

Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory

»Multiculturalism« as a Literary Theme
after 1980

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Remembering a Childhood in Cyprus: Taner Baybars’ “Smellscape” and Multiculturalism in His Autobiography, *Plucked in a Far-Off Land*

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1. Remembering paradise

The Turkish Cypriot poet and writer Taner Baybars (born 1936) is best known for his poetical work, in which he makes extensive use of multicultural and multilingual rhetorical devices in form, expression, and language, thus contributing to a new style of “multicultural” poetry in European literature. His production is almost entirely in English; only his first poetry collection, *Mendilin Ucundakiler* (1954), is written in Turkish, the reason being that Baybars left Cyprus in 1955 and never came back to the island. Apart from one novel (*A Trap for the Burglar*), his only prose writing is his autobiography, *Plucked in a Far-Off Land – Images in Self Biography*, which was originally published in London in 1970. The same book was re-published in Nicosia in 2005, having meanwhile been translated into Turkish by Bahar Düzgören and published in Turkish in 1997 under the title *Uzak Ülke*. The book can be considered a kind of “restricted biography,” as it is limited to the first eleven years of his life; it is a biography of his childhood memories and an attempt to formulate these memories in a series of seven “sets of images,” as he calls them, organized in three parts, roughly according to the places where he spent his childhood: the first seven years in Vassilia, a village close to Lapithos on the north coast of the island, then in Minareliköy, close to Nicosia, and eventually in Nicosia itself.

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When drawing connections between memory and narrative, especially for the early period of somebody's life, one is tempted to look at the psychoanalytic interpretation of memory and remembering. Actually, memory as part of the narrative process in autobiography has been described by theorists as a "continuous process of re-remembering" implying three stages: 1. the event, 2. the memory of the event, and 3. the writing of (the memory of) the event (King 2000, 21). Autobiography is thus "rememory," since it constitutes the third step of the narrative process. Early childhood is seen as the "Golden Age" in psychology. Or, as Nicola King, referring to Laura Mulvey, puts it, "The pre-Oedipal is precisely what we *cannot* remember, but what we *need* to remember as what has been lost" (King 2000, 28). Lost like paradise. Actually, Baybars frequently uses the image of "paradise," as we shall see, and he ends his book with the description of circumcision as a metaphor for the end of childhood (= paradise) and the passage to manhood, concluding with the following words:

Nothing replaces the past and no past comes to an end even if the end is the end of a penis. [...] And once you begin to think childhood is over. The paradise is lost. The rest of your life is an attempt to regain it. Some of us succeed, some of us do not. (Baybars 2005, 222)²

When considering the matter of memory, Sigmund Freud uses the metaphor of archaeology, comparing the recovery of the buried past with the excavation of an archaeological site. In order to do this, memories must be rearranged and retranscribed (what he calls "*Nachträglichkeit*") according to the new circumstances the subject is inscribed in, including remembering. The memory is thus a synthesis of past and future, and remembering becomes a productive model for memory close to the structure of narrative itself (King 2000, 17). In order to achieve this, memory needs an image to be seen, to be "narrated" (King 2000, 26), hence the use of metaphors for re-remembering. It is under these premises that I want to try to describe the process of Taner Baybars' childhood memories. However, in doing so, I do not claim or even intend a psychoanalytical or Freudian interpretation (see Baybars' view on this topic at the end of this paper). Rather, my aim here is to see Baybars' "images" as a narrative technique of remembering. Analyzing these metaphors, I also hope to be able to show how the memory of multiculturalism in Cyprus in the late 1930s and the 1940s is part of a nostalgic remembering of the past.

2 All quotations of Baybars are numbered to facilitate comparison of and reference to specific quotes later in the paper.

