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## 'Non-Istanbulites' of Istanbul : the right to the city novels in Turkish literature from the 1960s to the present

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## CHAPTER 12

### ***It Takes All Kinds: The Istanbul Forgotten in the Varoş***

The novel analysed as the counterpart of *Periphery* is *İnsan Kısım Kısım Yer Damar Damar* [It Takes All Kinds<sup>437</sup>]<sup>438</sup> by Hatice Meryem, first published in 2008 by İletişim. The second impression of the novel was published by the same company in the same year. This is the first novel by the author, who had previously had three short-story books published.

In the novel, themes directly related to the right to the city appear in terms of material necessities, particularly services of the municipality and infrastructure. Through its setting, an ex-shantytown, themes of isolation on the outskirts of the city and people's unawareness of their right to the city are treated reciprocally. The intensive use of free indirect discourse enables the novel to refrain from an authoritative attitude, and depict life in an ex-shantytown through the eyes of those who experience it. Owing to its satirical edge, the novel extends its themes without sliding into agitation, and invites readers to question the dominant discourse on the so-called *varoş* neighbourhoods and their population without being assertive.

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<sup>437</sup> The English translation of the book's title is taken from the translation excerpt by İdil Aydoğan and Amy Spangler ("It Takes").

<sup>438</sup> References in this dissertation are made to the second impression by İletişim, 2008.



Fig. 9. The cover of the impression used in this analysis.

### 12.1 Plot Summary

In the first chapter of the first part of the novel, Zümrüt, one of the two main characters of the novel, is planning a family picnic for the evening. Her sister Elmas is the other main character of the novel, and she lives with Zümrüt and her family. From various details discussed below, it can be inferred that the novel is set in the 2000s. The two sisters prepare stuffed vine-leaves for the picnic they will go on in the evening. As the chapters proceed, the reader learns that Zümrüt has two sons and a little daughter Aynur, who has a chronic illness. Her husband Cavit's brother Coşkun, who has been in prison for a while and recently released, lives with them as well. In the flat above, Cavit's other brother Nurettin, his wife Seher and their children live. On that day, Coşkun's dog, Löp Et has an accident and dies. At the end of the first part of the novel, the family members are ready to get in the pickup truck to go on the picnic.

The second part focuses on Coşkun's story. His contemplations about his past, the process which led to his imprisonment and his view of life, which has been entirely transformed in the prison, are introduced. His friend Cansın tries to prove that he was innocent in the incident which got Coşkun into trouble, causing his imprisonment.

In the third part, the stories of Sami and Cansın, as well as the story of the friendship between Coşkun, Cansın and Sami are told. The stories of two figures important in Coşkun's life also appear in this chapter: Communist Cemal and Commander Duran.

The picnic constitutes the fourth part of the novel. During the picnic, Coşkun and Elmas go to the fairground near the picnic area.

In the final part, Nurettin's wife Seher finds a babysitting job for Elmas. However, on her first working day, Elmas slaps the girl she is hired to look after. Meanwhile, Coşkun comes home with his face covered in blood because he gets beaten up at the coffee-house where he has tried to preach to people. Elmas runs away with Coşkun, taking Aynur with her as well. Coşkun leaves a farewell letter to Cavit, in which he criticises him for not being respected by his wife Zümrüt. Cavit, devastated by these words, gets drunk and his inner world is briefly introduced based on this drunken state. In the last chapter of the novel, it is the first day of a religious holiday, so Cavit and Zümrüt go out in the pickup truck to visit their relatives. The novel ends with Cavit's contemplation as he drives the pickup over the Bosphorus Bridge.

## 12.2 Main Features

The book has an introduction by the author, which is quite unusual for a novel, something that would rather be expected in a piece of non-fiction. In addition to this three-page long introduction, the two-hundred-and-eighty-six-page long novel comprises sixty-one chapters distributed into five parts: I: “A Long Afternoon” (chapters 1-24); II: “Coşkun and the Rest of Them” (chapters 25-29); III: “Respect for the Past” (chapters 30-43); IV: “Picnic Time” (chapters 43-53); V: “Winter’s Almost Arrived” (54-62)<sup>439</sup>.

*Kinds* follows conventions of the realist novel, such as “psychological characterization, detailed descriptions of everyday life, and dialogue that captures the idioms of natural speech” (“Realism” 654). The novel can also be categorised as an example of dark humour. Elements such as Zümrüt’s chronically ill daughter, Coşkun’s experience in the prison, and the accident that kills Löp Et the dog in boiling water, bring a dark shade to the humorous edge of the novel, manifest particularly in the sarcastic comments of Zümrüt.

The style of the novel can be summarised as follows. The narrator uses colloquial language. In the dialogues, which are highly realistic, dialect is used as well as a couple of expressions that can be categorised as slang. Adages have a significant place in the novel, as will be discussed below. Both in the narration and in the dialogues, the word order is unmarked, i.e. inverted syntax is not used. The novel does not make use of long and complex sentences. The use of punctuation is standard.

The novel is narrated in the third-person by a narrator who is not one of the characters of the novel. No information is given about the narrator’s gender or age. Figural narration is dominant in the novel, where the reflector characters vary in different chapters. Thus, like *Birds*, this novel has “serial reflectors” (Keen 63). The narrator is not a neutral one, she reveals her feelings in the narration by including certain adjectives, and also makes comments on actions, characters, events and so forth; thus, a marked narrator.

Throughout the novel, the use of digressions and flashbacks stand out.

Although the novel has not received great attention from literary circles, it has not altogether been ignored, either. Prominent literary critic Metin Celal described the novel as “masterly in telling the life in *varoşes*”, in his column in *Cumhuriyet* (“Edebiyatta 2008’den”)<sup>440</sup>.

<sup>439</sup> I: “Uzun Bir Öğleden Sonra”; II: “Coşkun ve Diğerleri”; III: “Geçmişe Hürmet”; IV: “Piknik Zamanı”; V: “Eli Kulağında Kış”.

