Publishers, 2001), (pp.1-24), pp.6-7.} Karaj indirectly informs the Kurdish boy that Persian ethnic hegemony will soon dominate Iran. Thus, Persian nationalism appropriates Western colonial discourse and directs it at non-Persians in the name of progress. Gellner states: ‘Nationalism sees itself as a natural and universal ordering of the political life of mankind’.\footnote{Gellner, p.48.} This clearly applies to Iran in the novel, since the Shah considers his policy as the most appropriate method of nation-building. Karaj criticises the Shah’s despotism and – ironically – tells the Kurdish boy that Iranian modernisation requires drastic actions. He deconstructs the state’s modernity that has only represented worshipping the dictator Reza Shah:

> We are all here in this sweltering nowhere, our food is deliciously rotted, the morning tea smells like my baba’s armpits and we have to go around slaughtering the likes of you all day and all night in the name of some imaginary king. A soldier’s dream, wouldn’t you say? The Kurd orphan stares, unsmiling.\footnote{The Age of Orphans, p.68.}

Eliminating “Others” is a precondition for the Shah’s progress, and Karaj critiques the empty compliance with nationalist ideology by an ‘imaginary king’. The Kurdish orphan is also puzzled by the Shah’s newly introduced nationalist doctrine, which makes no sense to non-Persians.

Creating a little Europe within Iran is implemented at the expense of minorities’ marginalisation. When Karaj wakes from his sleep, under the military tent, he sees the boy is pleased by showing himself as an enthusiastic recruit. Karaj is told by other soldiers: ‘\textit{The sergeant will be pleased, Karaj, you are raising the perfect cadet’}.\footnote{Ibid., p.71.} The novel traces the indoctrination of a ten year old (orphan) Kurdish boy to a modernisation project which Karaj describes as fake:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{The Age of Orphans, p.68.}
  \item Ibid., p.71.
\end{itemize}
I drag him back into the tent, lightly smack his grinning head and wonder if such instant orphaning and instant adoption will beset the Kurd boy as a blessing or a curse. Either way, he is my brother now and his jovial face fans my hot mood. Listen, I tell him. See that soldier over there? The one with his rifle across his shoulders, the serious looking one? Every night he wets himself in his sleep! Can you believe it? A grown soldier of the great shah! Pissing like a baby! The Kurd boy smiles and I smile too, like two brothers sharing the same joke.44

Karaj articulates the novel’s counter-discourse against the Shah’s nationalist myth of creating “modern” and “developed” Iran. He distances the boy from other soldiers since the boy’s Kurdishness will prevent him from becoming a member of the nation. The novel provides a critical perspective on Iran’s selective exclusions by means of Karaj.

The Masked Persian Under the “Iranian”

The Shah’s modernity is designed by, and for, Persians. On a hot summer day, Reza Shah himself visits the barracks where he meets the newly recruited Persian and non-Persian – the latter portrayed in the novel as “orphans” – cadets. The cadets stand in columns awaiting the Shah, and Reza Khourdi is positioned between Baluchi twins. The Shah starts questioning the row of boys:

*And you, my son you are a child of which province?*

Reza listens to the responses.

*Tabriz; Khorramabad; Tehran, Agha Shah; Mashhad; Schomal; Rasht, like yourself Agha Shah …*

*Very good. A willing conscript, I see, a smart city boy. Here to make your father proud, I am sure.*45

Reza Shah’s cheerful greetings with the civilised Persian “city boys” accords with his actual addresses to the new Iranian army: ‘Gentlemen! Our dear homeland stands in urgent need of its brave sons … Be alert and diligent: the dust of Ardashir is watching over you.’46 His high spirits are dampened when he stops in front of non-Persian cadets:

*The Shah and his aides stand before the Baluch twin whose ear is missing a large top piece. He approaches the boy and fingers the wound with a gentle touch of his gloved hand.*

*Conscription?*

*The boy nods.*

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44 Ibid., p.71-2.
45 Ibid., p.95.
And you are a child of which devious province, my son?
Baluchistan.
And your father thought he was more powerful than me?
—
And he tried to resist your conscription and now you’ve been branded a miscreant?
[...]
Some things must be done by force, my son, and now you know that, but lest you forget ...
The Shah pinches the injured ear until blood drips onto the cadet’s shoulder.47

The Shah justifies his nationalist repression of the Baluchi people, deeming their province ‘devious’. When the Shah hears the word ‘Kurdistan’ while asking about Reza Khourdi’s province, he says: ‘A Kurd then? […] You are a troubled people. Troublesome ...

The Shah’s use of derogatory expressions to the non-Persian boys implies that he views the Baluchi and Kurdish boys as dangerous bastards whom he has reluctantly adopted.

Atabaki and Zurcher indicate that unsuccessful attempts by Reza Shah’s (and Kemal Atatürk’s in Turkey) predecessors to modernise the country in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries nevertheless introduced ‘the practice of authoritarian modernisation in post-World War I Turkey and Iran’.49 In the military barracks, the Shah’s portrait begins a monologue. The Shah, in this scene, reveals his personal ideology about Iran’s past and future. He justifies his own strict Persiocentric outlook, identifying non-Persianness as his principle challenge:

I am a man partial to spilt blood. I administer war regularly and with great panache […] in the name of a greater notion: nation. […] My men and I […] do the dirty work and in doing so make our glorious Persian past a modern thing, a proper thing, a thing to belong in the world of tanks and war and one-faced fear.50

This surreal literary device is effective because it extends and explores the metaphor of the Shah being all-pervasive, present in every official room. His eyes are everywhere; here you see that his portrait speaks to everyone, conveying not merely his power alone, but also his ideology. The novel criticises the Shah’s inner ideological discourse, which assumes nationalist repressions to be sacred for the sake of “modernness”. The surreal

47 The Age of Orphans, pp.95–6.
48 Ibid., p.96.
49 Atabaki and Zurcher, p.5.
50 The Age of Orphans, p.99.
device is therefore a way of intervening critically in Shah’s pervasive presence. It makes the portrait speak the words that are hidden, the violence that lies beneath his rhetoric. Khadivi’s literary representation of postcolonial Iranian nationalism in *The Age of Orphans* lends support to Gellner’s argument that ‘nationalism’ is rarely detached from the contexts of ‘colonialism, imperialism and de-colonisation’. Gellner observes that European occupation of most of the world’s territories, which was a prerequisite for Europe’s industrial growth, affected both Asian occupied and unoccupied lands. Western colonialism gives rise to Persian nationalism, enforcing particular kinds of order on national life in the novel. Anthony Smith notes that nationalism aimed to establish potent ‘nation-states’ and collapse ‘various localisms of region, dialect, custom and clan’ at the beginning. It resisted ‘feudal practices and oppressive imperial tyrannies’ and announced ‘the sovereignty of the people and the right of all peoples to determine their own destinies, in states of their own’. He further discusses that resisting ‘imperial and colonial administrations, so much so that for a time it seemed indistinguishable from popular democracy’ during ‘nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ was the task of nationalists. However, Smith also states, nationalisms became dictators as ‘imperial and colonial rulers had found ways to siphon off the force of nationalism from its democratic base’. Despite Smith’s justification of nationalism’s dictatorships, I still contest Smith’s use of the terms ‘people’ and ‘nation-state’ that were viewed by nationalisms before the “toxication” caused by colonial and imperial interferences Smith refers to, because “people” is a general term, which misleadingly marks all ethnicities with the ideals of nation-statehood in favour of one ethnicity. Moreover, nationalism’s very totalisation of the people Smith prefers makes no way to democratic citizenship since the beginning of nationalist rule. In *The Age of Orphans*, the authority is in the hands of “Persians”, who represent all Iranian “people(s)”. Although Persians perceive nationalism as resisting imperial powers in the novel, this same nationalism enacts new varieties of oppressions towards non-Persians.

Ehaladan, a Persian cadet in the barracks, explains to his Tehrani mother in his letter that Persian men’s burdens are many. He describes Reza Shah’s role as essential as well

51 Gellner, p.42.
53 Ibid., pp.1-2
as timely at what he sees as a critical moment of nation-making: ‘Mostly we study the magnificence of great shah. Agha Reza Pahlavi [...]. He is great enough to be God himself.’\textsuperscript{54} For Ehaladan, Reza Shah is a necessary historical prerequisite for nationalist modernisation. Ehaladan is therefore happy to carry out his national tasks: ‘I am well and fine so do not stretch your heart to worry for me. Even if there is only a little sunlight, it is beautiful here.’\textsuperscript{55} The mythmaking apparatus operates alongside nationalisation as Ehaladan seems to have been inculcated with stories of the Shah’s “great projects” for the “Persian nation”:

Just yesterday the commanders kept us awake until dawn piling stones and then unpiling them and piling them again and we sweated in the dark night like animals but the commanders tell us again and again the work of making a great Persia will demand thick arms all around.\textsuperscript{56}

Complying with the demands of modernity is depicted as a humiliating and arduous process in Iran. Yet the commanders teach the young cadets that it is for the sake of modernising the country under the leadership of Persians. On the mouth of Ehaladan, Khadivi depicts the nationalistic methods of giving birth to the greatness of Persia as being problematic and inhumane. Giving the authority of speaking to Ehaladan, as a Persian character, makes the novel’s critical portrayals of Iranian modern nation-building authentic and factual.

Gellner provides ‘provisional definitions’ of what he calls – and critiques – the ‘contingent idea of nation’. One of the definitions is that ‘[t]wo men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture,’ which ‘means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating’.\textsuperscript{57} In \textit{The Age of Orphans}, this problematic contingency of the state’s nationalism excludes non-Persians. The Persian and non-Persian boys in the barracks must ‘sit supplicant before’ the Shah’s ‘framed portrait’ and say: ‘\textit{God praise the Persian nation, and God protect His Most Honorable Majesty, the King of Kings, Shahenshah Pahlavi. The first’}.\textsuperscript{58} The idea of nationhood consolidates the superiority of Persianness, and the Shah’s portrait is a symbol of the prescribed hero-worship of a Persian leader. The non-Persian cadets are

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{The Age of Orphans}, p.110.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.111.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p.109.
\textsuperscript{57} Gellner, p.7.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{The Age of Orphans}, pp.88-9.
trained to conceive the nation as only consisting of Persians. When the sergeant lecturer
in his history class says: ‘We are a young nation’,⁵⁹ he refers to the “Persian nation”. Furthermore, the Shah’s monologue states that he fights ‘belligerent Qashqai and Lur tribes in the name of a greater notion: nation’.⁶⁰ He also praises his ‘brigades and divisions’ for being ‘successful against Simko [a Kurdish leader], the Bakhtiyari in deserts and mountains north and west’.⁶¹ The Shah not only deems ‘nation’ to be equivalent to Persian ethnicity, but as justification for eliminating other groups in Iran.

According to actual history, although Persian ethnocentric racialisation has run throughout Persian history,⁶² European historiography of Iran (Persia) divided it into ethnic hierarchical groupings and glorified the notion of Aryanism. Asgharzadeh argues that the West’s representation of Iranian history marginalised non-Persians’ role in Iranian ‘civilization’. Since the eighteenth century, both ‘nationalist’ and ‘Orientalist historiography’ have excluded non-Persians, claiming in ‘the early twentieth century’ that only ‘the Persians’ possess Iran.⁶³ It is not only an outcome of Persian nationalism but also the product of historical and political discourses about Iran. Asgharzadeh further illustrates:

[T]erms such as Aryan, Indo-European, Aryanism, and Indo-Europeanism were constructed and reconstructed by European scholars in order to craft an identity, an origin, as well as a homeland for Europe’s white race. This was of course one side of the story. The other side was to construct an identity for certain ethnic groups in places such as Iran and India in which the absurd Aryan myth was to be grounded. Understandably, when certain ethnic groups in Eastern societies came to realize in the wake of Oriental constructions that they were Aryans, and hence, supposedly superior, they tried to take advantage of this newfound identity in numerous ways.⁶⁴

The legacy of this European influence in shaping modern Iran is demonstrated by the mindsets of the novel’s Persian protagonists. It is the year 1935 in the novel when the Persian Captain Gholam Ali Ansari writes a letter from the Kurdish town of Saqqez to the capital Tehran. Captain Ansari refers to the country’s modern name: ‘Iran (as I have heard we are officially named now, per the suggestion of the German Chancellor to His

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⁵⁹ Ibid., p.93.
⁶⁰ Ibid., p.99.
⁶¹ Ibid.
⁶² Asgharzadeh, p.54.
⁶⁴ Ibid., p.77.
Most Imperial Majesty). The irony here is that a European, not Iranians themselves, has named the country as ‘Iran’.

The main purpose of Captain Ansari’s letter from Saqqez is to propose the temporary assignment of Reza Khourdi in Tehran, and then in Kermanshah permanently, to serve “national” ends. He states that the Iranian Royal Army Battalion in Saqqez has destroyed ‘the Kurdish rebels Simko and Dizli’ and Saqqez’s residents ‘now possess endless gratitude for Your Kingly Favor and are […] eager to enter among the security-revering and tranquillity-worshipping citizens of our burgeoning nation, Iran’. Despite Saqqez’s perceived happiness about clearing the town of “brigands” and “bandits”, he further endorses the people’s claim to “modernisation”. However, modernisation equals to “Persianification” campaigns, such as opening ‘a school of the Persian language’ and constructing ‘a road connecting their small hamlet to the Great Capital Tehran and other amenities’. The striking contradiction within Captain Ansari’s ideas appears when he separates Kurds and Persians, two ethnicities from an “Indo-European background”. This has political implications, as Asgharzadeh and Amir Hassanpour argue that the Kurds’ ‘Indo-European’ background ‘did not prevent them from becoming subject to various genocidal acts of racism’ such as in ‘Indo-Europeanist Iran’. Captain Ansari’s understanding of the idea of nation is highly questionable because he later says that Saqqez’s people are ‘full blooded in their enthusiasm to renounce all Kurdish identities […]’. Accordingly, Kurdishness does not belong to modern Iranian nation. Captain Ansari thus emphasises a Persian/Kurdish binary while asking for Reza’s permanent assignment in Kermanshah:

I would like to distinguish […] a singular cadet of our division […]. His name is Reza Pejman Khourdi (a son of your own) […]. The cadet I mention is himself a Kurd, an early tribal conscript orphaned on the battlefields of Kermanshah. He makes no claim to comprehend his previous language or culture but clearly possesses a keen understanding of the specific sensibilities unique to the Kurds and thus was able to identify transgressions and resistances invisible to us.

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65 The Age of Orphans, p.141.
66 Ibid., p.140-1.
67 Ibid., p.141.
69 The Age of Orphans, p.141.
70 Ibid., p.142-3.
Kurdish language and culture are differentiated from those of Persian and Captain Ansari problematises his previous claim about Saqqez’s people’s high spirits. It is irrational for Saqqez’s people to be happy with the Iranian (Persian) army’s control, because Captain Ansari obviously demeans Kurdish language and culture. It is at such moments that nationalism exploits culture as the basic building blocks of the nation. Anshuman Mondal contests Gellner’s claim that “[n]ationalism is primarily a political principle’, instead arguing that culture also plays an effective role in modern nation-making. For Mondal, nationalism is also cultural: “[M]odernity is not an enclave of pure instrumental reason but rather the harbinger of a new type of politics hitherto unknown in the world: cultural politics.” Mondal concludes that ‘in modernity political logic is itself restructured so that “culture” became its fundamental rationale’. The Persian culture is the basis of the foundation of the modern Iranian state in *The Age of Orphans*. However, it is politics that mobilises and (re)constructs Persian culture since Persian nationalists follow the Western Orientalist arguments of linking “original” Persian roots to the West. In the novel, the modern Iranian state Westernises the nation as a means of “embracing” Persians’ cultural origins; therefore, it welcomes “civilised and Westernised Persians” exclusively. The notion of “Iranian”, thus, represents the political, and cultural, terminology of “Persian”.

**The Aftermath of Nation-Building**

Like Oya Baydar’s *The Lost Word* and Sophie Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual’s Kemalism*, racial “Othering” in *The Age of Orphans* is depicted by Khadivi as being central to Reza Shah’s nationalism. *The Age of Orphans* exposes the alienating racialisation on which Iranian modernity is founded. Multi-ethnic cadets have bonded like brothers before the Shah’s visit to the barracks. The familial nature of this relationship pre-dates the cadets’ encounter with the ideas of nation-statehood, in which state and nation are presented as a single entity. After the visit, the boys start resenting each other and degrading one another’s ethnicities:

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72 Ibid., p.3.
Hastily, easily, the brotherhood disbands. Coagulates of new boys, formed in the sticky classroom and formed in the sweaty bunks and formed in their own happy imaginations, dissolve and the fraternity gives way to an easy enmity made of pointed finger ha ha ha. What were before boys, simple of mind and manner, are now complications of ascendancy and memory [...]. So starts the segregation: them and us; the other and the I; the sophisticate and the savage; civilized and ingrate; the good and the undesired.73

This description shows the contrast between the extended metaphor with its literary language (‘coagulates’ … ‘sticky’) and the crude and unanalytical ‘pointed figure ha ha’. This is an unpleasant idea. It contrasts with the nobility of a ‘brotherhood’, suggesting close bonds and united principles, to more degraded and undesirable alliances. The lack of punctuation here, too, suggests unthinking finger-pointing without any true rationale other than cruelty and racialisation. The language use portrays the politics of the modern state as denying and resisting the coexistence of different groups. Persians, Baluchs, Lurs, Turkomans, Arabs, Shahsevans, Bakhtiyaris and Kurds – all these melted into the ideals of newly founded “Iranian/Persian nation” – become enemies to one another in the barracks. Thus, it is the modern Iranian state that creates the modern Iranian nation, not the other way round. Gellner critiques the idea of inseparability and concurrency of nation and state. He maintains that nations are as contingent as the states could be and yet, nation and state are probably not concomitant. Accordingly, he argues that ‘[t]he state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation’ and ‘[s]ome nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their own state’. However, Gellner acknowledges that ‘[i]t is more debatable whether the normative idea of the nation, in its modern sense, did not presuppose the prior existence of the state’.74 In The Age of Orphans, it is the Iranian state, as a consequence of nationalist modernity, that constructs the nation – the same is true of Turkey in The Lost Word. The Turkish state constructs what is called “the Turkish nation” consisted of both Turks and non-Turkish members such as Kurds in the novel. Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans portrays the formation of Iranian state in the way that Mondal suggests: ‘Nations […] are the arenas constructed by such organizations, the most powerful of which is the modern state itself’.75 The state, as a modern institution, forms the nation based on nationalist polarities in the

73 The Age of Orphans, pp.96-7.
74 Gellner, p.6.
75 Mondal, p.4.
Despite the newly-created ethnic dichotomies in the novel, a small number of the barracks’ cadets mourn the brotherhood they have lost in the wake of the Shah’s amalgamation of state and nation:

Few, however, are sad as Reza is sad, his sleepy heart broken by the loss of the brother love born so easily between them all on those first days, free of history and the gun-strong determination of this new state.

The melancholic barracks acts like a microcosm for the nation-state. Reza Khourdi’s sadness represents a deep criticism of Persian nationalist modes of forming nationhood. Narrow definitions of nation-statehood promote asymmetrical relationships among the social groups.

Inspired by the remnants of European colonialism and Persian historical racialisation, Persian protagonists belittle “unwanted” subjects. As Étienne Balibar argues, ‘a fluctuating combination of continued exteriorization and “internal exclusion”’ is a colonial remnant. The sergeant lecturer refers to some groups of non-Persians as ‘barbaric tribes’ and a Persian captain, on another occasion, calls them ‘the dirty tribes’. Another old Persian captain in the Nehavand barracks humiliates the Kurdish boy even though ‘he washes the old man’s feet with rosewater and powders them over and under with lilac talc’. The Kurdish boy’s position is that of a slave or an animal:

Another year passes and he becomes a good boy in it, still nameless and orphaned and so preferred because he is an idiot Kurd who runs to the warm deep pleasure of command like a happy dog.

The pipes, on your knees to light them.
[...]
Embrace me here and here, yes, there, hold me tighter, you mountain ape, until sleep comes, my darling, darling boy.

The Kurds’ status in Iran is similar to Kurds’ social position in Turkey where they are called “mountain Turks” as explored in The Lost Word. Animalising and infantilising the Kurdish boy promotes the notion of Persians’ “rationalism” as well as their physical superiority. The old captain’s discrimination renders the Kurdish boy abnormal in

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76 The Age of Orphans, p.97.
78 The Age of Orphans, p.91.
79 Ibid., p.93.
80 Ibid., p.81.
81 Ibid., p.83.
modern Iran. This is reminiscent of Reza Shah’s actual address to the Kurds, to whom he referred as ‘Mountain Iranians’.\(^82\) Despite this, the Kurdish boy is pleased to be treated like an animal and is by no means concerned about his inferior position.

In the context of Western colonisation, Dibyesh Anand argues that ‘colonized people’ were instilled with ‘a sense of inferiority’.\(^83\) The relationship between Persians and Kurds is similarly colonial. Along with the formation of the nation-state, racism becomes integral to the nation’s popular culture; Persian cadets in the barracks, like their captains, associate animalistic characteristics and filthiness with Reza’s Kurdishness: ‘Your mother was an ass and your father must have been a heavy horse, you’ve got the parts of an animal, you dirty Kurd, hehehe haw haw’.\(^84\) The novel promotes solidarity with Reza. With the exception of a Baluchi cadet, discriminatory racialisation is not practised by ‘Turkoman and Rashti and Lur and thin Baluch twin’ cadets. However, ‘[o]f the tribal conscripts only the twins’ thick brother, with both ears intact, tries on the teasing and laughing, *Hehehe hawhawhaw, dirty Kurd, Khourdi is a dirty Kurd*.\(^85\) The Baluchi twin is described as “thick”, a metaphor for his idiocy because he is conspiring with the “city” boys’ racism. He is ignorant of the Persio-centric racial perceptions. As Ehaladan, in his letter to his mother, writes:

> The barracks are full of boys like me, city boys with fathers who took us to the military recruitment centers and passed us along for this great duty. We are the good, clean boys. There are dirty boys too—tribe boys, Maman, and they are all as different from each other as they are from us. Some of them have dark skin like Mustaffa the Egyptian ice seller (the one who scares you with his big black-and-white eyes), some of them have thin eyes like slits and there are even some tribe boys with yellow hair and blue eyes or green eyes like Aava’s English dolls.\(^86\)

Ehaladan has the self-love associated with Persian nationhood. He takes pride in his Persianness and expresses disgust towards non-Persians. Modern Iran is established on fear of and xenophobia towards non-Persians. The narcissist Ehaladan is reminiscent of Asgharzadeh’s discussions of modern Iran’s history. The ‘racist model’ of the superior “‘Aryan race” made ‘the Pahlavis’ believe that the Aryan race’s home was definitely

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85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., p.110.
‘Iran’ and ‘Persians’ were certainly its descendants.\textsuperscript{87} Alana Lentin maintains: ‘[R]acism [...] has become inherent in the structures of our political apparatus: the nation-state’.\textsuperscript{88} David Mertz also argues that ‘nationalism is a function of racism’, which helps nationalist ideologies operate.\textsuperscript{89} Nation-state nationalism not only drives Ehaladan to love his “nation”, but to express his xenophobic abhorrence towards ‘tribe boys’, who are perceived by him as inferior replicas of the real thing.

The best example of racist worldviews in the novel is Meena. She acts as a guardian of nationalistic Persianness through her marriage to Reza Khourdi. For her, Kurds resemble ‘goat[s]’\textsuperscript{90} and are ‘idiot[s]’ who live in a ‘forsaken’\textsuperscript{91} land. One of her sons hints at physical hierarchies perceived by Meena and the modernising committee in Kermanshah against the Kurds.\textsuperscript{92} He also recalls that his mother was always unhappy with her children’s half-Kurdishness:

> On the mornings of the parades, our baba would shout, \textit{Clean the kids! Wash their hair and their faces!} While our maman was scrubbing the seven of us so hard that our skin stung and everybody cried a little bit [...] Our maman yelled back: \textit{I can’t wash the Kurd out of them! They’ll never be clean}\textsuperscript{93}

Meena distinguishes her Persianness from Reza’s Kurdishness and takes pride in her ethnic “superiority”. Thus, the Kurds are always perceived as impure and “unclean”. Although Persian racial constructions are rooted in Persian history,\textsuperscript{94} both adopting European racial ideologies and Western construction of Iran\textsuperscript{95} – as I examined previously – outstandingly influence the Persians’ perceptions in the novel. This racialisation results in Persian dominance over the supposedly “stupid Others” susceptible to hegemonic rule. This dominance is also perpetuated by the idea of knowledge. As Ehaladan says in his letter, he and the commanders beat the tribe boys for

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{87} Asgharzadeh, p.80.
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{The Age of Orphans}, p.262.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., p.217.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., p.231.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p.233.
\textsuperscript{94} As it was discussed, Persian characters’ excessive inclination to Ferdowsi’s \textit{Shahnameh} is an example of already-existing Persian racialisation (Ibid., pp.192, 239).
\textsuperscript{95} An example of European construction of Iran has also been explained that naming the country “Iran” is suggested by a German Chancellor in the novel (Ibid., p.141).
\end{footnotesize}
being illiterate. Moreover, Meena’s brother also imagines Reza Khourdi as an ‘idiot’ for being ‘unreading’. Rather than seeking a social or political explanation for the tribe boys’ (and Reza’s) lack of education, knowledge and literacy, these factors simply legitimate Persian domination. Persian literacy and Kurdish illiteracy further exacerbate ethnic polarity in the Reza Shah’s Iran.

Islamic Modernity in Khadivi’s The Walking

Khadivi’s The Walking narrates the collapse of the Pahlavi’s regime and the triumph of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. Reza Khourdi, with his young sons Ali and Saladin, are questioned by a mullah and revolutionary guards for being a captain in the Pahlavi days. The mullah asks Ali and Saladin to shoot eleven Kurdish men, who are under arrest for being charged with having links to Kurdish nationalist movement, to show the Khourdi family’s loyalty to the new Islamic republic. In a state of panic, Ali instead shoots the guards and runs away with Saladin. On their way to America, Ali feels the pull of his mountainous town and leaves Saladin, who dreams of living in California, specifically Los Angeles, to become a famous Hollywood actor. Saladin’s dream is inspired by Meena – his mother – who inculcated into him the fantasies of living in the West, when she took him to the cinema as a child. Despite all the hardships of going to Van, Istanbul, the Azores, then to California, in pursuit of his dreams, Saladin does not meet his own expectations. He always thinks of Ali, his family and home, yet his dreams never come true. He ends up as a lonely man in California, haunted by the dream of homecoming.

The Walking portrays a short period of Iran’s political circumstances during post-1979 revolution against the Pahlavi dynasty. The new Iran is depicted as continuing the Pahlavi project of nationalism to a great extent. An old man, in response to Ali’s question about recent news of Iran, says: ‘Shahs come and shahs go. Here nothing changes, thanks be to God.’ Although the new Iran is not secular, it is still a remnant of modernity in the novel, in the sense that the structure of nation-statehood, adopted by

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96 Ibid., pp.110-11.
97 Ibid., p.192.
98 The Walking, p.35.
Reza Shah in *The Age of Orphans*, is preserved and sustained. As Azadeh Kian and Gilles Riaux argue, the Islamic revolution did not bring an end to the nationalist ‘state’ in spite of the Pahlavi’s dethronement. At the same time, revolutionary Iran in the novel rejects Western hegemony. Nonetheless, it is Eurocentric in the sense that opposition to the West perpetually dominates its agenda; it is Eurocentrically anti-Western. This opposition aims to eliminate Pahlavis’ political culture of Westernisation. Pahlavi Iran in *The Age of Orphans* introduces modernisation in the name of Persianness and pro-Western discourses, and the new Iran also mobilises nationalist, yet anti-Western, discourse in presenting its ideology in *The Walking*. The novel opens in 1979, the beginning of a significant period in Iran’s history: ‘[T]oday the exiled Shah was denied asylum in France’. It also reads: ‘[T]oday two million took to Azadi Square in Tehran to voice their independence from the manipulative forces of the British, the Americans…’

The Pahlavis’ Westernisation in *The Age of Orphans* transforms into de-Westernisation in *The Walking*. Mehrzad Boroujerdi explains that the concept of ‘gharbzadegi’ (‘Westoxication’) has been a constant factor in Iranian Islamic political intellectualism’s opposition to the West since the middle of the twentieth century, playing a crucial role in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Attempts to eradicate this Western “intoxication” of Iran are portrayed as helping the state also perpetuate the divide between “us” and “them”. However, this binarism is implemented in a different mode that is also supported by the new Islamic principles. In order “to rescue” Iran from Western hegemony, Islamic Iran vindicates its dichotomous ideology towards the West in *The Walking*. The new Iran shares common principles with *The Age of Orphans*’s depiction of the Pahlavi state. The same notion of nativism is promoted, emphasising the superiority of Persianness. However, the state also inclines towards the Persian Islamic past:

> With a voice like a dear old father, its timbre soothing and soft, he [Ayatollah Khomeini] calls for an end of exploitation of Iran by the British, the Americans,

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the rest; calls for a country built on itself, responsible and available to itself; calls for an Islamic state similar to the Islamic empires of ancient times; and promises what only a father can: to bring the people of this noble country *integrity, justice and a spiritual righteousness that can only come from God*.\(^\text{102}\)

The Islamic nation-state struggles for and in the name of the Islamic nation. Politicised Islam is portrayed in this speech as reinvigorating established nationalist paradigms. The notion of an Islamic nation, led by a Persian Shiite identity, and the notion of Iranian/Persian nobility together dominate the novel’s revolutionary Iran. Islamic Iran is a complex mix of Western Orientalism, Islamic values and nativism. The new government has two principles in mind, one is to embrace the Persians and the other is Persian Islamic identity. As Minoo Moallem argues, revolutionary Iranian ideology inherits nationalist ideas in creating its “Other”.\(^\text{103}\) The 1979 revolution in *The Walking* adapts Reza Shah’s political culture and worldviews in *The Age of Orphans*. The Pahlavi dynasty attempted to revive the pre-Islamic past. Yet revolutionary Iran’s dream of establishing an Islamic empire represents the revival of Persians’ pre-Islamic and Islamic identities.

Although *The Walking* does not depict any ethnic racialisation, the Kurds are once again excluded from the nation in revolutionary Iran. Kurds say to each other: ‘We have suffocated under the Shah and now we will be suffocated under this regime of Allah and Allah and Allah.’\(^\text{104}\) However, it is *not* Shiism which is the target of the state’s exclusionary ideology. The Khourdi family’s background is Shiite, but he and his sons are interrogated simply for working as a captain during the Pahlavi days. The new Iran does not consider the fact that Khourdi was obliged to work for the state as explored by *The Age of Orphans*. Despite ethnocentrism playing no theological part in Islam, the state nonetheless supports the idea of Persian supremacy. The new Iran is thus contradictory, because it claims to be religious but its definition of the nation is ethnocentric in places. This evidence in the novel illustrates that Iran has not yet rescued itself from previous Pahlavi ideologies. When a mullah suspiciously interrogates

\(^{102}\) *The Walking*, p.91.


\(^{104}\) *The Walking*, p.2.
Babak’s Kurdish background in the presence of Ali and Saladin, Kurdishness is stained with shame:

I am a Kurd.
The mullah nods.
Why? Saladin turned to his brother, incredulous. Don’t they know?
[…]
Ali shook his head. Saladin jaan, how long before you understand your own fate?
At seventeen you still don’t understand that if you are a Kurd, you can never be anything else … Such a shame ….

The Kurds, as in the days of Pahlavis, are rejected. The new state’s criticism of Pahlavi authoritarianism, its Western-leaning policies and ethnocentric worldviews are exposed as questionable. This is because everyone must now be ‘devoted to this new Iran and nothing else’. At the same time, the new Iran’s political paradigms are founded on the state’s conception of Islamicness. The post-1979 Iran of the novel is constructed on Western colonialism and state religiosity. The Walking narrates the fate of Kurdishness under Iran’s modern regimes, whether under secular modernity or Islamic, as deserving sympathy.

Choman Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’ and Ba’thist Nationalist Tropes

‘The Spoils, 1988’ is a poetic narration of the Iraqi Ba’th party’s “Anfal” campaigns – literally “the spoils” – which took place in 1988 and claimed thousands of Kurds’ lives. The poem’s depiction of Ba’thist ideology provides the material for a detailed examination of the Ba’th’s method of glorifying Arabic language and ethnicity. The third stanza, which is this chapter’s focal point, depicts ideological underpinnings of the campaign against ‘the villagers’. Stanza three begins with ‘Anfal came!’, a refrain which repeats and emphasises the first stanza’s opening words. The use of the refrain promotes sympathy for the victims of the Anfal’s cruelty. The stanza’s compassionate tone depicts the Anfal-driven ideology as denying ethnic differences. It portrays the Ba’thist flagrant rejection of the Kurds: ‘Anfal came!/The soldiers spoke a foreign language’. The exclamatory voice depicts the ideologically discursive operation of the ‘Anfal’. The first

105 Ibid., p.11-2.
106 Ibid., p.15.
107 Life for Us, p.20.
half of the stanza focuses on the soldiers’ foreignness as Arabic speakers. The second half of the stanza depicts the Kurdish victims’ misconception of the soldiers’ religious ideology (as opposed to their ethnicity):

The villagers thought they were Muslim brothers but they spat at the Qura’an the imams held before them, pissed on the engraved name of Allah, bulldozed the village mosques.

The soldiers’ nationalism is represented by means of their behaviour. Ba’thist discourse and policy reject the ‘Qura’an’, ‘Allah’ and ‘mosques’ of Kurdish ‘villagers’ because Arabs and Islam are one and the same for the Ba’th soldiers. For them, Kurds cannot be associated with Islam.

The Use of Religious Discourse

Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’ represents the racialised discourse of Ba’thism, in which Islam and Arabness are perceived as inseparable in order to carry out the Anfal operations. The third stanza substantiates the fact that the soldiers’ acts against Kurdish ‘villagers’ stem from the ethnocentrism of the Ba’th party. The party was established by Zaki al-Arsuzi in Syria in 1940. It was initially called ‘al-Ba’th al-Arabi’ party before Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din Bitar used the term al-Ba’th in 1943.108 The Ba’th ‘soldiers’ in the poem are informed by notions of the Kurdish/Arabic binary when they mistreat Kurdish ‘villagers’ since the soldiers’ nationalist ideology is spurred on by the notion of “Arabness”. As John Devlin remarks, ‘Arab nationalism’ was the Ba’th’s major pillar since its birth; creating ‘a single Arab state’ was one of its goals.109 The adherence to “Arabness” leads to racial ideas while imagining Kurdish ‘villagers’ in the poem.

The poetic persona of ‘The Spoils, 1988’ arouses pity for and solidarity with the ‘Anfalised’ people, and promotes a sense of disgust towards the soldiers’ fascist behaviour. Ofra Bengio observes that Ba’thist discourse and military practice are sometimes directed by fascist principles.110 According to Derek Gregory, Ba’thism was deeply indebted to ‘European fascism’ as it mistreated the communists, ‘Kurds and

110 Bengio, pp.125, 217, 221.
Shi‘as’.\textsuperscript{111} The fascist legacy makes the soldiers’ nationalist principles incompatible with the villagers’ Kurdishness. Just as Benedict Anderson notes the close relationship between language and nationalism,\textsuperscript{112} Arabic language and culture are the Iraqi soldiers’ primary prerequisites for membership of the nation in the poem. Bengio indicates that one of Arsuzi’s intentions for choosing the ‘particular word’ Ba’th was driven by ‘Arab tradition’. She states that Arsuzi also reflected upon ‘European nationalism’:

He [Arsuzi] discerned two forms of “renewal” in European history: the Renaissance and the rise of nineteenth-century European nationalism. The former, he held, was an attempt at reviving Greek and Roman culture; the latter a reawakening of an ancient ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage. Among the Arabs, too, Arsuzi argued, ba’th meant the return to the “springs of national [qawmi] life”: the revival of the language and of the cultural genius of the Arabs.\textsuperscript{113} (Emphasis original)

Grounded in these ideas, Ba’thism is ambivalent in the poem because the soldiers draw upon secular ‘al-Arabi’ bases and characteristics, yet see their Anfal mission as religious. This ambivalent discourse attempts to mislead the world by showing that the Anfal campaigns are carried out in the name of God.

