

LIFE AMONG THE NON- MUSLIM SPECTRES OF YELDEGIRMENI:
IMAGINATIONS THROUGH SPACE

by

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ABSTRACT

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Once home to an equal amount of Jews and Turks, and a lesser amount of Greeks and Armenians, the Yeldeğirmeni neighborhood of Kadıköy today is a very populated area comprising mostly from Turks and Kurds, that has been going through a period of gentrification in the last years. There are almost no members of the non-Muslim community left, and the historical or popular accounts on the communities and the events leading to their absence are scarce, and mostly unavailable. Using mainly semi-structured interviews, along with textual and ethnographic analyses, this study explores, based on the case of Yeldeğirmeni, people's attachments to the place they live in, especially when such place is one that have been abandoned by a group "other" to themselves, in the aftermath of a violent history. How do the present inhabitants of Yeldeğirmeni conceive of the history of the non-Muslim population of the area? How do the inhabitants of the neighborhood conceive of the history of the space and the buildings they live in, what do they themselves remember, and do the non-Muslim history take a part in the history they narrate? When history itself is fragmentary and incomplete - what kinds of affective responses do the unfinished stories of the past of the area evoke, and how are they dealt with?

ÖZET

YELDEĞİRMENİ'NDE GAYRİMÜSLİMLERİN HAYALETLERİ ARASINDA YAŞAM: MEKAN ÜZERİNE HAYALLER

AYLİN DENİZ ÜLKÜMEN

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Anahtar Kelimeler: hafıza, gayriMüslimler, mahalle çalışmaları, nostalji, Yeldeğirmeni

Bir zamanlar eşit sayıda Türk ve Yahudi'nin, daha az sayıda da Rum ve Ermeni'nin yaşadığı Kadıköy'ün Yeldeğirmeni mahallesi bugün, daha çok Türklerin ve Kürtlerin yaşadığı ve soylulaşma sürecinden geçmekte olan kalabalık ve popüler bir mekan haline gelmiştir. Gayri müslim topluluklardan geriye mahallede yaşayan pek az kişi kaldığı söylene de, nüfus kaybını açıklayan anlatı veya metinler yok denecek kadar azdır. Büyük ölçüde yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelere dayanan, ancak metin analizlerini ve etnografik analizleri de kullanan bu çalışma, Yeldeğirmeni mahallesi örneği üzerinden, kişilerin –özellikle de şiddet içeren bir geçmişin ardından kendilerine “öteki” olan grupların terk ettiği mekanlarda yaşamını sürdüren kişilerin- yaşadıkları mekanla kurdukları ilişkileri incelenmeyi hedeflemiştir. Çalışmanın peşine düştüğü temel sorular şöyledir; Yeldeğirmeni'nde son dönemlerde yaşayan kişiler nasıl bir mahalle tarihi kurguluyorlar? Yaşadıkları mekanın, yapıların tarihini nasıl anlatıyorlar, kendileri neler hatırlıyorlar, ve bu anılarda gayrimüslimlerin nasıl bir yeri var? Anlatılan tarih parçalı ve eksik olduğunda, mekanın tarihine dair boşluklu anlatılar nasıl duygular uyandırıyor ve bunlarla nasıl başa çıkılıyor?

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Statement

Yeldeğirmeni is a neighborhood situated in central Kadıköy, between the Haydarpaşa Terminal and the Halitağa Fountain. As it is bordered with roads on four sides, the neighborhood can be distinguished from its exteriors, and remains to this day as a an area where many of its inhabitants are familiar to each other. Though in fact the area is legally registered as “Rasimpaşa”, in the everyday it is still being referred to as “Yeldeğirmeni”. The area has witnessed various changes in terms of its inhabitants throughout history, and is now undergoing a process of gentrification. It is known that in the early 20th century, the majority of the neighborhood was Jewish and many Turks, and fewer Greeks and Armenians also used to reside in the area, as well as Italians and French (Turkay, 2010). However, not many remain from the non-Muslim population; and the majority is known to be Turkish or Kurdish, and Muslim, among many are those who have been migrating to the area from various places in Anatolia.