<sup>440</sup> Reviews of the novel have appeared in *Zaman Kitap*, by Serdar Güven; *Okuduğum Kitaplar* (literary blog), by Metin Celal; [www.sol.org.tr](http://www.sol.org.tr), by Hüseyin Çukur; [www.insanokur.org](http://www.insanokur.org), by Fazilet Karahallı Avcu. Additionally,

### 12.3 Title and Beginning

The novel's title is an adage in Turkish, which can literally be translated as: humans have many kinds, soil has many veins. The adage is uttered by Zümrüt towards the end of the novel, reflecting her shock and disappointment to see that her sister and brother-in-law have run away, taking her sick daughter with them (273). This title, when combined with the novel's narrative technique analysed below, suggests that the fact that there are many sorts of humans leads to separateness and a lack of communication among them, even within the same family.

The first chapter of the novel is entitled "Zümrüt with a rose on her tongue and Elmas who wants to swallow her tongue"<sup>441</sup> (15), and it begins with Zümrüt's suggestion of cooking stuffed vine leaves to eat on the seaside. At this very first moment, Zümrüt's incredibly rich vocabulary is introduced, as she recites a verse about stuffed vine leaves<sup>442</sup>, following her suggestion to cook some for the evening. Her sister Elmas thinks that Zümrüt is pregnant and that's why she fancies stuffed vine leaves, and in the rest of the beginning paragraph of the novel, the narrator explains Zümrüt's story of eating coal during her former pregnancy. The next paragraph explains how great a speaker Zümrüt is; examples of adages she uses are given, to explain how colourful her expressions are and how rich her vocabulary is. The narrator describes her tongue as "colourful and vivacious like a circus, like a fair, like a market place"<sup>443</sup> (16), she is described as capable of making rhetoricians jealous (17). The chapter ends with Zümrüt's comment about her sister Elmas, that she is so silent because she knows she is guilty.

This beginning demonstrates a couple of central issues of the novel, as it presents the two central characters. The power of speech and possessing language, which is a central theme of the novel, is introduced at this very first point of the novel. The beginning also hints that the two women at the centre of the novel are unhappy people. The power of Zümrüt over Elmas is explicit in this opening chapter, as well as their disconnectedness, and the degree of selfishness dominating their relationship. Zümrüt appears as an exaggerated figure here, if not ridiculed, which has a humorous effect. The narrator uses free indirect speech extensively at this point in rendering Zümrüt's words. The following remark in the free indirect speech form

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interviews with the author on the novel have appeared in *Yeni Şafak Kitap*, by Hale Kaplan Öz; in *eyozgurluk* (current topics blog), by Murat Sayım (bibliographical info included in Works Consulted.)

<sup>441</sup> "Dili Güllü Zümrüt ile Dilini Yutmayı Düşleyen Elmas"

<sup>442</sup> " . . . gelinlik kıza yapıştır para pul, sarmayı sofraya koy, geç karşısına kurul!" [ . . . give the young bride gifts, put the stuffed vine leaves on the table and sit in front of it ] (15).

<sup>443</sup> " . . . dili bir sirk,dili bir panayır, dili bir pazar yeri gibi rengarenk ve capcanlı . . . " (16)

encapsulates the characterisation of Zümrüt in this beginning phase of the novel: “One would not be right by staying silent. One who stays silent would always suffer. It was necessary to fight for one’s rights”<sup>444</sup> (17).

## 12.4 Characters and Related Themes

### 12.4.1 Sisters of Different Languages

As explained above, Elmas is the exact opposite of Zümrüt with her silence. This repulses Zümrüt, since “one thing she could not stand was a person who does not speak”<sup>445</sup> (20). Zümrüt can use words like weapons while “Elmas was scared of words”<sup>446</sup> (24). The fifth chapter is entitled “One can only swear in one’s own language”<sup>447</sup> (35). At the beginning of the chapter, Elmas is on her way back from the shop. She comes across a cardboard box with a couple of books inside, and on the cover of one of the books it is written in English: “My First Dictionary, The Beginner’s Pict...” The rest of the book’s title is unreadable, since the cover page is torn. The narrator explains that Elmas does not speak English, but speaks in another foreign language which she has learnt from her mother. She adds that Elmas has never seen a person speaking in that language reading a book (36). What follows is a digression of a page-long passage describing that language. After this passage of digression, the chapter continues with Elmas finding more books in the box, one of which is a cookery book.

The passage of digression begins with the remark: “This was such a language that perhaps it was only good for speaking”<sup>448</sup> (36). The passage describes various ways the language is used orally, implying the centrality of oral culture where it is used: “However [speakers of that language] had never thought of writing even one line down. Neither had it ever occurred to them that a grudge would be borne against their language, which served so many purposes”<sup>449</sup> (37). Then fires started in the place where this language is spoken. People could not put those fires out. They had to flee to other cities. Elmas’s mother is one of these people, and when asked about this event, she does not want to talk about what happened. She no longer uses this language, apart from when she is angry, when she curses others in that language.

<sup>444</sup> “Susmakla haklı çıkmazmış insan. Susan her zaman ezilirmiş. Hakkı savunmak gerekirmiş” (17).

<sup>445</sup> “. . . tahammül edemediği bir şey varsa o da konuşmayan insandı.”

<sup>446</sup> “Kelimelerden korkardı Elmas.”

<sup>447</sup> “Yalnız Ana Dilinde Küfreder İnsan”

<sup>448</sup> “Öyle bir dildi ki bu, galiba yalnızca konuşmaya yarıyordu.”

<sup>449</sup> “Ancak akıllarına tek bir satır olsun yazmak gelmemiş. Bunca işe yarayan dillerine düşmanlık besleneceği de düşmemiş akıllarına hiç.”

Vagueness, if not an actual contradiction, can be found here. The previous paragraph ends in telling us that this is a language Elmas learned from her mother. However, in this passage it is explained that her mother has left her mother tongue behind: “Since she assumed a pose as if she left her mother tongue behind intentionally among all those things which burnt furiously, she looked like the final representative of a people which has lost everything apart from their pride”<sup>450</sup> (37).