As Arsuzi and Aflaq’s ideas suggest, the Ba’th party mobilises European nationalist and colonial discourses for its own ends. However, the party mobilises Islamic tropes and concepts against non-Arab – Kurdish – ‘villagers’ in the poem. From the early days, Ba’th nationalism aimed to rejuvenate the Arabic language and culture as an anti-colonial strategy. Loomba notes that Asian and African ‘anti-colonial nationalism’ considered itself as having different ‘notions of liberty, freedom and human dignity’ despite its imitation of the West.\textsuperscript{114} Although the Ba’th often defined itself in opposition to the West, the stanza captures the party’s dual nature; the soldiers are both secular and religious. The Anfal campaigns are code-named after the eighth sura (chapter) of the Qura’an called al-Anfal. The irony of this is heightened when ‘they [the soldiers] spat at the Qura’an the imams held before them/pissed on the engraved name of Allah’. Here lies the contradiction. Disrespect is shown towards the Islamic faith of the Kurdish villagers while carrying out a “sacred duty” of ethnic cleansing. The Ba’th’s political

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] Bengio, p.34.
\item[114] Loomba, p.160.
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strategies were nevertheless justified on the ground by Saddam Hussein. In one of his addresses, he stated that the Ba’th party takes its ‘name Ba’th’, as well as its spirit, from Islamic doctrines. He emphasised “every believing Muslim is a Ba’thi [a Ba’thist or a Ba’th member], even if he does not belong to the party”.

Saddam’s nationalist construction is reminiscent of Aflaq – however Christian himself – who, Bengio argues, conceived ‘Islam’ as ‘an integral part of being an Arab’. In the poem, the villagers’ assumptions about ‘the soldiers’, who the villagers consider as ‘[m]uslim brothers’, has no bearing on the “Arab” soldiers’ disinclination to sympathise with them.

Historically, the superiority of Arabness – but not Islamicness – plays a significant part in Ba’thist ideology. Bengio points out that the Iraqi Ba’th’s ideology used ‘Islamic themes’ when necessary:

From 1968 until 1977, the Ba’th regime was silent on the topic of religion; between 1977 and 1980, there were indications of an impending change; the war years, from 1980 and well into the first postwar year 1989, constituted the phase of toeing the Islamic line; the last phase, from 1989 onward, was one of deliberate Islamic flag-waving.

The move from secular to religious ideals, and the linking of Islam with Ba’thism, drives the Ba’thist ‘soldiers’ to imbue ‘the Qura’an’, ‘the mosques’ and even ‘the name of Allah’ with Arabness as well as with pan-Arabism. This is a return to Aflaq’s ideological association which he created between Islam and Arabism that “there is no Arab who is not a Muslim; . . . every statement to the contrary is misleading”. He asserted that ‘Islam’ is the cornerstone of Ba’thist ‘Arab nationalism’. The apparent religiosity of the Anfal campaigns shows how ethnocentric Ba’th ideology is. The Anfal is perpetuated against the Kurds, and yet these same Kurds are Muslims, as pointed out by the poem.

The poetic representation of the Ba’th soldiers’ improper treatment of Islamic symbols exposes the reality of Ba’thism. The Ba’th’s use of ‘Anfal’, as a religious word, is fallacious and its carrying of the flag of Islam is intended to silence any opposition.

117 Bengio, p.34.
118 Ibid., p.176.
119 Al-Thawra al-Arabiyya (daily Baghdad), (1) 1976, p.15 (cited in Ibid., pp.177-8).
from the Muslim world.\textsuperscript{120} Hardi portrays the Anfal as stemming from Ba’thist racialisation masked in religious discourse. As Bengio asserts, ‘[Ba’thist] political purposes of myth-making resembled those of the uses of language’, arguing that this strategy aimed to justify implementing its agenda.\textsuperscript{121} The stanza portrays the same Ba’thist propaganda against the Kurds. The religious discourse of the Ba’thist “heroic” Anfal campaigns is fundamentally inspired by its secular nationalist beliefs.

The Ba’th ‘Soldiers’ and the Arab Nation

Ba’thism goes beyond the ideals of statehood and puts its nationalism in service of the “Arab nation” at least in theory. It is motivated by the notions of pan-Arabism, which believes in one Arab world, including all the territories where the Arabs live. Iraqi Ba’thist nationalism therefore differs from Turkish and Persian nationalisms, which mainly focused on Turkish and Iranian statehood – as portrayed in Baydar’s \textit{The Lost Word} and Khadivi’s \textit{The Age of Orphans}.\textsuperscript{122} Although the Ba’th party firmly believes and consolidates the ideals of statehood in ways that threaten all Iraqi citizens, it crosses artificial borders and also embraces all Arabs outside Iraq. However, Anees Jillani observes that Saddam’s pan-Arabism does not resemble the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser’s during 1950s and 1960s; Saddam’s Arabism, unlike Nasser, did not attract the Arab state’s sentiments in arousing the Arabic national feeling. His nationalist sentimentality was far from pan-Arabic ideology and it was ‘pure naked aggression emanating from greed’.\textsuperscript{123} The existing literature about Ba’thism in general – and Iraqi Ba’thism in particular – debate whether it was racist or not. According to Michael Leezenburg – as I also quoted in this thesis’ Introduction – Ba’thist discourse is changeable from time to time and there is no clear-cut evidence of its racism.\textsuperscript{124} Ralph

\textsuperscript{120} However, this is not a justification for many Middle Eastern and other countries that remained silent while the Anfal and other atrocities were carried out against the Kurds by the Iraqi Ba’th and other governments in the region.

\textsuperscript{121} Bengio, p.206.

\textsuperscript{122} For further discussions on the differences between Kemalist and Pahlavi nationalisms with Ba’thism see pages 2 and 3 in the introduction to this thesis.

\textsuperscript{123} Anees Jillani, ‘Nasser, Saddam and Pan-Arabism’, \textit{Pakistan Horizon}, 44 (April 1991), 75-88 (pp.87-88)

Coury defends Aflaq’s ideologies, noting that Aflaq’s nationalism does not necessarily motivate racial hatred, but only serves the idea of ‘nation’.\textsuperscript{125} He argues that Ba’thists’ ideologies of pan-Arabism have changed over the decades and in different countries of Syria and Iraq since its foundation in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{126} Despite Coury’s defence of pan-Arabism and his counter-arguments against the West, especially the US, which is described by him as demonising pan-Arabism and Ba’thism, the problematic feature of Ba’thism still remains, because Aflaq’s conception of the idea of nation does not strip away racialisation of the nation itself. The nation is central to every nationalism and it, as Mondal argues, creates “the Other” through its perceived different identity of itself from other nations.\textsuperscript{127} Despite all these arguments – over Saddam’s bleak pan-Arabism and Ba’thist debatable racism – Iraqi Ba’thist rule was racist in its Anfal campaigns. The ideological discourse, the practical methods and exclusionary manner of Ba’thism during these 1988 campaigns against the Kurds illustrate Ba’thist racism at least during the Anfal. Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’ ironically portrays Saddam’s spurious catchphrase that ‘every believing Muslim is a Ba’thi’ since the soldiers do not consider Kurdish Muslims as “Ba’thists”, or as Muslims, simply because they are not “Arabs”. The ‘daily \textit{al-Qadisiyya}’, Bengio says, has highlighted the Arabness of the Ba’th, its sense of ‘revival (Ba’th)’ and the role of Saddam Hussein in supposedly acting on behalf of “the spirit of Iraq and of the Arab nation”.\textsuperscript{128} The stanza’s portrayal of Kurdish exclusion represents the Ba’thist conception of “nation”. Duygu Dersan Orhan argues that Kurdish ethnicity has been conceived by Iraqi governments as hampering ‘Iraqi and Arab nationalism’ since the creation of the postcolonial Iraqi state.\textsuperscript{129} According to Loomba, ‘nationalism and pan-nationalisms’ establish ‘communities [...] with a historical, racial and cultural unity which [...] simplifies complex cultural formations and performs its own exclusions’.\textsuperscript{130}

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{125} Ralph M. Coury, ‘The Demonisation of Pan-Arab Nationalism’, \textit{Institute of Race Relations}, 46 (2005), 1-19 (pp.6-7).\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p.8.\textsuperscript{127} Mondal, p.9.\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Al-Qadisiyya}, 1 May 1990 (cited in Bengio, p.35).\textsuperscript{129} Duygu Dersan Orhan, “Us” versus “Them” Dichotomy Within: Iraqi Identity Building During the Saddam Era’, \textit{Atilim Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi}, 1 (2011), 79-96 (p.87).\textsuperscript{130} Loomba, pp.178-9.\end{flushleft}
The word nation stands for umma in Arabic, and glorifying this concept of nation, which feeds the soldiers’ Ba’thism in the poem, motivates their nationalist task against the villagers. In critiquing the Ba’thist ideology, Bengio states: ‘the word umma [nation]’ had a powerful connotation for all Ba’thists since the party's establishment. According to Arsuzi, umma is derived from ‘umm (mother)’ whereby umma stands for mother, and the umma’s ‘members’ are the mother’s children. Moreover, Arsuzi emphasises that ‘language, art’ as well as all aspects of ‘public life’ are the offspring of ‘umma’. In the light of such ideology, the Ba’thist conception of the nation makes the ‘soldiers’ conceive Kurdish ‘villagers’ as national heterogeneity. Gokhan Bacik argues that ‘pan-Arabism’ had a leading part in defining Iraqi state formation. ‘Arabism’, he notes, became ‘the official state doctrine’ under the slogan “One Arab nation with an eternal mission” soon after Saddam succeeded to power. The position of Kurdish ‘villagers’ is thus problematic. Bengio notes that it was challenging to classify ‘Iraqi people’ [Sunnis, Shiites, Arabs, Kurds and other ethnic and religious groups], as ‘Iraqi’ or as ‘Arab’, because being Iraqi paralleled with being “part of Arab umma”. She observes: ‘Unlike an Iraqi identity, an Arab one denies the separate character of the Kurds, who are ethnically and linguistically non-Arabs.’ However, there is an exception to this policy in the poem, in the way the soldiers foist a separate identity upon the Kurds by ostracising Kurdishness.

Kurdish ‘Villagers’ and the Postcolonial Nature of Ethnicity

The constructed dichotomy between Arabs and Kurds, as created by the Ba’thist ‘soldiers’ and their mission to annihilate Kurdish ‘villagers’, has historical dimensions since the establishment of the Iraqi state. Michael Kelly defines Iraq as an unlikely state

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131 Bengio argues that ‘the name Ba’th at once evokes the party’s central slogans: “A single Arab nation with an eternal mission” and “Unity, freedom, socialism.”’ (Bengio, p.35).
132 Ibid.
135 Bacik, p.96.
136 Bengio, p.36.
137 Ibid.
for being a ‘colonial’ remnant and he further describes it as a fake country ‘borne of convenience and connivance’.  

Stephen Ryan, meanwhile, observes that bloody tensions have existed within the “borders” of “third world” countries because those borders were not only “artificial” but also contradictory to the reality of the “pre-existing cultural divisions” of these countries. The portrayal of the Ba’th’s ethnic violence in the stanza illustrates Iraq’s postcolonial exclusions. As Avshalom Rubin states:

Like the political elites of India, Indonesia, and Nigeria, postcolonial Middle Eastern rulers have struggled to strengthen their states while accommodating plural societies. This has been particularly true of the multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian polities of Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, all of which have experienced violent ethnic or sectarian strife in the post-colonial era. In all of the aforementioned states, independence did not mean allegiance to the flags and borders bequeathed by the departing power. Instead, it inspired withdrawal into sub-state ideals of political community, and, conversely, the adoption of ideals like Pan-Arabism, which transcended state boundaries.

The poem reflects upon the fact that in postcolonial Ba’thist Iraq, ethnic “difference” is the raison d’être. Rubin further notes, during the Ba’th’s rule in Iraq, the Kurds were the most targeted victims of the state’s centralising strategy, which had already been launched by the preceding policy of state formation. Ba’thism is limited to pan-Arabic discourse to uproot the colonial legacy, as the stanza on the rejected Kurdish “tribal” life illustrates.

Bacik argues that the Ba’th party defined itself against colonial constructs, and criticised the preceding Iraqi governments’ tolerance of ‘colonial remnant’. For the Ba’th, Bacik observes, one such colonial creation was social groups’ affiliation to tribal sects, which were considered by the Ba’thist ‘socialist discourse’ as hindering the country’s development. However, the Ba’th itself openly welcomed tribal assistance when it was necessary. Loomba argues that the fierce remoulding of ‘physical territories, social terrains as well as human identities’ was a colonial policy. Yet she

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141 Ibid., p.376.
142 Bacik, p.181.
observes that constructing new ‘identities’ was the focus of ‘anti-colonial struggles’. Nelida Fuccaro also remarks that ethnicity has had a salient status in Iraqi modern history since the country’s independence ‘from British Mandatory control’ at the beginning of the 1930s:

First, in the immediate postcolonial period ethnicity became central to the development of Iraqi national and international politics. Second, ethnic specificity emerged as a major factor in the shaping of postcolonial Iraqi society, despite the continuous attempts at enforcing a new national identity on the part of a still fragile state.

Placing ethnicity at the centre of Iraqi nationhood and politics creates antagonism towards Kurdishness. As Orhan rightly asserts, the ‘Ba’th regime’ invoked an “‘us” and “them” dichotomy’ within Iraqi society. The poem’s description of the Anfal campaigns exposes the outcomes of denying, marginalising and massacring the Kurds during Saddam’s reign. Adeed Dawisha observes, like Orhan, that ‘Arabism’ was always promoted by ‘Ba’thists’ in order to deny the ‘existence of the non-Arab Kurdish community’. The stanza thus warns that ‘Anfal came!’ to expunge Kurds’ existence, also leaving severe psychological impacts on survivors. The next chapter will discuss this poem’s depiction of Ba’thist prejudice that causes dispersal, disintegration and death.

**Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have critically appraised Persian nationalist and Iraqi Ba’thist discourses in Laleh Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans* and *The Walking* and Choman Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’. The concept of nation is depicted by these writers as deceitful. It disguises Persian and Arabic views of Iran and Ba’thist Iraq. This chapter examined the discursive strategies of Pahlavi and 1979 revolutionary nationalisms in Iran, arguing that they are fundamentally shaped by both Western colonialism and anti-Westernisation. Establishing regimes of “modernity” is Iran’s hallmark. *The Age of Orphans* and *The

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143 Loomba, p.155.
145 Orhan, p.94.
Walking are highly critical of this. Iran figures in these novels as the creation of racial myths, whereby non-Persians, mainly the Kurds, are consistently perceived as backwards and anti-state. Khadivi’s novels fictionalise the political life of Iran since 1921, depicting the state’s Persiocentric discourse as structured by ambivalent and contradictory “secular” and “religious” ideals. In The Age of Orphans, nationalism traces its Persian roots to the Europeans in order to apply the “Persian civilising mission”. Yet, it acclaims and reawakens interest in Persia’s historical roots. Pahlavi’s project of “creating a little Europe” is depicted as tarnishing Iran with Persians’ so-called Indo-European Aryan identity. In The Walking, Iran promotes the notion of Islamic modernisation during 1979 Islamic revolution. It preserves some of Pahlavi’s nationalist ideals and Kurdishness is still exteriorised. The state’s religious ideology is portrayed as having adopted the ethnic characteristics of Persianness. In Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’, I investigated nationalist motifs and impulses of Ba’thism as contradictory. I have explored how Ba’thism in the poem claims to be religious, whereas, inspired by pan-Arabism, its inherent racialisation is apparent in its depiction of the treatment of the Kurdish villagers. This chapter has analysed the extent to which the Anfal also originates from the Ba’thist idea of embracing the Arab nation in the poem. Hugely affected by colonial policy, the trope of “us versus them” demonstrates the postcolonial ethnic tensions in the poem.
Chapter Three: Illegal Spaces and Lawless Bodies within Nation-States

For no matter what learned scientists may say, race is, politically speaking, not the beginning of humanity but its end, not the origin of peoples but their decay, not the natural birth of man but his unnatural death.

Arendt (1968: 157)

[Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth.]

Foucault (1979: 194)


1 According to the nation-state’s law, violating the state’s territories, such as claiming independence, is regarded as transgression and its violators are charged with breaking the law. Turkey, Iran and Iraq treat this “transgression” as a form of lawlessness. Being lawless figures from the state’s point of view, the Kurds face cruel repressions in these texts. This resembles the European perception of savages in the past as Peter Fitzpatrick observes that since Greek and Roman times and throughout sixteenth century philosophy and Enlightenment thought, savagery and lawlessness have been one and the same. The enactment of (the European) suppressive law was thought to be desperately necessary in order to rescue people from the savages’ lawlessness, such as in the Americas (Peter Fitzpatrick, *The Mythology of Modern Law* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.72-87). Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi policies generate this idea of “lawlessness” within the framework of nation-statehood (not forgetting that nation-statehood is inspired by colonial worldviews in my examined texts). Because of their “lawlessness”, Kurdish literary characters are subject to punishment.

2 The Kurds have already been referred to as *homo sacer* in a few scholars’ works. However, this has not been so far discussed in the way I investigate in this chapter. I will provide a close reading into the Kurdish literary protagonists’ status as being *homo sacer* in the selected texts of this study. Moreover, I
a permanent state of exception\(^3\) in these texts. I contend that persecuting them provides a space for Ba’thist, Persian and Turkish nationalisms to give birth to “orderly” states. In order to protect the ideals of nation-statehood, Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish sovereignties oppress them. Derek Gregory argues that the ‘war on terror’ reactivates ‘the colonial past’ through “us” and “them,” “civilization” and “barbarism,” “Good” and “Evil” dichotomies.\(^4\) In my discussions, Kurdish literary characters are portrayed as existing in this context of “terror”; they are perceived as rebels and destabilisers of state rule. The sovereign powers do not hesitate to declare war against “the Kurdish threat”. I will also explore how Iraq, Iran and Turkey are depicted as being accorded the right to kill Kurds with relative impunity.


The Ba’thist sovereign power dominates Kurdish individuals within Iraqi territories in these literary works. The Ba’th classifies the Kurds as excluded subjects during its mass-murder operations against them, and perceives them to be in need of “administrative correction”. As the modern state is a product of modernity, its use of power and its deployment of order are also outcomes of modernity. These literary works suggest that Iraqi oppressive rule over the Kurds is conceived by the Ba’th as an unquestionable requirement of modern nation-statehood. Extending Thomas Hobbes’ ideas\(^5\) in which the state, as in the Americas, needs to use its ultimate power in order to provide protection from lawless savages, Peter Fitzpatrick critiques that the state “is allowed” to use its apparatuses to protect its citizens from “the barbarian threat”\.\(^6\) Ba’thist Iraq is portrayed by Scheurer and Hardi as being motivated by the same ideological principles in dealing with the perceived Kurdish danger. *The Sayings*, ‘My Country’\(^7\) and ‘Dropping Gas: 16\(^{th}\) March 1988’\(^8\) illustrate the destruction of Kurdish villages and the

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\(^3\) For discussions of the state of exception, see the introduction to this thesis, p.25.


\(^5\) For Fitzpatrick, Hobbes’ ideas are modernity’s leading philosophy.

\(^6\) Fitzpatrick, pp.73-6.

\(^7\) *Life for Us*, p.23.

\(^8\) Ibid, p.19.
chemical attack on Halabja town in 1988 by the Iraqi sovereignty. Michael Kelly says the Ba’thist perpetration of Halabja caused five thousand deaths and seven thousand ‘wounded, crippled, blinded’ people.⁹ Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’ depicts the scenes of human loss in the Anfal massacres, which are consistently depicted as paralleling Nazi policy.

Scheurer’s The Sayings is a novella which tells the story of a female American officer, Lieutenant Marie Bowers, and her fellow captives, who are taken prisoners in 2005 by Kurdish guerrillas in the north of Iraq. This happens following the American group’s failed mission to arrest Dr. Saladin, a Kurdish guerrilla leader, who is thought to have Soviet smallpox weapons, and Stefan Essberg, a Kurdish guerrilla who was working as a janitor in the NATO Headquarters in Brussels. Essberg leaves explosives in the Headquarters and then flees to the north of Iraq, where the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) bases are situated. Soon after this, it is discovered that Stefan, the son of a Kurdish mother and a Belgian father, was influenced by Dr. Saladin, whose sayings – almost misinterpreted by Stefan – led Stefan to blow up the headquarters on 21st March 2005, marking the beginning of Kurdish new year of Newroz. For Stefan, it is an act of counter-insurgency against NATO’s support – especially the US – of Turkey, and of Iraq during the Anfal campaigns in the 1980s against the Kurds. Lieutenant Bowers, accompanying the group of American military intelligence agency members, is sent to the north of Iraq. There, they are supposed to be helped to capture Stefan and Dr. Saladin by Americans based in the Kurdish city of Suleimaniya. The Bowers’ group, inspired by the idea of fighting terrorism, heads to Iraq to face their Kurdish enemies. But they are captured by Dr. Saladin, who takes them into the heartland of Kurdistan, to caves and mountains, where they themselves witness the human destruction caused by the international geopolitical players. In the wake of her journey, Bowers and her fellow officers’ views changed about Dr. Saladin, who is no longer believed to be evil. By the end of The Sayings, it becomes difficult to decide who is good and who is evil. The Sayings depicts destruction caused by Iraq in the past. The American captives are taken to Halabja and one of them, Goodrow, observes: “[…] the site of one of the

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worst gassings by Hussein.” [...] “It killed thousands of people [...]. Mostly women and children.”

Resembling Kelly’s actual description of the Halabja ‘genocide’, Goodrow depicts the Halabja attack as one of the worst acts perpetrated against humanity: ‘Jesus, what the hell happened here? It looked like old pictures from Nagasaki and Hiroshima’. The Iraqi Ba’ath is represented as a malevolent deity, deciding who deserves to live and who does not. Its acts are that of genocide against the Kurds. Foucault notes that it is not ‘the ancient right to kill’ that makes grounds for ‘genocide’ by ‘modern powers’. He says genocide takes place since ‘power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population’. The Ba’th sovereign policy is portrayed as having been conducted while the world was silent. When the American captives are shown the remnants of the Ba’th’s war against the Kurds, Dr. Saladin tells them that the US policy is ambivalent, changing according to its geopolitical interests:

Crumbling city streets, or tumbled village ruins, it was all the same – a place to culture stubborn human life, in between the wailing sirens and the falling bombs [...]. “There are thousands of these bulldozed villages all along the Iranian border. [...] Saddam Hussein did this during the ‘First Gulf War.’ [...] Of course Americans do not call it that.” Saladin persisted with his monologue. [...] “You call it the ‘Iran-Iraq War.’ This helps you forget what side you were on ...”

Saladin’s critique of US policy reflects the international treatment of Kurds during the Halabja and other attacks against them. Kurdish rural areas are so ruined that one of the American captives says: ‘The place looked like a storybook village where a mad giant had stomped through town, kicking and flattening everything in sight’. These spatial and human catastrophes in the novella highlight the plight of the Kurds as being excluded not merely from the Iraqi state laws, but from the globe’s human community.

By mean of his novella, Scheurer captures actual reactions to the chemical attacks, as Dilip Hiro states in an article: ‘The images of men, woman and children, frozen in instant death, relayed by the Iranian Media, shocked the world. Yet no condemnation

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10 The Sayings, pp.61-2.
11 Kelly, pp.33-4.
12 The Sayings, p.62.
14 The Sayings, p.59.
15 Ibid., p.51.
came from Washington’.\textsuperscript{16} As an American himself, Scheurer criticises the US policy for being silent towards the oppressions of Kurds conducted by the Ba’th regime. Accordingly, \textit{The Sayings} deconstructs the idea of nationhood and establishes a humanitarian bastion in the way Scheurer not only disregards the American geopolitical interests but lambasts them in his representations. Karen Culcasi notes that the US viewed the Kurds as ‘rebels’ who were aided by Iran. This was because, during the years of the Ba’th attacks, ‘the Kurds were allies with Iran and the U.S. now supported Iraq, the Kurds were too generally depicted as an American enemy’.\textsuperscript{17} In \textit{The Sayings}, it is 2005 and the American captives think that Saladin and his guerrilla group are in league with American enemies. But after Saladin releases the captives, Bowers remarks: “Hegemony is the ultimate form of terrorism.” She recited to herself. Some of his \textit{[Saladin’s] “Sayings” do make sense, she thought.}\textsuperscript{18} Although the American hostages believed they were coming to Iraq’s north to fight Kurdish terrorists, they realize that it is the Kurds who have been subjected to terrorism.

This form of terrorism, as demonstrated in the attack on Halabja and during the Anfal and other incidents, are portrayed in detail in ‘My Country’, ‘Dropping Gas: 16\textsuperscript{th} March 1988’ and ‘The Spoils, 1988’. The lack of a Kurdish homeland on the world map promotes violence against the Kurds. The poetic persona of ‘My Country’ portrays Kurdistan as an outcast and refugee whose melancholic stories of suffering and statelessness are unknown to the world. In the first two stanzas, the Kurds’ stories are sympathetically depicted:

\begin{quote}
I carry it in my handbag every day
in books about genocide –
pictures of mass graves, of leaders hanged,
children mutilated by chemical weapons.

I carry it in my memories of levelled villages,
cemented springs, polluted land,
in all the cancers, miscarriages, sterility.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Sayings}, pp.131-2.
Using concrete details as evidence of oppression, the speaker illustrates the Kurdish predicament in nation-states where Kurds reside. Kurdistan is imagined as a place of genocide, a space in which Iraqi sovereignty practises its violence. Nicholas Blomley argues: ‘Space gets produced, invoked, pulverized, marked, and differentiated through practical and discursive forms of legal violence.’ But what characterises Kurdistan is that it is an invisible space. As the last stanza reads:

I sing my country for the silence that surrounds it.
I remember a country forgotten
by everyone else.

The landscape embodies violence and destruction; nonetheless, very little, or nothing, is known about the oppression itself. The speaker depicts a Kurdish land with miserable stories to which nobody listens. S/he thus sings Kurdistan into being an imaginary land on the world map.

Ba’thism is a regime which spreads terror yet claims to fight against “the Kurdish terror”. As Gregory observes, it is through causing ‘terror’ that the “war on terror” is carried out. The terror experienced by the chemical bombardment of Halabja in 1988 is poignantly depicted by the poetic persona of ‘Dropping Gas: 16th March 1988’. Kathleen McDermott describes Hardi’s ‘free verse’ poetry as having both ‘documentary veracity’, but not musicality, and as bearing ‘witness’ to the political events. The reason for this, as I partially discussed in the introduction to this thesis, is that Hardi herself does not want to fully appropriate the Kurdish plight into any form of poetic flourish. This enables the stories of Kurds’ predicaments to be portrayed simply and clearly. Her poetry represents the ethics of representation. The main focus of her poetry is state oppression, rather than only poetic aestheticism. She eschews this in favour of direct, relatable poetry which is simple rather than embellished with high-flown literary language. ‘Dropping Gas: 16th March 1988’ documents the historical atrocity against Halabja town’s people in 1988. It opens with a paradoxical moment after killing Halabja’s civilians: ‘It is not quiet in Halabja, though it should be’. This beginning line

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20 Chapter Four explores the literary representations of this cartographic exclusion of Kurdistan.
21 Gregory, pp.xiv-xv.
of the first stanza shows that no one is expected to have survived yet “life” still exists. The poetic persona afterwards appears perplexed by the catastrophic scenes:

I return from the mountains with the rest.
What is it about wanting to know?
Wanting to see so that you believe?
What is it about not being able to just let go?

The alliterative lines that begin with ‘what, wanting, what’ question the Halabja incident. The reader, who is asked by the speaker about the attack, is preparing to witness unbearable scenes of destruction. The following stanzas represent visual images of the massacre: ‘Half of the houses are still standing’ whereas the rest are only: ‘bricks and cement, windows and doors/flesh and blood’. The remaining houses are apparently untouched by the attack but contain corpses. Half of the remaining objects are depicted as staying merely to witness the ruined half.

Life and death take the same shape. The human crisis in the poem reaches its peak as the corpses of ‘loved ones’ including ‘children’ lie on the ground. The poetic persona portrays the survivors’ reaction to the horrific death of the ‘loved ones’. S/he, who has so far addressed the audience about the incident, joins the audience and makes way for another poetic persona to express his grief: ‘My neighbour says, They are all dead./He wants to show me his family’. This gives a realistic tone that imbues the poem with a sense of authenticity and eye-witness authority to describe the scene by the one who has lived through the bombardment. The main speaker ends the poem with the line: ‘[I]t’s all dead now, cannot be killed any more’. The politics of homicide against the civilians originates in the Iraqi nationalist doctrine. The depiction of the attack points the finger at Ba’thist sovereignty, which decides who should live or die. As Achille Mbembe argues, ‘sovereignty’ is the one who threatens ‘the entirety of one’s life’. 23 Giorgio Agamben notes that ‘in modern biopolitics’ 24 human ‘life’ is completely determined by sovereignty. 25 Mass killings by the Ba’th render the poetic persona inarticulate at places in the poem: ‘I stand detached from everything/observing, believing and not believing’. S/he, who witnesses wasted lives, is unable to control his/her own psychological

24 The politics that targets every aspect of human life.
reactions or to express the feelings provoked by the incident. S/he presents his/her ‘neighbour’, a ‘woman’, a ‘man’ and ‘the Imam’ as mad, unable to bear this atrocity. Killing of Iraqi Kurds by the Iraqi sovereignty is no wonder, since, in Martin van Bruinessen’s words, the ‘Iraqi regime was probably the first government ever to use chemical weapons against its own citizens’.

The background to the attack is that the Ba’th regime is said to have been provoked by the Kurdish Peshmarga forces’ alliance with neighbouring Iran to cross the Iraqi territories. The Iraqi Ba’th justified its chemical attack on Halabja – or denied its responsibility and accused Iran for the attack – by describing it as a defence of Iraqi territories, yet it remains a massacre. In the context of violence, Agamben evokes Plato’s conception of ‘the “justification of violence”’, which does “violence to the most just”.

For the Iraqi Ba’th, the state’s border is more sacred than the lives of its people. The poem portrays civilians as being sacrificed to protect the state’s sacrosanctity. The Ba’th’s destructive ideology, which conceives all Halabja residents as criminals, makes the Imam, whose Islamic principles preclude the consumption of alcohol, nonetheless seek refuge in it: ‘[T]he Imam who always called for prayers/will soon take to drink’. The Imam’s situation illustrates its traumatic aftermath. The personal impact of such events lies far outside the experience of most people. At the end of the poem, the speaker remains incapable of grasping the scale of aggression against Halabja’s settlers. S/he repeats the same beginning words ‘I stand’ of the previous stanza:

I stand here watching, crying and not crying.  
I know that I don’t know anything,  
that I will never know anything  
and I know that this ruin  
is the only knowledge I will ever have.

The use of refrain ‘I stand’ in the last two consecutive stanzas suggests the speaker is rooted to the spot by her shock at this wholesale destruction. S/he stands, stares, wonders and still does not know which course of action s/he must take, whether ‘believing’ the situation or not as in the fifth stanza or ‘crying’ or ‘not crying’ in the sixth.


27 Agamben, pp.33-4.
Choman Hardi, when asked in an interview whether her poetry is a depiction of Kurdish history, explains that although her *Life for Us* (2004) is dedicated to personal and familial stories, it also describes the history of the Kurds:

I think my English book *Life for Us* is very personal journey [...] It’s a very concrete journey of a person but as well as that it is a journey of a family, my family, and a journey of a people, the Kurds (at least the Kurds in Iraq). Some of the poems have dates, for example; ‘Escape Journey, 1988’, ‘At the Border 1979’, ‘The Spoils, 1988’ and so on, because they are historical events, moments in time.28

‘The Spoils, 1988’29 is dedicated to ‘the 182,000 victims of Anfal, Kurdistan, Iraq’.30 Arabic soldiers march across the pages of the poem’s narration dressed in military clothing and bearing the weapons that force the Ba’th party’s nationalistic agenda on Kurdish villagers. Gregory considers the Anfal as an example of ‘terror’ whereby the Ba’th declared ‘“war on terror”’.31 I focus on the Iraqi state’s suspension of victims’ lives by declaring a state of emergency in the Anfal banned areas. The poem opens with the name of a historically verifiable incident: ‘Anfal came!’ The poetic persona appears as historian and photographer who is documenting what and how ‘Anfal’ was. ‘[L]ittle sparrows’ and ‘sheep’ have died. Natural sites and buildings, ‘caves’ and ‘houses’ are demolished. The poem personifies ‘the caves’ as being ‘choked’, as though incapable of breathing. It explores the scenes of suffering in relentless detail:

The villagers were taken, separated,  
those who cried were shot because they cried,  
those who didn’t were shot because they didn’t.  
They were kept in the southern sands.  
Those who survived the desert  
were buried together, alive.

Every line documents a single, foul act. It is presented like a list of atrocities. It also marches forward, showing the acts of inescapable execution. ‘The Spoils, 1988’ captures historical incidents minutely, reflecting Hardi’s own research, which reveals how, during

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28 Hardi, Interviewed by Poetry Archive  
29 *Life for Us*, p.20.  
30 Ibid.  
31 Gregory, p.155.
the Anfal operations, the Ba’th regime attacked banned places.\textsuperscript{32} These places were especially marked by the regime for Anfalisation. Violent acts in the poem are expressed as “taking away”, “separating”, “keeping in the southern sands”, “shooting” and “burying alive” the villagers; representing the actual manners of the operations. As Michiel Leezenberg notes, during the Anfal operations, the Ba’th regime used ‘concentration camp[s]’ in the south where it ‘resettled’ most of the old ‘captives’ some of whom died due to terrible ‘living conditions’.\textsuperscript{33} The third stanza opens with the same words as the first: ‘Anfal came!’ This repetition shows that the violence was not carried out in a single act but that it was conducted in a series of acts and its effects felt repeatedly thereafter.

The massacre in ‘The Spoils, 1988’ presents the Anfal victims as \textit{homo sacer}, who lived a bare life. Agamben notes that a bare life holds no political rights and ‘must be excluded’ by means of ‘death’.\textsuperscript{34} Through imposing the state of exception in the Anfal spaces, the state is granted more power over the residents of these spaces. Agamben terms this type of sovereign power ‘\textit{full powers} (pleins pouvoirs) which is sometimes used to characterize the state of exception, and refers to the expansion of the powers of the government’.\textsuperscript{35} Exploiting sovereign rule makes the Iraqi Ba’th normalise the killing in the poem. The villagers’ lives resemble Gregory’s definition of bare life: ‘[N]aked life that is excluded from political participation, and so can be abandoned to violence and death without recrimination or penalty’.\textsuperscript{36} Agamben, meanwhile, notes that ‘the state of exception’ takes place with the exclusion of ‘bare life’ from the political realm, when ‘the exception everywhere becomes the rule’.\textsuperscript{37} The same state of exception decreed by the Iraqi sovereignty is evident in the poem’s Anfal massacres.

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\textsuperscript{34} Agamben, p.100.
\textsuperscript{37} Agamben, \textit{Homo Sacer}, p.9.
\end{flushright}
Excluding “illegal” Kurdish subjects from the nation-state in the poem reminds of Ali Hassan Al-Majid’s declaration of the state’s plan against the Kurdish villagers. It was decided by Al-Majid that Kurdish “‘saboteurs’” should no longer possess anything. Al-Majid ‘suspended the legal rights’ of the banned areas’ denizens, commanded capital punishment of the saboteurs’ family members and those whom the state has confirmed their violations.38 The life of the homo sacer Kurdish villagers is continually under threat. In the way Christine Sylvester argues in the context of defining the replicas of homo sacer in the modern age,39 Kurdish ‘villagers’ are annihilated with relative impunity in the poem. David McDowall notes, the villagers’ lives and the violence perpetrated on the Anfal victims resembled the Nazi concentration camps.40 Even though Nazi ideology is internationally rebuked, its ideas and political praxis are in evidence in the Anfal, as depicted in ‘The Spoils, 1988’. Referring to the Nazi regime, Agamben claims that ‘modern totalitarianism’ imposes ‘legal civil war’, which eventually results in terminating people – those who have no political rights – along with oppositional enemies.41 Thus, by means of adopting Nazi methods, the Anfal banned areas are spaces where life and death coalesce and where the Anfalised people are no longer treated as human beings. As Hannah Arendt argues, the establishment of ‘concentration camps’ by totalitarian states aims to disgrace and dehumanise the camp dwellers, who ‘can be transformed into specimens of the human animal’.42

As explored in the previous chapter, while Kurdish imams are portrayed in ‘The Spoils, 1988’ as holding ‘the Qura’an’, ‘the soldiers’ still do not perceive them as Muslims because the state excludes Kurds from the “Islamic sphere”. This further contributes to Kurds’ status as homo sacer. Agamben argues that the killer of homo sacer is not charged with ‘homicide’, unlike the freeman, whose ‘murderer’ is subject to punishment. Homo sacer is excluded from both ‘ius humanum’ (human law), and also from ‘ius divinum’ (divine law). He further observes: ‘Life that cannot be sacrificed and

38 Kelly, p.22.
41 Agamben, State of Exception, p.2.
yet may be killed is sacred life’. Kurdish villagers are excluded from God’s law when the soldiers spit ‘at the Qura’an the imams held before’ them, pissing ‘on the engraved name of Allah’ and destroying Kurdish ‘village mosques’. They are thus taken out from the heavenly domain, rendering them “blasphemous”, non-Islamic subjects. Reflecting on the ideology behind the Anfal, Khaled Salih remarks:

Anfal was [...] a political solution applied to a political problem in which demonising the Kurds was an important ingredient. The first step, the choice of Anfal as a code-name, is revealing. By so choosing, those Kurds who were to be affected by the campaign were labelled as ‘unbelievers’. Their areas of residence were termed ‘prohibited areas’. Riding an area of rebels was hailed as ‘purification’.