2. Smells and childhood

An extremely important vehicle in remembering events, especially in childhood, and a current metaphor in narrating them, ideally in an autobiography, are smells. Art and cultural theorist Jim Drobnick writes: “Enigmatically lacking a well-defined or extensive vocabulary, odours are unmatched in catalyzing the evocation of distant memories and places” (Drobnick 2006, 1). All of us have experienced odor-memory in our lives; in other words, every one of us has remembered a certain situation, emotion, or person through a smell or a fragrance, no matter how distant the memory. In his outstanding essay, titled “Smellscape,” J. Douglas Porteous states that “smells can be memory releasers for the reconstruction of one’s childhood” (Porteous 2006, 89), an assertion which is extremely relevant for literature. Many authors, perhaps most prominently Marcel Proust, use a “smell-generated flashback technique,” which has also been defined as “the Proustian hypothesis of odor memory” (Porteous 2006, 101), and it has been stated that “senses” in a broader framework (especially taste and smell) have been used also in the narrative of the Greek-Turkish population exchange, particularly in Christian refugees’ memories of their homeland of Asia Minor.³ Especially in our case of a childhood autobiography, smell becomes the most important and most extensively employed metaphor for memory. That Taner Baybars consciously uses odors as metaphors, and that he considers smells as the most concise vehicle of memory, becomes evident from a chapter towards the end of his book, titled *Reflections on Images*, in which he describes his way of remembering through the writing technique of images:

The days are memorable through various smells, each one indicating a certain time of the day or even a certain period of the month. Smell of cucumber and mint-hellim was the sign of a cool breakfast on the shady side. An earthenware pot simmering with okra or boiling black-eyed beans was lunch. Ouzo, plates of *mezes of jajik* and tomatoes, melons and peaches, coffee burning on the wood fire, was the evening meal. [...] If some poet or artist or musician could only evoke all these smells and tastes of my childhood not just in one line, in a single brush stroke or in a single note, but in the accepted length of any of these media—if he were able to do this, I would not exclaim: You have robbed me.

3 See Iğsız 2007, on Kemal Yalçın’s novel, *Emanet Çeyiz: Mübadele İnsanları* (A Dowry Pledge: The People of the Exchange, 1998). I would like to thank Zehra Aslı Iğsız for providing me with her unpublished manuscript.

4 Baybars refers here to a story by Borges in which the character, a poet, describes a palace of an emperor so well in just a single line that the emperor exclaims: “You have robbed me of my palace!”

I would shout with greatest joy: You have regained my palace for me.⁴ (Baybars 2005, 206–207)

That the poetical means of using olfactory images is undoubtedly a conscious choice of the writer—who considers his memories, and his book, in a certain sense to be a “collection of odors”—is clear from the following example:

Those days added yet another smell to my collection: ink and newsprint. (Baybars 2005, 208)

2.1. The smellscape of familiarity

The range of Baybars' *toposmia*, or “smellscape,” includes a wide variety of places, moments, and persons which are remembered by their scent. Porteous (2006, 91) defines “smellscape” as “smells [that] may be spatially ordered or place-related.” Smellscape must be “non-continuous, fragmentary in space and episodic in time [...]” In the autobiography of our author, smells are used regularly in the stage of re-remembering emotions that otherwise could not be depicted in the same effective way. Actually, “psychological research indicates that olfaction seems to stimulate emotional or motivational arousal, whereas visual experience is much more likely to involve thought and cognition” (Porteous 2006, 91). Typically in Baybars' works, smell is identified with his quest to remember childhood as a “paradise”; odors are almost exclusively used in a positive sense and often express the authenticity or genuineness of food, objects, or persons. They thus symbolize emotions like familiarity, coziness, and hominess, as can be seen in the following examples, which refer to early childhood, age just over two, in Vassilia:

Lovely smell of baking bread from the oven. [...] Smell of baking bread. (Baybars 2005, 16)

By noon baking bread from the village ovens would fill the air with currents of delicious smells. The smell of real wheat! (Baybars 2005, 17)

The smell of charred bread was lovely. (Baybars 2005, 24)

In that room smells of different things, objects or persons, food or fruit – they all created an atmosphere always associated with cosy winter mornings, red blankets up to my nose over downs stuffed with goat's hair. (Baybars 2005, 24)

Also in later stages of his life, the smell of food represents the first indicator

for the description of space (smellscape as part of the real “landscape”!). The following examples refer to his Uncle Fikri’s house and to a bookshop, both in Nicosia, which are full of familiar smells too (at least in the author’s re-remembering process):

On the ground floor: the front room, the dining room, the kitchen which always smelled of bottled tomato purée and fresh oranges. (Baybars 2005, 34)

The smell [of the lentil soup] was a sign of cosiness. (Baybars 2005, 195)

And even Nicosia itself:

[Referring to the time before summer vacations]: I would say “thank you” to everybody in Hikmet’s bookshop which smelled of tobacco and thick coffee. (Baybars 2005, 198)