The parallel between this unnamed language in the story and Kurdish is quite obvious. The description of the way Elmas’s mother and other people in the village had to run away because of the fires is an explicit reference to the village evacuations in Eastern Turkey. Elmas’s perception of the unnamed language as being only spoken and never written sounds like a reference to the illegality of publishing in Kurdish in Turkey in the past, which results in the fact that she has never read anything in this language.

There are a couple of points worth analysis regarding this unnamed language. Although Elmas and Zümürüt are sisters, therefore the woman who speaks that language is the mother of both of them, it is Elmas, the silent one of the two sisters, who is associated with that language through this digression. The reader almost forgets that the mother who had to leave her native tongue behind is also Zümürüt’s mother. Zümürüt is a master of the Turkish language, with all sorts of adages, idioms and sayings in Turkish. The novel does not give any information about whether Zümürüt, like Elmas, learned that unnamed language from her mother at one point. Whether she did or not, this does not seem that important. Zümürüt, who has been in Istanbul for a long time, is associated with the Turkish language. She speaks endlessly in an amazingly rich Turkish. Elmas, who has recently migrated to Istanbul, is associated with the other language. She is always silent. This silence of Elmas can be interpreted in terms of the connection between immigration and the assimilation of the ethnic minority. On the way to an urban identity, the immigrant from the ethnic minority has to, first of all, leave her language behind. Otherwise, one gets excluded and cannot survive in the city. Hence, assimilation takes on a further dimension upon immigration. The novel develops this theme through the characterisations of the two sisters in an implicit manner.

#### **12.4.2 The Women of Kozluk: Consumers on the Periphery**

Female characters are located at the centre of the novel. The inner worlds of Zümürüt and Elmas are more explicitly introduced than those of other characters. Zümürüt has four

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<sup>450</sup> “Çayır çayır yanan onca şeyin arasında ana dilini bile isteye bırakmış gibi kararlı bir tavır takınması yüzünden, gururundan başka her şeyini kaybetmiş bir halkın son temsilcisine de benzerdi biraz.”

sons, the years of whose birth she can't remember. She is not happy with her husband's high libido, and much of the time tries to find excuses to avoid sex. The explanation of how Coşkun, Cavit's brother, sees Zümürüt is an important aspect of her characterisation. He doesn't like the way she behaves towards her husband Cavit, and he hates the way she does not cover her cleavage.

It is difficult being a woman in Kozluk. 'Honour' can easily be manipulated and used against women. For instance, Cansın, whose mother was killed by her husband for 'honour' goes as far as slandering domestic worker women for doing 'other' things than cleaning (145). According to Zümürüt, the men of Kozluk all beat their wives and the women think they deserve it (153).

In various instances in the novel, it is implied that some kind of prostitution goes on in the Kozluk Center, the shopping mall of Kozluk, and Elmas is also involved in it (100, 237). This may not be sex for money in the full sense of the word, but some sort of flirtation in exchange for material benefit. Since shopping malls are the ultimate symbol of consumerism, the setting of this prostitution-like activity being at the Kozluk Center is worthy of attention. Additionally, shopping malls give an urban look to ex-shantytowns like Kozluk, and create the illusion of an urban life. The close relationship between consumerism and an urban identity comes together in this symbol of the shopping mall. The way the novel develops them in connection with each other is worth a close look.

The women of Kozluk live on the periphery of the city, almost side by side with gated communities. A fancy urban upper-middle class life is within eye-sight, yet as far off as another planet. Kozluk women go to the apartment buildings in these gated communities to clean their stairs. They envy the lives there, a glimpse of which they get this way. This aspiration is depicted in the novel as an issue of class with a strong spatial dimension, as analysed below.

Kozlukite women's consumerist desire appears as a significant theme at various stages of the novel. In the introduction to the book, signed by the author, Meryem states that a high number of Kozlukite women have been following "the fashion"<sup>451</sup> of giving birth in private hospitals "which have been mushrooming on every street"<sup>452</sup> in Kozluk (9). This is also the main clue in inferring the times the novel is set in. The chapter which chronicles the development of Kozluk ends with the information that the year Elmas moved to Kozluk was also the year when the women of the neighbourhood put guipure lace curtains on their

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<sup>451</sup> "moda"

<sup>452</sup> "her sokak arasında mantar gibi bitiveren "

windows, became acquainted with women's programmes on television, some of them even went to television studios as audiences on these programmes, and got used to using mobile phones (34). There is an entire chapter on *Borcam*, a glassware dish that can be put in the oven, which Zümrüt regards as a fancy piece of kitchenware (78). For Zümrüt, it is a highly precious item about which she dreams for a long time. Eventually, she manages to buy one from the local street market on the never-never. As she pays the first instalment and holds her *Borcam* in her hands, her manner is described thus: "She looked like a completely different woman, one who lives very far from Kozluk"<sup>453</sup> (80). Unfortunately, after a short while, Elmas breaks the *Borcam* accidentally.

The theme of consumerism, intertwined with the theme of Kozlukites' aspiration to live like rich people, is a recurrent theme in the novel. The reader learns from Elmas that Kozlukites use laminated flooring, satin paint and PVC window frames when they are turning their shanties into apartment buildings, although they can't afford the basic needs of the buildings, such as banisters and stove pipes (70). The highly humorous chapter entitled "Another Life's Dream is Hidden in Guest Rooms"<sup>454</sup> (94) is a good example of the combination of the two themes. The door of the guest room at Zümrüt's family home is always locked and only gets opened for guests who come to visit them on religious holidays. The room is full of stuff bought and kept by Zümrüt but never used: Duralex tea cups, an electric coffee grinder, a Hoover, fake silver saucers, nesting tables, plastic flowers and so forth. When Zümrüt enters this room, even the way she walks and sits changes (95). The room is described humorously as "having transformed into the depot of a store which sells household goods"<sup>455</sup> (95) by the narrator. According to Zümrüt, the stuff in the room should be used by people who are worth it, and none of her family members are (95).