Killing ‘the villagers’ is perceived by the state to purge them of their supposed “sins”. The poem’s reference to ‘the Qura’an’ and ‘village mosques’ purposely exposes the deception spun by the perpetrators of these crimes. Like homo sacer, they are exposed to ‘a double exception’ and ‘set outside human jurisdiction without being brought into the realm of divine law’. At the end of the poem, despite starting a new life, the survivors are permanently altered, leaving ‘for unknown destinations’, using another ‘language’ and marrying again. Every aspect of their life has metamorphosed. Thus, in the last stanza, although a few victims survive the Anfal, they forever ‘remember’ the campaigns. It becomes the Anfal survivors’ destiny to never “forget” the history of state violence.

The Pared Down Nation-State in Laleh Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans and The Walking

In The Age of Orphans, Reza Shah always chooses the martial option for repressing Kurdish resistance. Violence and oppression consolidate modern Iranian nation-building. Every demand for Kurdish independence is rejected and the Kurds are tortured

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43 Agamben, Homo Sacer, pp.81-2. Agamben explains that the sacredness of homo sacer meant prohibiting his sacrifice to the gods, a ritual which was fed by a religious right of those who were not excluded from society. Sacredness, he says, seems to be religious exclusion according to the Roman laws (Ibid., p.82).
45 Agamben, Homo Sacer, p.82.
and killed. From the novel’s outset, Kurds who resist the Shah’s military attack are massacred in the Kurdish area of Kermanshah in the 1920s. According to Iranian sovereignty, an early step of modern nation-formation requires an iron fist. Similarly in Khadivi’s *The Walking*, the new Islamic government in 1979 assaults the Kurds, making their situation no better than that of the previous Kurdish generation featured in her *The Age of Orphans*.

Because modern sovereignty “protects the sacredness” of the modern state, it is allowed to marshal an “organised” and “safe” community. Marked by this blueprint, Zygmunt Bauman calls the modern state “‘gardening’ state’, which treats its governed ‘society […] as an object of designing, cultivating and weed-poisoning’. Bauman argues that ‘the gardener’ (the state), in order to keep the ‘furrow’ orderly and harmonious, combs out ‘every self-invited plant which interferes with his plan and his vision’. Modern Iran in *The Age of Orphans* is conceived by the Iranian state as in need of “civilising”, a campaign which mainly views non-Persianness as impeding the creation of an orderly and harmonious society. When Kurds rebel to this state project, they are subjected to absolute repression. Marching towards the Kurdish city of Saqqez, Iranian army forces are full of hatred against the Kurdish rebels. Gathered in the military camps, the enthusiastic soldiers march to ‘carry out the shah’s unexplained desires’ without question. Parrot-like memorisation of Reza Shah’s ‘desires’ represents the soldiers’ ill understanding of nationalist policy. The captains and lieutenants afterwards examine the soldiers’ devotion to the state’s commands:

*Why have we come to Saqqez?*  
To infiltrate the renowned hideout of infamous and renegade Kurdish commanders Simko and Dizli, who are aligned with the blasphemous Kurdish quest for independence that weakens our great nation! Leave us humiliated! Susceptible to invasion and attack!  
*Aufereen* [Well-done], Sarbaz. Tomorrow we will march.

Being conceived as blasphemous, the Kurds must be purified. Kurdish blasphemy represents contamination of the ideological doctrines of the Iranian nation-state. The soldiers are urged to protect the homogeneity of the “modern nation”, together with state

47 Ibid., p.57.  
49 Ibid., p.117.
borders, from any possible Kurdish self-rule or resistance to state ideology. As Ralph Peters observes, Middle Eastern territorial borders are always bloody and chaotic for the Kurds. Simko and Dizli are ‘infamous’, ‘renegade’ and outlaws for threatening the Shah’s conception of “modernity”, which entails fierce protection of newly-decided borderlines of nation-statehood.

Kurds’ “violation” of Iranian national rules allows the captains and lieutenants to mobilise the troops to attack Kurdish “perpetrators”. What defines perpetration for these captains and lieutenants is resistance to cultural and linguistic assimilation, which is part of Iran’s modernisation/Westernisation of non-Persians. Kurdish rebellion to the state’s Persianification is perceived as hampering the “Iranian civilising mission”. Persianifying the nation is a means of embracing Western cultural and social values, because the Aryan (Persian) race is imagined by nationalism to be originally European. As Alireza Asgharzadeh writes, Iran’s myth of the ‘Aryan’ race’s supremacy and its civilisational modernisation has led, and still does, to the ‘execution, eradication and annihilation’ of non-Persian groups. After the Iranian soldiers’ entry into a Kurdish town in search of the rebels, a Kurdish boy talks about the seventeen days of the soldiers’ stay:

On the second day the shah soldiers came to town [...]. They stood in the meiydan and shouted for the men to come out. No men came. Then they shouted that any Kurd who was not a follower of the shahenshah of Iran, the king of kings, would be shot and killed. I nearly raised my voice to say I am not! We are Kurds of these Zagros and that is all! [...] Our fathers were deep in the mountains, covered by stones, invisible [...] Every day now the soldiers ride or walk from their camp to our town [...] They walk with purpose; some say they walk slowly for us to hear the clink of their sharp spurs and know them as military men, modern men, men of metal.

The Kurds resist the state’s ‘modern men’ and their denial of Kurdishness. The regime of modernity in Iran establishes itself on bloodshed, with virtual impunity, which is a characteristic of many Middle Eastern states. Touraj Atabaki and Erik Zurcher note that Reza Shah’s (and Atatürk’s) centralisation and modernising projects were founded on

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51 Chapter Four will explore this policy of state assimilation in The Age of Orphans (and The Lost Word).


53 The Age of Orphans, pp.120-1.
establishing an ‘authoritarian reform’. As in The Age of Orphans, any suspicion that Kurds are endangering authoritarian rule is met with zero tolerance. In the novel, Reza Shah’s son is in power in 1945. The Kermanshahi Kurds support the Kurdish Republic of Kurdistan in Mahabad and demand further independence, as the new Republic appropriates Kermanshah and other Kurdish cities to its territories. They march in the streets and demand the protection of Kurdishness: ‘The children will speak Kurdish at school!’ This Kurdish demand for linguistic rights “justifies” the state’s use of violence against them; the Kurds have broken the rules of nation-statehood, which is modelled on Persian ethnic identity.

Gradually, the state accrues the right to treat “the lawbreakers” as sub-humans who deserve no pity. The “backward” Kurds are tortured like animals. With other officials in Kermanshah, Captain Reza Khourdi unwillingly announces the prohibition of any reference to the newly announced Kurdish Republic in Mahabad. The decision reads:

[All mentions of Mahabad are now illegal and that any [...] good feeling concerning nation or state will be dealt with as transgressions against his majesty the shah [...]. Reza listens to the pronouncements through the walls of his barracks office and can hear nothing else but the occasional bray of some anonymous hoofed animal tied unwillingly to a post. They bring them into the office strung together in a human chain made of rope and sharp twine. Reza sees that each one’s fists are tied fast around the neck of the man in front of him and the line of men, ten or twelve, moves slowly and cautiously behind the cadets. The lieutenant looks to Reza proudly.]

The lieutenant’s treatment of the captives, who are tied like animals, shows how they resemble homo sacer. Agamben says homo sacer lives in a state of unbelonging to the human community just like the ‘wolf-man’, who was a bandit, banned from the city. Agamben states that Rodolphe Jhering was the first to connect homo sacer and ‘wargus, the wolf-man, and of the Friedlos, the “man without peace” of ancient Germanic law’. The “unpeaceful” wolf-man was conceived as ‘a monstrous hybrid of human and animal, divided between the forest and the city’, denied from human status and was

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55 The Age of Orphans, p.214.
56 Ibid., p.237.
57 Ibid., pp.242-3.
subjected to murder by anyone. The Kurds punished by the lieutenant are another category of animalised humans alongside these ancient figures. The lieutenant’s happiness increases as he punishes the Kurdish men: ‘The lieutenant clearly enjoys the sound of his own voice. What is this feeling of wanting a state all your own? The Kurds keep silent. Our Iran isn’t good enough for you?’ Reza Khourdi, who is sitting at his desk trying ‘to avoid the sight of the blood and the piercing’, is distressed to see the lieutenant humiliating the captives: ‘Maybe you can tell me? The shish lands again and again, this time leaving marks, but the man makes no sound’. Disobeying the state represents the infringement of Iran’s laws by announcing a Kurdish republic. Reza Khourdi, who the state recruited as a cadet when he was a child and then assigned him as a captain in his original hometown Kermanshah, distances himself from the lieutenant’s treatment, because he senses the oppression and disavowal of Kurdishness in modern Iran. He cannot overcome the memories of Iran’s massacre of his family before he was taken to the barracks for the first time in his early childhood.

A Kurdish man, who was Reza Khourdi’s friend in Kermanshah, ‘was hung for treason against the shah and his head puffed up so much that his marble eye popped out and a street dog sniffed at it and walked away’. The uselessness of the man’s corpse, which is thrown in the street, symbolises the state’s sense of unwanted groups – such as Kurds – as waste within Iran. As Foucault remarks, the state ‘power’ manages the citizens in the way it tries to “make” live and “let” die. The Iranian state’s penal system inflicts bodily pain, reminding us that Foucault explains how this pain was historically associated with condemnation before the nineteenth century, in countries like France. Khadivi portrays modern Iran as inflicting physical aggression on the Kurds. However, Iranian sovereignty in the novel does not stop at corporeal punishment.

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., p.244.
62 Ibid., p.232.
64 ………….. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Great Britain: Penguin 1979), pp.3-16.
It also punishes the Kurds’ ideas of their own Kurdishness, interrogating them with bodily torture about their ideas of Kurdish independence. As Foucault further writes:

[Criminals] are punished by the ‘security measures’ that accompany the penalty [...] and which are intended not to punish the offence, but to supervise the individual, to neutralize his dangerous state of mind, to alter his criminal tendencies, and to continue even when this change has been achieved.65

It is by applying this mode of state violence that the “orderly” Iran comes into being. The Kurds are punished not only because they call for independence, but for being Kurdish, calling the state’s “national” homogenisation into question.

In Khadivi’s The Walking, 1979 revolutionary Iran practises death to fight the oppositions to the state. Any violation of state law is punishable by death. In the novel, Kurds thus link their status with death: ‘I am Kurdish. My blood alone is a death sentence in this new regime’.66 The new revolutionary regime continues this aspect of Pahlavi ideology in repressing the homo sacer Kurds. In novel, the revolution’s ‘komiteh [revolution committee] guards, are everywhere’ and they are ‘as bad as SAVAK’.67 Making only changes of terminology, the Islamic state pursues the Phalavis’ secular policy agenda since SAVAK was the Organisation of Intelligence and National Security prior to the 1979 Revolution.

The state’s murder of Kurds in The Age of Orphans is justified by discourses of modernity and Westernisation; applying the state legislation now requires the state’s sacrifice of the Kurds. Yet, in The Walking, Kurds are equally deemed to exist outside the state’s humanitarian laws if they call for independence, and are, therefore, perceived as lawbreakers. As a mullah tells the arrested Kurdish men at the dawn of the new Iran:

This afternoon you have been found guilty for the crimes of firearm trafficking to Kurdish nationalist rebels to the west, a violation of the laws of the Islamic Republic that merits instant execution. As you were under the Shah, violent, aggressive, vainglorious, you have exhibited yourself at the dawn of the Islamic republic, and we will let your deaths serve as examples to your sons.68

The arrested Kurds are excluded bodies for the mullah because they refuse to obey and glorify the new state principles – these principles in the novel were examined in Chapter

65 Ibid., p.18.
66 The Walking, p.4.
67 Ibid., p.23.
68 Ibid., p.13.
One. Thus, the mullah orders their shooting: ‘[A] million threads were cut and the Kurdish men dropped to the valley floor like puppets, useless and tossed aside’.\(^6^9\) Death becomes a normal ritual performed by the state against anti-state Kurds in *The Walking*. Whether secular or Islamic, modern Iran’s ideals of nation-statehood justify ongoing violence against its perceived enemies. In *The Age of Orphans*, the Pahlavi dynasty uses secular ideology to protect nation-statehood. *The Walking* similarly depicts revolutionary Iran – despite its Islamic identity – as perpetuating almost the same ideology of statehood, which is generated by preserving the state borders and Iranian nationhood.

**Fighting “the Other” in Oya Baydar’s *The Lost Word* and Sophie Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages***

If Scheurer’s *The Sayings* and Hardi’s ‘Dropping Gas: 16\(^{\text{th}}\) March 1988’ and ‘The Spoils, 1988’ describe the Halabja Gas Attack and the Anfal campaigns as instances of a state of exception in Iraq, Oya Baydar’s *The Lost Word* and Sophie Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages* illustrate a similar process in Turkey’s Kurdish region. Violence becomes the foundation on which Turkey is constructed. Bloodshed prevails and death supersedes life. This is similar to Agamben’s discussion of George W. Bush’s creation of a ‘state of exception’, following September 11, 2001, as an attempt to bring about ‘a situation in which the emergency becomes the rule, and the very distinction between peace and war (and between foreign and civil war) becomes impossible’.\(^7^0\) Turkey is depicted as “legally” possessing the whole territories of the Turkish nation-sate, including the Kurdish region in Turkey’s southeast. Turkey has the right to use violence against those who protest against its laws. As Blomley puts it: ‘To have a property in land is to have a right to some use or benefit of land. Such a right is necessarily relational, being held against others’. This is because ‘[p]roperty’s “bundle” of rights includes the power to exclude others […]’. Such rights are enforceable, whether by custom or the law’.\(^7^1\) The Kurdish region in the novels is characterised by the state of emergency imposed by Turkish state under different

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\(^6^9\) Ibid., pp.13-4.

\(^7^0\) Agamben, *State of Exception*, p.22.

\(^7^1\) Blomley, p.21.
pretexts, of which the most obvious is the state-PKK clashes. In this context, Kurdish literary characters suffer bloodshed and are abandoned by the law. They are stained by an imagined guilt allowing the state to punish them, destroy their lives and to kill them.

Suspension of Life in *The Lost Word*

In *The Lost Word*, Baydar portrays Turkey as frightening and represents Iraq as ‘hell’ due to ongoing warfare. Mahmut, Zelal, Hüseyin Dayi and other Kurds in the novel live a hellish life in Turkey. Their life is characterised by a state of limbo. Kurdish resistance to the state’s racial ideologies is dealt with ruthlessly. After his encounter with the Kurdish couple, Mahmut and Zelal, Ömer sympathises with Mahmut’s miseries:

Ömer notices the strong eastern accent in the boy’s voice. He remembers the Kurdish cry for help. He looks at his face carefully for the first time. He sees the loneliness, fear, hopelessness and the look of a cornered, wounded animal.

The Kurdish ‘cry for help’ reverberates through the novel, and increases in volume after the 1980 coup. As in real life, Hakan Yavuz points out that the suppressions of the ‘1980 coup’ created ‘a siege mentality among the Kurds’ in Turkey and they consequently began to conclude that ‘Turkish state’ would continue to have an ever-present supremacy over their lives. The novel plays a significant role in promoting solidarity with the Kurds by depicting the aftermath of this coup, which continues to haunt Kurdish literary protagonists at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The southeast in *The Lost Word* has high death rates, legalised by the state’s discursive lawmaking. The Kurdish region is not defended by the country’s elite. Seeing a “wounded animal” like Mahmut precedes Ömer’s journey to the southeast, where he witnesses the utmost aggression against the Kurdish citizens. Every aspect of the southeastern life involves war and blood. The first thing Ömer realises in the first Kurdish town he visits is Turkish intellectuals’ ignorance of the Kurdish predicament. The young man who helped Ömer to find Mahmut’s family home in the southeast succinctly narrates the Kurdish plight:

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72 *The Lost Word*, pp.40-1.
73 Ibid., p.66.
74 Ibid., p.16.
The lad [...] begins a repetitive passionless tirade. ‘If only our intellectuals came here and saw for themselves, if the press came, if they got to know us and reported that we are not dishonourable terrorists and separatists. We are Kurds, human beings. We just want our language and our identity. We want to live like people in the west.’

Ömer, as a Turkish intellectual, seems bored of the lad’s complaint, which is described as ‘a repetitive passionless tirade’. Henri Barkey and Graham Fuller explain that ‘[Turkey’s p]olicy in the southeast has relied almost exclusively on the military option’. They also state that the passivity of ‘most of the press, intellectuals, civil society, and political parties’ furthered the Kemalist use of military force. In the southeast, Ömer is entrapped in the Turkish Commander of the Mountain Troops’ perception of the Kurds, who are viewed as dangerous. Ömer thinks: ‘Instead I should have shut the man up immediately’. But Ömer did not shut the Commander up. His silence exposes Turkish intellectuals’ muteness about the state’s policy. He is thus presented as an accomplice.

The Commander views southeastern residents as terrorists, and murdering them is regarded by him as protecting the country. He has a phobia of Kurdish “abnormality”. Anna Secor notes, the Kurds are living in a state of exception in Turkey, because they are perceived as abnormal. She describes Kurdish identity as a supposedly ‘shit nation’, a concept that ‘becomes the guilt-mark of the state of exception whereby, as a Kurdish man put it, “they always see you as against the state”’. Turkey in the novel represents the southeast as a site of terrorist actions. Agamben argues that the state of exception comes into being when sovereignty announces that it is challenged by “unstable”, dangerous conditions. Just as I found with other primary texts about Iraq and Iran, the Kurdish experience in Baydar’s *The Lost Word* also resembles the life of

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76 *The Lost Word*, p.130.
78 Ibid.
79 *The Lost Word*, p.259.
80 Ibid, p.151.
82 Ibid, p.44.
homo sacer. Perceiving the Kurds as ‘militants of the terrorist organization’\textsuperscript{84} by the Commander encourages the Turkish government to declare the state of exception in the southeast, where policing becomes an integral part of everyday life.

Kurdish literary characters are entangled in the state’s policing of its geopolitical borders. Secor argues that, in the Kurdish region, ‘policing becomes something that one cannot escape, cannot leave behind within the abandoned spaces or territories that are already governed as “other”’.\textsuperscript{85} The southeast is attributed almost to Kurdishness in the novel and is an excluded space from any legal right of protection. The Turkish racial outlook on the Kurds is vindicated by calling them “terrorists” and this terminology helps the state practise its power on their lives. Ömer in the southeast is told by a Kurdish lawyer that an innocent child has been murdered for being accused as a terrorist:

[Ömer says:] ‘That boy who was shot as a terrorist ... Did you say he was twelve years old? Why him?’
‘Even you have doubts when asking that question? Mistrust has settled in our hearts. We cannot overcome it with ease. The boy really was innocent; whatever innocence means in these parts ...’\textsuperscript{86}

The boy is marked with guilt as Ömer also calls him a terrorist. It is not Ömer who wants to see the boy as guilty. The boy’s “Kurdishness” has already identified the boy as a dangerous terrorist. This paves the way for the state to kill him, because the boy is excluded by law, which represents the state’s “justice” when facing the “terrorist” boy. As Secor remarks in the context of Turkey’s banishment of the Kurds in the face of law: ‘Justice is the threshold at which the state of exception, the ban, comes into effect’.\textsuperscript{87} No “justice” is possibly found for the Kurds in the novel, because justice is only defined from the state’s view. Yet enforcement of the state’s law has denied the recognition of Kurdishness. Seeking justice from this state law, which has already defined the Kurds as wrongdoers, is impossible. The only “justice” is applying the state’s exclusionary law, which is a constituent part of modern Turkish nation-statehood. “Justice” is defined by that law which inspires Turkey’s justification for declaring war on Kurdishness. Thus,

\textsuperscript{84} The Lost Word, p.151.
\textsuperscript{85} Secor, p.47.
\textsuperscript{86} The Lost Word, pp.156.
\textsuperscript{87} Secor, p.50.
modernity’s democratic values in Turkey are myths. As I investigated in the introduction to this thesis, mythmaking is modernity’s sibling.

The state justifies its violence against the boy through its use of the Manichean allegory that classifies people into two races; a “safe race” and a “dangerous race (terrorists)”.

The law correspondingly permits the elimination of the lawless groups and allows the state to fight the “race of terrorists”. Foucault explains the mutual relationship between racism and politics of death as being:

‘[P]rimarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die. The appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and that other, in contrast, are described as inferior: all this is a way of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls. It is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population’.

The state’s absolute power in activating its racial ideology to murder the child (“terrorist”) is conducted by means of the state’s nationalist projects. One of these projects is the protection of a “peaceful” life by killing “unpeaceful” subjects. Wendell Kisner argues that, in order to justify the suspension of the law at critical times such as ‘civil war, revolution, foreign invasion, and now terrorism [my emphasis]’, ‘[m]odern states’ call for a ‘state of exception’. Jiyan, who represents the defence of the southeast, indirectly condemns the state’s murderous power in the face of its claim to fight terrorism:

‘If you are trying to capture the spirit of our people, go to a mourning house. [...] He [Ömer] knew about community centres, but he had not heard of mourning houses. ‘Is it the home of the young lad they shot as a terrorist a few days ago?’ ‘It’s not just his, but it’s everyone’s home [...]’.

‘Is it always open?’

‘It’s always open because people are always dying. A lot of people die here. Death is our most important social activity.’ [my emphasis]

The omnipresence of death here reflects the state of emergency’s impact on the Kurdish region. Asa Lundgren states, it was in ‘2002’ that ‘the state of emergency’, which was

90 The Lost Word, p.155.
imposed in ‘1987’, was repealed by Turkey.\textsuperscript{91} However, it is after 2002 in the novel that Ömer sees people living with torture and death in the southeast, the Kurd is viewed as a dangerous “terrorist”. For this reason, Ömer called the murdered boy a terrorist, yet he knew that the boy was not.

Baydar’s \textit{The Lost Word} also represents the state’s policy as leading to counterinsurgency by the Kurdish organisation of the PKK. Nonetheless, the PKK’s counterinsurgency claims Kurdish civilian lives in the southeast. Bruinessen remarks that a vast proportion of Kurdish people from among the ‘35,000’ dead, actually died between ‘1984’ and ‘1999’ as a result of the state-PKK conflict.\textsuperscript{92} Mahmut, who was a medicine student dismissed from university for celebrating ‘Nawroz’ and singing ‘Kurdish songs’ on university campus,\textsuperscript{93} has fled to the mountains to escape death. When he leaves the mountains, he sadly explains that the Kurds have nowhere to live peacefully:

\begin{quote}
[Ömer asks Mahmut:] ‘Why and who are you running from, son?’

[...]

‘From death,’ he says as though spitting through his teeth.’ From the military, the military police, the organization, the state and from the tradition … From everything, everything that you know about our parts, because they all bring death.”\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

Kurdish resistance is symbolised by both mountains and death due to the state’s hard-line policy. Taking refuge in the mountains still does not guarantee a safe haven since Mahmut equates Kurdish life with “death”, suggesting the extent to which war has displaced him:

‘Our village was burnt down. Our aghas took to the mountains. I was still a child, aged eight or nine. [...] W]e left it all behind. [...] I screamed the place down and wouldn’t leave it even though my dad beat me. When we came down the hill to the plain and looked back, our village, home and barns were all in flames.’\textsuperscript{95}

Destroying Mahmut’s village and displacing his family have affected his whole life, because intimidation always stalks him. McDowall indicates that those who were

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{The Lost Word}, p.95.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., p.49.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
viewed as enemies were detained and arrested in public by Turkish ‘Special Teams (Ozel Tim)’ during the [state-PKK] war years.\textsuperscript{96} He also notes that Turkey humiliated the Kurds by means of ‘arbitrary arrest, violence, torture, extra-judicial killings, sexual violence or threats of violence and the wanton destruction (or plunder) of moveable property, livestock and food stocks’.\textsuperscript{97} As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri observe, ‘[w]ar has become a regime of biopower’, which continuously constructs ‘all aspects of social life’ in spite of ‘controlling the population’.\textsuperscript{98} All aspects of Kurdish life are touched by war in the novel. Despite the destruction of his home and the torture and intimidation of his family members, Mahmut’s family is also dishonoured. His father’s pride is severely wounded: ‘He also remembers that for three days his father didn’t get out of bed, not from pain or sickness but from grief and shame, that for three days he lay facing the wall on the cushions in the corner’.\textsuperscript{99}

On the other hand, the PKK is depicted as strictly controlling Kurds who break its laws. Any violation of its rules cost the violator’s life, because s/he is thought to be clandestinely working for the state. As Mahmut says: ‘In the camp, one snowy morning at dawn they had executed Seydo who had panicked and attempted to surrender in the middle of a battle’.\textsuperscript{100} Kurds who reject war and bloodshed are victims in every respect. Although Mahmut says: ‘From time to time children would be taken from their villages against their will’, he willingly took to the mountains:

> We felt in our hearts the sound, the poetry, the legend of the mountain. We combined them with the heroic stories we had acquired since childhood. We fortified the memory of our raided, evacuated, burnt villages with rebellion against our poverty, our oppression and rejection.\textsuperscript{101}

Although Mahmut’s father is against the idea of war, it could be argued that war is the Kurds’ only choice. Lundgren observes that Turkey’s excessive brutality may have led to the growth of a strong PKK ‘Kurdish nationalism’ in the southeast, causing violent reprisals by the Kurds.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{96} McDowall, p.441.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., p.440.
\textsuperscript{99} The Lost Word, p.96.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., p.93.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p.94.
\textsuperscript{102} Lundgren, pp.47-8.
the area, Jiyan, at her pharmacy in the Kurdish town, tells Ömer that the state obliges the Kurds to fight back. She says ‘[t]he more we fear, the crueler we become’, by which Jiyan seems to refer to the PKK, whose violent methods could be justified as counterattacks on the state. On another occasion, Ömer condemning violence whether perpetrated by the state or the guerrillas, and Zelal responds: ‘If others kill, there’s nothing for it but to kill, too. If they come at you and get better of you, then you defend yourself with weapons.’ In the same way, Mahmut thinks the Kurds are ‘without hope, without a future, downtrodden, poor and bereft’ and they ‘go up the mountain to fight to be regarded as human beings – as somebodies – and to have hope and dignity in our identity’. Kurdish literary protagonists regard Kurdish military attacks on the state as resistance to Turkey’s “regulation” of the Kurds. Mahmut, Zelal and Jiyan believe that the Kurdish counteraction resists state discipline. They imagine Kurdish resistance as a legitimate response to state torture and denial.

Indecisiveness is a hallmark of the southeast in the novel. Secor explains that ‘[m]any of those who lived in Turkey’s southeast found themselves caught between the PKK and the Special Teams, forced to choose sides, spend time in jail, or flee’. What is problematic for the Kurds in The Lost Word is shifting allegiances to the state or to the PKK. They either stay in Kurdish settlements under state rule or join the PKK, both cases exposing Kurdish civilians to torture because they are often accused by the state of having PKK affiliations. The southeast in the novel is a space of military interrogation and clashing armed forces. It is where human suffering takes places. The young man in the Kurdish city tells Ömer that he enlisted with the Turkish army in order to do his military service. The man hates the idea of joining the army but is obliged to do so. His father is in an untenable situation since he will face problems whichever side he takes. Despite enlisting with the army, the state is suspicious of Kurds and it tortures them under the pretext of the PKK threat. The young man tells Ömer that three fingers of his right hand are not working because he was punished by a Turkish sergeant, who

103 The Lost Word, p.142.
104 Ibid., p.117.
105 Ibid., p.204.
106 Secor, p.37.
107 The Lost Word, p.126.
saw him firing so accurately ‘during target practice’. The man’s experience with the sergeant represents the way in which Kurds in Turkey have no recourse to the law. They are obliged to admit to crimes they have not committed. As Agamben argues, state sovereignty excludes *homo sacer* from judicial order, thereby allowing sovereignty to stand outside the law and to make the law itself. Baydar portrays Turkish sovereign power as routinely practising torture against the Kurds, and every perceived collaborator is subject to its disciplinary policy in the novel. The sergeant, who is the agent of state sovereignty, freely applies punishment and deprives the young Kurdish man of legal protection. It is the state’s suspicious eye that enables the sergeant to invite the man to incriminate himself.

**Fleeing Sovereignty in *The Registrar’s Manual***

During their escape from the Iranian state violence in Khadivi’s *The Walking*, Ali Khourdi tells his brother, Saladin: ‘Don’t you remember the stories the old men told? Kurds have always escaped through these mountains. We are not different’. Ali suggests that the Kurds’ physical bodies are literal sites of the power’s discipline. They have to escape for their lives. This experience marks Selim’s life in Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual*. Selim, the main protagonist, also resembles Kurds in Baydar’s *The Lost Word*. He lives the bitter experience of Mahmut, Zelal, Jiyain and other Kurds. He flees to Germany because he is being hunted by the Turkish state. Although Selim is in his early teens, he is accused of being a PKK “collaborator”. Hardach, like other writers above, depicts Kurdish life as bare life, ever vulnerable to state oppression. Selim falls outside international human laws, yet he is subjected to Turkey’s legally enforced torture. Secor argues that ‘the sovereign decision […] creates a pervasive zone of indistinction’ by imposing ‘the state of exception’ whereby sovereignty generates its “laws” freely. Turkey’s Kurdish region, she writes, is tarred with the same brush by Turkey. Mbembe demonstrates that biopower divides ‘human species into groups, […] subdivi[des …] the population into subgroups, and […] establish[es …] a biological

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108 Ibid., p.127.
110 *The Walking*, p.33.
111 Secor, p.40.
caesura between the ones and the others’. In *The Registrar’s Manual*, Selim is pursued by the Turkish authorities because he is accused of breaking the law. For Turkey, Selim’s Kurdish identity marks him out as being of a separate race and, therefore, a natural slave to Turks. The concept of “natural slave” goes right back to Aristotle, who believed ‘some people […] were born natural slaves and ought to be slaves under any circumstances. Other people were born to rule these slaves, could use these slaves as they pleased and could treat them as property’. Aristotle’s concept of ‘natural slave’ fits into Turkey’s perception of Selim – as I quoted Turkey’s Minister of Justice, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, in the introduction to this thesis, who asserted in 1930 that Turks are masters in modern Turkey while non-Turks are ‘servants and slaves’. Being regarded as a “slave” by Turkey’s racial ideology, Selim is thus subjected to death. Mbembe argues that for Arendt, ‘the politics of race is ultimately linked to the politics of death.’ Likewise, he says, Foucault reaffirms that perceived racial difference is a means of exercising the ‘sovereign right of death’.

At the very beginning of the novel, the yacht, on which Selim and others hope to reach Europe, is shipwrecked. Selim swims to the southern shores of Italy through foul-smelling excrement, symbolising the miserable life awaiting him. He witnesses the death of Evin, a little Kurdish girl whose name means ‘love’ and whose parents bury her in the sand. Despite these difficulties, he prefers to escape:

> But Selim, his ears full of water, limbs struggling to keep his body afloat […]. The heat on the creaking boat had not stopped him, the watchful coastguard had not stopped him, his own fear and seasickness had not stopped him. A sticking mass of digested pasta would not stop him.

Selim is running away from his homeland, yet he faces danger on his journey. Despite the surreal moments he faces in the sea, he does not stop running from Turkish sovereignty. The novel’s narrator compares Turkey to Nazi Germany:

> The simple fact was, I had never before met a victim [Selim] of that particular kind of violence. My grandparents had talked about the war the way most German
grandparents do: my grandmothers had stories about swapping antique chairs for rashers of bacon; my one surviving grandfather about stealing a lump of butter as a prisoner of war.\textsuperscript{118}

The state holds sway in Selim’s life, rendering him sub-human and making him a desperate victim. This depiction is grounded in actual Kurdish experience as illustrated by Christopher Houston: ‘[T]he human rights situation is probably the most succinct indication of the chaos to which the south-eastern provinces [of Turkey] in particular have fallen prey’.\textsuperscript{119}

Human suffering is one of The Registrar’s Manual’s central themes, which Selim recounts in his stories of the destruction of Kurdish villages\textsuperscript{120} and Kurds’ imprisonment. The southeast is a liminal space, prey to the state’s absolute right of destruction and its claim of protecting its sovereign territories. The novel, on other occasions, depicts Kurdish civilian experience as adversely affected by the state-PKK war. The Turkish state – as in The Lost Word – accuses Kurdish civilians of having ties with the PKK. As Selim says, while his father was in prison and he was eight years old, ‘[t]he Turkish special units came to our house and beat me […]. They kicked me in the head with those. The skin came off. You can see the scars when I shave off my hair.’\textsuperscript{121} Subjecting an eight year old to such violence shows the state’s ruthless power. As Foucault remarks, sovereign power is allowed to despatch the “threatening bodies”.\textsuperscript{122} The state perceives its use of power as a “just” method of preserving Turkish nation-statehood.

Bauman observes that ‘modernity’ regards obtaining ‘order’ as one of its ‘tasks’. At the same time, he argues: ‘Order and chaos are modern twins’.\textsuperscript{123} Modernity’s twin in Selim’s story is manifested in Turkey’s claim that is protecting the country. The fantasy of creating an “orderly” state brings chaos in the shape of Kurds’ murder and imprisonment. The more the modern Turkish state embraces “order”, the more Kurdish resistance – perceived by Turkey as chaos – increases. The desire for the highest standard of “orderliness” obliges the state to punish every probable transgression. When Selim is thirteen, the only “crime” he commits is going to a funeral with his sister:

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{118} Ibid., p.169.
\bibitem{120} \textit{The Registrar’s Manual}, p.347.
\bibitem{121} Ibid., pp.168-9.
\bibitem{122} Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality}, p.138.
\end{thebibliography}
‘Aynur and I […] went to someone’s funeral, a man who had been shot by the Turks. All my friends were there. We heard a bang, someone started shooting. It was bang, bang, bang, and then there was a tank and it drove into the crowd. It drove into the crowd and it drove over the children.’ […] ‘There was a lot of blood. And screaming. After that and the beatings, my mother was so afraid for me, she sent me away with the Schlepper.’

Years after his escape to Germany, Selim does not become a PKK recruit. In spite of this, the state accuses him of being affiliated with the PKK when he visits his hometown after gaining asylum in Germany. Because of this sovereign cruelty, Selim’s family preferred him to drown in the sea than be caught by the state. As the reader is told: ‘If he goes back he’ll be killed’. Selim is thus obliged to evade punishment as his homeland is unsafe. His case perfectly illustrates Yavuz’s point that Kurdish people after the ‘1980 coup’ were left with no choice other than to seek asylum in Western countries or become guerrillas. Despite being repeatedly threatened with deportation in Germany, Selim nevertheless accepts Europe’s unwelcoming asylum laws: his journey to Germany was an escape from death.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored literary expressions of the Kurds’ plight in the states where they are living. These literary works are media by which Kurds’ stories of bloodshed and “legal violations” are narrated by both Kurdish writers; Choman Hardi and Laleh Khadivi, and non-Kurdish writers; W. C. Scheurer, Oya Baydar and Sophie Hardach. I have analysed these writers’ literary portrayals of excluding the Kurds from the legal domain within Iraq, Iran and Turkey’s territories, whereby Kurds resemble homo sacer, living in a permanent state of exception. Blomley argues that modern Western law carries violence within itself, yet the examined literary works illustrate that the Middle Eastern states of Turkey, Iran and Iraq, and their laws, are established on and inspired by violence and bloodshed. In these texts, humiliation, dehumanisation, torture and death

125 Ibid., p.332.
126 Ibid., p.165.
127 Yavuz, p.12.
128 Blomley, p.121.
provide the foundation for nation-statehood in Turkey, Iran and Iraq. This nation-statehood goes beyond the law. Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish modernities are marked by violations of human rights, whereby “untroubled”, “safe” and “orderly” Iraq, Iran and Turkey are achieved by violent means. Violence is the cornerstone of the modern nation-state; modernity in all three countries is a matter of making spaces of human trafficking, relying on a “fantasy of creating order” through the exercising of sovereign power. Places like Halabja and the Anfal-targeted areas in Scheurer’s *The Sayings* and Hardi’s poetry, Kermanshah and Saqqez in Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans* and *The Walking* and Turkey’s southeast in Baydar’s *The Lost Word* and Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual* are all recognisable sites of sovereign aggression. In global terms – as well as to Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish citizens – such spaces are rendered invisible, whereby these states apply their states of exceptions. These recent literary texts bring these spaces once more to our collective attention. Writing these texts in English thus informs English readerships about Kurds’ experiences in these modern states.
Chapter Four: Narrating Homelessness, Assimilations and Unbelonging

Where is one’s ‘place’? This question is fundamental to the cultural impact of colonization and affects every aspect of colonized society.