My entry into the field took place in 2012, years before my field study, when I was advised to visit Yeldeğirmeni while searching for an affordable apartment to rent in Kadıköy. My prospective housemate’s parents had lived in the area many years ago, and a friend of her family had suggested that we go visit the neighborhood as it had “changed much” in the recent years. As someone who had grown up in Kadıköy, I was surprised at this suggestion; my associations about the area consisted only of “birahane”s – pubs where men dominated; but I was even more surprised when we did visit the neighborhood. The neighborhood which we feared in our youth seemed peaceful and warm. I was even more surprised to see that it consisted

mostly of 3 to 4 floor houses, of which many were characteristically constructed by non-Muslims. There was a synagogue, and three minutes apart from it, a church. (I would find out about the mosque years later, as it was not in the center of the area). All along the Karakolhane Street, the main street of the neighborhood constructed with cobblestone –a pavement characteristic of the old parts of the city-, were small shops where daily interaction between the inhabitants took place. The neighborhood had indeed been dominated by Jews and Christians some time ago, even though they seem to have disappeared now. The abundance of Turkish flags hung in numbers at the windows of old non-Muslim houses was striking.

Today, besides a mosque built in 1836, there remains one synagogue (built in 1899) and a Catholic church (built in 1912) located in proximity to each other. The only schools of the neighborhood are those two whose names have later been converted to Turkish: the Saint Euphemie French School (now Kemal Atatürk Lisesi) and a German school (now Osmangazi İlkokulu), and the Saint Louis Primary School which now serves as a dormitory (Turkay, 2010). The dates written on the school building correspond not to the date of their constructions, but to the dates of conversion. When the scant historical (official or popular) accounts of Yeldeğirmeni are examined, the disregard for the non-Muslim population is striking. Most accounts focus on the beginnings of inhabitation at the site in the Ottoman period, barely mention in one sentence the past presence of “non-Muslims” as a category unclear in what it includes, and again at times remark that for the most part, the communities do not remain in the neighbourhood, without giving any details as to why and how their absence took place. Therefore it can be said that in the written accounts there is a silence on part of the history of the non-Muslim population, and the remaining population also remains invisible since the religious institutions remain closed for most of the time, and the shops that used to belong to them have either changed hands or do not make their owners explicit (the names are all in regular Turkish). Therefore, the everyday life of the neighborhood includes repeated encounters with such material remnants of their absence and once presence. As a consequence, it can be said that although the population may be absent from historical accounts and physically absent themselves, they remain in other forms of materialities.

My encounter with the non-Muslim traces of the site had been quite peculiar as well as spontaneous. We had arrived at the neighborhood searching for an apartment (to which we would later be moving in). As we climbed up the stairs, our landlord pointed to a woman sitting by the window in a house just across ours, saying, “Look, this is a Greek lady. But she is very nice”. The introducing of those not Turkish as “Kurdish/Jewish/Greek/Armenian... but

nice/kind/hospitable” etc. was an already accustomed statement. However, I was surprised that her identity was known to him, and also that he had chosen to tell us about her. I later realized that such introductions would be occasional. A year later, I was again entering the apartment when I met a young woman working for the elderly couple downstairs, whom she presented to me as “Jewish but very kind.” In a surprising need to relieve her, I found myself introducing myself as half Jewish, after which she grabbed me by the arm to introduce to the elderly man, who was extremely delighted –to my surprise- to meet me and repeatedly asked me to come visit him longer. I had had the impression that he behaved as if he had found something rare but joyful for him. My last spontaneous encounter was last summer when an elderly woman suddenly came to sit next to me to ask the time for iftar as it was Ramadan, was shocked because I did not know, and upon my claim to Jewishness to escape criticism, she was relieved. She told me that “it was not a problem”, and that her great grandfather was also Armenian. “Kan beş göbek geçermiş,” [blood is transmitted for five generations] she told me, and that the Armenianness would end with her. Then suddenly, bursting into tears, she started telling me that “Hz. Muhammed was such a great person, so generous, so kind...”, stood up and walked away.

I had been wondering about where the non-Muslims who used to dominate the area had disappeared, although I did not yet have an answer, those remaining were at the same time both invisible and very visible, in minority yet salient as to be primarily introduced upon meeting. However, the narratives of my first informants about the non-Muslims they had met personally or had been observing in the neighborhood were strikingly contradictory in themselves and with each other. This appeared also to be the case with how they recounted the history of the neighborhood, and especially the history that regarded non-Muslims specifically. Considering together with brief instances with other inhabitants, the question about the history of Yeldeğirmeni evoked narratives either about the remembered past with non-Muslims, imagined past of the non-Muslims, or heard past about them. In any case, they were partial, fragmentary, and contradicted each other.

This study explores, based on the case of Yeldeğirmeni, people’s attachments to the place they live in, especially when such place is one that has been abandoned by a group “other” to themselves, in the aftermath of a violent history. Using primarily ethnographic fieldwork, I would like to pursue the question of what it means to inhabit a formerly non-Muslim house whose habitants had somehow disappeared, and to hang the flags at the windows, looking and being looked at from outside? How do the inhabitants of the neighborhood conceive of the

history of the space and the buildings they live in, what do they themselves remember, and do the non-Muslim history take a part in the history they narrate? And more specifically, how do they relate to the space left by the non-Muslims, and to the non-Muslims who have left, if they do in any way? Can we speak of a form of affectivity that emerges from living in the remains of the “other” that comes into an interplay with how the present inhabitants conceive of the space they live in?