Like her sister Zümrüt, Elmas has dreams about a middle-class life. As mentioned in the previous section, one day she finds a couple of books on the street on her way back home from the shop. Among these books, apart from the English book and the cookery book, there is a third book about motherhood and raising children. These three books she comes across accidentally create a bridge between her life and the urban middle-class living nearby: for the immigrant Elmas living in Kozluk, such a bridge is formed through the garbage of those who she admires. Among the three books, Elmas takes only the cookery book home. She reads all the recipes in it and fantasises about opening the cupboards in the picture on the cover of the

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<sup>453</sup> "Kozluk'tan çok uzaklarda yaşayan bambaşka bir kadına benzeyip çıkmıştı."

<sup>454</sup> "Bir Başka Hayatın Hayali Saklıdır Misafir Odalarında"

<sup>455</sup> "ev eşyası satan bir mağazanın ardiyesine dönen" (95)

book, taking ingredients whose names she has never heard of before and cooking them in the bright cooking pans she sees in the picture. In the next chapter, Elmas brings the book to the kitchen before they start stuffing the vine leaves for the evening picnic. Zümürüt decides to hear Elmas read out the recipe in the book, although she actually knows how to cook it. However, she gets frustrated, since the recipe in the book calls for olive oil and some other expensive ingredients. Elmas regrets not anticipating her sister's frustration. Looking at the book, she starts day-dreaming about "“that beautiful day”" <sup>456</sup> (44). She does not know what she will do, wear or eat on that day, but she knows that she will be very happy. She also reminds herself that she will never go to the Kozluk Center after that day.

The Kozluk Center was built around the time Elmas moved into the neighbourhood. The women of Kozluk like strolling through it, even if they can't shop there. This is the place where Coşkun, Cansın and Sami go pickpocketing. According to a friend of theirs, it is an easy place to do that because people who don't have any money have become "“shopping maniacs”" <sup>457</sup> (178). These people are described by the narrator as "“this crowd who would get into debt bigger than their bodies, with the credit cards in their pockets”" <sup>458</sup> who "“want to touch nothing but money and fancy new stuff”" <sup>459</sup> (178). The Kozluk Center comes to the fore as an important motif related to the theme of consumerism in Kozluk, as well as the changing social life in the neighbourhood analysed in the conclusion section.

The novel seems to imply that the people of Kozluk living on the periphery of the city try to connect with the modern urban culture by consuming products similar to those bought by the members of the urban middle class. They are vulnerable to the effects of the consumer culture, and they look up to the way wealthy urban people live. This theme is refined particularly through the female characters in the novel. Kozlukite women's admiration for the life of the rich is different from the admiration of women, for instance, far away in an Anatolian town getting stunned by the lives they see in the soap operas on television. Since the women of Kozluk do not see these lives on television, but live side by side with it, what they aspire for cannot be explained only in terms of admiration for the lives of the upper classes. The fact that Zümürüt looks like a woman living very far away from Kozluk as she carries the Borcam (80) is a perfect example of the issues of identity that are intertwined with the spatial dimension of the problem. For first or later generation immigrants living on the periphery, the aspiration to the life of the higher classes not only derives from the desire

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<sup>456</sup> "“o güzel gün”"

<sup>457</sup> "alışveriş manyağı"

<sup>458</sup> "cüzdanlarındaki kredi kartlarıyla boylarından büyük borçların altına giren bu grup"

<sup>459</sup> "paradan ve cicili bicili yeni şeylerden başka hiçbir şeye dokunmak istemeyen"

for a dream-like luxurious life, but also from a search for an urban identity, since their only role models for this identity are these upper-class women. They are not familiar with women who are modern and urban yet close to them in terms of socio-economic strata, such as progressive members of the proletariat, women working in different sectors and levels active in unions or other progressive causes. No such role model exists for them. The only urban women they can imagine are the members of the upper-middle class. The novel hints at this through the use of symbols of the consumer culture and through depicting what they mean to Kozlukites, especially with the use of the psycho-narrations of Zümürüt and Elmas, rather than getting a smart aleck narrator make such comments.

## 12.5 Setting and Related Themes

### 12.5.1 Understanding Kozluk

There are three instances in the novel where comments on Kozluk and Kozlukites are at the very forefront. The first one of these belongs to the author since it is in the introduction signed by Hatice Meryem. The second one is a chapter based on the narrator's comments on Kozluk. In the third one, the reader is introduced to Zümürüt's views on the neighbourhood she lives in, reported by Elmas. Additionally, there are instances when other characters' opinions about the place where they live are introduced. It can be useful to start with Zümürüt and other characters' opinions of the neighbourhood.

#### a) Kozluk by Kozlukites

The thirteenth chapter of the first part of the novel focuses on Zümürüt's views on Kozluk. In fact, in a former chapter, Zümürüt's comments about Kozluk are briefly introduced: “. . . all Kozluk and whoever lives in Kozluk were wastrels. . . . if the whole of Kozluk flew away, nobody would feel it”<sup>460</sup> (50), but the latter is much wider in scope. In this instance, Elmas reports Zümürüt's speech on Kozluk: “With her sister's colourful description, this was a place where layabouts and loafers, stony-brokes and hoodoos, sauceboxes and thieves, downs-and-outs, bad lots, hangdogs and the barelegged settle down”<sup>461</sup> (67). Elmas continues by saying that according to Zümürüt, “the women of Kozluk with their mannish faces”<sup>462</sup> (67) are concerned about what to cook for the evening and reflect their stress onto their husbands and children. According to her, the men of Kozluk can be divided into “those with a job and

<sup>460</sup> “. . . tüm Kozluk ve Kozluk'ta yaşayan kim varsa hepsi işe yaramazmış. . . . bütün bütün uçuverseymiş koca Kozluk, kimsenin haberi olmazmış.”

<sup>461</sup> “Ablasının renkli anlatımıyla, işsiz gücsüzün, çulsuzun uğursuzun, arsızın hırsızın, fakirin fukaranın, itin kopuğun, sefilin baldırı çıplağın yurt tuttuğu bir yerdi burası.”