Ashcroft (2001, 124)

[L]anguage and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds.

Thiong’o (1987, 12)

An old photograph in a cheap frame hangs on a wall of the room where I work. It’s a picture dating from 1946 of a house into which, at the time of its taking, I had not yet been born. […] It reminds me that it’s my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city [Bombay] in the mists of lost time.

Rushdie (1991, 9)

The writers featured in this study portray Iraqi, Turkish and Iranian nation-states as founded on “forgetting” Kurdistan and Kurdishness, whereby the Kurdish homeland apparently disappears from view. This chapter explores literary portrayals of Kurdish protagonists’ lack of a homeland. I examine depictions of “home” as a discursive concept. I contend that (re)constructions of (lost) homeland are created not only through depicting the geographical limits of Kurdistan, but also by linguistic, cultural and migratory means. I argue that geography, language, ethnic entity and displacement all take on spatial dimensions. This chapter investigates the way Kurdish literary protagonists imagine their homeland in the poem ‘Lausanne, 1923’, in Choman Hardi’s Life for Us (2004) and W. C. Scheurer’s The Sayings (2003). In these texts, the concept of homeland is figured as a geographical entity on the map. I also examine Hardi’s ‘To Kurdistan’ and ‘My Children’, Oya Baydar’s The Lost Word (2011) and Laleh Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans (2009), in which ideas of a Kurdish homeland are embedded in the
Kurdish language and culture. Denying the Kurdish language and culture parallels the loss of Kurdish territories. My argument centres on portrayals in which the dispossession of Kurdishness is compared to Kurdish homelessness. In addition, I investigate how migration, forced displacement and asylum-seeking, in Hardi’s poem ‘Somehow’, Khadivi’s novel The Walking (2013) and Sophie Hardach’s novel The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages (2011), alienate Kurdish literary protagonists from finding their true home. Nostalgia and dreams of re-joining lost family life become a form of homeland, which is no longer a mere physical entity. This chapter explores in ‘Somehow’ and The Walking the characters’ search for the home – homeland – left in the past life. Furthermore, I suggest that Selim, The Registrar’s Manual’s Kurdish protagonist, is an exile and is viewed as an “outsider”, excluded by asylum rules in Germany, and thus doubly stateless and displaced. This condition makes difficulties for Selim to construct a home in its full meanings. I examine Selim’s encounter with “unhomeliness”, drawing from Homi Bhabha’s writing about the concept of the ‘unhomely’,¹ which I interpret as meaning that the home Selim left behind in Turkey’s southeast does not resemble the idealised home Selim wishes to inhabit again. Despite the existing transnational discussions of creating shifting homes and fluid identities whereby the migrant can adopt a wider vision regarding the senses of belonging to a “fixed” nation, I argue that nationalist policies in the host countries and dominant power relations challenge this hybridised construction since migratory experiences differ from a geography, person and experience to another. This chapter concludes that, due to their dispossession of an independent country, the Kurdish language and cultural entity, Kurdish literary characters split into a number of selves, none of which are real. After they cross state borders, they are unable to fully construct a home that they long for.

Envisaging Kurdistan: Choman Hardi’s ‘Lausanne, 1923’ and W. C. Scheurer’s The Sayings

Delimiting Turkey, Iran and Iraq’s borders is the first essential step of pervading these nation-states’ domination in these literary works. Bill Ashcroft argues that cartographic mapmaking, which relies on ‘a Eurocentric view of spatiality’, has helped to create

places marked by colonisation as a means of the ‘demonstration of power’. Hardi’s poem ‘Lausanne, 1923’ depicts the process of making Turkey, Iran and Iraq. These states render the Kurds powerless by means of cartographic projects. The poetic persona of ‘Lausanne, 1923’ portrays Kurdistan as an imaginary land without borders which lies within other nation-states. Hardi’s decision to write in English seeks to alert English-speaking audiences to the plight of the Kurds, which has resulted from their lack of an independent Kurdish homeland. Hardline Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish policies against the Kurds – explored in the previous chapters – are highly pertinent to Kurdistan’s statelessness. As Hardi observes in an interview with Benjamin Morris, her poetry answers the question put by some British people, “‘why can’t you just settle down in Iraq?’” Hardi wishes to educate such audiences as to why Kurdistan is subsumed into modern Iraq (Turkey, Iran and Syria).

‘Lausanne, 1923’ mirrors an actual historical event. Mehrdad Izady explains that the ‘Treaty of Sevres’ was amended by Atatürk. It was superseded by ‘the Treaty of Lausanne’, which annexed around ‘200,000 square miles of Kurdish territory’ to the Turkish republic, ‘the British mandate of Iraq, and the French mandate of Syria’.

Consequently, the Kurdish homeland has existed only in the abstract, a mythical land with unknown territories, an invisible space on the geopolitical map. Hardi captures this history in her ‘Lausanne, 1923’ where the superpowers collaborate to deprive Kurdistan of its independent borders:

Sitting around an old table
they drew lines across the map
dividing the place
I would call my country.

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3 *Life for Us*, p.22.
4 See below Hardi’s own remark on her purpose of writing in English.
6 Mehrdad Izady, *A Concise Handbook: The Kurds* (Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis, 1992), p.3 (cited in Karen Culcasi, ‘Cartographically Constructing Kurdistan within Geopolitical and Orientalist Discourses’, *Political Geography* 25 (2006), 680-706 (p.684)). This territory of Kurdistan only refers to that part which was under the Ottoman rule – [like the territories of other peoples in the Middle East] – prior to its collapse in pre-WW1 period. The so-called Iranian Kurdistan was already part of the ‘Safavid’ Empire of Persia and remained under the Iranian rule. This division of Kurdistan into the territories of these two empires was the result of the Ottoman-Safavid agreement in ‘1639’ (Ibid).
7 *Life for Us*, p.22.
The past tense of the first part of the poem contextualises the problem by referring back to the colonial division of the surrounding region of Kurdistan into a number of nation-states after the First World War. The Kurdish homeland, as a country of its own, was left officially unrecognised. Hardi, who speaks as the poetic persona of the poem, challenges the superpowers’ geopolitical agenda by making conditional this colonial division in the last line. She adds a human dimension to the act of mapmaking and personalises it by means of using ‘I’ and ‘my’. The poem acts as resisting tool for questioning the world powers’ exclusionary division of Kurdistan.

The poem’s brevity reflects the duration of the Lausanne conference, which lasted only a few hours in 1923, its single sentence ends with a full stop as though to emphasise how final the matter was. The poem nonetheless manages to communicate the serious consequences of the diplomats’ haste to conclude the matter, which jeopardised the Kurds’ lives for many decades. Its simple language and plain structure mirror the casual political injustice imposed on the Kurds. When asked, in the interview with Morris about the clear-cutness of ‘Lausanne, 1923’, Hardi replies that reading the historical event of signing the Treaty of Lausanne which annulled the ratification of the Treaty of Sèvres – the latter promised the Kurds an independent country of their own – inspired her to write this poem. She further refers to the short time some ‘British and French’ officials spent in signing the treaty that mirrors the shortness of the poem itself:

Sometimes I try to reflect in the language and in the form and in the length, the situation itself. Other times the plain-spoken language you mention is to contrast with the complexity, the horror and the pain of the moment. Passionate and complex language may not suit the poems in the book [Life for Us]. [...] Tranquillity and simplicity: sometimes they bring the horrors back better.8

In the poem, Kurdistan is given a lower status by the world powers in comparison to that of other former colonies which became independent countries in the nineteenth century. Refusing to ratify the Treaty of Sèvres, and replacing it with the Lausanne Treaty, marginalises Kurdistan internationally. The poet problematises this reality by crying for a hypothetical Kurdish homeland in its last line: ‘I would call my country’. Hardi’s ‘Lausanne, 1923’ thus deploys the literary imagination to create an independent Kurdistan. The use of the conditional ‘would call’ emphasises the future significance

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and consequences of their action of drawing lines. In this way, the poet manages to focus
the reader’s mind both on past actions and future consequences.

W. C. Scheurer’s *The Sayings* (2003) also brings to light the superpowers’ division
of Kurdistan. It is 2005 in the northern mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan in the novella. The
BBC field correspondent to the Middle East, Reid Hunt, interviews Dr. Saladin, a
Kurdish guerrilla leader:

“Dr. Saladin, you are the most wanted man in the world today. International public
enemy number one. How does it feel to be hunted by so many nations?” [...]
“I think Abraham Lincoln once said, when asked about being ridden out of town
on a rail, ‘But for the honor of it, I would rather have walked.’”
[...]
“You are a Kurd yourself?” [...]”
“I am.”
“From Turkey?”
“Yes. As you know, the Kurds have suffered terribly in both countries [Turkey and
Iraq] since the end of the First World War. In many ways, it’s like the war never
really ended for them.” [...]
“And this is why you are so much opposed to NATO now?” [...]”
“I am not against NATO. I’m not against anyone.”
“But, doesn’t your book blame NATO for everything done to the Kurds?”
“I simply observe the fact that NATO has supported the regimes that did these
things.”

Saladin links the Kurdish predicament in both Iraq and Turkey to the First World War,
which made the Kurds suffer in the nation-states where they had been living. Despite
this, Saladin has an imaginary homeland in mind when he asks American Lieutenant
Marie Bowers to mark out Kurdistan’s borders while they sit on a rock at the border
between Turkey, Iraq and Iran: ‘Can you tell where Turkey begins?’ and Marie replies:
‘No’, so he adds: ‘It is all Kurdistan.’ His drawing on the map represents an alternative
form of map-making, one which is doomed to impermanence. After a while, Saladin
releases the American captives and heads to Iran. The conversation between the
Americans runs as follows:

They all stopped short by Marie when they saw Saladin and his men riding off into
the blazing glow of the bright morning sun. “Headed east.” Goodrow commented.
“Probably going into Iran for a while.” Marie replied without turning away from
the sight of the human forms vanishing from their view. “It’s all Kurdistan to

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9 *The Sayings*, pp.77-8.
10 Ibid., pp.119-20.
them.” She felt their puzzled silence and confused stares, as she continued tracking the horizon with their eyes. “These mountains.”

The captives’ puzzlement seems to have been motivated by the American political depictions of the Kurds. Douglas Little argues that the American political perception of ‘the Middle East’ since the Second World War shares common characteristics with ‘Said’s Orientalism’. The Kurds have not only been Orientalised but have been cartographically excluded by US foreign policy. Karen Culcasi remarks that Kurdistan’s geography has been variously reimagined according to the US strategy ‘in the Middle East’. As an American, Scheurer criticizes American Orientalist policy for its denial of “the Other” through political mapmaking. By means of his American character Marie Bowers, whose conceptions of the Kurds and Kurdistan change after being shown the remnants of Kurdish misery, Scheurer grants Saladin (and other Kurds) the right to consider Kurdistan as a country, at least in their imaginations. However, such recognition of a Kurdish homeland by Marie is sourced from a humanitarian point of view, and not from a political maneuver and geopolitical interests.

In Scheurer’s The Sayings, like Choman Hardi’s ‘To Kurdistan’, which I examine below, the unrecognised borders of Kurdistan are placed in parallel with the Kurdish language. The lack of a geographical homeland allows the nation-states to eradicate Kurdish language and culture. Consequently, Dr. Saladin is pained when he talks about Kurdishness. In reply to Lieutenant Marie’s question ‘[w]hat makes a Kurd a Kurd?’ he says:

“I don’t know. Language and culture I guess. What makes a person anything?”
“You are born to it?” Bowers seemed really interested in this for some reason.
“Definitely. No one can choose to be a Kurd.” Saladin gazed off in the distance, shrugging off his inner pain with a scowl. “Why would they?”

The role of language and culture with which Saladin identifies Kurdishness is significant. This reality makes Kurdish literary characters associate their physical homeland with Kurdishness. Taking this as my foundation, I hereby turn to the literary

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11 Ibid., p.126.
13 Culcasi, p.684.
14 The Sayings, p.93.
narrations of the state’s repressive policies towards the Kurdish language and culture. Attempts to protect their own culture and language, meanwhile, are a means of being at home for these Kurdish characters.

Unmaking Kurdishness in Hardi’s ‘To Kurdistan’ and ‘My Children’, Oya Baydar’s The Lost Word and Laleh Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans

Kurdish language and culture are depicted as a homeland for Kurdish protagonists. A sense of home is repeatedly expressed through Kurdishness. In a broader context, Ashcroft argues: ‘Place, and the experience of displacement, emerge out of the interaction of language, history, visual perception, spatiality and environment in the experience of colonized peoples.’ The protection or the loss of language, history and culture appear to determine a group’s status as being at home or being displaced. If physical violence – as explored in Chapter Three – is a means of human suppression, cultural and linguistic prohibition is another method of nation-state discrimination in my chosen texts. As Ngugi Wa Thiong’o observes: ‘The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation.’ I will explore the depictions of state modernisation programmes which ban the Kurdish language and censor the expressions of Kurdish culture. Turkey and Iran’s Westernising projects, which are part of their nationalist reforms, are practised by assimilating the Kurdish literary protagonists to the mainstream culture of dominant ethnicities. These writers illustrate the relationship between nationalism and language, in Benedict Anderson’s sense that ‘[w]hat the eye is to the lover […], […] language […] is to the patriot’. Kurdish literary characters are “strangers” to the nation’s rules of membership, just as Sara Ahmed views ‘the nation’ as ‘home’ through which ‘we could recognize that there are always encounters with others already recognized as strangers

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15 Ashcroft, p.125.
17 According to John Perry, language was always the focal point for Turkish and Persian élites even prior to the formation of modern Turkey and Iran. (John R. Perry, ‘Language Reform in Turkey and Iran’ in Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernisation under Atatürk and Reza Shah, ed. by Touraj Atabaki and Erik Jan Zurcher (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003), pp.238-259 (pp.239-40)).
within, rather than just between, nation spaces’. Protagonists such as Choman Hardi, her poetry’s poetic personae and The Lost Word’s Mahmut and Zelal, and The Age of Orphans’s Reza Khourdi are rendered homeless by means of prohibiting their own Kurdish language and culture. Yet, it is depictions of silenced Kurdishness that tells the stories of repressed Kurdish sense of self and the lost Kurdish homeland in these narratives.

Displacement at Home in ‘To Kurdistan’ and ‘My Children’

In the poem ‘To Kurdistan’, nationalisation is portrayed through the states’ naming and renaming of “Kurdistan”, which is perceived as an empty space by – especially Turkish – nationalist architects. Kathleen McDermott, discussing Hardi’s poetry, identifies it as autobiographical commenting that ‘[t]he reader is unlikely to differentiate the poetic persona […] from the author’, ‘To Kurdistan’ is a mixture of both Hardi’s personal story and her imagination. It is ‘2003’; the poem’s speaker plans to revisit (Iraqi) Kurdistan. S/he returns from Europe following the dethronement of Saddam Hussein earlier that year. The act of crossing borders references the Kurds’ displacement. Although the poetic persona tries to forget border issues as s/he buys gifts for friends and relatives, s/he cannot overcome them when s/he thinks about Kurdishness:

I prepare to go home every day,  
can’t sleep without dreaming of border guards.  
I wish I could bring some books back  
then I remember all the Kurdish alphabet books  
that were torn and trodden-on at that border.  
You teach your children Kurdish in the West.  
That is where the problem lies,  
you teach your children Kurdish.

The challenges faced by the border-crossing and Kurdish language are now intertwined to the extent that Kurdish language is depicted as “home” to the Kurds. This stanza acts as a bridge between the deprivation of Kurdish independence and the banning of the

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20 Life for Us, p.48.
Kurdish language. As the last stanza explores, prohibiting the Kurdish language leads to a denial of Kurdistan’s independence:

I will take the repeated advice
and will not say ‘to Kurdistan’, when asked where I am going.
I will save myself the humiliation of being taken to the world map
and asked, ‘Could you show me where that is on the map?
I don’t remember having heard of it.’

The poem reflects Hardi’s actual experience when she used to cross Turkey’s border: ‘[T]hat was a Turkish border guard. Normally, people who know where it [Kurdistan] is say that just to annoy you.’22 As poetry is an act of public communication, ‘To Kurdistan’ becomes a tool for narrating and thereby asserting the Kurds’ narratives of belonging.

The Turkish guard’s conception of Kurdistan, the existence of which he denies, has geopolitical ends. Michael Heffernan argues that maps have been used as tools by political powers against each other since the beginning of ‘the twentieth century’.23 Culcasi similarly states that maps are tools to oppress ‘others’.24 The guard’s ‘humiliation’ of the Kurdish traveller emerges from a nationalist discourse by which it further displays its powerful dominance over Kurdistan’s unclear boundaries. As Ashcroft points out, maps are ‘a very particular form of knowledge, a special exercise of the power of surveillance […]’.25 In the poem, the concept of the border helps the Turkish guard to deprive the Kurds of an independent state, and the name of “Kurdistan” simultaneously acts as a distinct marker, which makes the Kurdish traveller belong nowhere geographically and linguistically.

In ‘My Children’,26 dispossessing language and lacking a “home” are inextricably linked. The mother tongue constitutes a form of home for the poetic persona by communicating her experience of being out of place. This is conveyed even inside her own home in conversation with her children:

I can hear them talking, my children
fluent English and broken Kurdish.

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24 Culcasi, p.686.
25 Ashcroft, p.129.
26 Life for Us, p.63.
And whenever I disagree with them
they will comfort each other by saying:
*Don’t worry about mum, she’s Kurdish.*

Will I be the foreigner in my own home?

The Kurdish language becomes the site of the poetic persona’s Kurdish homeland. Conveying her estrangement due to language differences between the speaker and her children, however, is problematised by the fact that the poem is written in English. The very language of the poem itself communicates the extent of her estrangement. Traces of this argument can be observed when Hardi distinguishes between Kurdish and English poetic languages:

Kurdish is my mother tongue, and so it was natural for me to write in that language. I tried to translate some of my poems but they really didn’t work! Kurdish belongs to a very different literary tradition – it’s a lot more colourful, elaborate and abstract, whereas contemporary English poetry is very understated, and quiet.

The poetic persona, or Hardi herself, is doubly excluded from home, once through the language of the poem itself and also through her children, who barely identify with their mothers’ Kurdish heritage. Nevertheless, she writes in English as a means of expressing the Kurds’ plight.

Chinua Achebe famously argues that African writers’ writing in English or French unites the ethnic and linguistic groups not only of Africa as a continent, but also of a country like Nigeria, which consists of diverse ethnicities. English, Achebe also observes, has helped them to have one (African) literature. Moreover, in an interview with BBC World Service, the interviewer tells Hardi that Russian was a ‘natural idiom,

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27 Unlike other literary genres, translation of poetry seems to face the challenges of “untranslatability”. Despite David Damrosch’s discussions – I referred to Damrosch briefly in a footnote to this thesis’s introduction – about the remarkable role of translation in the rise of world literature, Nicholas Harrison argues that translation contains both losses and gains and she observes that poetry cannot be translated and then be presented in the targeted language in the same spirit of the original text. This is due to the inexplicable interweaving between poetry and its native literary language. (Nicholas Harrison, ‘World literature: What Gets Lost in Translation?’, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 49 (2014), 411-426 (p.415)).


29 Chinua Achebe, ‘English and The African Writer’, *Transition*, 75/76 (1965), 342-349. For discussions on writing in one’s native tongue or in European languages, see also Thiong’o, op. cit.
[...] untrammelled, rich, and infinitely docile’ for Vladimir Nabokov, who said this while reflecting on writing his Lolita in English and describing it as ‘private tragedy’. She also asks her: ‘Like Nabokov, do you find it a tragedy [to write in English]’, and Hardi responds:

Absolutely not. Because I think English is the language of power; therefore, I feel happy about it, because I have many stories nobody else knows about them. Using language as a tool is very important to convey these stories.

It is the inability of Kurdish to reach large readerships that causes Hardi to view English as powerful. Hardi aligns with Chinua Achebe’s view that literary writing in English helps Achebe to address a wider audience. But Hardi disagrees with Nabokov, probably because Kurdish, unlike Russian, is already stateless and relatively unknown. Writing in English stems from being surrounded by English in ‘everyday interactions’, combined with the need to approach ‘a larger readership’. When she was UK-based, Hardi encountered questions from people with little knowledge of the Kurds. As she explains, she was asked: ‘“What’s the difference between Kurdish and Arabic?” or ‘Why can’t you just settle down in Iraq?’ What’s your problem?’ That sort of thing’. She says that she wrote poetry about the Kurdish predicament in order to answer such questions and make people aware of Kurdish history: ‘This was one motive for writing in English.’ However, in addition to considerations of reaching a wider audience, Hardi argues: ‘We need distance from the things we write about, and I think using a second language to write is another form of having distance from the subject-matter; therefore, combined with the need to approaching more neutrally.’ This approach is double-edged. While writing in English is a means of giving a clearer picture of the Kurds to a world audience, equally it distances her from her Kurdish self. Despite her declarations, her situation at least partly resembles Nabokov’s “tragedy”; the speaker – or Hardi herself – is ‘the foreigner’ in her own home in ‘My Children’ itself.

‘My Children’ enacts a spatial distancing from Kurdishness, since the speaker is absent from her home(land). Both the speaker’s (Hardi’s) Kurdish background and the

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31 Ibid.
32 Personal Interview with Choman Hardi: 12 August, 2014.
34 The Word – BBC World Service.
language of the poem illustrate Kurdish displacement and estrangement. Despite her arguments for writing her poetry in English, Hardi estranges herself because she uses English even as she – or her poetic persona – complains that it renders her a foreigner in the poem. This inevitably represents the postcolonial Kurdish literary experience, which encounters estrangement whether or not it uses English to express itself. In the poem, the speaker reminds of Paul Seaman’s experience in feeling like ‘a refugee in my own country’.35 Her assertive language, ‘in my own home’, paradoxically speaks of the poetic persona’s lack of a home. Her children, who are the offspring of the host culture, do have a home, however. The speaker’s rhetorical question, ‘Will I be the foreigner in my own home?’ is affirmative, not interrogative; the answer is already revealed in the previous lines. One can hardly become a foreigner in her/his own home unless s/he is not “at home”. Yet, she is dispossessed, since her own children render her as a foreigner. The poetic persona’s foreignness originates not only in unbelonging to her current home, but is also in her feelings of belonging somewhere else. By means of portraying the estrangement of Kurdish language, the speaker hints that she is out of place in every sense.

‘Language is a person’s country’: Internal Alienation in The Lost Word

In Baydar’s The Lost Word, homelands have linguistic and cultural dimensions. For instance, Turkey defines the whole of its territories using the Turkish language. Michael Cronin argues that language and place are considered to be inseparable: ‘Language is seen to define place, and places are inextricably bound up with forms of speech’.36 In the novel, the Turkish language is viewed by the Turkish state as also engulfing the country’s non-Turkish regions. On the other hand, Kurdish protagonists associate the southeast with the Kurdish language and heritage, a relationship which leads to the obliteration of Kurdishness and homeland. It complies with Cronin’s view that the modern global community is surmounted by cultural impacts as ‘culture’ crucially plays

a role in rendering groups peripheral.\textsuperscript{37} In \textit{The Lost Word}, the nation’s language plays a key role in marking out individuals as foreign or native. In Norway, Bjørn, who is Deniz’s son and whose mother is Norwegian, alienates Elif, Deniz’s mother, from the Norwegian community. He asks Deniz: ‘Doesn’t she speak our language? Is she a foreigner, too?’\textsuperscript{38} This linguistic estrangement also characterises the narrow definitions of Turkishness. In Turkey, Mahmut and Zelal are defined as “internal foreigners”. Mahmut talks about his schooldays:

The teachers taught us in Turkish. To begin with, we didn’t understand what they said and asked what it was in Kurdish. Some of them said kindly that Kurdish wasn’t allowed and that in any case there wasn’t such a language. As children we were astonished that the language we spoke didn’t exist. Some of them used to cane us, and we learnt Turkish with a good beating. In the senior class they taught us history – about Atatürk mainly. We used to bemoan the fact that the Kurds had no Alparslan, no faith and, especially, no Atatürk and that all the great men were Turkish.\textsuperscript{39}

Schooling Kurdish students to deny their own language and culture has been part and parcel of the nation-building process since the early days of the Republic. Zelal also shows how insidiously Turkish nationalist ideology forces everybody to learn its values: ‘[…T]hey taught in Turkish; reading and writing, Atatürk, the flag …’\textsuperscript{40} Thiong’o in the BBC’S HARDtalk programme regards language’s role as paramount to human societies. He says: ‘Wherever one people have colonised another, they always imposed their language whether French, the Portuguese … anywhere in the world’. He states that he finds beauty in every language, but also remarks that ‘the problem has been, in a system of oppression and aggression, the languages […] are hierarchies’.\textsuperscript{41} Turkey’s prohibition of Kurdish in \textit{The Lost Word} similarly demonstrates a system of hierarchical colonisation. To protect the homogeneity of the nation, and the superiority of Turkishness, Turkey educates Kurdish children to identify themselves as linguistic, as well as cultural and historical, Turks.

The assimilation campaigns explored by the novel have their historical roots in Turkey. Howard Eissenstat explains that around the formation of modern Turkey, many

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p.25.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{The Lost Word}, p.83.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., pp.49-50.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p.101.
\textsuperscript{41} BBC World Service/HARDtalk 23 July 2013.
‘European intellectuals’ believed that ‘nations’ help to establish states. For them, the existence of only one ‘language, territory, and culture’ was thought to define the nation itself. He further notes that Turkish ‘modernist military officers’ were influenced by these intellectuals.\footnote{Howard Eissenstat, ‘Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and State Nationalism in the First Decades of the Turkish Republic’ in \textit{Race and Nation: ethnic systems in the modern world}, ed. by Paul Spickard (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), pp.239-256 (p.247).} Welat Zeydanlioglu also remarks that Kemalism in Turkey associated ‘a multi-ethnic space’ ‘around a monolithic official identity based on “Turkishness”, a notion that oscillated between inclusion and exclusion’.\footnote{Welat Zeydanlioglu, ‘Kemalism’s Others: The Reproduction of Orientalism in Turkey’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, 2007), p.99.} Based on Mahmut’s recollections, Turkish language, history and victories are the means by which the state propagates Turkey’s social categories. As Turkish Prime Minister, Ismet Inonu, clearly announced in 1925:

\begin{quote}
We are frankly nationalists [...] and nationalism is our only factor of cohesion. In the face of a Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. Our duty is to turkify non-Turks in the Turkish homeland no matter what happens. We will annihilate those elements that oppose Turks or Turkism. What we are looking for in those who are to serve the country is above all that they are Turkish and Turkist.\footnote{Zeydanlioglu, p.97.}
\end{quote}

Baydar questions the humane dimensions of Kemalism, which are mirrored in Inonu’s statement. Through its nationalist teachings, the state sets Mahmut adrift from his Kurdish background. At the cost of his self-esteem, the Turkish education system forcibly inculcates the constituents of the Turkish nation – such as ‘language’, ‘Atatürk’ and ‘history’ – into Mahmut and other students. In the novel, the state educates Kurdish students in Turkish nationalist values, while ensuring that its educational system simultaneously teaches Turkish pupils the same disciplines since all members of the nation are now considered “Turkish”. Observing the relationship between school education and nationalist teaching, Penny Enslin remarks, an in the South African context, that the sense of ‘autonomy’ and independent worldviews should be invoked by ‘both education itself and education for democratic citizenship’,\footnote{Penny Enslin, ‘The place of national identity in the aims of education’ in \textit{The Aims of Education}, ed. by Roger Marples (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.100-111 (pp.103-4).} rather than education exploiting pupils and instilling into them nationalist principles.\footnote{Ibid., p.105.} She argues that school
education needs to consolidate the notions of ‘a democratic way of life which includes understanding and respecting the identities of others’.\textsuperscript{47} Enslin’s discussion, if applied in the Turkish context, deeply problematises Kemalist projects of modernisation because Kemalism does not advocate democratic values for different group members such as Mahmut and Zelal, but instead foster hatred and denial of “the Kurdish Other”. Kemalism thus disavows the first principles of democratic citizenship.

Baydar fictionalises the reality of Kemalist nationalism – as stated by Inonu – depicting the enforcement of Kemalist doctrine by educational means. Every aspect of non-Turkishness is deemed illegal; speaking Kurdish is considered a betrayal of the nation; as Zelal’s ‘teacher […] just said to them “You have to learn Turkish.” However, the Principal – you know the type, hardly human – used to beat the hell out of those who spoke Kurdish’.\textsuperscript{48} Thomas Eriksen argues that one ethnicity controls notions of ‘a nation-state’ and that the dominant group derives its power from ‘markers of identity (such as language or religion)’ in the process of law-making.\textsuperscript{49} State “law” in the novel not only consolidates linguistic and cultural genocide, but also entails spatial assimilation. Ömer witnesses the spatiality of linguicidal acts in Turkey’s southeast:

There is only the name of the neighbourhood – Republic District, Number 17 – on the address that Mahmut has written on a piece of paper, not the name of the street. Perhaps he forgot to write it; perhaps there is no need for street names around here. The broad street, Flag Avenue, that cuts through the town, leads to a small square, Republic Square, in the centre of which there is a lead-coloured bust of Atatürk on a concrete plinth; barbed wire drawn taut around the statue and surrounding it limp, faded daisies, dead in patches …\textsuperscript{50}

The names that surround Ömer such as ‘Republic District’, ‘Flag Avenue’, ‘Republic Square’ and ‘Atatürk’ illustrate the extent of the state’s “Turkification” projects. The ‘barbed wire’ represents the state’s protection of the statue, which embodies the figure of Atatürk. However, ‘faded daisies, dead in patches’ suggest Atatürk’s faded glory as time marches on. Despite the Kemalist linguistic and cultural assimilations, the spirit of Kurdishness lives on.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p.109.  
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{The Lost Word}, p.102.  
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{The Lost Word}, p.124.
Turkification in the novel originates from the state’s method of perceiving Kurdishness as “fabrication” and “inferiority” – as I explored in Chapter One. Zeydanlioglu asserts that the Kemalist outlook focused on ‘civilising’ the population through ‘Turkification’, because Kemalists promoted ‘Western modernity, superiority and strength’ by creating an ‘homogenous nation-statehood and militarism’.\^51 Turkey’s mythmaking represents the Kurds as a threat to Turkey’s Westernised status in The Lost Word, where nationalist discourse and praxis are depicted as a means of integrating and assimilating all groups into the Turkish nation. An old Turkish woman views Kurdish as a repulsive language worthy of contempt. She asks Zelal and Mahmut in the hospital: “‘What language is that you are speaking?’ Her voice is not kind, not curious either, but menacing’.\^52 The scene conveys how widespread the Kemalist worldview is, excluding non-Turkish speakers from the nation. As Atatürk once stated:

One of the significant characteristics of the nation is language. One, who regards himself as a member of the Turkish nation, should before everything and in any case, speak Turkish. If someone who does not speak Turkish, claim membership to Turkish culture and community, it would not be right to believe in this.\^53

The old woman assumes that speaking Kurdish is an attempt to ruin the Turkish language because so-called Kurdish does not exist: ‘God forgive us, we have got to the stage where we can’t protect our own language’.\^54 According to the xenophobic woman, Zelal and Mahmut’s Kurdish language endangers the Turkish language. She feels authorised to stop the couple’s conversation in Kurdish so as to protect Turkishness. She draws inspiration from that nationalist idea that Turkey is only for Turks, an ideology that becomes a pervasive myth, which marks the assimilation of every aspect of life into Turkishness. As Zeydanlioglu argues, the Turkish project of “‘national unity’” was thought to be carried out through ‘forced cultural assimilation and centralisation’.\^55 Mahmut and Zelal defend their right to speak Kurdish and embrace their Kurdishness in

\^52 The Lost Word, p.215.
\^54 The Lost Word, p.216.
\^55 Zeydanlioglu, ‘Kemalism’s Others’, p.96.
Turkey when they reply to the woman. Yet, they are aware of the fact that the Kurdish language will always be abused:

‘We are not doing you any harm, teyże. This is our language. Where we live they speak Kurdish […] It is the language of our mothers. […] Everyone speaks better, more sweetly in their mother tongue. The woman turns her back on them again and is quiet. Mahmut is filled with unease. ‘That’s what I mean,’ says Zelal in Kurdish. ‘What am I doing stuck next to people who insult the language I speak, the language I heard when I was born? With whose words I was loved, with whose lullabies I was lulled and with whose oaths I was beaten.’

The woman’s turning “her back on them again” symbolises Turkey’s silence in response to questions about its policies on Kurds. Mahmut’s ‘unease’ indicates his disappointment with the Kurdish situation in Turkey. However, Zelal has been raised with the Kurdish language and culture, which challenge the woman’s denial of Kurdishness. It also refers to the language’s significance and its efficacy in power relations in Kemalist Turkey. Moreover, there is gendering of language (‘mother tongue’), which is an established idea across many cultures. As I will analyse in Chapter Five in detail, this reflects the emphasis on women as conveyers of language and its associated cultures.

During their youth, at the time of the 1980 coup, Elif and Ömer flee to Norway where they meet an old retired German soldier at Gasthaus Cottage in the Norwegian Island. Their conversation runs as follows:

‘You speak an excellent German.’
‘I was German once upon a time. Language is the country that a person has lost.’
‘Language is a person’s country,’ repeats Ömer in German.
‘His lost country!’ insists the old man. Then with his right arm extended in a Nazi salute he continues in a cynical high-pitched and tremulous voice, “Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles …”

The German’s enthusiasm is language-focused and he points to language as expressing national identity. Describing his voice as cynical is a critique of nationalist affections. For the German, loss of one’s own mother tongue is definitely loss of his/her country. This scene indirectly comments upon Turkey’s repression of the Kurds since the novel mainly focuses on Kurds’ loss of their language. Ömer, meanwhile, reiterates language’s importance by paralleling its status with one’s own homeland. For this reason, when

56 The Lost Word, p.216.
Mahmut murmurs some words to himself in Kurdish later in the novel, Ömer begins to think:

He lapses into Kurdish. Perhaps he’s repeating the same things for himself, for his heart and for his memory in his mother tongue. As he speaks in his own language his suffering stops being a narrative and becomes his own property. It becomes himself. He no longer needs words. Pain escapes words and settles in his heart for ever.\(^{58}\)

Kurdish language represents the Kurds’ plight which can solely be expressed by using Kurdish words. It becomes the only witness of Mahmut’s suffering. Moreover, Kurdish language takes on spatial dimensions, by which I mean it represents the Kurdish sense of belonging to the homeland. Speaking in the native tongue represents embracing the southeast sorrows caused by Turkey.

Baydar’s *The Lost Word* suggests that the loss of the Kurdish language leads to the destruction of its folklore, in ways that raise serious questions about modern Turkey’s “liberal” and “secular” values. Zelal says: ‘I learnt fast and grew to speak Turkish well. However, I lost the language of stories. I could no longer tell stories – not in Turkish nor Kurdish’.\(^{59}\) The young man in the southeast also tells Ömer: ‘[W]e remain mute until we have learnt Turkish.’\(^{60}\) The muteness of the Kurds symbolises the loss of their political rights, cultural heritage and modes of expression. With regard to the nationalist desire of keeping the nation “pure”, Richard Koenigsberg states, ‘[t]here is a tendency to associate’ the nationalist’s ‘wish to maintain the purity of the nation with fanatic racist ideologies’.\(^{61}\) Mahmut wonders, ‘if we are all Turks, what is it this language we speak among ourselves? Why do they scream, “Dishonourable, separatist Kurds! Armenian spawn!” […] If everyone is Turk, what is it you want?’\(^{62}\) As Martin van Bruinessen puts it, ‘[t]he embarrassing question why it was necessary to turkify people [the Kurds] who were said to be Turks already was never answered’.\(^{63}\) It is the state’s contradiction for

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\(^{58}\) Ibid., p.48.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., p.120.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., p.128.