Also outdoor smellscape are used for the description of familiarity and coziness:

Those outings down at Vavila, generally late spring [...], were full of gaiety, donkey rides to and from, the smell of a leg of mutton dug out from the earth. (Baybars 2005, 29)

[In the village of Minareli]: On certain days smell of starch reached us from their [the neighbours’] garden, boiling in cauldrons on open fire. They plunged skeins of cotton into the boiling starch and hung them on a line of tough rope [...] After the skeins had dried they were stored in one corner of the loom room, my favourite corner when I went to watch them. Like an animal who becomes used to the smell of a definite place. (Baybars 2005, 83)

Odors also serve to evoke the remembering of the opposite feeling of familiarity, namely outings in the town where exciting smells impregnate the boy’s brain, like in this walk in the market place of Nicosia:

[...], walking along the road called Arasta which was the hub of haberdashery, lingerie and buttons. That smell from each shop, cool, starchy. [...] The whole place was a mixture of smells. There were rows. Each row smelled differently. One of spices, another one of vegetables and fruit, and another one of fresh blood dripping from newly slaughtered beasts hanging on sharp, shiny hooks. (Baybars 2005, 48)

2.2. The female smellscape

An important section of the “smellscape” recalling familiarity and home memories belongs to the remembered image of mother and other women:

Mother came up a little later, she smelled of soap and clean water. (Baybars 2005, 35)

One afternoon mother washed my feet and gave me a fresh pair of socks and a shirt which smelled of pressed jasmines. (Baybars 2005, 45)

She [Aunt Vedyä, Uncle Ahmet’s wife in Lapithos] smelled of scented soap, fresh, dried jasmines and roses on her dress. (Baybars 2005, 70)

Uncle Ahmet’s wife embraced me, and the sea air which I hadn’t smelled for some years, the salt. (Baybars 2005, 169)

I didn’t feel frightened in that room [the bedroom]. It had the mark and smell of every woman in the village. (Baybars 2005, 14)

Our downstairs room was full of women, all heads covered, scent of rose-petal juice, smell of incense and two candles where the woman was going to chant the *mevlut*. (Baybars 2005, 33)

Emina was a source of village stories. She took me to her crossed legs, her *çarşaf* smelling of tobacco and fresh cow dung. (Baybars 2005, 93)

In this context, smell is also the classical metaphor of the earliest memory of sexual excitement:

[When encountering Leila, with whom the little boy is in love]:
How my head would whirl and whizz, my armpits exude sweat with a strange odour reminiscent of ginger pussy cats! (Baybars 2005, 89)

2.3. Lapithos the paradise

The paradise *par excellence* for the young Taner was the village of Lapithos, where one brother of the mother lived and where the family used to stay during summer vacations. The following excerpt uses the imagination of smell as

the memory of a memory, re-remembering the paradisiacal image of the village, which is famous for its fresh and cool air:

The sun was green under the plane trees. It was high noon but you couldn't say it was. The splash, the spray from the cascading water made the air cool and lovely. People under hanging grapes in the cafés... I could almost smell the ouzo and slices of sweating cucumber in white saucers. (Baybars 2005, 68)

Lapithos, as an idealized metaphor of a lost childhood-paradise, is present also in the memories of later years, when Taner, already resident in Nicosia, comes back to the village:

Lapithos, again, was becoming my dreamland. Near the sea, water for the asking, the vast garden, the fruit trees and the mountains at the back. I would sit on the balcony, reclining on Aunt Vedya, and look towards the sea. Then, at the other side of the house, I would look towards the mountains, the scent of thyme and the sound of the brook [...]. (Baybars 2005, 170)

I was happy in Lapithos. I could stay there forever. I had no wish to go to Nicosia nor to Minareli Köy afterwards. (Baybars 2005, 173)

Even now, after so many years, thinking of that house and that garden, the shaded walks down to the seaside, I feel a tremendous pang because I know that nothing in this world will ever create those moments again. [...] Lapithos is idealised. (Baybars 2005, 187)

The other village, Minareli Köy, where Taner was not as happy as he was in Lapithos, is nonetheless also depicted sometimes as a paradisiacal smellscape:

The song and mother's mandolin on some evenings made that little yard with a fruitless peach tree more than a corner in paradise. The smell of earth, parched and waterless, Hamida's giggles every now and again. The distant catcalls. (Baybars 2005, 164)