<sup>462</sup> “Kozluk'un erkek suratlı kadınları”

those without<sup>463</sup> (67), and those without a job are many in Kozluk. The women of Kozluk see their husbands as “half-formed men”<sup>464</sup> (68) The children who do not have any warm clothes suffer from cold in the winter, but they have a great time in the summer making some money by selling water, paper tissues and bus tickets, and playing until late at night. On the youngsters, Zümrüt speaks negatively: “. . . almost none of them would mend their ways, they would become either thieves or rascals”<sup>465</sup> (69). Zümrüt also compares the early days of Kozluk with today. Although they used to have excessive water and electricity cuts, and after every rainstorm the streets would be muddy as they had no asphalt on the roads, still many women long for their shanties, which they used to look down on in the past. At least they had some chickens, and they could grow some vegetables in front of their homes. Besides, all open pieces of land in Kozluk have now been turned into junkyards (70). Nostalgia for old Kozluk is an important feeling in Zümrüt’s psyche. In a later example, when she goes to visit her new neighbours, she tells stories about the past of the neighbourhood, longing for the green Kozluk with animals such as chickens and sheep, despite frequent electricity and water cuts (103). Through these comments of Zümrüt, the sympathy of the novel for shanty as shelter is explicit: if the first tenet of the pro-shanty position is its inevitability as shelter in the absence of welfare housing policies, the second one is its harmony with nature. Once again, the novel’s position is transmitted through the comments of its characters, rendered via free indirect discourse, rather than through a narrator speaking with authority.

Other characters’ comments about Kozluk are introduced in various parts of the novel. Towards the end of the book, Coşkun comes across his friend Sami, who has not been around for a while. When they start chatting, Sami says “God damn Kozluk”<sup>466</sup> (264) and “in agony”<sup>467</sup> he says that “he will never set foot here again”<sup>468</sup> (264). At the end of their chat, Sami tells Coşkun: “you too, run away from this hell!”<sup>469</sup> (265) His words are connected with his fear of Cansın, who plans revenge, but they also show his feelings about his neighbourhood.

For Elmas, Kozluk is a terrible place she is stuck in: “she . . . understood that there was no door opening to a “beautiful day” from the Kozluk hell”<sup>470</sup> (270).

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<sup>463</sup> “İşliler ve işsizler.”

<sup>464</sup> “erkek müsveddesi”

<sup>465</sup> “. . . neredeyse hiçbiri adam olmaz, ya hırsız ya da hayta olurmuş” (69).

<sup>466</sup> “Allah Kozluk’un bin belasını versin”

<sup>467</sup> “kahırla”

<sup>468</sup> “buraya bir daha ayak basmayacağını”

<sup>469</sup> “Sen de kaç git bu cehennemden!”

<sup>470</sup> “Kozluk cehenneminden “güzel bir gün”e açılan bir kapı olmadığını . . . anladı . . . .”

When Coşkun transforms into a different person in the prison, he wants to show everyone that he has changed, and wants to become a role model for the children of Kozluk: “there were even times when he thought that he would be a role model, a year zero for Kozlukite children struggling against impossibilities . . . ”<sup>471</sup> (112). In the same chapter, which focuses on his inner world, the psycho-narration of his thoughts on Kozluk are striking. He sees it as “a place of cowards”<sup>472</sup> who never trust each other and who are scared of everything: “Would be scared of their next-door neighbour, their mother, their father, their own child, their best friend, with whom they walk arm in arm . . . the forces of security, the municipality . . . scared of one and all”<sup>473</sup> (116-7). Echoing the title of the novel, these thoughts of Coşkun emphasise the separateness of Kozlukites. This is an important detail, since in many neighbourhood novels set in earlier decades, a sense of neighbourhood community is dominant, at least among the majority of the people of that place against the hostile ones. *Kinds*, as demonstrated in its title, constantly stresses the lack of such community bonds. The novel’s preoccupation with its characters’ feelings about Kozluk is given direct expression through dialogues, free indirect speech and psycho-narration.

### 12.5.2 A Look at Kozluk from Outside

In the novel, the narrator comments on Kozluk and its people as well. Kozluk is a place which would in a pejorative manner be described as a *varoş* by those looking at it from the centre. Writing about the concept of *varoş*, Tan stresses that “theft, murder, prostitution, drugs, radical leftist tendencies and terror are the discursive codes the state and the media use to criminalize the *varoşes*” (344-345). Islamist fundamentalism is also added to these at times. As discussed below, the narrator’s standpoint is different from the dominant discourse otherising places like Kozluk as *varoşes*. Before analysing this, it would be useful to have a look at the introduction.

The introduction has bitter-sweet humour. At the beginning of the introduction, Kozluk is described as: “. . . a little past [Istanbul], a little before it, a little to the right of it and a little to the left – but by no means in the centre . . . ”<sup>474</sup> (9). The introduction starts with humorous observations on trends among Kozlukite women, such as giving birth in private hospitals. The subject moves from here to the babies and children in Kozluk. The author tells

<sup>471</sup> “İmkansızlıklarla boğuşan Kozluklu çocuklara bir örnek, bir milat olacağını düşündüğü zamanlar dahi oluyor[du] . . . ” (112).

<sup>472</sup> “ödlelerin yurdu”

<sup>473</sup> “Kapı bir komşusundan, anasından, babasından, öz evladından, en yakın arkadaşından, kol kola yürüdüğünden . . . zabıtanın, belediyeden . . . hep korkardı.”

<sup>474</sup> “. . . [İstanbul’un] biraz sağına bira soluna düşen – ama asla ortasına düşmeyen – . . . ”

us about how Kozlukite children do not hesitate to swim in inappropriate places such as dirty streams, channels and the Bosphorus. She adds that, when they swim in the Bosphorus, “. . . Istanbulites who travel on intra-city ferries and live tender lives . . .”<sup>475</sup> (10) react negatively towards them; a remark which signals a dichotomy between Istanbulites and Kozlukites. In the introduction, the people of Kozluk are always referred to as Kozlukites, which may be an implicit reference to this dichotomy. The author explains that Kozlukite mothers send their children to learn the Koran or how to sew in their free time, however children dream of “judo and tae-kwon-do courses and the glossy windows of large shopping malls”<sup>476</sup> (10). The discrepancy between the life they live and the one they aspire to signals their state of being both inside and outside of the city.