1.2. Theoretical Framework and Research Motivations

Before examining the case of Yeldeğirmeni in particular, it is useful to first have a look at the course of the conditions of non-Muslims in Turkey in general, and more specifically in Istanbul. Until the formation of the Republic, the Ottoman Empire comprised of a multiethnic and multireligious structure which then had to be forged into a unitary nation state. Before the Turkish War of Independence the non-Muslims comprised approximately %15 of the population, which had decreased to 2% of the population in 1927, and then decreased to 1.6% in 1935 (Toktaş, 2009). There were differences in the population change trajectories of different groups; between 1927 and 1935, the Armenian and Jewish population had decreased, while the Greek population had increased, because of a treaty that granted Greek citizens living in Turkey a residence permit in Turkey. However in 1945, the population of Jews, Greeks, and Armenians had all decreased to comprise the 1.3% of the general population (Toktaş, 2009).

The massive events that took place in the Republican Period that can be considered as the milestones to the intensification of nationalism and oppression against non Muslims, as well as to the significant decrease in the non Muslim population in Turkey can be named as the population exchange between 1922-1924, the Wealth Tax Law (1942), the 6-7 September events (Caymaz & Çanakçı, 2016), the 1964 forced migration of Greeks and the Cyprus Operation in 1974. Türker asserts that the population loss on the part of the Greeks (in Kadıköy in general) is firstly (and mostly) due to their migration and population exchange after 1922. He states that with the increasing upheaval, Turks had begun manifestations against the Greeks during 1921-1922, and that during the 1923-1924 population exchange, Kadıköy had become one of the main areas of the “humanity drama.” Türker describes how at the time many Greek families had fled the country without being able to spare the time to sell their property. Between

the years 1922-1924, 1,200,000 Greeks residing in Anatolia and 400,000 Muslims residing in Greece were deported and exchanged, leading to major changes in the social and political spheres of both countries. (Aktar, 2000, p.17). On 3-4 May 1934, a statement was announced to declare that unless the people who had fled appealed to the population exchange commission by June 30, their property would be transferred to the Turkish Treasury. Between the years 1935-1945, the Greek population had decreased by 21.000 and the Armenian population had decreased by 1000. Toktaş states that before the formation of Israel in 1948, there was a greater decrease in the Greek and Armenian population, and following 1948, the decrease in the Jewish population had increased. Greeks had migrated mostly to Greece, Armenians to France and the U.S., and Jews to Israel. (Toktaş, 2009).

The second milestone is the Wealth Tax Law that was passed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 11 November 1942. The law itself described only a payment of tax, but with one catch: there were four different categories (Muslims, non-Muslims, converts, foreigners) and each category had its own tax rate. The taxes for non Muslims, Jewish converts and foreigners (those who are not citizens) were significantly higher than Muslims: non-Muslims were obliged to pay 10 times more than Muslims, and two times more than converts. Those who failed to pay the taxes were sent to work camps in Aşkale where they would be forced to work under fierce conditions, and many non Muslims had thereby lost all their wealth and property due to the high tax rates. Bali (2012) explains the grounds to this law by stating that the regime had not succeeded in turkifying the economy and control was still on minorities, not Turkish bourgeoisie. The economic life was dominated by the minorities at the time. In 1942, the newspapers of Istanbul were news targeting non Muslims, and especially Jews, denoting they were gaining excessive profit, by illegitimate ways (Hür, 2016) providing the social ground which would support the law. Toktaş reports that between the years 1943-1944 approximately 4000 Jews had migrated to Palestine (Benbasse & Rodrigue, as cited in Toktaş, 2009), and several years later, approximately half of the Jewish population of Turkey migrated (approximately 35,000 people) to Israel in the year of its foundation in May 1948 (Bali, 2012). Bali claims that even though their future in a newly founded state was uncertain, the reason why almost half of the population had fled their country of origin was the discriminatory nature of the policies in Turkey, and not the economical advantages offered by Israel as it is commonly assumed.