\(^{62}\) The Lost Word, p.203.

calling the Kurds “Mountain Turks”, as I discussed in Chapter One. Turkifying Mahmut and Zelal contributes to erasing Kurdishness from the modern nation’s memory.

Ernest Renan argues that ‘[f]orgetting […] is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation […]’. Turkification campaigns, as a model of nation-forming, are a means of “forgetting” Kurdishness in the novel. According to Eissenstat, ‘[t]he Turkish History Thesis’ argued that ‘Kurds were Turks who had forgotten Turkish’ and they ‘had strayed from their true identity’. Strangely enough, reasoning here has it that it was the Kurds who were accused of forgetting their Turkish origin, an ideology which helped the state to “forget[…], postpon[e] and cancel[…]” the Kurds. Sovereign strategies consequently oblige Mahmut to think: ‘It would be better for him to forget Kurdishness, a sorry fate, a punishment that God had given to his wayward servants’, a thought that leaves him geographically and culturally naked. The abolition of the Kurdish sense of self leaves Mahmut homeless within Turkey’s southeast. Without even physically leaving their homeland, Mahmut, Zelal and other Kurdish characters are homeless. This experience is not only unique to Turkey; Reza Khourdi falls into the same crisis of unbelonging in Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans*.

The Amnesia of the Nation-State’s Architects in *The Age of Orphans*

The Kemalist treatment of “non-Turkish” in *The Lost Word* resembles Pahlavi’s authority in managing non-Persians in Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans*. As John Perry argues in the context of Kemalist ‘secularist and chauvinistic’ influence on post-War Iran, Iranian ‘language purists’ were enthusiastic in making language reforms in the early 1930s. The state bans Kurdish in *The Age of Orphans*. The policy of unifying Iran’s languages is implemented in public education; Persian becomes the language of schooling for all ethnicities. Reza Khourdi’s son narrates an event that reflects modern Iran’s homogenisation strategy:

65 Eissenstat, ‘Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation’, pp.252-3.
68 *The Lost Word*, p.203.
69 These purists’ national plan was purifying the Persian language of Arabic loanwords.
70 Perry, p.244.
In 1946 Behad Chezani, a school teacher, went crazy during class and threatened his students with the needled end of a compass for a whole afternoon before finally—*pop!*—piercing his own throat [...]. Before he stuck the compass in his throat, Behad Chezani came to our house to ask our baba, slowly, because his voice was shaking, *Why can’t I speak Kku-rrd in the school?* And our baba didn’t take his sunglasses off to talk to him and said it just like this: *It is the order of the most imperial shah.*

Forbidding the Kurds to speak their mother tongue, the novel implies, causes Chezani, and by implication other Kurds, to go mad. It is “guilt” that Chezani is still unaware of, or forgets, the illegality of Kurdish. He must have known that Kurdish is disallowed, for being incompatible with Iran’s “modernness”. Reza Khourdi thus unhesitatingly reminds the “absent-minded” Chezani of the state’s rule. Alireza Asgharzadeh states that, since the establishment of the Iranian nation-state, Reza Shah’s ‘ultranationalist ideology’ led to the forcible prohibition of ‘all non-Persian languages’ to be used in writing. ‘Farsi’, he notes, became Iran’s only official ‘language’, while other languages used in Iran were no longer allowed. Although it is now 1946 in the novel, and Reza Shah has already been succeeded by his son – Muhammad Reza Pahlavi – his nationalist ideologies, discussed by Asgharzadeh, are effectively practised.

Despite Chezani’s complaint about the prohibition of the Kurdish language, Reza Khourdi’s Kurdishness is already almost completely erased. Reza, nonetheless, never becomes Persian. Below I examine another related phenomenon: “forgetting to remember” Kurdishness by the modern Iranian state and also by Reza Khourdi himself. Reza is vulnerable to the nationalist campaigns, whereby his native tongue, culture and history are uprooted. Since he was orphaned by the state army and taken to the Nehavand barracks in the 1920s, he is no longer the same Kurdish boy:

[D]ay after day for the first year, he is shorn of the boy from before and cannot remember the pieces of that other life—heartbeat, sapling, cold carp—so that even the mother tongue grows sticky on his lips and he answers to all calls with the crisp Farsi: *Yes yes yes.*

His previous Kurdish life perishes alongside Persianification. However, Kurdishness haunts Reza’s life. He is allowed to speak Persian only, an act which is a form of

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73 *The Age of Orphans*, pp.82-3.
repetition rather than communication. Farsi/Persian is not his native tongue, but an adopted language. Despite moulding him into the modern nation, he is neither Persian nor Kurdish. Apart from repeating/speaking Farsi, he has to remain silent. This silence is embodied in Kurdishness, which takes a couple of forms; one is copying Persianness, which is an imposed mimicry, and the other one is muteness. Reza’s mimicry reinforces Bhabha’s discussions – conducted in relation to European colonial contexts – about ‘colonial mimicry’, which ‘is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.’ Bhabha remarks that mimicry simultaneously disturbs the colonial power, because it is not authentic but “incomplete” and “virtual”. Thus, it ‘mock[s]’ on the part of the colonised, whose mimicry destabilises the colonial dominance by representing an incomplete image of the coloniser’s manners. Meena – Reza’s wife – feels annoyed by adopting Reza: ‘Ah, Reza joon [dear Reza], I have always thought you to be an apostate breed, one way or another.’ Persianifying Reza disturbs Meena since Reza embodies a subtle criticism of the state’s policy. In addition to this, Reza never becomes fully Persian, but a Persianified figure in modern Iran.

Reza Khourdi as ‘palimpsest’

The imposition of Persianness places Reza Khourdi in crisis. ‘Palimpsest’ is the title of one of the novel’s chapters in which Reza represents an imperfect copy of a Persian. In modern Iran, Kurdishness is tarred with Persianification while Reza’s Kurdish identity is overwritten. It belongs to the past, but cannot access the present. The Kurdish boy is nameless in the novel until he is (re)named Reza Khourdi:

[B]orn at the age of eleven, to the Honorable Shah Reza Pahlavi.
And so named: Reza Khourdi
Age: Approximately 12-14 (undocumented tribal stock)
 [...] 
The attaché from the Ministry Of Interior in charge of new citizens is tired. An endlessly stream of unnamed orphaned cadets stood before him today, sad eyed and too small for their uniforms, and naming them has made the old man sleepy. The first name is easy; it is the first name of the Most Imperial Majesty

74 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.86.
76 Bhabha also references the difference between ‘Anglicized’ subject and ‘English’ in the way the former never becomes the latter but repeats his manners (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.87).
Shahenshah Reza Pahlavi I, and with it the boys join the low ranks of same-names, an instant empire of agnates born to the new nation.\footnote{The Age of Orphans, p.86.}

Reza’s age is not fully known and he is described by the state as “tribal” – he therefore represents a threat to the state’s modernity. Non-Persian cadets are orphans, as the novel’s title also suggests, because their families were massacred by Reza Shah for resisting his ethnocentric, despotic rule. They are currently destitute and are the nation’s adopted members. Reza Khourdi is the novel’s most prominent orphan, representing Kurdishness as a form of enforced orphanhood, a people in need of adopting. In addition, the manner of naming and registering Reza signifies his unworthiness and insignificance to the attaché, who is tired of (re)naming new cadets. The boy is named Reza Pejman Khourdi, who ‘is created, this time in thirds: a third homage to a false king; a third memory of another’s delight; a third genesis of people erased’ [my emphasis].\footnote{Ibid., p.87.} The word “create” metaphorically refers to the god-like powers of destruction and recreation that belong to the attaché. This corresponds with an historically verifiable process that Asgharzadeh describes as: ‘Despicable acts of linguicide and deculturation […] committed in order to achieve the chauvinistic agenda of ethnic and linguistic purity of the Persian race in Iran’.\footnote{Asgharzadeh, p.87.}

Reza is given three “new” names, none of which relate to his Kurdish ethnicity. His identity is described as follows: ‘And nevermore was he the boy. Never again was he the boy that was.’\footnote{The Age of Orphans, p.87.} Assimilating Reza indicates Persian cultural and linguistic dominance over the Iranian ethnicities that are considered inferior in comparison to Persians. As Asgharzadeh observes, Aryanism inspired the modern historiography of ‘non-Persian nationalities’ whose ethnic backgrounds were imagined to have a low status.\footnote{Asgharzadeh, p.87.} This ideological praxis forces the Kurdish boy “to forget” his past life, yet enables the state to establish a “modern” nation. Homi Bhabha critiques the “forgetting” that entails nation-building:

\footnote{77 The Age of Orphans, p.86.} \footnote{78 Ibid., p.87.} \footnote{79 Asgharzadeh, p.87.} \footnote{80 The Age of Orphans, p.87.} \footnote{81 Asgharzadeh, p.87.}
To be obliged to forget – in the construction of the national present – is not a question of historical memory; it is the construction of a discourse on society that performs the problematic totalization of the national will.\(^{82}\)

Employing this national construction divides Reza into two subjects; formerly a Kurdish boy, he is now an adopted Persianified figure called Reza Khourdi. Before going back to Iran’s Kurdish region after many years in the military barracks, he wearily struggles to remain as Reza Pejman Khourdi. He has decided to kill his Kurdish self: ‘He re-minds himself: He is Reza Pejman Khourdi […] and […] it was the Kurd boy in himself that he kicked and killed to die and be dead and now that is clean and in order and erased.’\(^{83}\)

However, his Kurdishness revives itself when he enters the Kurdish region. Reza’s dual selves are clearly manifested when he sees a Kurdish woman breastfeeding her child in Saqqez city while he is a state soldier on a military mission. He is an “Iranian” soldier at war with his Kurdish self. The novel depicts his experience of being a divided self, caught between both his lost past and his fake present:

The shadow in Reza stands still. The cadets turn from their raid to find Reza with his mouth wrapped around one breast and his hands clutching at the other and the woman lying on her back, empty eyed, as the soldier drinks and drinks. Reza cannot help himself […]. In Reza the shadow self and soldier self dance in delight as the desire to love oneself and hate oneself is now well fed and Reza is allowed to punish and caress all at once. He sucks and slaps and thinks with certainty that he is Reza Pejman Khourdi, and he is the son of a yet undefined nation of Iran.\(^{84}\)

The Iranian state thus creates “forgotten subjects”. The process of “forgetting” non-Persian social categories makes Reza feel that he has never been a Kurd. He only “remembers” the amnesiac modernity on which the nation is founded.

During his two year stay in Tehran – before promoting him to a captain in his original place of Kermanshah – Reza becomes a “new” person, who ‘dissolves into the maculate city’.\(^{85}\) In Tehran, he meets an old friend from the military barracks, he reminds Reza of Reza’s Kurdishness, but Reza hides his genuine background:

Remembering not to remember, as it was another lifetime ago and as shame is a thing to stuff into a corner or a small box or a lantern that needs to be lit, Reza

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\(^{83}\) The Age of Orphans, pp.128-9.
\(^{84}\) Ibid., p.132.
\(^{85}\) Ibid., p.151.
takes Meena’s arm to walk away from the soldier and the wife with her skewed smile, garish and ignoble.\textsuperscript{86}

This enforced self-denial leaves Reza internally displaced within Iran. Ethnic homogenisation and the protection of statehood make him lose everything of himself on his first night in Tehran: ‘Reza walks clean and without history [...]. [A] good man, the modern man of nation and king, landless and lost, complete with deeds done and forgotten [...].\textsuperscript{87} Other selves emerge from his real one, which has lost its way. Moreover, “forgetting” prevents Reza from defining himself fully, because his new identity, name and social position are all fabricated. He has difficulty in introducing himself at the Armenian brothel in Tehran and he tries to shun his Kurdish background. He shows off himself among the women: ‘Reza the Great, Reza the Inheritor, Reza the Conqueror, Reza definitely-not-the-bird-boy-orphan-Kurd. Definitely-not’.\textsuperscript{88} In the wake of these ambivalences infused within Reza, Khadivi portrays him as a ‘palimpsest’;\textsuperscript{89} yet whatever Reza does to introduce his “created” self, he cannot fully hide his Kurdishness. Others perceive him as an orphan in need of extra love:

The whores turn over in bed and give him extra time without charge. They know he is an orphan boy (the scent of unlove has always passed easily between the orphan and whore) and are generous with their ears and bodies.\textsuperscript{90}

The whore and the orphan belong nowhere. Both are destitute and lonely; however, Reza’s orphaned state is a political one. His ‘scent’ cannot be disguised and other outcasts instantly recognise it. The scent is a truth that lingers despite state propaganda. No matter how hard Reza tries to present himself as “Iranian” (Persian), he is fundamentally a palimpsestic Kurd.

The state is successful in its national assimilation campaigns. However, it is abortive at a personal level since Reza cannot desert his Kurdish self on his wedding night. He unsuccessfully struggles to hide his Kurdishness from Meena:

On that first night he comes to lose himself in her […]. In words without sounds he tells her what he knows: that he is one of a kind, the dirty and the hidden, of

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., pp.201-2.
\item\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p.150.
\item\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p.154.
\item\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., pp.151-7.
\item\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p.154.
\end{itemize}
rock and desert wind, the sullied blood of the shamed and unburied dead, as orphan, a Kurd.91

Both Reza’s visible orphanhood at the brothel and his psychological disorder on the wedding night undermine the state’s project of “forgetting the past”. The process of modern nation-building appears to be sham. Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans promotes an alternative interpretation of thus thinly disguised political reality. Although Reza Khourdi has conflicting mental reactions to the Shah’s projects, he cannot fully “forget to remember” his past Kurdishness. Reza is internally scattered for possessing neither a genuine language nor a true self. As Hong Zeng describes ‘[d]isjointedness within self’ as a way of bringing in ‘a divided self, multiple personalities, masks, and doppelgangers’.92

The state assigns Reza Khourdi as a captain in Kermanshah, returning him to his erased past and forgotten family life. It is a return to the home which was wrenched from his memory decades before. As a ‘lost son’, he tries to discover his home by remembering the past while sitting on the veranda at his house in Kermanshah.93 He is not Reza Khourdi now, but the “lost” son. This loss haunts Reza till the end of his life. In the end of the novel, Reza is alone in Kermanshah. His Tehrani wife – Meena – is dead and all his children have left him. He revisits the past in which home is contained: ‘I spend my afternoons alone at the stone perch. Remembering.’94 He thinks of the current Pahlavi king, Muhammad Reza Shah, and refers to the home(land) he lost in the wake of Reza Shah’s nationalism: ‘Your father was quite the mapmaker, […] determined on his unlined images of Iran.’95 He also laments his inability to create his own Kurdish home: ‘I am not a mapmaker, only a man of stone’.96 Pahlavi’s mapmaking has cancelled Kurdishness. The geopolitical mapping in the novel goes hand in hand with the production of new identities and new cultures. Ashcroft argues, ‘[t]he map maker had to “forget” or erase earlier knowledges of the structure of the world’.97 Reza

91 Ibid., pp.185-6.
93 The Age of Orphans, p.213.
94 Ibid., p.283.
95 Ibid., p.287.
96 Ibid., p.288.
97 Ashcroft, p.132.
is situated on the frontier between Iran’s de facto borders and the imaginary lines of Kurdishness. He is reduced to being devoid of meaningful identity:

I have marched, shah oh shah, once with the Kurds, once with you, once alone […] and still I am an orphan of this earth, left behind by her slow spin. […] Now I must sit, […] stuck to watch, to smoke. To sing and die, die into dust, loyal to the winds of an unspeakable home.98

He is an orphan, trying to regain his lost self through becoming part of the homeland’s soil – ‘die, die into dust’ – albeit that the ‘unspeakable’ homeland remains undelineated. Reza still feels suspicious of this wordless home, which gives him a feeling of “not knowing where home is”. He is always outside history and geography; he lacks a place in the modern nation. “The unspeakable home” of his own refers to the silenced Reza in telling his own story, even though many stories could be told about him by others such as the narrator of *The Age of Orphans*. Reza’s homeland is itself mute and his tongue is unable to narrate Kurdistan’s stories. It is the novel that rescues Reza’s story from being untold.

**The Citizens of In-between in Hardi’s ‘Somehow’, Khadivi’s *The Walking* and Sophie Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages***

Kurdish literary protagonists resemble ‘pragmatic figures’ of the modern era that, for Stan Smith, are characterised by experiences of displacement. According to Smith, the “displaced person” is the twentieth century’s prototype, being an outcome of two world wars and of the legacy of nation-statehood.99 Migration and displacement, in my examined literary works, are associated with nostalgia and lost social and familial life. Ashcroft remarks:

‘Where do I belong?’ The place of a diasporic person’s ‘belonging’ may have little to do with spatial location, but be situated in family, community, in those symbolic features which constitute a shared culture, a shared ethnicity or system of belief, including nostalgia for a distant homeland. It is when place is least spatial, perhaps, that it becomes most identifying.100

Ashcroft’s statement is probably true for the diasporic experience that longing for one’s own place is cultural, more than spatial, yet yearning for one’s own culture, family life,

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98 *The Age of Orphans*, p.289.
100 Ashcroft, p.125.
and belonging to a community can become spatial. A physical homeland is substituted for nostalgia, cultural and a familial life. For the chosen Kurdish writers and literary protagonists, homeland is connected to memories that indicate shared familial and cultural values.

Choman Hardi notes that her Life for Us is ‘very much a personal concrete journey’.101 Her poetry explores “home” – specifically lost home. I will argue that the stories – in poetic form – of Hardi’s journeys are shaped by her broken experiences of home in the distant past. The poem ‘Somehow’102 depicts a poetic persona who is neither “here” nor “there”, but somewhere in between. “There” is absolutely connected to “the past” in which home is embedded. The poetic persona is driving though safe and beautiful rural France. She, with her lover, is in a new place:

We are now in France, driving through fields robbed by the harvest.
Only the sunflowers are still standing, tall and full of seeds.

The fullness of the sunflowers symbolises a life filled with promise: ‘We walk around a lake hand in hand’. She spends happy moments in the forest, yet remains homesick as the last stanza takes her back to the idea of the past home:

It is so soothing here – the soft sprinklers everywhere. But it is the rough roads of my childhood that I miss most, the piercing wind, the summer earth burning my bare feet.

Time takes on a spatial dimension while space takes a temporal aspect. Memory and homeland become one and the same; the path to the poetic persona’s childhood is the path to her homeland. Her real home is ascribed to a location other than France, and is confined to her memory.

Ahmed notes that a place to which one does not return to is linked to “the past”.103 The poem’s speaker is physically present in France yet spiritually in Kurdistan. The “here” of France is associated with “the present”, and the “there” is associated with the “past”, which has disappeared. Yet, in a sense, “the present” does not exist because the

102 Life for Us, p.45.
103 Ahmed, p.91.
poetic persona is spiritually absent. This depiction of the home recalls Salman Rushdie’s description of his own migration, explained in an epigraph to this chapter. An old photograph, which is hung on the wall of his North London office, makes Rushdie feel the foreignness of the present. However, Rushdie also argues that migrants could benefit from their displacements for the sake of giving the present a meaning, which could be made out of various bits of experiences:

Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to the death.¹⁰⁴

In the same way, Rushdie’s essay ‘Out of Kansas’¹⁰⁵ rejects the romanticisation of homecoming and embraces the idea that home should be wherever a migrant is. These remarks by Rushdie cannot be applied to Kurdish experience especially as it figures in Hardi’s poetry (and in Khadivi’s depiction of Saladin’s migratory experience in The Walking). Hardi in ‘Somehow’ falls into a frame similar to Rushdie’s expression in the epigraph that his ‘present […] is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city [Bombay] in the mists of lost time’.¹⁰⁶ She permanently longs for an imaginary homeland also in the way Rushdie further claims that migrant Indian writers ‘will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost’ and they will construct ‘invisible […], imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind’.¹⁰⁷ She oscillates between past and present. She has to be in permanent connection with “the past” in order to feel at home. The borderline between past and present enables the poetic persona to narrate belonging-to-a home. She can only locate herself on the dividing line between past and present. Hardi’s poem implies that in some cases an idealised original homeland is preserved by diasporic people, rather than those who have not migrated. However, the homeland Hardi dreams of in the poem does not exist, it is her own displacement experience that brings that past home into imagination and protects it from fading. As Avtar Brah argues: ‘[T]he concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses

¹⁰⁶ …………………, Imaginary Homelands, p.9.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.10.
of fixed origins while taking account of a homing desire, as distinct from a desire for a “homeland”.

Robin Cohen comments on Brah’s remark, saying: ‘homeland had become a homing desire and soon home itself became transmuted into an essentially placeless, though admittedly lyrical, space’. I will thus connect Hardi’s own view on the fixed notions of home with Selim’s experience in Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual* below. Hardi notes that the original place one has left will never be inhabited in the same way before leaving. Yet, the notion of an idealised homeland still exists in her poetry. Being nostalgic, feeling responsible towards the Kurds’ future, thinking of inhabiting Kurdistan once again and the ongoing ethnic and racial dichotomies – as she depicts the challenges caused by a Turkish border guard in ‘To Kurdistan’ and the exclusion by means of Englishness and Kurdishness in ‘My Children’ above – make Hardi not to imagine her existence outside Kurdistan. Hardi’s description of her children in ‘My Children’, which I previously examined, brings to mind John McLeod’s comment that despite ‘gender, “race”, class, religion and language’ dissimilarities, ‘generational differences’ also entail various diasporic identities. Because her children have no experience of migration, even though they are diasporic, their constructed identities have already taken a different shape than that of Hardi’s.

**Dreams as Illusions in *The Walking***

Very similar to Choman Hardi’s portrayals in ‘Somehow’, Saladin in Khadivi’s *The Walking* is a displaced, uprooted, body who does not feel settled in America. Although Khadivi notes that there is possibility not to keep with “rootedness”, she argues that it is costly in the sense that the migrant socially loses a lot and s/he loses ‘safety in the world; that is sad and it is not to say that it can’t be recreated somewhere else, these things just take time’. Khadivi also contends that migration is a matter of loss and gain, and one can make use of it out of available opportunities in the host countries. Therefore, when she is asked ‘are you a good American citizen?’, she replies with ‘yes and no’. She is thankful ‘to the United States’ for being able to accomplish her university degrees and having

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110 Hardi, [http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-Literature/exiledpoets_3035.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-Literature/exiledpoets_3035.jsp)

individual freedom. However, she puts it, ‘in another way, you have to be suspicious of wherever you live; nationalism is disgusting […] You have to be an individual first before you become part of this larger, encompassing clan.’\footnote{Newslaunder, ‘NL Interviews Laleh Khadivi’, \url{http://www.newslaundry.com/2013/03/02/nl-interviews-laleh-khadivi/} [Accessed 20 June 2015].} In addition to this, she prefers the term “homeful”, rather than “homeless”, saying although migrants lose many things, they ‘are required to construct home over and over and over again, and in doing so it becomes a richer experience to be on the planet’.\footnote{Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), ‘The Global Soul and the Search for Home’, (Published on YouTube on 28 January 2013) \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFWUExBxVPE} [Accessed 11 August 2015].} Yet, Khadivi does not deny the fact that her mother’s being a migrant has outlined Khadivi’s life experiences very effectively which she cannot ignore in thinking about her own position in the world: ‘My mother is much more the migrant; she goes in a circle […]. My father is an emigrant and that is a one direction; you leave and never return’.\footnote{Newslaunder.} When she is further asked whether she has lost anything about Iran while she has never been raised, but only visited, there, she replies:

\begin{quote}
I do believe that I had [something] and lost it insofar as I was raised by a mother who had it and lost it, and so through her I had the sense of loss and through her felt a lot of absences that she has experienced […]. I think when you go to a culture that is so incredibly family-based, not commerce-based, not ambition-based, but this thing is the loyal is first and foremost to the structure of the inside of the house, I miss that and I miss their intimacy she [my mother] would refer to and also I experience when I go to Iran.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

The loss of this familial nexus Khadivi goes through slips into Saladin’s life in her \textit{The Walking}. This circular form of migratory experience Khadivi refers to makes the process of “homefulness” challenging as it is reflected in the novel. Just as Reza Khourdi in Khadivi’s \textit{The Age of Orphans} was displaced inside his homeland, Saladin Khourdi, Reza’s son, in \textit{The Walking} tries to make a home outside a homeland. Yet he is unsuccessful. Both brothers, Ali and Saladin, escape from the Iranian state following the 1979 Revolution. Saladin wants to enjoy life in the Western world by becoming an actor in Hollywood, an idea inculcated in him by his mother, Meena. From the early days of their escape, Ali is afraid of leaving, and prefers to return home, whereas Saladin dreams
of a new American home especially in California. Discussing the movie of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) – based on Frank Baum’s book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) – Rushdie suggests that the movie’s song “‘Over the rainbow’ is, or ought to be, the anthem of all the world’s migrants, all those who go in search of the place where ‘the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.’” Rushdie refers to the film’s protagonist Dorothy Gale, who escapes death with her dog Toto. He does not find the movie’s closing sentence “‘there’s no place like home’” realistic:

> [B]ut rather that there is no longer any such place as home: except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz, which is anywhere, and everywhere, except for the place from which we began.\(^{117}\)

Rushdie’s argument here does not apply to the Kurdish experience in *The Walking*. Saladin eventually becomes a number of selves, aimlessly trying to settle somewhere. It is true that Dorothy, in Baum’s ‘sixth book in the series’ of Oz story, brings her auntie and uncle to Oz, ‘where Dorothy became a princess’,\(^ {118}\) yet Saladin is not similarly welcomed as a prince, but a Kurdish migrant far from his family and friends, in America. In the novel, his home is described as ‘unknown’.\(^ {119}\) Saladin’s dream of becoming a famous actor and living the American dream are illusions. Unlike Rushdie’s understanding above that dreams become true – ‘[Over the Rainbow] is a celebration of Escape, a grand paean to the uprooted self, a hymn – the hymn – to Elsewhere’\(^ {120}\) – things never work out as Saladin used to imagine them, inspired by the movies he used to watch in Kermanshah: ‘This is not how it he planned it, the end of all running and the beginning of home.’\(^ {121}\) He now only thinks of his family memories and childhood days with Ali. Ahmed argues that having several ‘home[s]’ as a result of people’s motions entail ‘the discontinuities of personal biographies and wrinkles in the skin’.\(^ {122}\) Saladin’s memory of childhood is different from his current experience in America. The home he escaped and hated before is now longed for by him. He nevertheless cannot inhabit it

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117 Ibid., p.30.
118 Ibid., p.29.
122 Ahmed, p.91.
again. As Hardi notes, home is a mythic space in the minds of displaced people.\(^\text{123}\) By means of becoming a Hollywood actor, Saladin dreamt of crossing the boundaries of Kurdishness, or Iranianness, yet the problem is that Kurdishness is a traumatic experience he cannot escape even after deciding to settle down in America. Saladin is also trapped in thinking of his family and relatives’ persecution by the government. Imagining his lost homeland, and physically settling in the current one in America, sees him caught between past and present. Rushdie’s sense of home as being where the heart is appears as quite a privileged view, given Kurds’ exclusion first as Kurds then as asylum-seekers in Europe and America in these literary texts.

Towards the end of the novel, Saladin recalls his father Reza Khourdi’s words on their pigeons’ evening homecomings: ‘But how, baba? How does the pigeon know where our house is? How do they remember?’ Reza replies: ‘Instinct. […]’. It is the knowing of where you belong. And when.’\(^\text{124}\) Nostalgia thus estranges Saladin in America. The spatial and temporal experiences of homeland intermingle, displacing him in time and space. According to the Kurdish literary experience, Rushdie’s discussions of celebrating immigration and constructing a home based on what migrants have, and what they are, remain the romanticisation of immigration. Not everyone is able to construct a home for themselves when their first homeland is deemed non-existent – such as the international cartographic borderless status of Kurdistan – and yet always remembered. Rushdie’s views appear limited to the privileged migrants, like himself or Dorothy in Oz.\(^\text{125}\)

**Nowhere is Home in The Registrar’s Manual**

For Kurdish literary characters, the idea of “nowhere” represents their homeland. In their way to America in Khadivi’s *The Walking*, Ali soon realises the invisibility of home and tells Saladin: ‘You move like a man made of dreams […]. And now look at you, look at me. Two brothers on the way to nowhere. We belong to that town, to our sisters, to the

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\(^\text{124}\) *The Walking*, p.251.

\(^\text{125}\) Yet, Rushdie’s reflection on his past life in the epigraph I quoted from his *Imaginary Homelands* accords with Kurdish experiences as I discussed it with relation to Hardi’s ‘Somehow’.
life there.’\footnote{126 \textit{The Walking}, p.71.} The description of this “nowhere” of home by Ali not only haunts Saladin later in America, but also characterises Selim’s life in Hardach’s \textit{The Registrar’s Manual} in Germany. Hardach portrays Selim’s life as being almost dislocated in every sense. Selim, who was accused of being a PKK member, has fled his own homeland in Turkey’s southeast, and is seeking a more secure life in Germany. Far from home and family, he is completely detached from his new life and is constantly nostalgic. Moreover, he is deemed an illegal alien by German asylum laws. The novel opens with the metaphorical foreshadowing of the predicament awaiting Selim in Germany:

Selim’s first view of Europe was a vast, thick carpet of shit. Layered on the waves before him, bobbing on the water, there loomed an impenetrable barricade made of tons and tons of excrement pumped out by the generous stomachs of southern Italy; as if the shores of Europe, fed up with thousands of washed-up refugees, had decided to surround themselves with a man-made security cordon of slime and stench.\footnote{127 \textit{The Registrar’s Manual}, p.3.}

This first, unforgettable, impression lodges deep in Selim’s consciousness. The arrival scene completely flaunts readers’ expectations. The ‘first view of Europe’ is linked with ‘shit’. The first stage of his new life is clearly going to be awful. When he is afterwards asked by the narrator, the German woman, about his first experience in Germany, Selim’s ‘memories of that time were hazy, blurred by a heavy tiredness. He recalled a series of camps and disused barracks. Days passed by. Weeks.’\footnote{128 Ibid., p.12.} Despite his damaged memory, he remembers those days and wearily describes them: “\textit{Hmm. Es war Scheisse [shit].}”\footnote{129 Ibid.} In spite of facing the asylum problems in Germany, he is homesick, displaced and a homeless exile.

Predicaments of Exile

Ahmed observes that the ‘migrant’ is incapable of forgetting the past – which represents ‘the form of a discomfort’ for not inhabiting ‘that which was inhabited as home’ – since s/he fails to embrace ‘the present or present space’.\footnote{130 Ahmed, p.92.} This applies to Selim, who is unable to find a true home after his migration to Germany, where he views home as placeless. The novel’s narrator works at the Paris Town Hall, and tells Selim’s life-story
in Germany fifteen years before. His past family life in Turkey’s southeast embodies Selim’s real home, and he longs for it in the asylum seekers’ camp at bedtime: ‘Selim’s mind swerved across Europe, back to Italy, to Greece, to Turkey, and then south and east to the mountains, giving in to the pull of memories.’ What is special about Selim is being a migrant exile, displaced and homeless. As Edward Said wrote:

EXILE IS STRANGELY compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.

For Selim, the experience of displacement ruptures his sense of self. Although he ‘[t]ried to think of something else’ he could not erase the images of his true home, and of his mother, in his mind: ‘Selim buried his face in his pillow and imagined she was there, big, soft and warm, keeping the winter cold out and her voice down so as not to wake the others.’

In The Registrar’s Manual, notions of home are fulfilled through sensations of coldness, softness and warmness in ways similar to Ahmed’s concept of ‘a spatial configuration of an embodied self’ in ‘migration narratives’, where human – physical – senses are affected by the change in spaces. As far as Selim is concerned, he is a flying bird rescuing himself from the living present by his ceaseless remembering of Kurdistan. Although Selim, like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz – as discussed by Rushdie – escapes the original homeland to find a safe haven, he still remains homeless. His experience of migration also fails to conform to Dorothy’s experience, because Salim, like Saladin, is lonely and, unlike Dorothy, is not welcomed as a “prince”, but faces terrible homesickness and threat of deportation as an asylum-seeker, which I will discuss shortly. For him, Kurdistan represents a mythic home which is re-shaped by his displacement. As Ahmed observes, ‘[t]he narrative of leaving home’ brings about ‘too many homes’, which results in homelessness. At the same time, by means of Selim’s relationship with the past, Said’s argument that ‘[e]xiles are cut off from their roots,
their land, their past’\textsuperscript{138} suggest that exiles can never be separated from their past, but live forever with it. Although Said makes clear that all kinds of homecoming impossibilities relate to life in exile, still he proposes differences between ‘exiles, refugees, expatriates and émigré’\textsuperscript{139}. Based on Said’s definitions, Selim could be classified as both exile and refugee. Said describes the ‘exile’ as a figure who was expelled from home, and who suffered for leading an exclusionary life. On the other hand, he associates ‘refugees’ with political crises of the modern age. For Said, refugees, being ‘innocent and bewildered people’, need to be immediately aided, ‘whereas “exile” carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality’.\textsuperscript{140} Selim is a lonely exile and a displaced refugee seeking asylum. He would have been deported to Turkey if the German woman – the novel’s narrator – had not married him.

Selim represents what Said describes as an ‘[e]xile’, whose status is not ‘satisfied, placid, or secure’.\textsuperscript{141} Hong Zeng points out: ‘Exile suggests longing for a lost center and a vagabond state.’\textsuperscript{142} Living in exile decentres Selim, who is a peripheral wanderer, aimlessly seeking a homecoming. In the wake of such dissatisfaction, Said maintains that the exile is so aware of her/his situation that s/he imagines herself/himself as an orphan in the new community.\textsuperscript{143} Selim, who has recently arrived in Germany, seriously does his prayers:

\begin{quote}
At break time just after noon, prayer mat rolled up and tucked under his arm, Selim walked out of the classroom, out of the building and into the snow-covered schoolyard. […] Rolled out the patterned brown rug with his fingers, frozen red. Silently recited his intention to pray, raised his hands, declared God to be great, then let himself glide into the gentle rhythm of prayer: ‘Bismillahi r-rahman ar-raheem … In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful …’\textsuperscript{144}
\end{quote}

Praying not only illustrates the religiosity of Selim, it has also cultural dimensions. At first, Selim belongs to his own culture, tolerates the cold while praying and is not part of the majority of non-praying students. However, his new life alienates him from the solace of praying. This is an act of integration into the host culture that Selim encounters

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{138} Said, p.177.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., p.181.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p.186.
\textsuperscript{142} Zeng, p.2.
\textsuperscript{143} Said, p.182.
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{The Registrar’s Manual}, p.71.
\end{footnotes}
in Germany. Selim is readily adapted to the new culture and gradually forgets doing his prayers:

It was not a conscious decision. [...] Day after day, he put on his shoes, his jacket, but left behind the mat. And, at some point over the next few years, it simply disappeared. He did not know when or how. It took him a while to notice it was gone.\footnote{Ibid., p.73.} Exiles’ adaptation to the culture of the host environment is a possibility for Said. He argues that in order that ‘the exile’ avoids being affiliated to her/his native home, s/he ‘can make a fetish of exile’.\footnote{Said, p.183.} This helps the exile to live like other members in the host country. Selim easily abandons praying and smoothly interacts with the community’s habits in order ‘to join’\footnote{Ibid.} the centre, to quote Said’s words on the exile’s joining the new community, in a form of costly “integration”.