The author continues by telling us that the children of Kozluk start working at a very young age and cannot go to school, and stresses that some of these children turn to crime while some become policemen and soldiers. The fact that Kozlukite people get married early, and have children and grandchildren at a young age, and then start expecting death early, is told in a sympathetic and humorous manner. What is noticeable in the introduction is the perception of their way of life as a struggle for survival. The introduction does not portray Kozlukite people in a way to motivate pity for them. On the contrary, the use of humour calls attention to their ability to survive despite all the hardship they suffer from. This is the approach in the whole of the novel, which is particularly stressed in its ending as discussed below, in the conclusion section of this chapter.

It should be noted that there are a couple of instances in the introduction<sup>477</sup> where the author, probably unintentionally, gets close to reproducing the pejorative *varoş* discourse, such as in comments on the issues of Kozlukite children’s unwillingness to study, or Kozlukite men’s tendency to crime. However, when the introduction is taken as a whole, furthermore when it is interpreted together with the novel, these minor instances seem insignificant.

Similar to the author’s approach in the introduction, the narrator of the novel has a sympathetic approach to the main characters, as well as to the people of Kozluk in general. The narrator’s presence is most strongly felt in the chapter entitled “Where is Kozluk, Who is Elmas?”, where the story of the foundation of the neighbourhood is told. This chapter also explains that the people who founded the neighbourhood were rural to urban immigrants. In

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<sup>475</sup> “şehir içi vapurlarda seyahat eden ve mülayim hayatlar süren İstanbullular”

<sup>476</sup> “Judo, tekvando kurslarıyla büyük alışveriş merkezlerindeki mağazaların pırıltılı vitrinleri”

<sup>477</sup> As explained above, the introduction is signed by the author of the novel.

this chapter, the history of Kozluk is told humorously, with realistic details reflecting the similarity of shantytowns with each other. Similar to the introduction, this is far from depicting Kozlukites as people to pity, and Kozluk as a horrible, grim place. Rather, the place is depicted as a place where no one would get bored. The narration about the shops that were opened in the first years of Kozluk is a good example of this. The narrator lists the names of the shops in one breath, in a manner reflecting the way the shops were opened one after the other within a short time. With the wide range of shops listed, the atmosphere these shops brings to the neighbourhood is animated in the narration. This mentioning of shops also makes it clear that if that many shops were opened in Kozluk, then people living there have a certain income and standard of living, as they were opened before credit cards were widely available. In short, the narrator's approach to Kozluk is not negative, an attitude which becomes clear especially in comparison with the Kozlukites' approach to the place, described in the above section. The dynamism and energy of the place appears as a positive trait of Kozluk in the book, bringing to one's mind Lefebvre who says, "working-class neighbourhoods have a 'liveliness' that makes them interesting and which we would like to find elsewhere" ("The Other Paris" 157). The chapter also emphasises that physical conditions and infrastructure in the neighbourhood have been developing. In some parts of the narration, it is possible to infer that there are some criminal people living in the place, or life in Kozluk may result in a disposition to crime. However, it can be inferred that the majority of the people living there do not have anything to do with crime or rough ways, they are simply poor people trying to survive in the city.

### 12.5.3 Rights in the Invisible Side of the City

In the novel, the theme of the right to the city appears in terms of physical necessities and environmental problems. The latter is introduced through Zümrüt's words: "[She] was often complaining: 'A Junkyard, and a shitty stream!'"<sup>478</sup> (36) People throw metal junk into an empty site in Kozluk, and despite their efforts Kozlukites cannot find a solution to this. They apply to the municipal authorities; they even talk on television programmes but cannot achieve anything. Similarly, a stream mixed with sewage water is another serious problem. As the novel proceeds, it comes out that, at one point, when the candidate for municipal mayor is in Kozluk, Zümrüt complains to him about this. She explains that the mayor does not have time to fix the problem since he is too busy smartening up the rich people's streets (63). She adds that this stream carries the sewage water of the expensive gated communities near

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<sup>478</sup> " . . . 'Bir hurdalık, bir de boklu dere!' diyordu sık sık" (36)

Kozluk (63). She expects fellow Kozlukites to appreciate her rebellious behaviour. However, they get scared thinking that if this man becomes mayor, he will cut off their water. Therefore, they are worried and don't appreciate the courage of Zümrüt. Obviously, Kozlukites' fear of their water being cut by a new mayor who gets annoyed with a Kozlukite is a significant detail, stressing the Kozlukite people's perception about their existence in the city: they consider even the most basic services as a favour rather than a right. Unsurprisingly, on the other side of the favour they see punishment, which they expect as a result of even a minor complaint.

The other aspect of the right to the city that finds a place in the novel is related to Kozlukites' lack of access to recreational areas. As mentioned above, at the centre of the story there is the preparation for and the experience of a picnic. As the time for the picnic approaches, Zümrüt is concerned that they will not be able to find a place at the seaside, and end up next to the highway like all other times before, and have their picnic with exhaust fumes. In Istanbul, where parks and similar recreational areas are not widespread, to spend time in a nice green atmosphere is rather a challenge for the underprivileged. Many poor people have picnics on little green patches next to highways. Zümrüt's tension about finding a place at the seaside is a fine detail that in fact says a lot. People having picnics in 'extraordinary places' is something that disgusts elitists. For them, this is behaviour revealing that immigrants are not aware that urban life has its rules. The novel, through Zümrüt's comments, depicts how in fact having picnics in such areas is actually the result of the lack of recreational space, a central right to the city.