And years after, in Nicosia, the re-remembering of this "secondary" paradise of Minareli Köy sounds like this:

Again the smell of parched earth. The fragrance of syringa outside Ustabaşı's house, the milky vapour rising from dank fig trees. (Baybars 2005, 197)

2.4. Real and imagined smells

Smell as metaphor of an idealized childhood-paradise is clearly expressed in the following example as well, where the smell is no longer specified and concrete but rather transposed to a metaphorical, imagined smell (that of “childhood”):

[The shop of a nut-seller in Nicosia, who opens a stall in Lapithos during the summer]: I always went to him [to his shop in Nicosia] for a piastre worth of salted almonds or chick-peas or fresh roasted ground nuts. His stall always smelled of childhood. As squirrel’s paradise. (Baybars 2005, 199)

[In Nicosia]: The air smelled marvellously of something I could not identify. (Baybars 2005, 138)

Imagined smell can also be used as a rhetorical device for an imagined memory of the future in the past (which recalls, I am sorry to say, Freud’s “*Nachträglichkeit*”):

We went to the schoolroom and when father opened the door the smell of parched desks, paper stories—my whole future sensed through the smell of that room. (Baybars 2005, 100–101)

On the other hand, imagined smell simply is an effective poetical means to connect real and imagined images:

[About Leila]: Her pink cheeks. Auburn hair. She smelled of wood. I thought. I imagined her father unloading the donkey [...]. (Baybars 2005, 102)

But as soon as I saw it [the *Çocuk Haftası* magazine coming from Istanbul] I would smell the Istanbul ink [...] and then sleep with a unique peace of mind never to be experienced again. (Baybars 2005, 107)

2.5. The smellscape of negative memories

As can be seen, all the odors are symbols of paradisiacal and positive feelings inscribed in an idealized memory. But smell can also express memories of lack and poverty, at least implicitly:

The smell of burnt toast meant we had something to eat. (Baybars 2005, 24)

[...] the smell of fish but no fish, fish was such a luxury. (Baybars 2005, 22)

Other negative memories remembered through senses are typically linked to the notion of pain, like the punishment of red pepper on the lips (Baybars 2005, 26), or the first school experience:

The image of the first day going to school [in Nicosia] is a deep pain in my stomach. [...] The pain increased when I had to part from my father and found myself amidst countless children. (Baybars 2005, 192)

Also the sense of loneliness is connected to (in principle positive) smells:

Nothing was said, and I was let alone, smelling the jasmine, the scented syringa and stocks. (Baybars 2005, 45)

However, the only concretely unpleasant smell evoked by Baybars in the whole book is in reference to a Greek wine merchant in Değirmenlik, and even in this case the negative connotation of smell remains unexpressed and left to the imagination of the reader:

He had a vast shop lined with barrels of wine and brandy. The shop smelled of something which riveted me to my chair while father leaned on a counter and had a few glasses of brandy and ate *mezes*. (Baybars 2005, 105)

3. Multiculturalism

3.1. Together in distance

I want to use this last excerpt as a turning point which might help to connect Baybars' olfactory memory of his childhood-paradise with his memory of multiculturalism. The odor of wine, which in our last example "riveted" the boy to a chair, is what we might call the "smell of difference" between Turks and Greeks, felt metaphorically by the little boy Taner and remembered in narration by the adult writer Baybars. Perhaps also Sotiri's knife shop at Lapithos had something different and unfamiliar, expressed in terms of smell:

The shop was dark, smell of charcoal fire on which he [Sotiri] tempered the steel, smell of horns strung down from the low beams. (Baybars 2005, 32)

That the author's memory vaguely remembers the Greeks as something different is well expressed in the following odorous extract:

The Greek villages had a different air, somehow. They smelled of wine, there were more white-washed walls. And more women about. (Baybars 2005, 127)

Baybars spent his childhood always in mixed villages: Vassilia is referred to as a mixed village with its own Greek quarter (Baybars 2005, 15, 24, 37), while Lapithos had a significant Greek community, and also Minareli Köy was inhabited by both Turks and Greeks. Greek "neighbors," fishermen, doctors, wine merchants, or knife sharpeners, are always mentioned as something distant, living close but still not in the same quarter, underlining geographical as well as economic distance:

[Vassilia]: Our Greek "neighbours" lived down the village, mostly between the centre and Vavila. (Baybars 2005, 28)

The village doctor down at the Greek quarter. (Baybars 2005, 77)

In the Greek quarter [of Nicosia] everything was much more expensive. (Baybars 2005, 51)

In Degirmenlik it was different. The Greeks had more money. (Baybars 2005, 105)

Whereas the life of the communities in the villages seems to have been somewhat segregated, in Nicosia the boy Taner might have been surrounded by a more cosmopolitan environment where contacts, especially with Armenians, recalled for the first time, were more frequent:

She [Sadiya, a cousin in Nicosia] was still a student at St Joseph's, learning French and English, and she took piano lessons from an Armenian lady a few doors away [...]. (Baybars 2005, 47)

[A dream in Nicosia]: [...], the Armenian girl whom I loved most among the children of the street in Nicosia – yes, where was Carmin? (Baybars 2005, 43)

We did not celebrate Christmas although we enjoyed the holiday. Our Christian neighbours, the Greeks and the Armenians did, in a non-European way. [...] But the New Year's Eve was a common festivity among the Turks, the Greeks, the Armenians and the

Maronites. (Baybars 2005, 115)

But when recorded with senses—in this case sound and taste (according to Porteous [2006, 91] smellscape “cannot be considered apart from the other senses”)—multiculturalism is again equated with memories of a lost paradise. Here, senses play a role in depicting the image of peace, where the border-crossing bells of the Catholic church at Paphos Gate in Nicosia and a hot lentil soup create a cross-cultural memory in a paradisiacal sense:

No other lentil soup with Seville orange juice, no other church bells would again evoke that sense of absolute peace. (Baybars 2005, 139)

3.2. Memories of identity and nationalism

Very interesting in this context is Baybars’ description of his first nationalistic memory in the early 1940s. The identity shift of a boy, who used to play with Greeks and Armenians, from a Cypriot identity, albeit not well-defined, to a Turkish one is depicted by the first experiences of young Taner on stage, where he is supposed to read nationalistic poems on national holidays:

I remember how my feelings towards the Greek and Armenian neighbour children suddenly changed as I rehearsed the poems standing on a window sill. I ceased to be a Cypriot. (Baybars 2005, 117)

However, the difference between Turks and Greeks depended on official policy and did not interfere too much with the daily life of the communities. In the following excerpt, Baybars refers to stories called “*Stories from the Battle of Independence*”, which were published weekly and widely distributed in high volume to local bookshops:

It is not conjectural to add that similar stories were circulating among the Greeks, but only on National Days would we feel that there was a ditch between the two communities. (Baybars 2005, 117)

The following allusion to the Armenian genocide, and the reception of it by Turkish Cypriots, is also informative with regard to the nationalistic views in the Cypriot communities:

Hamparsum was the son of our next-door Armenian neighbour. [...] His father had escaped from Turkey during what they called

‘the great massacre’ a term which even my most cosmopolitan Uncle Hasan strongly repudiated. (Baybars 2005, 117)

Nevertheless, Turkish Cypriots in those years were very much influenced by Istanbul (which substitutes London as a center) and accepted the concept of Turkey as motherland:

In those days, Istanbul was as much part of a Turkish Cypriot’s dream as Mecca was a fervent Moslem’s. (Baybars 2005, 107)

[Concerning the water springs in Değirmenlik]: The Turks were convinced (and there may be a geological truth in this) that the spring travelled under sea from Mersin in Turkey. So to drink water from that spring was equal to drinking water on the Motherland. (Baybars 2005, 128)

3.3. Language: diglossia and bilingualism

This center-periphery relation is also illustrated by numerous passages about the Cypriot diglossia (used in the classical sociolinguistic sense of Ferguson 1959 and Fishman 1967) and the attitude toward Standard Turkish (called by Baybars “Istanbul Turkish” or “Turkish Turkish”). The first experience of diglossia in Baybars’ memory goes back to a theater performance:

What was even more interesting for me was the way every actor or actress spoke Turkish. Quite different. Backstage they reverted to the Turkish I heard every day. That dichotomy should have been enough for me to realise that the act was an act, the backside of the stage real life. (Baybars 2005, 120)

A few years after, Taner consciously uses the two variants with a clearly socially marked code-switching practice:

I read poetry aloud and spoke with an Istanbul accent to amuse my parents’ friends. My duplicity, whether due to my horoscope or to the circumstances of those early days, was already obvious to me. (Baybars 2005, 194)

[...] I began to speak with an Istanbul accent in order to win Aydin’s [the intellectual cousin in Limassol] admiration. [...] My Istanbul accent became so affected that soon I began to shorten even the most essential vowels. (Baybars 2005, 212)

On the other end of the diglossia scale (or, as Baybars calls it, “duplicity”) is a clearly familiarly marked Turkish Cypriot variant, which has no place in public or intellectual life. The “cosmopolitan” Uncle Hasan is here the symbol, or “memory container,” of a negative attitude towards both Turkish Cypriot and Atatürk’s reformed Turkish, or *Öztürkçe*:

Hamparsum’s father spoke beautiful Anatolian Turkish. Uncle Hasan often told me to hear him carefully so that I could appreciate the beauty of our pure language. He didn’t much care for the Turkish Cypriot dialect. (Baybars 2005, 117)

[Uncle Hasan drunk at New Year]: And my much experienced cosmopolitan uncle who spoke Turkish with an Arabic intonation to amuse guests, now spoke bluntly in the broad Paphos Turkish but no one was astonished by that lapse into the derided vernacular. (Baybars 2005, 119)

After Atatürk’s reforms we must try not to fall into the habit of using Osmanli words derived from Persian and Arabic. Uncle Hasan loathed the new Language Movement and solemnly prophesied that within the next fifty years no one would be able to write a single sentence of intelligible Turkish. (Baybars 2005, 171)

But coming back to multiculturalism, yet remaining in the field of language, Baybars’ memoirs contain abundant material about Greek-Turkish bilingualism in Cyprus at that time. Due to the dominance of Greek during the British rule and the first years of the Republic of Cyprus, in terms of speech, the Turkish community was characterized by widespread bilingualism, still observable in the older Turkish Cypriot generation, whereas among the Greeks there reigned a general monolingualism. This unbalanced bilingualism is well documented in Baybars’ book:

[Uncle Hasan]: He lay on the bed, above the sheets in vest and pants, holding one of the several papers he bought daily. Greek, Turkish and English. (Baybars 2005, 49)

Let the children have a bit of sea air, he [Kostari, the coach driver from Vassilia] told my father in Greek. (Baybars 2005, 56)

[Hulus, Aunt Yıldız’s husband, referring to Greek refugees from Greece coming to Cyprus during the war]: Someone was addressing the crowd, in Greek, through a loudspeaker. Hulus spoke Greek as well as Turkish. He listened attentively but didn’t tell

what was happening. (Baybars 2005, 74)

Although he [the “sergeant,” a school mate’s (Alptekin’s) father who had lived among Greeks in Karpaz] was a Turkish Cypriot he spoke better Greek than Turkish and sometimes he spoke full sentences of Greek while talking to father who politely nodded his head. Father’s Greek was good but not fluent. (Baybars 2005, 106–107)

A special place is reserved to Turks from Paphos, who seem to have been even more competent in Greek than in Turkish, and there was also a myth circulating about their origin, which presumably has ideological roots (see Baybars quote 65):

He [Mustafa, Havva’s wife, neighbors in Nicosia] mumbled something, it was sometimes difficult to understand these Paphos people. They generally spoke better Greek than Turkish. (Baybars 2005, 62)

Hamida [the maid from Paphos] spoke Turkish; her intonation and certain idioms, half Greek, half Turkish, delighted us enormously. (Baybars 2005, 152)

Traditionally the Turkish people from Paphos were considered to be the descendants of the earliest Turkish settlers on the island. The fact that they spoke Turkish with a Greek accent enhanced this ancientness. It was commonly believed that in some very remote Paphos villages the Turks could not speak Turkish at all. In their mosques they prayed in Greek. They even wanted to have Atatürk’s monumental speech, which took him some days to deliver, translated into Greek so that they might be able to hear it. None could read in any language. (Baybars 2005, 152)

I might add here that actually, it was a Paphos Greek, Charalambos Azinas, who, in 1938, published a long poem about Atatürk’s death in Greek Cypriot written in Latin alphabet with the new Turkish orthography, apparently for the use by Hellenophone Paphos Turks (Fevzioğlu 2001).⁵

5 The multicultural character of Baybars’ book has already been commented in the book review by Kyrris, where he apparently overstates the Hellenophony of the “Paphos Turks” (Kyrris 1970, 199). At the end of the review, Kyrris compares some events described by “Baybar” (sic) with his own memories in order to underline the common culture and “psychological reactions” (Kyrris 1970, 200) of the two communities.