Although Bhabha argues that the ‘interstitial’ space ‘between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy’,\footnote{Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, p.4.} this space is still hierarchical for integrating Selim into the host culture. As the September 11\textsuperscript{th} incident further challenges Selim’s right to asylum, ethnic and cultural designations hinder the construction of his hybrid identity, because hierarchical policy enacts Selim’s integration. Trying to become part of the social circle is Selim’s only option for orientating himself around a new centre, a new cultural and national home. Selim’s interaction is determined by the host culture’s power over him, as one of the students utters ‘hostile’\footnote{Ibid., p.72.} words against Selim after his prayer in the school. In the context of EU, Floya Anthias and et al. argue that ‘migrants’ are subjected to ‘[i]ntegration’, which is ‘used both as an instrument of power and domination’. They further observe that such power ‘is linked to securitisation discourse and the management of populations, in particular those whose differences are considered to be disturbing and threatening on the basis of ethnicity, faith or national origin’.\footnote{Paradoxes of Integration: Female Migrant in Europe, ed. by Floya Anthias, Maria Kontos and Mirjana Morokovasic-Muller (Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media, 2013), p.2.} Selim, who cannot cross the “national boundaries” of Germany since he is not originally German, abandons praying and, therefore, is unconditionally integrated. As a result, he

\begin{itemize}
\item\footnote{Ibid., p.73.}
\item\footnote{Said, p.183.}
\item\footnote{Ibid.}
\item\footnote{Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, p.4.}
\item\footnote{Ibid., p.72.}
\item\footnote{Paradoxes of Integration: Female Migrant in Europe, ed. by Floya Anthias, Maria Kontos and Mirjana Morokovasic-Muller (Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media, 2013), p.2.}
\end{itemize}
feels he does not really belong in Germany. His integration thus reminds of Bhabha’s reflection on the voice of Toni Morrison’s ‘Beloved’s double lives’ in Beloved, constituted as a result of undecided inhabitation between different locations and cultures: ‘I am looking for the join ... I want to join ... I want to join’.  

Although Selim attempts to join the new community and forget the past one, it probably ‘involve[s] anguish and internal debate’ for him.

Asylum Laws and Nationalist Paradigms

National unbelonging arises from the “incompatibility” of specific individuals – or groups – for the host country. The asylum-seeker does not belong to the new community as they are excluded by the asylum laws. Said argues that ‘nationalism’ goes hand in hand with ‘belonging’, yet it is the opposite of ‘exile’. Nationalism, for him, constitutes its own polarising Self/Other paradigm, whereby exiles are perceived as not belonging to the nation and are considered ‘outsiders’. He further contends: ‘[B]eyond the frontier between “us” and the “outsiders” is the perilous territory of not-belonging’ and the typology of the outsider ‘in the modern era’ is that ‘the immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons’. Selim faces double exclusion in both Turkey and Germany. As an asylum-seeker, he is treated harshly and is refused legal residency by the German government for many years. The narrator describes Germany’s asylum laws and Turkey’s oppression against Selim as being the same: ‘I wish the Turkish and German officials had treated Selim and me a bit better.’ In Hardach’s The Registrar’s Manual, German asylum laws are depicted as inhumane in their treatment of political refugees like Selim and others. His uncle, uncle’s wife and cousin are deported under the court’s ‘decision’ which is ironically described as “careful”, showing sovereignty’s paramount legacy. The use of this moderate language is an implication that the legality of these decisions legitimates them as just, or even rational.

David Farrier argues that, since the mid-twentieth century, Western states’ asylum rules have treated ‘the displaced’ as ‘asylum seekers’ more than as ‘refugees’, in order to

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151 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p.18.
155 Ibid., pp.314-5.
make their stay ‘an increasingly conditional presence dependent on the discretion of the host’.\textsuperscript{156} He remarks that the policy towards asylum-seekers places them in ‘a condition of waiting, uncertainty and dependency that frustrates any chance for self-creation’.\textsuperscript{157} In a general sense, the Kurds are metaphorically described in the novel as sons of asylum seekers,\textsuperscript{158} symbolising the international, and intergenerational, statelessness of the Kurds. In Germany, Selim is made to wait, compounding his sense of emptiness and denying him the possibility of prosperity. For him, home is nowhere and emptiness is everywhere. He enters the state of un-fixity and instability.

On the way to Germany, the stateless Selim is described as having ‘had three passports, none of them real’.\textsuperscript{159} Possessing no “real” passport problematises Selim’s status in this world, which is policed by borders and national prerequisites for belonging. Having no legal identity excludes him from the jurisdictional territories of the nation-statehood. His identity is thus unknown in the host country. Farrier notes: ‘[t]he encounter between the stranger and the host is effectively a contest – a contest of definition, and by extension, of recognition’.\textsuperscript{160} For Jacques Derrida, ‘foreigner’ and questioning are two sides of the same coin: ‘the foreigner’ asks questions or more commonly is asked ‘question[s]’.\textsuperscript{161} The first encounter between Selim and the German officials demonstrates this questioning. The German official requires a convincing answer from Selim in order to identify him as legitimate. However, Selim’s life story does not provide the official with a satisfactory answer.\textsuperscript{162} Selim is now an “unknown person”, like Derrida’s concept of ‘absolute other’, who is even distinct of ‘foreigner’, since the former lacks ‘a name or a family name’.\textsuperscript{163} Throughout the novel, Selim only remains as Selim and there is no mention of his family name. In addition, his real name, which is introduced as Selim, is also suspect since he was already described as having

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{The Registrar’s Manual}, p.67.
  \item Ibid., p.7.
  \item Farrier, ‘Terms of Hospitality’, p.123.
  \item \textit{The Registrar’s Manual}, p.15.
  \item Derrida and Dufourmantelle, p.25.
\end{itemize}
‘three passports, none of them real’. His real name might not be “Selim”. While establishing his real name is difficult; the narrator is either unaware of his real name or she does not view him as “unknown”.

Anonymity complicates Selim’s case, rendering his life story unconvincing to the authorities. The German government, meanwhile, is disinclined to grant Selim residency because he has arrived “unexpectedly”. It is in such contexts that Derrida states: ‘[H]ospitality […] is not offered to an anonymous new arrival and someone who has neither name, nor patronym, nor family, nor social status.’\textsuperscript{164} Selim is permanently rejected in the way Derrida further maintains that the ‘anonymous’ is ‘treated not as a foreigner but as another barbarian’.\textsuperscript{165} Both Turkish and German officials treat him as a colonial subject; the former at home and the latter outside the home. He is not invited to enter either nation. This exclusion preserves the binary opposition between the stranger Selim and the host sovereignty. Indeed, Farrier contends that sovereignty’s maintenance of ‘conditional (colonial)’ characteristic of ‘the stranger and the terms of hospitality’ both help the sovereign (host) to keep its superiority over the stranger.\textsuperscript{166} He also quotes Derrida, who states that the host purposefully sets terms of hospitality to avoid the entrance of “unbelonging subjects” into the nation:

> For an organized society that upholds its laws and wants to remain the sovereign master of its territory, its culture, its language, its nation, for a family or for a nation concerned with controlling its practices of hospitality, it is necessary to limit and condition hospitality.\textsuperscript{167}

Every aspect of Selim’s life is now controlled, censored and monitored through the established power of German sovereignty. As Selim tells his interpreter: “[… W]ho said this is my date of birth. How can they know if even my parents don’t know?” Selim sighed.’ The interpreter, who ‘gave Selim a pen’, replies: “‘They know everything […]’”\textsuperscript{168} Selim, opposite to his sovereign master who only commands others to do what is required, obediently and silently obeys the rules and signs the papers.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Farrier, ‘Terms of Hospitality’, p.124.
\textsuperscript{168} \textit{The Registrar’s Manual}, p.11.
The stranger, for Ahmed, represents an identified ‘figure’, imagined as an unbelonging subject in the currently inhabited space. Emma Haddad also puts it: ‘The refugee’s identity is forged precisely by her lack of belonging, her status as an “outsider”.’ She further argues that the figure of the refugee helps ‘the nation-state’ to strengthen its emphasis on the difference between those perceived as ““other” and ““outsider” from the members of ‘the nation’. Grounded in this characteristic of unbelonging, Selim not only represents Derrida’s ‘absolute other’ and Ahmed’s ‘stranger’, but he also falls into Said’s discussions about the contradictory relationship between outsider – exile – and nationalism. As outlined earlier, exile, for Said, is the opposite of nationalism. The exile is regarded as “outsider” to the host nation. According to Said, the prominent outsider in modern times is the refugee. In the context of these discussions and their connotative representations in relation to Selim’s life, exile, outsider, refugee/asylum-seeker, absolute other and stranger all emerge in the figure of Selim.

Selim’s abnormal status in both Turkey and Germany places him somewhere between Turkey and Germany’s borders. As Haddad observes, ‘refugees do not fit into the citizen-state-territory trinity, but are forced, instead, into the gaps between nation-states.’ Selim is denied residence in either territory and only memorises those German words that refer to placelessness: ‘Since his arrival, he had learned a few words in German: Schlepper, people-traffickers, Asyl, asylum. And one that took him a while to learn: Asylbeweberheim. Shelter for asylum seekers.’ The acquisition of words – his very vocabulary reflects his uncertain home. For Farrier, excluded bodies are situated in ‘the [asylum-seekers’] camp’, which is ‘a permanent space dedicated to the impermanence of its inhabitants’. He further notes that ‘[t]he camp’ enables the members of ‘the nation’ to see their own image, whereas it hides the existence of its inhabitants. ‘Asylbeweberheim’ helps the “members” of “the German nation” to

169 Ahmed, pp.21-2.
171 Ibid.
174 Ibid., p.77.
separate themselves from Selim and figures like him. The Germans and Turks have a home, whereas Selim lacks it in both Germany and Turkey.

The Spaceless Home
Migration has suggested and created different possible understandings of the notion of home. Cohen states that home has had various connotations, noting that ‘the place of origin’ has represented “home”, while on other occasions it is ‘the place of settlement, or a local, national or transnational place, or an imagined virtual community (linked, for example, through the internet), or a matrix of known experiences and intimate social relations […].”¹⁷⁵ In Selim’s case, following his migratory experience, it is problematic to assign his true home in either part of the world. Despite asylum-seeking challenges, Selim’s fantasies of returning home remain foremost, continuously thinking of inhabiting the place he has left behind. For him, nothing can surmount the pain of distance from the original home. He unconsciously reiterates the word “home”, depicting his desperation to return: ‘I thought I was going to go home. For good. I was going to go back home’.¹⁷⁶ After Germany grants him asylum, Selim returns to Kurdistan, then goes back to Germany. The reason for not staying in his “native” homeland is Selim’s failure to recapture his old home, which now only exists in his memory. He is currently a stranger to his “original” homeland and the homeland is stranger to him. His experience mirrors Ahmed’s remark: ‘Migration can be understood as a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from that which was inhabited as home.’¹⁷⁷ Selim’s failure “to remember”¹⁷⁸ the longevity of time he has spent in Germany, when asked by Turkish authorities upon his return, shows the confusing entity of “time” for him. Ahmed notes: ‘The question […] of being-at-home or leaving home is always a question of memory, of the discontinuity between past and present.’¹⁷⁹ Selim has been in Germany for nearly a decade. Yet his memory blurs temporal boundaries because he has been living in an in-between space.

¹⁷⁵ Cohen, p.10
¹⁷⁷ Ahmed, p.92.
¹⁷⁹ Ahmed, p.91.
Selim’s experience of displacement accords with what Smith describes as not only being ‘an external, geopolitical phenomenon’ but ‘also an internal process’ of the displaced body that ‘is cast out from its own history and culture’. Selim cannot find the home he used to know. His fear of losing the home he was dreaming of is unavoidable as ‘he was sure the village had also changed’. Scholars like Bhabha – and Rushdie whose ideas were discussed previously – claims that in-between spaces help migrants to construct a shifting home for themselves out of different world perspectives they have encountered by means of migration. Paul Gilroy argues that cultural borders are porous as he discusses the transnational black Atlantic migration, contending that ideas of ethnic and cultural purities are nationalistic as well as colonial. Therefore, migration is a way of crossing fixed ethnic and racial borders. McLeod summarises Gilroy’s ideas as saying: ‘[For the migrants] [t]he grounded certainties of roots are replaced with the transnational contingencies of routes.’ According to Bhabha, the imaginative and the physical crossings of subjectivities’ borders – such as ‘race, class, gender’ and nation – can result in viewing the world identities as dynamic and in ‘authoriz[ing] cultural hybridities’. Bhabha thus urges an understanding of discontinuity of the “myth” of pure national origins and belongings and introduces new ways of discarding national rootedness and notions of fixity; identity is changeable such as by means of migration. The moment Selim encounters his old home – Kurdistan – his ongoing attempts of imagining a new home in Germany is disrupted. This is the instance of ‘unhomeliness’ that Bhabha describes as follows:

The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history’s most intricate invasions. In that displacement the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.

This new structure of home is a method of rethinking the past and estranging conventional notions of traditions; a new form of conceiving “traditions” is invented.

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180 Smith, p.10.  
183 McLeod, p.215  
184 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, pp.1-2.  
185 Ibid.  
186 Ibid., p.9.
Home is constructed out of current understanding of identity which is the product of diasporic experience in the new country and within the host culture. Selim’s “original” home is completely illusionary and haunting, and only exists in his hazy imagination. In the context of the diasporic embodiment of home, Brah describes “home” as ‘a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination’. She argues that one might ‘visit’ her/his native home – physically – once again but it is still ‘a place of no return’ as it cannot be inhabited like before. The migrant’s wish of visiting, and revisiting, their “original” homeland is a ‘constant cyclical push’ for Choman Hardi, who indicates: ‘[T]hat place you left will never exist again. That world is gone, and you keep searching for it, thinking that when you go back you’ll find it, but you never do.’ This also shows that both Hardi’s poetic persona and Saladin’s (in Khadivi’s The Walking) contemplations of the original homelands I discussed previously cannot be fully grasped again. In Kurdistan, Selim’s mother has found a local girl for him to marry. The bride and her mother, who have never seen Selim before, expect a handsome man who must be attractive and wealthy coming back from Europe. However, what they encounter is a ‘stranger’, who does not seem to belong to the Kurdish region in Turkey’s southeast.

Selim’s situation is an example of homeward cycling, after his migratory experience it is difficult to settle fully on the notion of fixed home. Prior to re-visiting Kurdistan, Selim is completely unstable as Sophie Hardach comments on his position: ‘For much of the novel his future is extremely uncertain, his life is steered by the decisions of others’. Therefore, Hardach further puts it: ‘it’s very hard to develop a secure identity of your own when you’re in such a state of insecurity and dependency’. Yet, by returning to Germany, Selim wants to live in his diasporic home with his wife. As Hardach notes, it is ‘a very happy and hopeful ending’ that Selim can construct a ‘life’ with his Kurdish wife and he can positively go along with his diasporic experience. Selim’s last attempt of having a settled life with his wife seemingly differentiates him from Saladin and Hardi’s poetic persona, both tried to inhabit the same homeland they left behind and are always trapped in homecoming – returning their “original” homeland – possibilities.

187 Brah, p188.
188 Hardi, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-Literature/exiledpoets_3035.jsp>
189 The Registrar’s Manual, p.349.
190 Personal Interview with Sophie Hardach: 22 May 2015.
191 Ibid.
However, despite her last remark about the happy ending of the novel, Hardach also remarks:

[T]here are times when he doesn't want to be Kurdish or German or anything, he just wants to be Selim. Yet that doesn't really seem to be an option, because his fate is tied to these powerful political forces - migration, conflict, nationhood - which are in turn tied to notions of ethnicity and community.192

This remark makes Selim’s “happy life” with his wife in Germany – as it was put by Hardach – problematic. Selim’s happiness comes in the wake of his escape from death in Turkey. Discourses of belonging in the host countries are so inescapable that McLeod argues: ‘Migrants may well live in new places, but that can be deemed not to belong there and disqualified from thinking of the new land as their home, instead, their home is seen to exist elsewhere, back across the border’.193 Correspondingly, given Selim’s exilic condition, discourses of national exclusion, belonging and unbelonging, previous asylum challenges, cultural discrimination as well as integrational and assimilative legacies I explored earlier, make difficult the construction of a transnational identity for Selim. These all challenge Bhabha and Rushdie’s views of the possibility of having migration’s positive outcomes. In addition to this, given Bhabha’s concepts of hybridisation and deconstructing pre-given models of identity as part of postcolonial perspectives, Selim can fashion a new identity for himself through moving beyond the ethnic borders of Kurdishness and geographical borders of Kurdistan. Yet it appears as a generalised discussion of postcoloniality suggested by Bhabha. Different experiences of relationships between the margin and the centre exist in terms of countries of residence in the way Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg put it: ‘There are […] many geographies of identity’.194 It is difficult for Selim to forget all sufferings he experienced because of Kurdishness and ignore his family members, relatives and village folks – they are in permanent contact with Selim and have not migrated outside Turkey’s southeast – who are still excluded because of Kurdishness inside Turkey. This might be the moment when Bhabha’s theories of hybridisation and going beyond, as postcolonial perspectives, fail to contextualise all postcolonial experiences. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan criticises

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192 Ibid.
193 McLeod, p.212.
poststructuralist romanticization of diasporic life differences, arguing that postcolonial experience is different from metropolitan worldview since postcolonial period marks the continuation of the Western models of hegemony. He argues: ‘The metropolitan theory of the diaspora is in fact a form of false consciousness that has to be demystified before the diasporic condition can be historicized as a condition of pain and double alienation.’\textsuperscript{195} In the way Radhakrishnan contends, Selim’s hybrid identity is subject to the dominant discourses of power in the host culture and integrational policies at the expense of Selims’s Kurdishness.

\textbf{Chapter Conclusion}

This chapter has investigated literary explorations of denied Kurdish homelands. I examined the geopolitical mapmaking of Kurdistan’s surrounding regions in Choman Hardi’s ‘Lausanne, 1923’ and W. C. Scheurer’s \textit{The Sayings}. The Kurdish homeland figures as an abstract notion, an invisible territory on the world map. Cartographic changes are depicted as a strategy of depriving the Kurds of a home, within the nation-states in which they are residing. Despite this, Kurds’ home is embodied in the Kurdish language, culture and family life, whose loss is a form of homelessness for the poetic personae in Hardi’s ‘To Kurdistan’ and ‘My Children’, as well as for protagonists such as Mahmut and Zelal in Baydar’s \textit{The Lost Word} and Reza Khourdi in Laleh Khadivi’s \textit{The Age of Orphans}. I have explored how language, history, heritage and culture represent spatial paradigms in \textit{The Lost Word} and \textit{The Age of Orphans}. Turkification and Persianification in both novels illustrate the modern nation-states’ colonisation of Kurdishness. In these novels, Kurdishness is portrayed as a mute object, a form of lost property. This chapter has argued that modern Turkey and Iran rely on ‘forgetting Kurdishness’. Nostalgia and longing for familial gatherings provide haunting memories of home for Kurdish protagonists. In Hardi’s ‘Somehow’, Khadivi’s \textit{The Walking} and Sophie Hardach’s \textit{The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages} the literary characters become in-between citizens whose home exists at the temporal borderline.

between past and present. Displacement, exile, nationalist exclusion in the host country and estrangement problematise their experiences outside their “original” homeland. The only way home is embodied is to journey *imaginatively* to the past. Despite the fact that diaspora and migration help in making transnational homes, Kurdish writers’ and the literary characters’ migratory experiences analysed in this chapter suggest that this process is partially, if not fully, romanticisation of diasporic life. Figures like Hardi (or her poetic personae), Saladin and Selim, however in different ways, present a challenge to Rushdie’s sense of the ease with which migrants can find a home and to Bhabha’s discussions of constructing a hybrid identity by means of migration. Selim escapes death and tries to build a home, with his Kurdish wife, for himself in Germany and he seems to be successful to some degree. However, the discourses of asylum policy, cultural integration and assimilation, exilic experiences in the host country and his traumatic experiences in Turkey challenge the easy decision of building a diasporic home for Selim. Kurdish writers and literary characters cannot decide on their constructed identities unilaterally, but “native” residents and discourses of power relations also interfere in shaping these writers and characters’ identities in the host countries.
Chapter Five: Constructions of Femininity in the World of Orientalist and Nationalist Patriarchy

This town is an open prison, but for women it is a closed prison.

(The Lost Word, 147)

A history of colonisation is a history of feminisation. Colonial powers identify their subject people as passive, in need of guidance, incapable of self-government, romantic, passionate, unruly, barbarous.

Geraldine (1993, 233)

The exploitation of women by means of nationalist and Orientalist patriarchal worldviews is widely critiqued in the works discussed in this thesis. I examine the literary narrations of colonial, nationalist and patriarchal ideas about bodily dimensions. First, I investigate literary depictions of Turkish and Persian women’s crucial role in state modernisation. Despite being victims of nationalist patriarchy, they operate as distinct markers of dominant ethnicities when compared to Kurdish women. In the context of Turkey, Iran and, to some extent, Iraq, the construction of gender differs when it comes to Kurdish women situations. Multiple features of identitarian constructions operate in oppressing Kurdish women. Throughout this chapter, I use the concept of intersectionality, as it has been widely used by recent feminist discussions, in dealing with various oppressive tools performing against Kurdish women. Some feminist scholars, such as Patricia Collins and Sherene Razack, also use the concept of interlocking, as being different from intersectionality, by which they discuss the limited employability of intersectionality. As for Razack, interlocking is more emphatic than intersectionality in showing the constitutive existence of each oppressive tool in producing a large system of oppressions against women, noting interlocking is a way of
‘keep[ing] several balls in the air at once’.1 Yet, I use the intersections of different oppressive aspects as being interconnected and discuss them with reference to literary examples of the chosen works that intersectionality also is a way of interrelatedness of systems of oppressions.

Oppressing and marginalising women in my chosen texts take on ethnic, racial and gender dimensions. For example, Kurdish women, in spite of being women, they are also treated as being Kurdish by state nationalist worldviews. The literary representations of Turkey and Iran portray Kurdish women as non-modern and, therefore, not being at the same level of Persian and Turkish women status. In this chapter, I apply different theories and arguments of feminist issues. I restrict my explorations not to one single theory as ‘one size fits all’2 discussion, an expression used by Valerie Bryson by which she promotes avoiding specific labels in dealing with women issues, and she suggests a mixed analysis of gender, race, class, religion and nation instead when women lives are at issue.3 This chapter examines Turkish and Persian women’s status in Oya Baydar’s novel The Lost Word (2011) and Laleh Khadivi’s novel The Age of Orphans (2009), where women figure as nations’ boundaries. “Modernisation” campaigns are implemented by means of educating and unveiling women in order to resemble Westerners. I contend that women in the novels represent modernity, whereby nationalist architects, particularly Atatürk and Reza Shah, treat the modern Turkish and Iranian peoples through their own patriarchal worldviews. For them, Turkey and Iran – Turkish and Persian homelands only – represent female

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1 Anna Carastathi, ‘The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory’, Philosophy Compass, 9/5 (2014), 304-314 (p.310.)
2 Different histories, geographies, cultures and politics have made feminism take on continuing discussions. Various feminist theories have emerged. Some of them have continued the previous ones, while some others have contested them as with third wave feminism which at places criticises second wave feminism of 1960s and 1970s for its tendencies of generalisations about Third World women. I therefore elaborate different theories and consider many feminist discussions since debates attempting to bring positive changes in women’s lives and human rights in general. As Stacy Gillis and et al. argue: ‘Feminism […] needs to be multiple, various and polyphonous’. (Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration, ed. by Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) p.4), and Kimberle Crenshaw notes that the discussions of ‘contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of color.’ (Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’, Stanford Law Review, 43 (1991), 1241-1299, (pp.1242-3).
bodies. I also analyse depictions of Turkish and Persian women’s role in ethnic
dichotomisations when imagining the Kurds, assimilating them and creating
Westernised Turkish/Persian nations. I suggest that Turkish and Persian women are not
only victims but also perpetuators of patriarchal ideologies. In Khadivi’s The Walking, I
explore how Iranian women are used by post-1979 Iran to serve as the symbol of the
new state’s Islamic identity. This chapter further turns to Baydar’s The Lost Word and
Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans, also exploring Sophie Hardach’s novel The Registrar’s
(2003) and Choman Hardi’s poem ‘The Penelopes of My Homeland’ in Life for Us
(2004). I investigate these texts’ portrayals of Kurdish women, who are subjected to
Orientalist attitudes as well as nationalist patriarchies. The colonisation of Kurdish
women’s sexuality fulfils the Turkish and Iranian states’ aim of becoming “superior”
Westerners. I also examine how Baydar and Hardach depict Kurdish women as resisting
Turkish colonialism in the southeast and taking the role of defenders of Kurdishness.
Furthermore, since Kurdish women represent Kurdish honour, they are also ill-
treated by Kurdish patriarchy in these texts. In Hardi’s ‘The Penelopes of My Homeland’, the
Anfal women survivors, who characterise Kurds’ painful history, are essentialised by
patriarchal worldviews in the post-Anfal period. This chapter concludes that these
writers criticise patriarchal treatments of Turkish, Persian and, particularly, Kurdish
women.

“Representatives” of Modernity in Oya Baydar’s The Lost Word and Laleh
Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans and The Walking

Women occupy a marginal space in national life because of patriarchal dominance, yet
they are the cornerstone in modifying its boundaries and defining its constructions. Nira
Yuval-Davis asserts that ‘women’ are not merely participants of nation-building, but are
also ‘central to its constructions and reproductions!’ For her, women’s part in
constructing cultural identities is so effective that they become ‘carriers of tradition’. Turkish and Iranian “modernities” become national traditions in The Lost Word and The

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5 Ibid, p.61.
Age of Orphans. Turkish and Persian women are central to these traditions. However, in The Walking, re-veiling women aims to create an Islamic subjectivity in opposition to Pahlavi’s unveiling in The Age of Orphans. Elleke Boehmer argues that the ‘body’ is always central to colonial and postcolonial discussions. According to Boehmer, the body is subjected to various transmogrifications. By means of analysing a number of literary texts, Boehmer observes that the body is the source of figuration, identity formation, domination, self-realisation, self-expression, self-silencing and nationalist inscription, which are all forms of representation. The body here mainly refers to women’s physical being. Moreover, coercive unveiling or veiling transforms women’s bodies into the terrain where various ideological struggles are played out. In these novels, the course of women unveiling or veiling focuses on women’s physical appearance as an important visual symbol of nationalist ideology.

Partha Chatterjee emphasises the conflicting nature of eastern nationalism, which opposes Western dominance yet adopts its lifestyle. In the light of this ambivalence, the eastern nationalist maintenance of the nation’s native values was part of its struggle against the outside world. Chatterjee also contends that women have been imagined as protecting the spirit of the nation’s nativity:

No matter what the changes in the external conditions of life for women, they must not lose their essentially spiritual (that is, feminine) virtues; they must not [...] become essentially Westernized. […] There would have to be a marked difference in the degree and manner of Westernization of women, as distinct from men, in the modern world of the nation.

Chatterjee’s statement refers to the patriarchal ideology which was proposed by Indian nationalism in the nineteenth century. Baydar and Khadivi depict Turkish and Persian women’s statuses in The Lost Word and The Age of Orphans as slightly different from that of India. Despite being guardians of the nation’s nativity, Turkish and Persian women are the focal point for enriching the nation with modern elements. As Valentine

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7 Ibid., pp.127-39.
8 See Chapter Two in this thesis for Chatterjee’s argument on the ambivalent nature of eastern nationalisms.
10 Ibid., p.627.
Moghadam argues ‘women’ in the Middle East were imagined to foster the state project and they contributed to national progress through ‘[e]ducation, employment and unveiling’.\(^{11}\) In these novels, patriarchal drives articulate this progress. Exploiting women’s femininity aligns with Cynthia Enloe’s statement that nationalism is a male-driven enterprise: ‘[N]ationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope’.\(^ {12}\) Anne McClintock also holds that ‘[a]ll nationalisms are gendered, all are invented and all are dangerous’\(^ {13}\) and Ania Loomba makes a similar point that ‘[i]f the nation is an imagined community, that imagining is profoundly gendered’.\(^ {14}\) The Turkish and Iranian male élite in both novels substantially drive modernisation ambitions, and their nationalist competitions with the external world and nation-making processes oblige women to conform to “modern” and “Westernised” behaviours and dress.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, The Lost Word opens in an Ankara coach station. The famous novelist Ömer Eren seeks inspiration for writing his next book. An old woman in the station directs him to the Kurdish region: ‘If he hadn’t noticed the woman with the odd hat sitting outside on one of the benches near platform 8 while he was waiting for his change in front of Başkent Büfesi he would not have headed in that direction’.\(^ {15}\) It is in that direction that Ömer meets Zelal and Mahmut, the Kurdish couple, and then heads to Kurdish region in Turkey’s southeast, where he familiarises himself with the Kurds’ predicament. In the southeast, he finds inspiration in Kurdish suffering to write his next novel. Thus, from the outset of The Lost Word, a woman directs Ömer’s adventures in the southeast. Following his encounter with the old woman, Ömer describes her as the essence of Atatürk’s nationalist endeavour:

The woman [...] is wearing pale, worn trousers that end just below the knee. [...] She reminds him a bit of his mother. [...] They are women who believe in the certainty of their own conventions, who preface their remarks with ‘We are the daughters of the generation of the Republic.’ When they see a woman covering her

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\(^{11}\) Valentine M. Moghadam, Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), p.71.

\(^{12}\) Cynthia Enloe, Making Feminist Sense of International Politics: Bananas, Beaches and Bases (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.44.


\(^{15}\) The Lost Word, p.9.
head with a scarf they see red and lament, ‘Even Atatürk could not make these people see sense!’ – refining their vowels like teachers, officers’ wives and friends of my mother. Perhaps I do the poor woman an injustice because she physically resembles my mother and because of the revulsion I feel towards my parents and that self-opinionated elitist circle.\textsuperscript{16}

Ömer criticises Turkish women for their nationalist ambitions as he views his ‘parents’, the nationalist women and ‘self-opinionated elitist circle’ as supporters of Kemalism. This concurs with Shahrzad Mojab’s remark: ‘[N]ationalism continues to be the priority of feminists; in Turkey, as in other countries, it divides women along ethnic lines, and turns them into agents of the patriarchal, militarist state.’\textsuperscript{17} This nationalist treatment of womanhood reminds of third movement feminist approaches that women’s situation must be analysed not only in terms of womanhood, but other forces of race, nation, ethnicity, class, culture and religion are actively at performance in oppressing and marginalising Third World women.\textsuperscript{18} Moreover, any essentialisation about women situation in my chosen texts is impoverished due to the fact that nationalist treatments of class, ethnicity and race differences give various impressions about Kurdish women. This accords with the way Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that Western feminist discourse tends to generalise about Third World women’s lives without making any inquiry into differences of geography, culture, ethnicity, class and other power relations. This analysis of women’s situation in the whole Third World by the Western feminists, Mohanty criticises, results in emphasising on the Third World as the West’s ‘Other’.\textsuperscript{19} Although Turkish, and Persian women, as I discuss below, are from the Third World, I have explained throughout this thesis that Turkish and Persian characters in my chosen texts, as in the reality, have considered themselves as “Westerners”. I thus analyse Kurdish women situation as an example in the Third World, subjecting to Turkish and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., p.10.
\item Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses’, 30 (Autum 1988), 61-88 (pp.61-64) (Mohanty in her essay mainly aims to deconstruct any disempowering effort by the Western feminism, which is supportive voice of Western colonisation for constructing a single Third World object for the West, of Third World women whose situations are not identical and cannot be essentialised. Her discussions could also be termed in the way I have used them above that ethnic differences are deeply influential in analysing women’s situations, and any generalisation harms potential understanding of women’s lives).
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Persian “White” feminist discourses in the Third World itself. According to bell hooks, there should be a kind of ‘solidarity’ between marginalised women of different experiences, a proposal which for hooks introduces ‘the idea of sisterhood’ for women to voice together in resisting different oppressions.20 Contrary to this, it is the idea of ethnic polarity and exclusion that are being perpetuated by Turkish and Persian women by means of enforcing and embodying Turkish and Persian modernity, an act directly excludes Kurdish women, because of their gender and Kurdishness, from the ideals of nationhood. Elif (Turkish) and Meena (Persian), as I will analyse shortly, who try to gain women’s rights in the mid of the nationalist patriarchal modes, fail to construct sisterhood and solidarity with Kurdish women. Despite no interconnected form of resistance by Turkish and Persian women with Kurdish women is seen, they also reiterate the binaristic fashions between Persianness/Turkishness and Kurdishness. Failure to construct such sisterhood by Turkish and Persian women results in these women’s lack of understanding the White patriarchy of Turkish and Persian male nationalists, who by means of stereotyping Kurdish women keep controlling Persian and Turkish women.

Baydar portrays Turkish Women in *The Lost Word* as the guardians of state ideology, complicit with its ethnic inclusions and exclusions. Women’s Westernised clothes, and their lifestyle, worldviews and personal interests mean that they resemble Europeans. More importantly, they disapprove of non-Western clothes as Ömer describes above, the elimination of which was part of Kemal Atatürk’s quest for modernity. For Deniz Kandiyoti, wearing Western dress in Turkey further delineated the already established nineteenth-century hierarchy between the urban ‘elite’ and their rural fellow-citizens during the days of forming the republic.21 Westernised élite – such as Ömer’s mother – are thus transmitters of Kemalist values. According to Moghadam, Suna Kili argues that introducing ‘the Turkish Enlightenment’ necessitated divorcing

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from the past. Moghadam thus contends that, for Kemal Atatürk, the programme of implementing ‘Westernization, secularization, and democracy’ relied heavily on equal status between males and females. However, as I investigated in Chapter One, applying Kemalist values simultaneously racialises Kurds for being “uncivilised”, “backward” and “pre-modern”. This racialisation is expressed by a Turkish woman who looks down on Zelal in their shared hospital room in The Lost Word. Although Elif does not express any kind of hatred towards the Kurds in the novel, her “Westernised” behaviour and clothes aim, however indirectly, at excluding Kurdish women since the Kurds are deemed as non-modern by the state. Thus, the Kemalist conception of “equality” is highly problematic in the novel.

Elif freely mixes with men and contributes to Western scientific development. Her head is ‘uncovered’, her clothes are ‘smart western’ and she also speaks ‘good English’. She is undoubtedly an outcome of the Kemalist state projects. Kandiyoti notes: ‘The “new woman” of the Kemalist era became an explicit symbol of the break with the past’. Turkish women’s role in the novel is noticeable; coping with Atatürk’s Izmir address in 1923 as radically rejecting the superiority of men over women. Atatürk accuses the Ottoman era as being marred by gender inequality which had caused, as he said, ‘[t]he failures in our past’. Post-Republic Turkish women are free to write and research. They must also be knowledgeable, like Elif, whose unveiled hair symbolises Turkish modern identity. Meyda Yegenoglu contends that ‘unveiling’ was central to Atatürk’s modernity constructions, whereby Atatürk fulfilled Westernisation. Elif is different from Kurdish women such as Zelal and Jiyan, who are perceived to symbolise the nation’s “backward” elements. Zelal escapes the Kurdish code of honour, represented by female sexuality, and Jiyan is said to be controlled by Kurdish clan

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23 Moghadam, p.82.
24 The Lost Word, p.13.
25 Ibid., p.266.
leaders. Thus, the Kemalist empowerment of Turkish women, such as Elif, by no means involves Kurdish women. Ien Ang argues: ‘feminism needs to take account of the fact that not all women are white, Western and middle class and take into consideration the experiences of “other” women as well.’

Elif is unable to go beyond the existing differences between Turkish and Kurdish women. The Kemalist notions of man/woman equality, inspired by the state Westernisation, do not include Kurdish women since the Kurds are imagined as “Oriental”.

Nevertheless, Elif similarly lives under the patriarchy embodied in the Kemalist domination. The empowerment of Turkish women is superficial as both Turkish and Kurdish women are controlled by patriarchy, however in different ways. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis argue that in the domain of nationalism, ‘[w]omen are divided along class, ethnic and life-cycle lines [...]. This is the case both from within the ethnic collectivity and from the state, whose boundaries virtually always contain a number of ethnicities.’

Turkish nationalism operates specific patriarchal strategies towards women of different social groups. This increasingly tears apart the mythic image of “liberated and empowered” Turkish women in the novel. As Elif used to blame Ömer: ‘You profess to defend women’s rights and feminism, but your swear words degrade women.’

The “Westernised” and intellectual Ömer is entangled in his patriarchal subjecthood. When a young arts reporter asks Elif ‘[h]ow does it feel to be Ömer Eren’s partner?’, she corrects the interviewer’s male-centred question, demonstrating the Turkish women’s role in lifting the nation’s reputation: “‘How does it feel to be the husband of professor Elif Eren, known for her work internationally on the subject of genetic transfer of forgetting and recollection?’”

Elif’s specialisation in ‘forgetting and recollection’ seems to be symbolic. It probably refers to the amnesia of Turkish nationalist Westernists who have forgotten their promises to women (and to non-Turkish groups) prior to and throughout the nation-building processes. They unselfconsciously use inappropriate words towards women, yet they are known for their feminist views on

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31 The Lost Word, p.135.