All these issues of the metal junk, the dirty stream, the limited or no access to recreational areas are elaborated through the narrated monologues or dialogues of characters, without the narrator making comments on them. Such a technique allows the novel to depict the problems of the right to the city from the standpoint of the characters, through their experiences, in other words through the eyes of those who suffer from these problems, rather than by a narrator who speaks on behalf of them.

#### **12.5.4 Experiencing Istanbul**

The novel does not give any explicit reference to where the imaginary neighbourhood of Kozluk is located. However, this setting seems to be inspired by neighbourhoods in the district of Arnavutköy, since the neighbourhood of Hadımköy, which is also in this area, appears in the novel (164). Other places mentioned in the novel are Bakırköy (184) and Yenikapı (202), which supports this guess. Beyoğlu gets mentioned a couple of times within

the scope of Cansın's relations with theatre circles. It is referred to in the conversations of Coşkun, Cansın and Sami as a remote place, a completely different world from Kozluk.

Kozluk seems to be depicted as an isolated place on the outskirts of the city. For instance, minibuses, an important part of daily life in such places, connecting them with the city centre, never appear in the novel. Almost all the novel is set in Kozluk, and the most important exception to this is the chapter entitled "The Man Who is Larger than Palaces"<sup>479</sup> (202-208). This chapter is about Cavit's friendship with a sophisticated fisherman called Hicabi, who eventually commits suicide. Moments from this friendship are told via flashback within the frame of the story of Cavit's blue pickup, which he inherited from Hicabi.

Cavit meets Hicabi at a coffee-house in Yenikapı. They instantly get on and have a walk on the shore from Yenikapı to Çatladıkapı. Here, Hicabi points out Topkapı Palace and asks Cavit if he has ever seen a palace. Then he invites him into an imaginary palace and they both act like they are in Topkapı Palace. After that little game, as they continue their walk, Hicabi tells Cavit stories about the Bosphorus, as well as about fishing boats. He talks about the past of Istanbul with nostalgia, as the rendering of his words by Cavit reveals: ". . . those were the times when Istanbul was Istanbul!" (204)<sup>480</sup>. He makes up some stories about these past times with a powerful imagination. Their friendship deepens as time passes. Cavit learns that in the past Hicabi used to read a lot and was engaged in a theatre group. This surprises Cavit who has never been to theatre. Telling Cavit about his theatre days, Hicabi refers to a past Istanbul as quoted by Cavit: ". . . if you put together the whole Istanbul of those times, a peddler would be able to carry it on his back . . ." <sup>481</sup> (205). Cavit and Hicabi drive around Istanbul in Hicabi's blue pickup: "One day they were going to Eyüp and praying before the holy men buried there, one day they were tossing back their wine bottles with the fishermen in Sarıyer, thanks to this pickup. They were either swerving round the bends over the remote rocks of Şile, or chatting with peasants in the coffee houses of villages around Çatalca"<sup>482</sup> (206). Owing to his friendship with Hicabi, Cavit experiences a very different face of Istanbul. In other words, he makes a bond with the city and its history during the time he spends with Hicabi. It is important to see that the only character in the novel who appreciates living in Istanbul and puts this appreciation in the centre of his life is Hicabi, a man nostalgic

<sup>479</sup> "Saraylara Sığmayan Adam"

<sup>480</sup> ". . . İstanbul'un da İstanbul olduğu zamanlarmış o zamanlar!"

<sup>481</sup> ". . . o zamanların bütün İstanbul'unu derlesen toplasan bir bohçacı taşımış sırtında . . ."

<sup>482</sup> "Bir gün Eyüp'e gidip oradaki mübareklerin huzurunda dualar ediyor, bir gün Sarıyer'deki balıkçılarla şarap şişelerini tokuşturuyorlarmış bu pikap sayesinde. Kah Şile sahillerinin ıssız kayalıklarında demleniyor, kah Çatalca taraflarındaki köylerin kahvelerinde köylülerle hasbihal ediyorlarmış."

about the past of the city. However, the novel successfully distils the nostalgia for a past Istanbul through a character like Hicabi, who is not an elite man at all. As discussed various times until now, the nostalgic discourse about Istanbul is widespread among the elite targeting the immigrants in the city. However, it is possible to long for the disappeared beauties of Istanbul without blaming immigrants for the loss. This is what Hicabi does. Introducing Hicabi, the novel turns two central clichés of the Istanbulites vs. ‘non-Istanbulites’ dichotomy upside down: first, it is not only the elite who are sorry for the negative changes in the city. Second, people who have not been born in this city can appreciate its beauty and heritage.

### 12.6 Conclusion

At a very early stage in the novel, the narrator comments that after feeling insecure in the city at the beginning, immigrants “. . . were able to challenge Istanbul”<sup>483</sup> (32). Such a wording can first be perceived as slightly on the side of the anti-immigrant discourse: that immigrants come and then they become demanding. However, when the novel is taken as a whole, it is clear that this phrasing is a reference to the way immigrants struggle and fight for their various rights in the city. The expression implies a certain strength in immigrants: the novel finds them strong and also stresses that they see themselves as strong, since they can survive in the city. The book emphasises the hardship rural to urban immigrants face in the city, and depicts them not in terms of a call for pity, but emphasising their will to survive in the urban setting. The ending of the novel is particularly powerful in this respect. In the final chapter of the novel, entitled “Life Flows like the Water of The Bosphorus” (284)<sup>484</sup>, it is the time of a religious holiday, although it is not specified whether it is Eid or The Feast of the Sacrifice. All Kozluk people are in their best outfits to visit their relatives and neighbours. Zümrüt, Cavit and their children are in the blue pickup on their way to their visits. In the final scene of the novel, the pickup is in the middle of the Bosphorus Bridge and Cavit is driving fast. The narration of Cavit’s feelings as he drives over the bridge is noteworthy: “Cavit was content. At one point, he took a glance at the mansions, each glittering like a piece of jewellery in the sun, the palaces and again the still waters of the straits of the city of Istanbul, which expanded on the two sides of the two gigantic continents. . . . Cavit was astonished. . . was not life running like the waters running through the straits?”<sup>485</sup> (285) Straight after these feelings of Cavit, some parts of which are rendered through psycho-narration, the

<sup>483</sup> “. . . İstanbul’a kafa tutar hala gelmişlerdi kısa zamanda.”