The events that took place in 6-7 September 1955 was another important milestone leading to the migration of non-Muslim groups. Following the false news declaring that the

house of Atatürk in Selanik was bombed by Greeks, Turkish masses had come together to assault non-Muslims and loot their shops, especially in Beyoğlu, where they were predominant. These assaults were mostly on Greeks, but many Jews, and fewer Armenians had also been assaulted. However, according to Akgönül (2007, p.23), the Greek population had not decreased immensely even following the 6-7 September events, and it had in fact increased between the years 1955 and 1960. In his book *Rum Olmak, Rum Kalmak*, Yücel (2016) states that despite the massive damage of 6-7 September, the events had not led the Greeks to leave the country, and in fact, the number of students taught in Greek schools had increased -until 1963 when the population would decrease. (Ananasrassiadou 200, as cited in Yücel 2016). He states that during the 40 years between the population exchange and 1964 deportation, the decrease in the number of Greek population is not significant, and the major event that had led to the massive migration had rather been the 1964 exile. With the cancellation of the 1930 Treaty with Greece that granted the citizens of both countries with the right to entrance, trade and reside in the other country, 12 thousand Greek citizens were forced to leave the country, with certain limitations on their belongings and accumulation. This policy had in fact affected more than 12 thousand people, as the Greek citizens of Turkey were also affected because they had family members of Greek citizenship, and still others were affected by the massive migration and increased oppression. According to Türker (2008), the Greeks of Istanbul were anxious following the deportation of Greek citizens, and many had thus migrated themselves, leading to a dramatic decrease in the Greek population of Kadıköy, and accordingly to the emergence of a “Muslim, Turkish Kadıköy” in the 1970’s. Samim Akgönül (2014) states that it is suggested that approximately 30.000 Greeks of Turkish citizenship had migrated along with 11.000 Greek citizens between the years 1960-1965.

The decrease in the population was thus very visible, and with the increased polarization, the 1974 Cyprus Operation served as the ground on which the attitudes towards Greeks would change even in cosmopolitan neighborhoods (Yücel, 2016). The migrations continued, and the number of the non-Muslim population decreased significantly in the following years. According to Çimen Turan, Greek population of Turkey had decreased from 105.000 in 1955 to 5000 in 1975. For the Jewish population, Bali states that following the period of 1980, the population of Turkey increased while the Jewish population decreased, the major reason being the migration to Israel, and this led to the ever marginalization of the Jewish population. In 2003, the Jewish population was not between 20.000-25.000.

The scholarship on the history and the present situation of non-Muslims in Turkey follows a particular trend. Bali (2007) describes how until the 1980's, the scholarship on non-Muslims was treated as pertaining only to the field of history, and was aimed mostly at defending the implementations of the state in the international arena. Critical work was scarce, and the official discourses predominated the field. Following the 1980's, new perspectives emerged especially in journals and the civic organisations, and following the 1990's, critical scholarship on minorities was on the rise.

Today, there is a rich dissident scholarship that critically examines the history and the present situation of non-Muslims, and the wider question of nationalism in Turkey. The transition to a modern nation state from the Ottoman Empire brought about certain reforms, of which an important portion was devoted to the standardization and homogenization of the population by "nationalizing, secularizing, and Westernizing" (Ekmekçioğlu, 2016). Although the major narratives about Turkey relied on the themes of unity and sameness, as Ekmekçioğlu notes, these narratives were used not for cohabitation, but for the denial of difference and homogenization. Even though it is a common statement that "Turkishness" takes as its ground shared citizenship that transcends any differences of race, religion, and language, such statement falls behind its claim, revealing instead an understanding of Turkishness that bases itself on ethnicity, race, and religion (Yıldız, 2001; Maksudyan, 2005; Ekmekçioğlu, 2016). In his work "Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene", Yıldız cautiously examines who is implicated in, and who is discluded from, the category "Turk", and delineates three points in history determinant in the formation of the category of Turk. He claims that Kemalist nationalism has constructed Turkhood not based on a transcendent political identity free of ethnicity, but on a monolithic form of Turkhood that is based on a unison in language, culture, and blood.

Along the lines of the modern nation state, the aim of the Republic included an intense program of Turkification, described by Aktar (2000, p.101) as the "exclusive predomination at all levels of the Turkish ethnic identity in all spheres of life, from the language spoken at the street to the history taught as schools, from education to the industrial arena, from trade to state personnel regime, from private law to the settling of citizens in particular areas." In line with this programme, non-Muslims would be granted by the state equal rights with Muslims as citizens, only in exchange for their giving up their native tongues, *ülkü*, and cultures for the Turkish language, *ülkü* and culture. However, as Bali (2007) puts forward, this contract would never be fully actualized, as neither the state nor the society would treat non-Muslims as Turkish, and the divide would remain. Therefore, Bali strongly supports that an important point