32 Ibid., p.172.
women’s rights. On the other hand, Elif is unable to discard patriarchal values rooted deep in society as she takes Ömer’s surname, as in the above quote she says ‘Elif Eren’. She is also affected by patriarchy and silently accepts male dominance:

She knows that her husband cheats on her periodically. She gets stuck on the word ‘cheat’. It is an ugly word, an inane, vulgar expression. It doesn’t reflect the truth. Ömer does not talk about these kinds of casual relationships, but he does not hide them either. [...] This has nothing to do with the body, desire, sex: it is a male instinct, a need constantly to prove himself; an obsession with being wanted, being considered important, being flattered and with making conquests. I am the real one. I’m the woman to whom he returns every time.33

The élite’s real attitudes, which might be unknown to the public, are driven by men, and their “modernity” advantages men. For such reasons, Ömer in the southeast stridently admits the perceived superiority of the intellectuals’ maleness: ‘[W]hat were all those women who had come and gone in his life other than the satisfaction of his male ego that was so utterly inflated by his fame and success? But Elif was different’.34 Both Elif and Ömer consider her as the source of patriarchal hegemony; Elif imagines herself as the woman to whom Ömer finally returns.

Despite adopting Western values, Turkish women are still assumed by Turkish nationalism to be suitable wives and mothers. Elif represents family reconciliation between Ömer, Deniz and her.35 In Norway, she is very sad about Deniz’s distance from her and repeatedly asks him to go back to Turkey with her. At the same time, Elif awaits Ömer’s birthday wishes by text message. As I explore below, the centrality of women – such as Elif – to the family springs from the state ideology since the early days of the Turkish Republic. Chapter One examined in Baydar’s The Lost Word how Turkish nationalism attempts to portray Turkey, and its public culture, as part of the West, yet its ambivalent character is evident when it imagines women’s status in Turkish society. In this context, nationalism magically forgets any ideas of being considered Western; it does not conceive Turkishness as part of a European cultural identity. By its nationalist treatment of women, Kemalism fully contradicts itself in claiming that Turkey is part of the Western world. Yegenoglu notes that, despite his strict Westernisation, Atatürk was still cautious about delimiting his modernisation campaigns to some degree. The

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p.239.
35 Chapter One explored how modernity and Westernisation drifts the Turkish characters apart in the novel.
adoption of Western culture was ‘a model’, yet Atatürk stressed the importance of maintaining the native spirit of Turkishness. In this respect, ‘women’ were the barrier to such ideas; unveiling did not necessarily mean an absolute imitation. Atatürk refused ‘extreme attitudes’ and in lieu suggested: ‘Those who go to extreme in the form of dressing by exactly imitating the European women should know that each nation has its own traditions and customs, its own national characteristics.’ Yegenoglu further indicates that women were not supposed to become ‘over-Westernized’ and ‘they should continue to be good mothers and wives’. Being “good” is slightly ironic here, because women are considered good only when they become the centre of family life. On the other hand, Turkey’s view that there is equal status between men and women in the West – for example in the UK – in terms of household affairs is another myth. Rebecca Asher argues that parenting in the UK in the twenty-first century is centred on women, and she calls the equality between men and women a myth, since women still attend to most of the childcare at the expense of their careers. Thus, the Kemalist conception of Western women as not undertaking the role of “good” mothers and wives is also mistaken. It is unaware – or deceives itself – of ongoing inequality between men and women in family life. Based on this false view, Elif separates herself from Western women. In Denmark, she did not make love with her English colleague, the scientist. She blames herself for attracting the Englishman when invited by him to a restaurant:

Why did I meet up with that English colleague? Was I really interested in talking science? And […] [w]asn’t everything, from the bra to the silk jersey blouse, chosen to show off your femininity, to get him excited? At one stage you even considered at the last minute wearing a thin cotton top without a bra at all – so that your nipples would be visible. So why didn’t you? Was it to play mysterious woman from the east? You are Turkish.

The use of internal monologue is an effective literary method of conveying how she has internalised Atatürk’s nationalist patriarchy. Here is her voice talking to herself, yet her voice is mingled with others’ voices, voices which espouse an ideology which sets her

36 Yegenoglu, pp.133-4.
38 Yegenoglu, p.134.
40 The Lost Word, p.281.
against herself. It demeans her sexuality. Her interior monologue reveals how she has internalised others’ judgements about women, judgements which she then turns against herself. Although Elif represents modern Turkish women’s progress, she still remembers that she is Turkish, under pressure to conform to Atatürk’s national sense of appropriate stances for Turkish women in the modern world. She embodies both native tradition and state modernity. She, then, re-joins Deniz and they travel back home, where she also awaits Ömer. Being a “typical” Turkish woman, she currently conforms exactly to the modern republic’s ideological standards.

Khadivi similarly critiques the secular Iran’s utilisation of women in applying the nationalist programme in *The Age of Orphans*. In the military barracks, a Persian sergent lecturer compares Iran to a woman whose honour is currently protected by the Shah: ‘And we are a raped whore [prior to Reza Shah], sniveling on the outside and torn apart on the inside by barbaric tribes’.41 The sergent refers to the Shah as being the protector of this woman: Iran. Women are thus the keepers of men’s honour. This shows the extent to which this image of Iran’s femaleness is implanted in the minds of nationalists such as the lieutenant. The Shah’s nationalism is designed for males, and by males, rather than females. The new Iran is in effect a female governed by the Shah’s masculine forces in the novel. His ideas are expressed through male/female polarity. The Shah is described as ‘Baba [father] Shah’ and Iran as ‘Maman [mother] Iran’.42 Every single aspect implies the feminisation of Iran, which is a female body related to the politics and culture of both colonial and postcolonial powers. The imagery of ‘Maman Iran’ in the novel is reminder of a similar gendered conception of the nation-building in the Indian subcontinent as Neluka Silva discusses in her book *The Gendered Nation: Contemporary Writings from South Asia* (2004). India, Silva notes, embodies a gendered image for being called “‘Mother India” (translated as *bharatmata*)’ by the Indian nationalists.43 Loomba argues that ‘the nation-state’ more generally is perceived as ‘a woman’ in ‘the colonial’ discourse. This stems from the fact that ‘women, land or nations’ altogether feed the desires of ‘[n]ational fantasies, be they colonial, anti-

41 *The Age of Orphans*, p.91.
42 Ibid., p.115.
colonial or postcolonial’.44 The Shah’s perception of Iran represents the colonial spectrum. His patriarchal character is shown in his behaviour as his daughter Ashraf Pahlavi says that the Shah ‘was the very embodiment of a traditional masculine character’.45

Hamideh Sedghi notes that ‘[i]t is within’ forcible subjugation, which was essential to ‘Reza Shah’s’ modernisation, ‘that changes in women’s lives should be understood’.46 Khadivi depicts Pahlavi’s state-building as resembling a triangle that consists of Westernisation, repression and women. (Persian) women in her The Age of Orphans fall into this triangular paradigm of the Western lifestyle, ethnic dichotomy and assimilation. Since the beginning of Reza Khourdi’s life in the barracks, Tehran is described as “modern”, characterised by its women. Yet women are only vehicles for introducing patriarchal modernity in the novel. Although a Persian lieutenant believes that he regards Tehrani women as models of development, he is re-sexualising and re-embodying them. He describes them as ‘the most sophisticated. French educated, uncovered, lovely’.47 He thus advises Reza Khourdi, ‘to take one for a wife. She will make for a good partner for you in the west, an example to the women of the town’.48 Women live in the midst of this masculine ideological atmosphere. Reza takes the advice, marries Meena and then they move to Kermanshah. One of their sons says:

Our maman came to the parades with red color on her lips and cheeks in a very tight jacket and skirt, like a man’s suit for a woman [...]. Our maman talked only to the men on the modernising committee, who held her parasol and lit her cigarette.49

The modernising committee in Kermanshah only consists of ‘men’. However, adopting “Western” world elements rescues women from being cloistered at home and urges them to participate in the state’s progress. Chatterjee notes that one of the Indian nationalism’s social demands centred on women not eating or drinking or smoking like ‘men’.50

44 Loomba, p.180.
46 Sedghi, p.64.
47 The Age of Orphans, p.160.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., pp.234-5.
Meena nonetheless smokes cigarettes with men and also wears Western clothes. She embodies the lieutenant’s description that Tehrani women are modern, “smart” figures.

The desire of Europeanising women distinguishes “Persianness” from “non-Persianness”. Persian women embody Persian cultural identity. Reza sees ‘uncovered’ women in Tehran: ‘[H]e lets his gaze wander from storefront to storefront as women with uncovered hair shop for Western clothes’. Unveiling signifies modernity and progress, as Afsaneh Najmabadi argues that Iran’s ‘modernity was defined as one of educating and unveiling’ the uncivilised, ‘traditional woman’. Based on this, the lieutenant’s description of educated and uncovered Tehrani women above is the nationalist exploitation of women. Kurdish women are simultaneously racially subjugated by contrasting them with these “civilised” Persian women.

Meena’s marriage to Reza Khourdi symbolises Persian dominance over Kurds through the gendered enforcement of Western values. She nonetheless seems to be unaware of patriarchal designs. The marriage aims at civilising the nation’s backward members. She represents the spirit of nationalism by educating her half-Kurdish children to preserve the Persianness imposed on the whole nation. Writing in the context of Reza Shah’s Iran, Haleh Afshar observes, ‘[w]omen, in their capacity as mothers, were viewed as crucial links in the modernisation process, and an effective means of transmitting the secular ideology to the new generation.’ The matchmaker’s views – she lives in Tehran’s Abadaan Street where Meena also lives with her family – reveals Persian women’s indispensable role in Iran’s racialisation. She tells her daughter: ‘Daughter of mine, do you want me to ruin our faultless reputation and mix them with the clean blood of our Tehrani girls […]? What rubbish the shah drags in for us to sweep up.’ The matchmaker’s refusal to wed her daughter to non-Persians aims to keep Persianness pure. According to Yuval-Davis, ‘excluded’ bodies are perceived to be from

51 As Shireen Mahdavi notes, Reza Shah’s trip to Turkey in the first half of 1930s resulted in condemning veiling; nevertheless, it was made visible ‘through education and example’. (Shireen Mahdavi, ‘Reza Shah Pahlavi and Women: A Re-evaluation’ in The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921-1941, ed. by Stephanie Cronin (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.190-202 (p.194).
52 The Age of Orphans, p.161.
55 The Age of Orphans, p.162.
a different ethnic ancestry since they are not part of ‘national collectivity’, and therefore, ‘intermarriage’ can tolerate their entry.\textsuperscript{56} Women are the vehicle for this ethnic inclusion, and the old woman is unhappy with this mingling of different ethnicities. On the other hand, her daughter suggests the willing amalgamation of diverse groups, representing the national duties of the younger generation in creating a “modern nation” assimilated by Persianness:

I see the soldiers are good for business and I tell her quietly, as I peel cucumbers and salt their fresh flesh.

\textit{Ahh, Maman, this new Iran will be a mixed thing soon all of the children will have blood in them from here and there and these soldiers have fortunes to spare. Ack-toph.}

She spits invisibly into the cauldron of green ash in front of her.

\textit{Mongrels. The girls of Abadaan Street have always wed the boys of Abadaan Street and this is how things have been because this is how we have made them. All the blood joined in good, clean matches.}\textsuperscript{57}

The daughter’s disagreement with her mother signifies her commitment to making the new Iran. On the other hand, the “educated” Meena, who is described by her mother as ‘smart’ for knowing ‘French’,\textsuperscript{58} marries Reza. The marriage symbolises the necessary assimilation of Kurdishness, as part of Iran’s modern needs.

The Shah’s modernity is also questionable for Meena’s mother. She has been sidelined by the state and hints that this modernity is a superficial fashion that might not last, offering an internal critique of the state project; one that shows how insecure it truly is. The Westernised country implies that older women are marginal to nationalist patriarchy, which exploits the energy of young women. Although before his death, Meena’s father always ‘determined they [Meena and her younger sister Haleh] both become “modern” Iranian women’, her mother used to respond: ‘nah, nah, nah. One at a time. Who knows how long this modernity is going to last. Best be safe’.\textsuperscript{59}

Marginalising old women is unquestioningly patriarchal because discrimination against old men does not feature in the novel. Correspondingly, the young Meena increasingly appears as a victim whose chief role lies in fulfilling nationalist projects. Iranian Europeanisation is thus a patriarchal agenda. When it makes way for women’s

\textsuperscript{57} The Age of Orphans, p.163.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p.174.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
contribution in nation-building, it exploits their body and gender, and silences their voice. Although she is criticised by a group of ‘old women’ in ‘the Hammam’ for bearing a ‘bastard [...] half Kurd’ child, and therefore betraying her late ‘good’ and ‘educated’ father, Meena says:

They are old women, naked and heavy, but they are not wrong. The child grows inside me, half the blood of this old street and old city, half the blood of my own husband, scion of stones and mountains that God himself forgot. A new babe for this new Iran.\(^{60}\)

Although Meena thinks that the Hammam women are telling the “truth”, nationalist notions drive her to hint that the requirements of the modern nation-state come first. The dream of establishing a Westernised Iran could not be realised without women’s sacrifice. The new babe refers to the success of Persianness and the demise of Kurdishness. At this point, the novel is deeply critical of patriarchy, for which Persian women are instrumental devices of the Shah’s modernity against the Kurds.

Meena’s role is so effective that she becomes the focal point of Westernisation. Different from other old women, she feels responsible for the modern nation and believes that without women’s contribution, Iran will not become as “progressive” as ‘France’ and ‘England’. She turns to the women in Hammam:

Yes, pregnancy is a difficult thing, as you know, but alas, for our new Iran a woman must make her sacrifices—so she is not forgotten like the women of the old time who just disappeared into history, like your own mamans, I imagine … I have even heard of city girls mixing their blood with the old tribes for the sake of the country, so that all the blood may one day bleed together harmoniously and we can be as great as France and England. It is for sure those women will keep a place in history for themselves.\(^{61}\)

Meena represents Persian feminist voice that speaks for the modern Persian women’s status. She attempts to rescue women from marginalisation in Iran’s modern history and find them a position within the newly demarcated boundaries of nationhood. The more she complies with Pahlavi’s projects of “Westernisation”, assimilation and marginalisation of non-Persians the more she appears as a perpetuator of the state’s patriarchal ideologies. Bryson notes that racism has been further practised by ‘white feminists’ who entailed the passivity of ‘black women’s voices’, attempts which have

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\(^{60}\) Ibid., pp.195-6.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., p.197.
ignored the facts that racial discrimination actively attends at ‘sex oppression’ and that ‘the experience of racism is gendered’. In spite of Meena’s attempts to be remembered by history, she is the conduit of her male counterparts’ worldviews. This patriarchal mode of dominance is reflected in a Persian lieutenant’s views. For the lieutenant, the ‘lovely’ Meena was unfortunate for marrying a Kurdish man and living in a place like Kermanshah, and Reza was fortunate not to marry a Kurdish woman: ‘What I would give for a Tehrani woman in this place ... the women here are bitter and already old at fifteen. But what can you do? This is our sacrifice to the shah, mageh-nah?’ Accordingly, Meena is merely an icon that serves the Shah’s ideas. The lieutenant brings Meena’s sacrifice to light for enforcing the ethnic distinction between Persian and Kurdish. Kurdish women are described as ‘bitter’ and ‘old at fifteen’, the idea which was already expressed by that lieutenant who in Tehran sent Reza to Kermanshah and asked him: ‘I hear the Kurdish girls have the heavy hands and feet of men. Is that true, Sarbaz? Yes, Agha’.

Describing Kurdish women’s bodily organs as resembling men’s emphasises Kurdish women’s unfitness for the nation. Women are again objectified by a reductive gaze, which imprisons women and assigns their function to be beautiful. It is still a relentless focus on women’s appearance. The incessant inferiorisation of women increasingly uses female protagonists in favour of an ethnic dichotomy in the way Jan Jindy Pettman argues, for the nationalists the admired females are ‘the national’ ones whereas the ‘racialized or otherwise othered’ are hardly considered pretty. The Persian women, representing the nation itself, are imagined as attractive, while the Kurdish women are correspondingly undesirable.

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62 Bryson, p.228
63 The Age of Orphans, p.212.
64 Ibid., p.160.
65 In most of the Middle East, including Iran, comparing women with men has two connotations. When women are compared with the bravery and active role of men, they are regarded as great. However, when their physical organs are perceived as resembling those of men’s they are viewed as ugly and unwanted. In both cases women are degraded. In the first example, women are deemed active only when resembling men, and in the second case, they are imagined as being objects for males’ sexual instincts. In The Age of Orphans, the lieutenants are inspired by patriarchal outlooks when they both acclaim Persian women’s beauty and call Kurdish women ugly.
Reza and Meena’s marriage is unhappy and inharmonious. When Meena communicates with the Persian Lieutenant escorting her – and Reza Khourdi – to Kermanshah she is fully “feminine” and mild-mannered, whereas she behaves like a dominant “husband” when she feminises her own Kurdish husband.67 Representing the state’s watchwoman, Meena observes Reza Khourdi’s behaviour in Kermanshah, even when she is feeding the baby in her arms: ‘Then tell me of your deeds, Agha Captain. How have you been a hero today? She wants to know of the latest uprisings, the schoolhouse he’s building, the status of her order of fine lace from Tehran.’68 Reza soon quenches her nationalist thirst, and she re-embodies “the feminised Iran”. She occupies a range of gendered stances, embracing a motherly identity in relation to Reza:

[T]here were three boys, the sons of farmers from Taq-e-Bustan, gathered in the meiydan and shouting to draw a crowd. What were they shouting, my love? He tells her of their pleas for Kurdish independence, how they asked the group: If Iran can suddenly have its own country then why not the Kurds? Are they not the oldest people of these mountains, is this not the era of country making? Who is to stop us? With the baby at her breast and her eyes sparkling she asks, So what did you do, Reza, jounam? […] I locked them […] He goes on. Soon I will make Kermanshah as lovely and peaceful as your Tehran. She pulls the baby from her breast and lays it on a woollen blanket and whispers, Aufareen [Well-done], my captain, and brings his head close to cradle in her arms and let him take of the milk, the tender teat and the ecstatic stream that ties him to his own beginning.69

Meena symbolises the maternal subject, maman Iran, which is always already wedded to baba70 Shah above, and Reza is the orphan boy who depends on this mother, without whom he does not exist. On the other hand, Meena’s motherly care stops when Reza disobeys her rules. She grows upset when she later imagines Reza as being “disloyal” to the modern Iran:

They say you are letting things go […]. It would be a benefit to us all if I simply announced to them all, the soldiers, the Kurds, everyone: Your captain is a Kurd! No different from the rotten peshmargas that shit in the mountains and take goats as their wives. A coward, pitiful in this Iran. […] Ah, Reza joon, I have always thought you to be an apostate breed, one way or another.71

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68 Ibid., p.221.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid, pp.114-5.
71 Ibid., pp.240-1.
The state’s attempts to modernise Iran by means of establishing a homogeneous nation seem to be unsuccessful. Significantly, the one who announces this nationalist failure is a woman, Meena. Women, in *The Age of Orphans*, are portrayed as the “leaders” of modern Iran’s history. Meena represents Iran, which is nothing without her “femininity”. Yet at the same time, the novel criticises the nationalist marginalisation of women and the patriarchal perception of them, who are rendered as tools of Pahlavi modernity.

On the other hand, Khadivi’s *The Walking* portrays the post-1979 Iran as modernising the Pahlavi Western-leaning modernisation of women situation. If unveiled Iranian women are vehicles of Western secular modernity in *The Age of Orphans*, veiling women is now a transmitter of Islamic state ideals in *The Walking*. Yuval-Davis argues, ‘rather than being seen as symbols of change’ as in Pahlavi’s unveiling of women, the post-1979 ‘forced veiling’ campaigns more likely represent women as “‘carriers of tradition’”. But in *The Walking*, it is simultaneously the tradition of veiling that represents the nation’s distinctive symbolic marker for the new state. Despite this, in *The Age of Orphans*, unlike Yuval-Davis’ argument over the Shah’s ‘emancipatory project’ of women, Pahlavi’s unveiling/Westernising women does not bring equality between men and women. Pahlavi’s campaign of unveiling is patriarchal and aims to embrace the perceived Iranian/Persian Western origins, as I discussed in this chapter above.

For the new sovereignty in the novel, an Islamic feminine subject represents a symbolic distinction from the Pahlavi ideologies. The relatives of Iranian women immigrants in USA narrate women’s situation in post-revolutionary Iran, on phones:

You know what they are shouting now? [...] A head scarf or a blow to the head! They are shouting this to our faces when we walk to school. We have to sit in the back of the bus! Do you know this! Can you believe it? Even the cinema it is split, men on one side, women on the other …

The state’s subjectivity is represented by women’s veiling and the separation of males and females. Women currently demonstrate the process of de-Westernisation as a means of “detoxifying” Iran of Western customs. They are the symbol of revolution,

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72 Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, p.61.
73 Ibid. Haleh Afshar makes a similar point regarding Reza Shah’s decisions about women’s lives in Iran that his ‘modernisation policies’ marked ‘the liberation of women’ to some degree. However, she notes that patriarchal ideologies still dominated the Pahlavi Iran. (Afshar, p.113).
Islamicness, the nation’s borderline and a reaction to Western hegemony. As Minoo Moallem argues, the Iranian 1979 revolution called for an Islamic model of autochthony utilising Islamic femininity. Thereby, it ‘was able to represent itself as different, original, and uncontaminated by the Western world’. Post-Pahlavi Iran also articulates itself by means of gendered performances for which women are the symbolic site of the state’s Islamic identity. Women function as a means of othering the West. The novel does not mention any sort of ethnic dichotomisation of Kurdish women through veiling. Yet, the state’s veiling project is portrayed as including all ethnicities, not only Persian women. As argued in Chapter One, the revolutionary Iran of The Walking sustains key concepts of nationhood in the treatment of the Kurds. Correspondingly, Iran’s re-veiling, which aims to be a distinctive marker from the outside world, is a carrier of Islamic identity imposed on both Persians and non-Persians. Women of non-Persian backgrounds also have to serve the new state’s ideals.

**Kurdish Women: The Battleground of Power Relations**

The state methods of introducing modernity, which I have so far examined in this thesis, render Kurdish women as subjects of colonial policy. Robert Young establishes his discussions of colonial desire as claiming it depends on ‘sex’, after language, in the coloniser/colonised contact zone. European, Turkish, Persian, and Kurdish patriarchies, reach their pinnacle during their encounter with Kurdish women. Jacques Tournesol’s European Orientalist constructions of Kurdish women in Hardach’s The Registrar’s Manual, Ömer’s fetishisation of Jiyan through his sexual fantasies, and Zelal’s burden of Kurdish honour in Baydar’s The Lost Word, as well as the Persian soldiers’ rape of Kurdish girls in Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans, illustrate Kurdish women’s status as being carriers of Kurdishness. Women are sorrowful in Scheurer’s The Sayings and Hardi’s ‘the Penelopes of My Homeland’, experiencing misery, witnessing the murder of their loved ones, and also becoming symbols of war. In these

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texts, different power relations of nation, ethnicity, gender and class result in interconnected collective disadvantages for Kurdish women.

The Libido of Western Subjecthood

In using the term Western, I include European, Turkish and Persian subjecthood. As I explored in previous chapters, nation-states’ Westernisation has aimed to mark Turkish and Persian literary protagonists with Europeanness. Kurdish women and the Orient are interchangeable in the Frenchman Jacques Tournesol’s book The Kurds (1932), as explained by the German woman narrator in The Registrar’s Manual. The narrator, who is working in Paris town hall, is confused by the proposed marriage of a Kurdish couple. She is unsure whether to authorise the marriage contract or not. The narrator asks for the bride’s presence at the time of signing the contract but the bridegroom does not comply. The reader does not know whether this is for traditional or legal reasons. She reads Tournesol’s book in order to become more familiar with the Kurdish way of life and to find a solution for the marriage. Tournesol’s image of the Orient is represented by Kurdish women. In a mountainous village in the southeast of Turkey among the Kurds, Tournesol thinks about writing an exotic work on the Kurds in order to entertain readers back home in Paris: ‘Here, it might have been worth taking a closer look at the women of the tribe. Tournesol, for one, did; though his adventures in the jealous Orient had taught him to go about with caution’. The inspirational source for the Tournesol’s Orientalist representations is a young Kurdish girl. In his room in Paris, he plays with the girl in his mind:

The girl. She was fifteen, sixteen maybe. […] In his dimly lit study, Tournesol opened his eyes, sighed and thoughtfully tugged at his graying hair. Oh, he admitted it, she was thirteen at the most, but they did grow up fast. Her hair was wrapped in a scarf, but her face, like that of the other women, was uncovered. In the milky light of dawn her laughter – her face … Oh stop it, Tournesol, he told himself and picked up his pen.

They grow very strong through their work, though they quickly lose their feminine charms, except for the Agha’s [clan leader’s] wives, who lead a more leisurely life and conserve their beauty.78

78 Ibid., p.204.
The gendered and masculine language of Tournesol, which is from a “Western” viewpoint, needs to be resisted from a Third World feminist perspective. The White women feminism, which is critiqued by third wave feminist voices for being Westocentric, as I referred to in the beginning of this chapter, does not embrace the Kurdish girl’s resistive tool, the veil, here. The tools of fighting patriarchal thoughts change from a location, culture and history to another, a fact that the Western second wave feminists lack to include in their agenda. They focus on women situation in the West and tend to generally analyse women situations of other world places from the perspectives of their given Western elements. The issue of wearing veil, or practising purdah, as Mohanty argues, is not always a matter of ‘universal’ ‘sexual segregation’ as it happens to be an argument of second wave feminism, but is a descriptive ‘generalisation’.79 Here, the girl’s ‘scarf’ attempts to put a barrier in front of Tournesol’s colonial explorative excavation. There is something possessive and predatory about Tournesol’s fantasies. The Kurdish girl illustrates Rana Kabbani’s statement that Eastern ‘women and young boys’ have ‘served as the colonial world’s sex symbols, its accommodating objects’.80 Both the girl’s uncovered face and covered hair provoke Tournesol’s desire and increase his curiosity, yet the latter stops him from reaching the girl. Yegenoglu argues that the impenetrable ‘veil’ prevents ‘the Western gaze’ from taking pleasure from ‘the Oriental woman’.81 The girl’s headscarf hides a crucially imagined element from Tournesol. He daydreams about Kurdistan, creates myths about Kurdish women and wishes to be a Kurdish Agha. The narrator says: ‘[… M]ore than seven decades later, as I leafed through the worn pages of The KURDS, I couldn’t help wondering if Tournesol in fact ever went to Kurdistan’.82 Kurdish women’s sexuality is a domain where Tournesol tries to test and display his masculinity through his Orientalist fantasies.

Women’s being central of representing the Orient – Turkey’s southeast – is presented more blatantly in Baydar’s The Lost Word by ‘eastern Orientalist’ Ömer,

79 Mohanty, pp.74-5.
81 Yegenoglu, p.39.
whose latest book has attracted many Turkish readers.\(^83\) Turkey’s relation to its southeast is established on a male/female binary. Ömer’s sexual desire for Jiyan’s body represents Turkish Occidentalist\(^84\) fantasy. The élite’s nationalist ideology, which is based on a male/female dichotomy as discussed above, lays the ground for Ömer’s Orientalist adventures in the southeast. Despite asymmetrical man/woman relationship between Ömer and Elif that I explored previously, Ömer does not imagine Turkish women as promiscuous. He thinks of Jiyan as being sexually promiscuous, a method which shows his patriarchal mentality in not only viewing Kurdish women as such but also in imagining the purity of Turkish women’s sexuality. At this moment, Jiyan is sexualised not because of her gender, but because of her non-Turkish background.

In spite of his criticism of Turkish intellectuals and the state’s marginalisation of the Kurds, he himself is drawn to Orientalist images of the Kurds and their land. Prior to meeting Jiyan, he perceives himself as superior to Hüseyin Dayi, Mahmut’s father, at the latter’s home in the southeast. Ömer talks about his own family affairs to Hüseyin, but not because of an intimate relationship between them:

I hadn’t talked about Deniz with anyone; not even with my wife had I been able to share the sorrow that dwelt in both our hearts. […] I was afraid of sharing the pain. Elif used to say, ‘Men don’t share their suffering even with their closest friends, because suffering seems to them like defeat. They are reluctant to show their weaknesses even to those closest to them. Men have no confidants, because to suffer is to them a disability.’ And now I’m sitting here and saying things to this man that I haven’t been able to say even to my wife. This is because, like a mute, he will keep whatever is said to himself, because I am not afraid of being scorned by him, because I’m the master. I can’t share my defeats with my equals, but I can share them with him without feeling wounded. Damn it! Am I such a scoundrel!\(^85\)

Ömer forgets to conform to the expected masculine forbearance while talking to Hüseyin, because he knows that Hüseyin will not consider him weak. He unconsciously feminises Hüseyin, whose muteness undoubtedly represents “the Orient”. According to John McLeod, Orientalist constructions render ‘the East’ as “feminised”, […] passive’ as well as ‘submissive’.\(^86\) Hüseyin is viewed as an inferior addressed by his ‘master’.

The relationship between Ömer and Hüseyin is not only a relationship between Turkey

\(^{83}\) The Lost Word, p.35.

\(^{84}\) See Chapter One for discussions on Turkey’s Occidentalism in The Lost Word.

\(^{85}\) The Lost Word, pp.131-2.


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and its southeast but between masculinised and feminised subjects, a construction which is a mixture of racialisation, ethnic dichotomy and patriarchal modes of thinking.

Meltem Ahiska argues that Turkey is recognised for its Occidentalism which represents ‘a hegemonic discourse’ whereby it helps Turkey to render itself “Western”. Ömer does not conceive Hüseyin as “male”, because Hüseyin is from “the East”. This discourse of imagining Hüseyin is consistent with the way Ahiska maintains that Turkish Occidentalist discourse leads ‘to perform and enact power’.

The polarity between Ömer and Hüseyin relies on a coloniser/colonised binary, while at the same time Ömer is surprisingly unhappy with his superior status. Turkishness represents Turkish fixed inescapable dominance in Turkey. At the same time, Elif’s use of the word ‘Men’ in the above quote evokes the “masculine West”, as opposed to the “feminine East”. Ömer’s masculine thirst is not quenched at Hüseyin’s town, but in the further “East” where he finds out the “real femininity”: ‘He has to go to the east of the east, towards the place where the voice is a scream that calls him with an irresistible power, like the voice of the sirens who seduced the sailors’. The East is knowingly destructive, like Jiyan, who is ‘attractive but at the same time disturbing’ for Ömer. The feminine East now symbolises seduction. The relationship between Ömer and “the seductive east” is reminiscent of Loomba’s argument:

Both in novels and in non-fictional narratives, the crossing of boundaries appears as a dangerous business, especially for those who are attracted to or sympathise with the alien space or people. ‘Going native’ is potentially unhinging. The colonised land seduces European men into madness.

Ömer both sympathises with and writes about the southeast on which the patriarchy of Turkishness is constructed as much as its nationalism. Jiyan’s sexuality binds him to the southeast. The novel thus criticises the state’s mythmaking of men/women equality in modern Turkey. This is simply because a patriarchal system of thought is unable to imagine men and women on the same level.

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88 Ibid.
89 *The Lost Word*, p.133.
90 Ibid., p.144.
91 Loomba, p.117.
Boehmer observes that the colonised ‘land’ is often represented by the Other’s ‘body’ in the colonial system of thought. For the coloniser, the body is deemed ‘unexplored land too being seen as amorphous, wild, seductive, dark, open to possession’. Jiyan’s physical appearance inspires Ömer in their first encounter. Jiyan and Kurdish land become one and the same. Hegemonic possession over her body embodies Turkish colonisation of the southeast. Sexualising her body is the act of penetrating and unveiling the Orient:

Ömer is surprised that the woman is so tall and so slim. [...] Her eyes are a deep black, surrounded by long black lashes; huge in relation to her face. ‘Her eyes are not just eyes, they are the land of eyes’ … Which poet wrote those lines? ‘Your eyes are a distant country. Your eyes are the mirror of your town, your country; so sad, so fearful, so mysterious, rebellious,’ he was to say later, referring to the lines of the poet.

The novel critiques the moment when Jiyan’s sexuality becomes the domain where Turkishness and Kurdishness clash and also explores often represented foreign lands as a female body in need of penetration. Ömer’s passion for Jiyan’s beauty resembles that of the Orientalists for “distant” lands. As Young maintains, sexual contact between different races occupied the centre of discussions in the nineteenth century, especially in France and Britain. ‘[S]exuality’ was a vehicle whereby they used to debate racial differences. Turkish nationalist racialisation is now sustained through the Ömer/Jiyan bodily interaction. Enloe argues: ‘Colonized women have [long] served as sex objects for foreign men’, and Loomba contends that ‘the conquered land’ was represented by ‘female bodies’ during and after the time of European colonialism. Like the perception of these patriarchal constructions, the daydreamer Ömer imagines Jiyan in the same way. Jiyan represents attraction and bewilderment, because she carries the East’s “exotism”. She does not only embody a sexually attractive woman for Ömer, but represents the colonised Kurdish land, culture and language.

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92 Bohmer, p.129.
93 The Lost Word, pp.137-8.
94 Young, p.1-29.
95 Enloe, p.44.
96 Loomba, p.129.
Jiyan’s sexuality for Ömer’s masculine desire\textsuperscript{97} parallels the southeast’s “readiness” for Turkish Westernisation. As I discussed earlier, Ömer’s masculinity represents the West, which needs its “East” in order to expose Turkish Western superiority at the expense of Kurds. The recurring feminisation of Jiyan and continued description of her attractiveness by Ömer affirm the Kemalist patriarchal prejudice against women. Ömer increasingly shows that Turkish nationalist teachings are patriarchal as ‘he winds the curls [of Jiyan’s hair] around his fingers. He wants to say to her, “My woman.”’\textsuperscript{98} He thinks that he completely possesses Jiyan, who he imagines to have been awaiting Ömer’s rescue:

When we spoke during the following days, you were to say, ‘We mustn’t forget how attractive Ömer Eren’s fame is. After all, all women like strong, famous and powerful men. You must admit that you took courage from your preconceived notions of the Orientalist to approach me. Weren’t women in the east females waiting ardently for their men, like courtesans? That east is not far away, even if it is only our east…”\textsuperscript{99}

Ömer resembles a chivalric European knight in shining armour, who rescues ‘the native […] woman’ from the Eastern man in Renaissance writings.\textsuperscript{100} Realising he was colonialist while making love to her, Ömer embodies modernity’s character as strong, famous and powerful, rather than the weak, unknown and powerless “Other”. Modernity in Turkey is correspondingly not constructed merely on Turkey’s Occidental subjecthood and southeast’s Oriental status, but also draws power from Turkish gendered performances in Baydar’s \textit{The Lost Word}. Kabbani notes that ‘the Victorian imagination’ conceived the Eastern woman as an enslaved dependant owned by ‘Western’ man. Moreover, ‘domination over her native land’ was regarded as ‘his colonial acquisition’ and yet she ‘enjoyed his domination and would mourn his departure’.\textsuperscript{101} Because colonialism is structured on binarism, as Boehmer notes, ‘the coloniser (white man, centre of intellection, of control)’ is placed against ‘the other’, who ‘is cast as carnal, untamed instinctual, raw, and therefore also open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloguing, possession,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[97] \textit{The Lost Word}, p.233.
\item[98] Ibid.
\item[99] Ibid., pp.235-6.
\item[100] Loomba, p.129.
\item[101] Kabbani, p.81.
\end{footnotes}
penetration.’¹⁰² Like an Orientalist adventurer, Ömer tries to ‘posses’ Jiyan. However, he finally fails to do it and in lieu practises other methods of domination: ‘I tried to enslave your body. […] I used your sexuality […] The more I thought about it, the more I understood that this was a form of rape, and I was ashamed of myself.’¹⁰³ He further thinks that Jiyan would become ‘addicted’ to his body, because he imagines her to deem him a suitable husband.