<sup>484</sup> “Boğazdan Akan Sular Gibi Akıyor Hayat”

<sup>485</sup> “Memnundu Cavit. Bir ara gözü aşağıda, iki dev kıtanın iki yakasına yayılan şehir-i İstanbul’un, güneşin altında her biri birer mücevher gibi ışıldayan yalılarına, saraylarına ve yine boğazın durgun sularına takıldı. . . . Hayret etti Cavit. . . . boğazdan akan sular gibi akıyor muydu hayat da?”

narrator's comments are heard: "They were going to visits on every holiday. . . . [they were] melt[ing] mint or cacao-flavoured cheap sweets on their palates . . . They were exhibiting that they could stand up against that tide, all that distress, aside from all that nuisance and worry . . . rather than life prevailing over them, they were prevailing over life, sort of defying each other a little bit"<sup>486</sup> (286). These are the final words of the novel, which ends with Cavit's contemplation over the Bosphorus Bridge<sup>487</sup>. As the narrator describes Cavit's contemplation, his thoughts as he looks at the view of the Bosphorus while he is driving over the Bosphorus Bridge, she uses the Ottoman phrase of "şehir-i İstanbul" [the city of Istanbul] (285). This word choice in narration seems to imply Cavit's pleasure, as he enjoys the view, arising from the awareness of living in a historical city which served as the capital of the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years.

The two central tenets of the novel are combined in this ending: the way the people of Kozluk live in an isolated way from the city centre, and the hardships they face to survive in the city. The ending of the novel presents these two central themes through their reciprocity: after all the hardships they suffer in the city, in an isolated place like Kozluk, there are times they can enjoy the city, with its views and historical heritage, at least on a special occasion like a religious holiday. The bridge here seems to be a metaphor for the connection between the city centre and isolated ex-shantytowns: the city centre, the historical buildings, palaces and mansions as well as ex-shantytowns on the outskirts of the city, they all together constitute the city of Istanbul. This way the novel also implies that the city belongs to everyone living in this city.

Throughout *Kinds*, there are a couple of instances when the use of humour might seem slightly leaning to an anti-immigrant and/or elitist discourse. As mentioned earlier, the passages about Kozluk children's unwillingness to go to school and their tendency towards crime are the main examples of this. Another such instance is at the very beginning of the novel, when the narrator uses the word "karikatürize" [caricatured] for the hair style of Kozlukite brides (11). However, when the novel is perceived as a whole, it becomes clear that the use of humour is with the intention of laughing with Kozlukites rather than laughing at them. This is the very position of the novel, looking at the life of immigrants in remote

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<sup>486</sup> "Her bayram ziyaretlere gidiyorlardı. . . . damaklarında naneli ya da kakaolu ucuz şekerleri eriti[yor] . . . Şu akıntıya karşı ayakta durabildiklerini, onca sıkıntı, onca dert tasa bir yana . . . hayatın kendilerine değil de, kendilerinin hayata galebe çaldıklarını sergiliyor, eh biraz da nispet yapıyorlardı." Gaz pedalına sonuna kadar bastı Cavit."

<sup>487</sup> It is not specified whether they are going from the European to the Anatolian side of Istanbul. However, if Kozluk is near Hadımköy, they must be going from the European side to the Anatolian.

corners of the city. It is realistic and objective, yet sympathetic, and calls for empathy rather than pity.

The novel looks at Kozluk with empathy, an imaginary place which in reality would be looked down on and stigmatised as a *varoş*, and to its people who would be humiliated as *varoş* types. At one point in the novel, the semi-pejorative and semi-elitist but at the same time humanist anti-shanty discourse in the intellectual and academic context is satirised: “. . . while modern urban planners who regard having been born in this city as bad luck keep organizing forum after forum, discuss over and over again that these structures, which partly look like a shanty and partly like an apartment building, destroy the silhouette of the city . . . ” (33)<sup>488</sup>. Obviously, the sarcasm here aims at the limited perspective of the majority of urbanists, who perceive the shanty issue only in terms of the look of the city, while ignoring the rights of and hard facts about people living in these shanties.

The final passage of the introduction comes to the fore almost as a poetic expression of the novel’s approach to people living in places like Kozluk. “Once Kozlukite mothers and fathers also have the grandchildren whom they were looking forward to, they start talking about the next world like they are talking about the next street”<sup>489</sup> (12). She adds: “. . . when they silently die under their heavy wool duvets or in the dim corridors of state hospitals, no one will be any the wiser. This story is theirs”<sup>490</sup> (12). The novel does not idealise the place nor depict its people as heroes or angels. It simply approaches them with empathy while depicting, in a realistic manner, the negative aspects of life in a place like Kozluk, the banal sides of its people, the degenerate ways of the lumpen proletariat, without being judgemental. It achieves this through the use of humour, and emphasises the possibility of approaching the amorphous looking ex-shantytowns dismissed as *varoşes*, and their poor and mostly uneducated people with an overall different attitude from that pumped out by the mainstream media.

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<sup>488</sup> “. . . bu şehirde doğmuş olmayı bahtsızlıklarına yoran modern şehir planlamacıları panel üzerine panel düzenlerken, kısmen gecekonduya kısmen de apartmana benzeyen bu yapıların şehrin silüetini bozduğu hususunu uzun tartışırken . . . ”

<sup>489</sup> “Kozluklu ana babalar, dört gözle bekledikleri torunlarına da çarçabuk kavuştuktan sonra, öte dünyadan adeta bir sokak öteden bahseder gibi bahsetmeye başlar.”

<sup>490</sup> “. . . ağır yün yorganların altında yahut devlet hastanelerinin loş koridorlarında sessizce öldüklerinde kimselerin ruhu duymaz. Bu hikaye onların.”