On the other hand, the scant knowledge of Turkish by the Greeks is mentioned by Baybars in one case only:

Kara Kosta didn't speak Turkish much, but he talked endlessly in Greek [...]. (Baybars 2005, 48)

This line hints once again at the rather limited contact with Greeks in the writer's memory. Interestingly enough, almost no instance of personal use of Greek is mentioned throughout the book, except for one event in early childhood, in which the young boy goes to the Greek bakery to buy a loaf of bread; not remembering or mixing up the Greek words learnt by heart during the way to the Greek quarter, he brings home only half a loaf (Baybars 2005, 28). However, he was clearly acquainted with Greek, which he heard around him in daily life, for instance, in the episode of Kostari:

Kostari knocked on the brandy bottles with forks and sang his Greek tunes and we all jumped up and down. (Baybars 2005, 56)

His acquaintance with the Greek language is also clear when he hears Greek music at the café in Degirmenlik (Baybars 2005, 86). Later on in his life, when Taner goes to the lycée in Nicosia and has the marvelous experience of learning to read English, he compares this with his poor reading skills in Greek with the following words:

It was all words now, a wonderful experience, more so than learning Greek words because I had not seen a Greek textbook, had only heard and spoken the few odd words, had learned how to decode a few capital letters: a triangle is delta, a wiggly O is omega, two vertical strokes under a horizontal line is pi, P is an R and so forth. Nothing in writing like my preliminary English reader by Mr Eckersley. (Baybars 2005, 195)

4. In lieu of a conclusion

A further step in the research of Baybars' memorial smellscape, or rather sense-scape, could be an analysis of his main literary production, i.e., his poetry, with regard to this aspect. Here is not the place to undertake such a research, but I will at least mention the poem "Gülten – An attempt to recapture a love in childhood on hearing her name many years later," from the collection *Narcissus in a Dry Pool* (London 1978), which includes poems written between 1965 and 1978. Since it is a rather long poem and therefore cannot be reproduced here in its full length, I only quote the first segment (segment 1 from 6; the quotation is from Baybars 1997, 66):

1

Who said your name took from me my past?
 Elbow sunk in a flower-pot, ten roses.
 Forgot, I did not, but ten upon ten supposes
 flesh from flesh geographically apart.

Satin embryo of images now begins to construct
 a chain of words in order to see you thus,
 through years of oubliettes, little oblivions.
 Photolysis of memory, *tef'assûh*, photo you

as I can. Recalling empties of brain, hurts
 the cortex. The flesh decomposes in the mind
 but lives phosphorent. Ten upon ten, *gül*
 tenez la puissance of the edifice of words.

Baybars' literary cosmopolitanism is linguistically extremely obvious in this (absolutely untranslatable!) poem, where he plays with the name *Gülten* (with its compounds *gül* "rose" and *ten* "body") in various languages (i.e., English and French), and creates a link between his work and his memory of senses and multiculturalism⁶. It thus becomes clear how Baybars' life, or rather childhood, constitutes a determinant factor in his later poetical production. However, I don't want to verge too deeply into the realm of interpretation, since Taner Baybar writes in his autobiography:

Nothing in the world is capable of eradicating the ecstasy I receive from the smell of a freshly cut cucumber or a sweet-melon. Some latter-day Freudians may read their own dirty interpretation into such feelings. That is entirely their own business. (Baybars 2005, 207)

Although I mentioned Freud at the beginning of this paper, I very much hope that my attempt of recalling smells and memories of a multicultural and multilingual past will not be confounded with dirty Freudian business!⁷

6 Of course, this does not exclude other interpretations; neither do I intend her to present an analysis of the poem. This has been done in the framework of postcolonial theory by G. Pultar (1997, 86), who states that the "insertion of Turkish words is a means of insurgence against the spiritual subjugation, a backlash against the cultural subjugation."

7 I wish to thank Taner Baybars for his encouraging words and advice when I submitted to him the manuscript of the present article.

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