Despite this, Ömer’s doubts about his own constructs and Jiyan’s refusal to become dependent differentiate his adventures from those of the European Orientalists: ‘[I]n appearance both Jiyan and the town are so welcoming, so inviting, so friendly that Ömer sometimes has doubts about himself. Or am I making all this up?’¹⁰⁴ He has undoubtedly fabricated all these fantasies and Jiyan wakes him from his dreams: ‘She was the fruit and the essence of this wild impenetrable land whose soul and mystery was impervious to invasion.’¹⁰⁵ Being “wild” and “impenetrable” represent the spirit of Kurdish resistance to the Turkish state, as I will analyse below. Despite this, Jiyan’s wildness as viewed by Ömer stems from the colonial way of articulating colonial perceptions through bodily constructs, as Boehmer remarks: ‘The seductive and/or repulsive qualities of the wild or other […] are figured on the body, and as (freshly, corporeal, often speechless) body.’¹⁰⁶ Ömer still compares Jiyan to the land, and she represents the classic uncolonisable space. Not surrendering to masculine control, she refuses his occupation as long as she is ‘impervious’ and: ‘She is no one’s woman anymore. She is the mistress of her own body […] The moment you think you have tamed it, it reverts to wildness.’¹⁰⁷ Jiyan brings to mind the seductive sirens described above to attract foreign men like Ömer. But, her body speaks out, as towards the end of the novel, she confronts Omer as an invader of the east, where the land and its people resist invasion and Orientalist appropriation:

‘There are no secrets,’ she says. ‘You create the secrets. The vision of the “mysterious east”; the fictionalized portrayal of woman that ranges from images of the harem, concubine and courtesan to Kurdish woman and me. The secrets are in

¹⁰² Boehmer, p.129.
¹⁰³ The Lost Word, p.236.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p.240.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp.232-3.
¹⁰⁶ Boehmer, p.129.
¹⁰⁷ The Lost Word, p.234.
your heads. They are in the heads of the Commander, intelligence, the District
Governor and even yours, Ömer Eren. Even in yours.¹⁰⁸

Jiyan represents the Kurds via her sexuality, sustaining the connection between women
and land. Kurdish women are the medium by which the state fulfils its dream of
Europeanisation. The whole Kemalist attempt to annex Turkey to Western civilisation is
at the expense of Jiyan’s body/Kurdish land that is the territorial boundary modern
Turkey needs to cross in order to reach Europe. However – as I partially explored in
Chapter One – Jiyan’s resistance to Ömer’s Orientalism makes him no longer believe in
the existence of a “seductive Orient”. At the very end of the novel Ömer does not view
things in the southeast in the way he used to in the beginning: ‘He must leave [the
southeast] immediately. There must not be any goodbyes. He must not be drawn to the
voice of the sirens. Anyway the sounds heard in the town now are not the sounds of
sirens but of tanks.’¹⁰⁹

In The Lost Word, rape is another potent metaphor. Assaulting Zelal in the
mountains by a group of unknown rapists, whether they were ‘soldiers or guerrillas’,¹¹⁰
is another face of patriarchy. She is a victim of warfare in the southeast, where the
clashes are perpetrated by male culprits: ‘[T]hey were spirits who had assumed the form
of the cruel male warrior […]’.¹¹¹ The wars launched by males place Kurdish women at
risk. The patriarchal subjectivity becomes the hallmark of nationalist ideologies.
Throughout the state/Kurdish conflicts, women are actively used to repress Kurdishness.
This nationalist construction is not only seen in Turkey, but in Iran as well. The Iranian
army soldiers cannot find Kurdish rebels in the Kurdish village and they imagine
Kurdish women as a space for destroying Kurdish honour in Khadivi’s The Age of
Orphans. Women are central to discourses of honour and shame:

  Where are your men? Where is your baba?!
  Where is Simko? And when we don’t answer they tear down our lines of laundry
  and wear our socks over their hands and our sisters’ skirts like scarves around their
  necks; they smell our mothers’ stained monthly cloths and let their eyelids flutter
  in pretend delight.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.289.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.347.
¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.99.
¹¹¹ Ibid., p.114.
¹¹² The Age of Orphans, p.123.
Playing with Kurdish “honour”, represented by women, signals Iran’s patriarchal colonisation. The rape of Kurdish girls afterwards symbolises the soldiers’ “triumph” over Kurdish rebellion. The Iranian soldiers’ act of raping Kurdish women shows another example of interconnectedness of race, gender, class and ethnicity power relations that I referred to previously. Women in *The Age of Orphans* are raped not merely because they are women but due to the fact that they are Kurds. The prettiest girl in the village tells the story of being raped by four soldiers, one of whom is Reza Khourdi: ‘[…] all the soldiers clapped for my shout as if it was their first victory.’113 After Reza unwillingly joins the rapists he feels sad, yet the soldiers’ discourse about rape shows women’s bodies as markers of Kurdishness:

> Hurry, Khourdi! Come quick. We have to tell the captains about your victory with the Kurd women … and we all wagered that you’d break in the face of your people. But no! You are stronger! What a story … come on, Khourdi, get out of that pen, today’s hero doesn’t hide!114

Reza is conquered and he is complicit in his own symbolic conquest. His depression merely relates to racial oppression of his Kurdish background. Unlike him, Persian soldiers feel they have defeated the Kurds. Yuval-Davis indicates that ‘rape is a common violent practice aimed at women (and sometimes men) from other racialized collectivities’.115 It is Reza Shah’s racial ideology that urges the soldiers to cross the boundary of Kurdishness by raping the Kurdish girl.

**Kurdish Patriarchy and the Vulnerability of Women**

In spite of European, Turkish and Persian patriarchal, Orientalist addresses, Kurdish men also dominate Kurdish women in the texts examined in this thesis. In Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual*, Baydar’s *The Lost Word* and Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans*, Kurdish men fight for their (“national”) honour, characterised by women. Guarding women and protecting them from others symbolise the victory of men’s resistance and the purity of their honour, be it national or familial. Pettman argues that protecting collectivity’s ‘boundaries’ often stands for watching ‘women’s bodies’ for the

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113 Ibid., p.135.
114 Ibid., p.139.
‘nationalist discourse’. Kurdish women’s sexuality is depicted as being central in Kurdish men’s armed and cultural struggles with the states. Yet, Kurdish patriarchy renders women as peripheral.

Hardach depicts women as guardians of Kurdish traditions in France. The story of the Kurdish couple’s proposed marriage relates to the groom’s refusal to bring the bride into the Paris town hall. Hiding the bride is probably for asylum purposes or because of tradition or it might be an elopement they wish to keep secret. Either way, woman is marginalised, controlled, yet crucial to the collectivity’s ideologies and traditions. Baydar portrays that bringing dishonour on the males endangers Zelal’s life; Zelal escapes from home after the rape:

There was a midwife in the village who […] used to giggle as she told my mother, ‘Look out for that daughter of yours. She’s got the fire of a whore.’ Even if she hadn’t said it my mother always kept an eye on me in any case. […] It wasn’t that she was afraid something would happen to me or that I would lose my virginity. She was frightened of the code of honour and wanted to protect me.117 Zelal’s sexuality constructs Kurdish honour. Such patriarchy evokes Yuval-Davis’ argument that women’s ‘behaviour’ and ‘clothing’ are markers of the nation.118 Prior to her escape, Zelal’s father rejects her teacher’s request to send Zelal to a boarding school, because Zelal is a girl, not a boy. Despite this, Zelal has also already been informed that she is no longer allowed to attend the local school: ‘You are grown up now. […] You cannot walk along those roads with boys […]. […] There are male teachers. A girl who has started to have periods doesn’t go to school.’119 The power of Kurdish patriarchy and the nation-state’s gendered ideology together hegemonise over Kurdish women’s lives. The nation-state building in The Lost Word (and in other texts) fictionalises the stories of power relations between men and women. These narrativisations are both critical of patriarchy and sympathetic with womanhood.

Michel Foucault remarks: ‘Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.’120 The dynamic forces of conflicting

116 Pettman, p.192.
117 The Lost Word, p.100.
118 Yuval-Davis, Gender and Nation, p.46.
powers in the southeast make Jiyan tell Ömer: ‘This town is an open prison, but for women it is a closed prison.’\(^{121}\) Her description resembles Gayatri Spivak’s statement: ‘If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.’\(^{122}\) Kurdish men are colonised and subjugated by the state, yet literary female protagonists are doubly oppressed by the state nationalism and Kurdish patriarchy. This reminds of intersectionality of theorists’ discussions that ‘oppression is produced through the interaction of multiple, decentered, and co-constitutive axes.’\(^{123}\) Metin Yuksel argues that Kurdish women in Turkey were ‘doubly marginalized’ as a result of ‘Kemalist’ nationalist projects; they, as Kurds, were subject to ‘ethnic’ discrimination, and the Kemalist empowerment projects of women were not advantageous to them.\(^{124}\) Yuksel further shows the difficulty of demarcating injustices of Kurdish patriarchy and those of ‘Kemalist modernization’.\(^{125}\) Jiyan and Zelal are similarly subjected to Turkish and Kurdish patriarchies in the way Yuksel discusses. The American scholar Kimberle Crenshaw argues that it is commanding that the differences embedded in ‘identity politics’ are considered in order to have a bright vision of ‘intragroup’ distinctive features. Referring mainly to ‘women of color’, Crenshaw notes: ‘In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class.’\(^{126}\) Analysing the marks of oppressing Jiyan and Zelal is inadequate if only the fact of their womanhood is considered. The Turkish feminist worldviews, I discussed previously with reference to Elif and other Turkish women élites, Kemalist racial exclusions and Kurdish patriarchy are all in effect when Kurdish women lives come into observation. In addition, as I will explore in Choman Hardi’s ‘The Penelopes of homeland’, despite their suffering during Ba’thist (gendered) Anfal campaigns, Kurdish

\(^{121}\) The Lost Word, p.147.
\(^{123}\) Carastathis, p.308.
\(^{125}\) Ibid., p.783.
\(^{126}\) Crenshaw, p.1242.
women’s scale of suffering increases in post-Anfal era at the hands of social patriarchal traditions and poverty. They are now working-class members in Kurdish society.

Loomba indicates that male tyranny was increased by colonial discrimination; therefore, the local men affiliated national identity with native women. Prior to Iranian soldiers’ entry to the Kurdish village, the villagers in The Age of Orphans are cautioned: ‘Hide your daughters, they [the Shah’s soldiers] are hungry, ravenous like mountain wolves.’ Kurdish leaders warn people to protect their daughters. One of the blind girls – who says her physical deformity rescued her from the soldiers’ oppression – narrates that seventeen girls were taken to the end of the village:

When we heard Ahang [a Kurdish girl] scream we sent away the youngest, girls and boys, to the hiding places as planned because we feared such, as Commander Simko and Commander Dizli warned: the shah’s men are beasts and they will eat even your tiniest child.

Women function as national weapons. They are used against Kurdish enemies when Kurds want to show their honour. Kurdish women are spaces that allow Kurdish men to discover their ethnic entity. They think if they fail to defend “their women” against the state soldiers’ rape, they lose their possession over their land. Although Simko and Dizli are not tyrannical in the way Loomba argues above, they nonetheless imagine women’s body as the boundary line between Kurds and the soldiers.

In addition, women are central to bloody warfare. In Scheurer’s The Sayings one of the American captive soldiers makes a general comparison between Kurdish women and American women when he sees a Kurdish girl:

“I’ve heard lots of them are teenage girls who left home to join the PKK.” […] Val thought about the young woman at the picnic. He thought of his own sister back home. How could all of these different girls exist in the same world? Their lives were so dissimilar—some clothed in innocence, beauty and hope, while others no less innocent or beautiful themselves knew nothing but mud and fear and the rancid hate of war.

Val’s description illustrates women’s heartbreak experiences and it depicts them as the most targeted victims. Kurdish women, in spite of their other national duties, are warriors by the side of men and are also sufferers of bloody conflicts. Selim’s sister

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127 Loomba, p.142.
128 The Age of Orphans, p.121.
129 Ibid., p.133.
130 The Sayings, p.107.
Aynur is portrayed by Hardach as a PKK guerrilla in *The Registrar’s Manual*. When Selim reflects on Aynur’s picture, he refers to women’s role as more remarkable than men’s:

‘You know, often I think, our women are a lot tougher. They milk the sheep, make cheese, clean the house, everything. I was sometimes a bit scared of my sister.’ He giggled. ‘My friend who gave me the photo told me she shot down a helicopter with a machine gun.’

Women’s jobs include household affairs, building an economic infrastructure and going to war. Being ‘tougher’ women is a marker of their multiple functions in the Kurdish context. Baydar in *The Lost Word* depicts the same image of the female guerrilla, as Mahmut says there were ‘young female guerrillas’ in the mountains. Thus, all these texts emphasise Kurdish women’s active role as fighters.

**Female Victimhood in the Post-Conflict Era**

Women’s survival from malicious wars is portrayed in Hardi’s poem ‘The Penelopes of My Homeland’, dedicated to ‘the 50,000 widows of Anfal’ in Iraq where they are obliged to build a life once the war is over. ‘The Penelopes of My Homeland’ consists of six stanzas, five of which begin with ‘years and years’ and the last one concludes with the women’s terrible experience throughout these long years. It is a poetic depiction of the unwelcome reality imposed on the Anfal women survivors in Iraqi Kurdistan. Unlike the story of the ‘Odyssey’, Penelope, who after twenty years of melancholic waiting reunites with Odysseus, who returns from the Trojan War, Kurdish women would never meet their Odysseuses after the Ba’thist Anfal war. The women survivors are modern Penelopes. In the absence of their male guardianship, they have to bring up their children, earn their living and everlastingly suffer. Their ‘Odysseus’ would not return home:

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Years and years of silent labour
the Penelopes of my homeland
wove their own and their children’s shrouds
without a sign of Odysseus returning.
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132 *The Lost Word*, p.91.
133 *Life for Us*, p.21.
134 Ibid.
If the Greek Penelope weaves the shroud as a trick to avoid marrying her suitors in Odysseus’s absence, Anfal’s Penelopes have to weave shrouds to earn money for their children. The Anfal operations against the Kurds in Iraq mostly affect Kurdish women and jeopardise their lives more than men. Women are Anfalised alongside men and if they survived, they would wait for their never-returning ‘Odysseus’. The intersections of gender, class, culture, ethnicity, nationality and so on, introduce different situations for the Kurdish Penelopes. They are now financially poor and their Kurdish background has already caused their own sufferings.

Young reminds us of Spivak’s observations that ‘native subaltern women’ are subjected to patriarchies of ‘colonial and indigenous rulers’, who, despite making no space for women ‘to speak’ for themselves, always represent them. As I have investigated in the literary texts throughout this study, the relationship between the state governments and the Kurds is a colonial one. It is within this colonial system that ‘The Penelopes of My Homeland’ depicts the Anfal women survivors as being overwritten and over-produced once by the Ba’thist rulers, and now by the Kurdish patriarchy. Kurdish Penelopes tend to have a ‘silent’ nature in the stanza. However, the poem, as a literary tool, attempts to break down women’s unfortunate reality by means of telling women’s stories from a female-centred narration.

Najde Al-Ali indicates that in the Middle Eastern context of war, such as the Kurdish situation, males are mainly war casualties. Females, however, are the first victims, who have to face the post-war challenges of familial life, find a safe shelter and fight poverty and alienation from society. The portrayal of post-Anfal women’s misery emanates from women’s roles in restructuring family life despite individual, social, financial and political obstacles. The speaker thus depicts widowed women as markers of sorrow and cruelty. Karin Mlodoch describes the Anfal women survivors as ‘public symbols of mourning’. Future generations can see and read the Kurdish past by means of these Penelopes’ hardships, white hair and loneliness. Choman Hardi in her

135 Young, p.162.
137 Karin Mlodoch, “We Want to be Remembered As Strong Women, not As Shepherds”- Women Anfal Survivors in Kurdistan-Iraq Structuring for Agency and Acknowledgment’, Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, 8 (Winter 2012), 63-91, (p.75).
study on the Anfal women shows them pursuing many jobs after they have lost their male kin, especially husbands. She notes that re-starting life after the Anfal involved hard labour:

Rebuilding life after Anfal was a major challenge for women. The majority experienced a radical change of status when they became the sole breadwinner in their families. Most of the women were uneducated and had no transferable job skills. They ended up doing the lowest paid jobs that no one else was willing to do. They worked as porters, labourers, servants, bakers, builders and factory workers. The hard physical labour took years from their lives. Over the years some women have developed health problems which prevented them from continuing to work.

The Penelopes’ ‘silent labour’ in the first stanza thus reflects actual experiences. The Kurdish Penelopes’ wishes are simultaneously portrayed as having been everlastingly buried after Anfal: ‘[…] their colourful future was all in the past’. But, they are still struggling to wait and stick ‘to the wishful dreams of the nights […]’ in the poem.

Women’s predicament in the poem does not only stem from the Anfal campaigns but also from the patriarchy which dominated women’s body and their whole existence. This patriarchal governance is tied with ‘Odysseus’, who represents Kurdish men. Kurdish life is Odyssean and Penelope is peripheral. In the fourth stanza these women represent victimhood and are uselessly waiting for Odysseus:

[T]he waiting mothers of my homeland grew old and older
without ever knowing that they were waiting,
without ever knowing that they should stop waiting.

Nevertheless, the Penelopes can hardly help waiting because they permanently live with the memories of their beloved ones. Although most of the Anfalised men – if not all of them – must have now died, the Penelopes do not even think about erasing the image of their return. This resembles the experience of a traumatic survivor, Suhaila, who was thirty-four when she lost her husband. She always lives with the dream of her husband returning: ‘She lost her husband and survived with only her daughter. In 1999, eleven years after Anfal, she described: “Every day I think, the day will come, the door will open and he will come in.”’

The women survivors have no choice but to watch the

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139 Ibid., p.121.
140 Mlodoch, p.72.
door where their husbands might enter. Moreover, the Penelopes have to forget about their bodily desires:

Years and years of youth that was there and went unnoticed
of passionate love that wasn’t made
of no knocking on the door after midnight
returning from a very long journey.

The survivors have to suppress their sexuality because they seem not to be allowed to remarry again. Thus, Kurdish social patriarchy appears as the most potent agent which does not allow the Anfal women survivors to re-start life.

Kurdish Penelopes are subjected to the social constructs in the form of psychological violence, which violates women’s rights. In the context of post-conflict times, Al-Ali welds male hegemony and masculine clashes that produce ‘violence’ against women, because of ‘the general state of anarchy and chaos’. More importantly, it is resulted from ‘an element of heightened aggression and militarisation, and prevailing constructions of masculinity promoted during conflict’.

Representing the Ba’thist Anfal war in ‘The Penelopes of My Homeland’ could thus describe the Anfal as a gendered campaign. Women’s labouring and their endless sorrow in the poem weaken their personalities and social status. As Hardi notes, ‘[b]eing poor and defenceless meant that they [women survivors] were vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.’

At the same time, the Kurdish government after 1991 portrayed ‘the image of rural women dressed in black, mourning the fate of their disappeared husbands and sons’ as a hallmark of ‘Anfal’ campaigns. Yet they were not imagined as heroes like male martyrs who fought against Ba’th regime during these campaigns.

In a wider context, Enloe asserts that women are not positioned as dynamic agents in the war against ‘colonialism and racism’ but rather as national ‘symbols’, ‘[e]ven’ after being subjected to severe treatments.

Being conceived in such way by the Kurdish ruling power is part of Kurdish women’s predicament in the poem.

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142 Hardi, p.137.
143 Anderea Fischer-Tahir, ‘Gendered Memories and Masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq’, Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies, 8 (Winter 2012), 92-114 (p.93).
144 Enloe, p.42.
As if they have not been participants in the nation’s sorrowful past, ‘the Penelopes’ bring to mind Yuval-Davis’ contention that nationalism and nations’ histories have always been linked to ‘bureaucrats’ and ‘intellectuals’, whereas women’s role has been marginalised; ‘[h]owever, it is women and not (just?) the bureaucracy and intelligentsia who reproduce nations – biologically, culturally, symbolically.’ In the last stanza, the poetic persona more accurately depicts women’s exposure to a helpless situation. The Penelopes’ daughters also experience the Anfal Penelopes’ lives:

The Penelopes of my homeland died slowly
carrying their dreams into their graves,
leaving more Penelopes to take their place.

These women have both sons and daughters, as the fourth stanza depicts: ‘Years and years of raising more Penelopes and Odysseuses’, but this last stanza only illustrates the Penelopes’ daughters’ lives. Odysseuses only head to war, and are killed, while Kurdish ‘Penelopes’ are destined to wait and suffer. This increasingly reflects on society’s limited space for the daughters of the Anfalised who face future challenges due to their femininity. Mlodoch explains that the Anfal daughters’ ‘fatherless youth is considered a spot on their virtue’ and most of them faced difficulty in finding their marriage partners. The Ba’hist patriarchal ideology Anfalises men, but leaves women behind. It aims to make female survivors, and their daughters, all time ‘Penelopes’ after their isolation from their ‘Odysseuses’, who are deemed the cornerstone of the collectivity’s life. If Homer’s Penelope has only a son and brings him up to adulthood at the time of his father’s return, Kurdish Penelopes have children of both genders. However, only daughters eternally continue the Penelopes’ act of waiting in the poem. They represent the indefensible status of women’s role in patriarchal traditions and become the symbolic trademark of the nations’ wars.

Chapter Conclusion

Born in a binaristic world, the modern nation is a discursive subject created by means of various dichotomies advanced by nationalist patriarchy. In the narratives examined in

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146 Mlodoch, p.75.
this chapter, women are the markers of national identity and are carriers of ethnic differences. Turkish\textsuperscript{147} and Persian women are charged with the nationalist duty of perpetuating Turkish and Iranian modernities, by means of racialised exclusion and the assimilation of Kurdishness. However, Turkey and Iran represent women as being at the nation’s margins despite the centrality of women’s legacy to nationalist and patriarchal projects. Women’s bodies are over-determined symbols of narrowly defined Turkishness and Persianness.

Kurdish women symbolise repressed Kurdishness. The selected literary works suggest that gender differences are formative of colonial and Orientalist relations and in constructing Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi nation-states. The powers of racial, class, ethnic and gender differences together construct an intersectional nexus which hugely shapes Kurdish women lives in the examined literary texts. Despite the European Orientalisation of Kurdish women, as in \textit{The Registrar’s Manual}, Orientalist and nationalist policies are generated and reproduced in Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Modern nations are founded on gender and ethnic binaries. Kurdish women protagonists are doubly colonised by state nationalisms and Kurdish patriarchy. For Kurdish men, women represent the code of honour. Their protection of women equates to resisting colonisation. The literary texts, however, contest nationalist equations of women with land, culture and tradition. According to Young, ‘colonization rests at the heart of culture, or culture always involves a form of colonization, even in relation to its conventional meaning as the tilling of the soil’.\textsuperscript{148} In the light of this, because women are thought to be carriers of culture and traditions, and their bodies represent land in the colonial and nationalist contexts, this chapter has focused on female sexuality and the colonial imagination. In Iraq, Kurdish women have been portrayed as pathetic figures surviving the Ba’thist Anfal campaigns. The poetic depiction of the Anfal shows that the Iraqi Anfal operations were highly gendered. These nationalist campaigns profoundly affect the lives of female characters. In all three countries, women in general, and Kurdish women in particular, are depicted as victims and bearers of modern statehood.

\textsuperscript{147} Mojab calls Turkish feminists ‘Watchdog of Nationalism’ because they have been silent, or have consolidated the state’s political ideologies in denying Kurds’ existence. (Mojab, p.5).

\textsuperscript{148} Young, p.31.
nationhood and tradition. Above all, though, Kurdish women are symbols of the Kurdish plight.
This thesis represents a new approach to researching postcolonial Anglophone literature. Dealing with postcolonial Kurdish experiences has not been a major focus of literary scholarship due to the limited source material in English. This study has examined a number of recent texts, written by both Kurdish and non-Kurdish writers, in which a new literary voice about the Kurds is articulated for an English-speaking readership. My PhD project can be regarded as a first step towards an emerging research on Kurds in the Anglophone literary world. This thesis has explored in these works how articulations of colonialism continue within modern Turkey, Iran and Iraq. I have argued that such articulations reproduce and reinscribe notions of ethnic dichotomy. I have suggested that these nation-states’ very construction depends on delineating an “internal Orient”, Kurdistan, a process that is critiqued in the literary texts I have explored. These state nationalists’ worldviews are governed by racial ideology and endorsed as colonial enterprises. Nevzat Soguk calls Third World nationalists ‘certified […] Orientalist think[ers]’. ¹ My thesis has interrogated these states’ perpetuation of the commanding features of colonialism, supported by regimes of (Western) modernity. Such modernity has adversely defined and impacted on Kurdish ethnicity, land, culture, history and

language. As I argue, the novels, poems and the novella examined in this thesis have made critical interventions in the discourses of nation-states’ nationalist modernisation, depicting the hardship of Kurds’ disenfranchisement and criminalisation. I have investigated critical literary interventions into nationalist Turkish, Persian and Arabic self-fashioning, a process which relies on its consistent contrast with Kurdishness. These nation-states are portrayed by writers Oya Baydar, Laleh Khadivi, Sophie Hardach, Choman Hardi and W. C. Scheurer as confusing modernity with ethnocentric “development”, whereby the idea of the “present” is rejected for having been constructed by (a selective account of) the “past”, for the sake of a “progressive future”. In the wake of such ideology, these authors’ works – examined in this thesis – critique states’ perceptions of Kurdishness as belonging to “past”. The “inferior”, “uncivilised” and “backward” Kurds are depicted by these authors as having been excluded by state architects from the collective memory of modern nations.

Although Western-leaning modernisation campaigns were introduced prior to the establishment of Turkish and Iranian nation-states in Turkey and Iran, it is nation-statehood which has completed these campaigns. After the foundation of modern Turkey and Iran by Atatürk and Reza Shah, Western modernity was established as the new regime and status quo. The literary texts I have discussed focus on post-WWI nation-states, whose architects imposed new models of internal colonialism, adopting Western modernity to their own political, cultural, social and historical contexts. The examined literary works all explore how “adaptative modernities” are actually realised. This typology of “modernities” is a merging formula of Western and Eastern political and cultural elements on which Turkey, Iran and Iraq are founded. Turkish and Iranian modernities are presented as comprising both foreign and domestic identities. These modernities are a novel combination of West and East, yet belong fully to neither of them. Westernisation has been central to modern nation-state building as depicted in Baydar’s The Lost Word, Hardach’s The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages and Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans. However, Iran in Khadivi’s The Walking and Ba’thist Iraq in Hardi’s ‘The Spoils, 1988’ in Life for Us figure as being mixtures of secularism and Islam, each of which is used to establish the states’ ethnic ideologies.
In the texts explored in this study, nation-states deploy colonial strategies towards the Kurds within their territories. Homi Bhabha remarks that the Western method of constructing knowledge about the colonised is to disinvest the colonised of their ‘otherness’ by inviting them to adopt Western ‘knowledge’. For Bhabha, such ‘discourse’ is ambivalent, because it ‘produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once as “other” and yet entirely knowable and visible’. This process accurately describes nation-states’ treatment of Kurdish literary characters. Since the creation of modern Turkey in 1923, as these writers’ literary depictions suggest, ideas of a homogeneous nation depend on activated state Orientalism. In The Lost Word (2011) Turkey’s southeast region represents the Orient, helping Turkey to fulfil its Occidentalist fantasy, which is embodied in Kemalism’s nationalist self-Westernisation. I argued that, in the novel, the most victimised people of all represent the “non-modern” past and non-Turkishness. The state views non-Turkish elements as threat for its imposed homogeneity and “progress” of the newly established nation. I also investigated the ways in which The Lost Word and The Registrar’s Manual (2011) explore Turkish racialisation, inside and outside Turkey, whereby Turkish Westernised identities are opposed to Kurdish Oriental characteristics.

In The Age of Orphans, Pahlavi nationalism is pro-Western while also rejecting Western dominance. Revolutionist Islamic nationalism, as illustrated by The Walking, is anti-Western while also preserving specific elements of the Pahlavi secular regime. Both novels critique the apparatuses of Western Orientalism and Persian racialisation in modern Iran, where nationalist discourse emphasises the superiority of Persians and the inferiority of non-Persians, especially Kurds. I have explored how, in these novels, this nationalist paradigm renders the modern nation as being synonymous with Persianness and how modernisation campaigns advantages only the “Aryan/Persian race”. Khadivi depicts these notions as being perpetuated since 1921 until after 1979 when the Islamic Revolution takes power. In addition, I also contended that Iraqi Ba’thist racial discourse in Hardi’s Life for Us is founded on the revival of supposedly superior Arabic language, history and culture. Such notions were activated against the Kurds during the Anfal campaigns of the late 1980s. As the literary depictions suggest, Ba’thist ideology has its

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historical roots in the early establishment of postcolonial Iraq and in the Ba’th party itself.

This state racialisation produced the ultimate form of violence against the Kurds, as explored in the chosen literary works. The writers criticise the states for “criminalising” the Kurds and for imposing state penalties such as burying them alive in the Anfal murderous acts and annihilating them during Halabja gas attack. The ambition of a unified nation, led by dominant ethnicities, jeopardise the lives of Kurdish literary characters. David Mertz rightly asserts that the ideology of ‘racisms presupposes the existence of society as an organic unity’. The states’ methods of providing “order”, “stability”, and national homogeneity entail using the most deadly technologies and bloody tools in order to “protect” state borders from any destabilising “Kurdish threat”. As Michel Foucault argues, biopower divides those who ‘must’ be killed from those who ‘must’ stay alive, a form of division that is defined by racism.4 The Kurds in these texts are subjects of sovereignty’s “legal” state of exception. Read in conjunction with theory, these literary exposés of colonial nationalism suggest a likeness between the Kurds and the Roman figure homo sacer, portraying nation-states as exempting Kurdish literary characters from the rights to live. State sovereignties operate as superpowers which suspend and invalidate the rule of international human laws in the literary works. Giorgio Agamben observes that sovereignty is intimately connected to the suspension of life. He argues that sovereignty is a ‘structure in which law refers to life and includes it in itself by suspending it’.5 Kurdish lives are portrayed to fall into precisely the same sovereign structure. Kurds, like homo sacer, belong neither to the human race nor to the animal kingdom.6 I have explored how Kurdish literary protagonists are excluded from wider society and denied due legal process. Turkey, Iraq and Iran represent the killers of homo sacer. Kurds’ oppressors are immune from any murder charges, since Kurds are depicted as standing outside human or divine laws.

This study has also examined the literary depictions of home and the lost Kurdishness. I investigated how Kurdish writers such as Hardi and literary characters lack a home. Kurdistan is invisible on the world map. Nation-states deny Kurdish language and culture, compelling Kurds to escape from state violence. Kurdistan is depicted as having been subsumed beneath the political borders of Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The Kurds are portrayed as homeless, estranged, displaced and unhomely. For Kurds, homelessness does not simply refer to geographical statelessness, but also to assimilative policies and displacement. I have analysed the ways that selected literary texts examine the idea that Kurdish language and culture represents a kind of home, which the Kurds also lose due to the “civilising” missions of Turkification and Persianification. “Backward” Kurds are not permitted to speak – or study in – their mother tongue or express their cultural traditions because prohibiting Kurdishness accomplishes the states’ modernising ambitions. Kurdish literary characters and their homeland are therefore neither Kurdish, nor Persian or Turkish. This has caused a Kurdish identity crisis. As I argue, in Hardi’s ‘Lausanne, 1923’, Scheurer’s The Sayings, Baydar’s The Lost Word and Khadivi’s The Age of Orphans, the discursive processes of “forgetting” the Kurds and “remembering” dominant ethnicities help states to construct their nationalist identities and disavow Kurds’ existence. In Hardi’s ‘To Kurdistan’ and ‘My Children’ the idea of geographical homelessness and linguistic and cultural dispossessiveness are also closely interdependent and linked.

For nostalgic Kurdish literary characters in Hardi’s ‘Somehow’ and Khadivi’s The Walking, the homeland resides in a remote location. Moreover, literary representations of the Kurds present them as strangers both inside and outside their original homeland as in Hardach’s The Registrar’s Manual. According to nationalist discourses and legal processes, they are foreign outcasts. Sara Ahmed argues that ‘not belong[ing] in a nation space’ is a way of defining others as ‘alien[s]’ who are considered ‘the outsider inside’.\(^7\) Bulent Diken notes, Ahmed remarks, that ‘the figure […] who is excluded from forms of belonging and identity, particularly within the context of discourses of nationhood’ is ‘the stranger’, who assumes an undecided position of a person who is neither ““us” nor

“them”.

Ahmed thus observes that the stranger suffers from having no concrete ‘referent in the world’. She quotes Michael Dillon, who notes: ‘[W]ith the delimitation of any place of dwelling, the constitution of a people, a nation, a state, or a democracy necessarily specifies who is estranged from that identity, place or regime.’ This shows that ‘a stranger’ is the character who is not at ‘home’. Kurdish literary protagonists fall into this category of strangerhood. The Registrar’s Manual was examined to depict the Kurds as being strangers wherever they live. As Selim endures tough situations when seeking asylum outside his homeland in the novel, remaining dislocated and nostalgic for the place he has left behind. When he returns to Kurdistan, the true home he left behind eludes him. Various discussions by scholars like Homi Bhabha and Salman Rushdie suggest the possibilities of constructing diasporic homes. However, Kurdish writers and literary characters featured in this study face difficulties in building such home. Despite the transnational inclinations of deconstructing the existence of an idealised homeland, Hardi’s poetry proposes that Kurdistan and childhood memories are possibly places where home could be located. Yet Hardi does not deny the fact that the home a migrant leaves behind cannot be inhabited the same way like before. Saladin in The Walking reflects Khadivi’s own experience of her mother, who had something and lost it upon her migration to America as Khadivi notes. Selim escapes death in Turkey and settles down in Germany where he is still unable to construct a home in its full senses. Such failure of fully building a translational hybrid identity by the Kurdish writers and literary characters examined in this study does not mean that they are ethnocentric and are unable to imagine themselves outside Kurdishness and Kurdistan. But the conditional welcome, integrational and assimilative policies, nationalist exclusions and asylum challenges in the host country on the one hand, feeling nostalgic and responsible towards the family, relatives, and other Kurds who have also suffered in the same way the writers and literary characters did on the other hand, make it difficult to completely construct a home for themselves.

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9 Ahmed, p.5.
11 Ahmed, p.25.
Finally, this thesis explored the way literary works promote solidarity with Kurdish women, who are particularly vulnerable to colonial nationalism. The intersections and interconnectedness of gender, class, ethnicity, religion and culture marginalise Kurdish women. Not only womanhood victimises Kurdish women, but their Kurdishness and social statuses also make their lives full of predicaments and sorrows. Nationalist propagandas are highly gendered. Patriarchal modes of thought variously govern women’s role in constructing the nation, placing them at the centre of the ideological battlefield. Women are portrayed as representing the homeland, which is men’s duty to protect. State patriarchy utilises, yet disadvantages, women. Baydar’s *The Lost Word*, Hardach’s *The Registrar’s Manual*, Khadivi’s *The Age of Orphans* and *The Walking*, Scheurer’s *The Sayings* and Hardi’s ‘The Penelopes of My Homeland’ are sympathetic to women, especially Kurdish women, who are controlled both by the dominant ethnicity’s elitism and also Kurdish patriarchy. Nationalism derives from a patriarchal worldview which objectifies women as state subjects and symbols of the nation. At the same time, Persian and Turkish women actively promote the state’s policy of racial modernisation, Westernisation, anti-Westernisation, assimilation and exclusion of Kurds. Thus, it is women who give birth to the state’s “adaptative modernity”. As Deniz Kandiyoti maintains in the context of Turkish republic, new cultural markers find expression in notions of unveiled “modern” women.\(^\text{12}\) Kurdish women are the first target of nationalist ideology. Moreover, these writers portray Kurdish patriarchal oppression as mistreating Kurdish women, who are viewed as carriers of honour, traditions and as symbols of resistance against state dominance. States’ colonisation of Kurdish women takes various forms. For instance, Kurdish women are objectified as sexual subjects. Raping them symbolises the failure of any Kurdish rebellion. Yet the act of rescuing Kurdish women’s bodies is a symbolic marker of victory and national identity for the Kurds. Kurdish women’s bodies are the battlefield on which conflicting nationalisms jostle for position. In Iraq, following the state’s war against the Kurds, Kurdish women are the most victimised figures of all. I examined literary portrayals of Kurdish women as bearing the traumas of Kurdish history. Throughout the selected

works, such women are triply colonised by non-Kurdish men, by women who represent dominant ethnicities and also by Kurdish patriarchs.

The Kurdish predicament is directly relevant to colonial and postcolonial debates. In this thesis, I have considered what Homi Bhabha argues: ‘the margins of the nation displace the centre; the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis.’ This study has aimed to establish that postcolonial literary discussions are impoverished without sustained scholarly investigation of literary articulations of colonised Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Like the chosen writers’ literary works, I have focused on the discursive constructions of modern nation-states, based on the marginalised subjects and peripheral voices of Kurdishness, Kurdish men and – above all – womanhood and, particularly, Kurdish women. Being literary reflections on actual life, the examined works are counter-hegemonic, opposing nation-states’ ideologies and fictionalising postcolonial Kurdish political, social and cultural experiences.

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