that is missed out in the scholarship on Turkification is that the aim was not to fully assimilate non-Muslims into the category of Turk; there was a double bind that led to the simultaneous requirement of Turkification from non-Muslims, and attempts to avoid full assimilation and to deny sameness in order to distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims. Ekmekçioğlu (2016) advances this view with her concept of “secular dhimmitude”, claiming that the situation of the non-Muslims in modern Turkey resembles highly the case of the dhimma in the Ottoman Empire. She proposes that the primacy of religion in determining one’s legal status in the Ottoman Period remained to some extent in the construction of citizenship in the Turkish Republic; and uses the oxymoron “secular dhimmitude” to refer to the position of non-Muslims who are treated as “step citizens” despite the alleged secular character of the Republic, and to describe their simultaneous exclusion from and inclusion in Turkishness.

Parla and Özgül (2016) point out that national citizenship of the Turkish Republic has been formed at three simultaneous levels: the homogenization of the population by mass destruction, the governing of the difference of those who have remained, and the dispossession of non-Muslim/non-Turkish property (to which they propose to add the transmission of such property to Muslim immigrants). Thus, an important part of the process of Turkification centered around the landscape and materialities, of the many properties that once belonged to non-Muslims, and were then, in various ways, confiscated and appropriated by the state, as well as by other citizens. These processes can be examined in two veins, the process of confiscation and appropriation, and the process of the silencing of such appropriation. As Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt (2012) meticulously show in their work “The Spirit of the Laws”, mass killings are only one part of genocides, an important and less discussed part is played out in the legal sphere by the confiscation of properties that once belonged to non-Muslim minorities who were killed, deported, or had to flee - and the legal system that rendered this redistribution possible, still forms the basis of the legal system and the property regime today (Akçam & Kurt, 2012). Many properties were confiscated without compensation, some using legal means, many other properties left by those who had been forcefully exchanged or fled the country were appropriated (see Ekmekçioğlu, 2016; Nalcı & Dağlıoğlu, 2011). As Nalcı and Dağlıoğlu (2011) point out, the rearrangement of the urban landscape is central to the the nation state model of silencing the past and introducing instead its official history. What is denied in official history is not only the mass killings and deportations, the acts of violence, but the very former existence of the minorities that have been perceived as threats to the nation- state (Suciyan,

2015). Therefore, that which is silenced is not only the massive violence, but a whole history of existence, as well as a history of appropriation and desettling.

However, such a history enters the lives of ordinary citizens at the everyday, through the daily encounters with the urban landscape. In her ethnographic work in northern Cyprus with the Turkish Cypriots who have come to habit the spaces left by the Greek Cypriots in the 1974 Invasion, Yael Navaro (2012) examines “what is retained in material objects and the physical environment in the aftermath of the disappearance of the humans linked or associated with that thing of space” (p.17). She seeks out to understand the affective transmission between the new inhabitants and the space left by the others, in order to understand whether such remains which she terms the 'phantomic', discharge a specific affective state that conflict with the dominant ideological, social, and political practices (which she terms the 'phantasmatic'). Based on her ethnography, she concludes that the Greek Cypriots, though physically absent, nevertheless remain affectively present in the form of their material remnants and accordingly, through the imagination of the Turkish Cypriots who live with those remnants. According to her analysis, such conflict between the phantomic and the phantasmatic either lead to a state of melancholy in which the new inhabitants live in a state of arrest, within the memories of violence and anticipation of the return of those who had left, or invoke the discursive stances of support for a separate state. Based on her ethnography, Navaro claims that against the totality of ideological practices and discourses, living with the remnants of “the other” may invoke disruptions that break through these totalities, holding that affect may play a role in such ideological dispositions, and may have an impact on how people are positioned with regard to predominant ideologies.

This study is based on a territory in which the phantasmatic belonged to an unrecognized state, which for Yashin, reveals even more explicitly the make-believe qualities of states, and in which the foundational violence is also in its most explicit form due to the physical and visible traces that remain from the violence experienced in the very field of inhabitation. In the case of Turkey in general, and Istanbul in particular, time has passed since the massive events of violence, such visible traces are not common if present at all, and the acts of confiscation and appropriation, have formed a landscape that conceals the multireligious and multiethnic past (Kezer, 2011), resulting in the anonymity of the properties (Parla & Özgül, 2016). The non-Muslim history of the many governmental buildings such as the Çankaya Palace (Kezer, 2011) and public areas such as the Gezi Park which was home to massive protests (Nalçı and Dağlıoğlu, 2011; Parla & Özgül, 2016) is not common knowledge, even though the daily

life of an ordinary Istanbulite can be filled with encounters with such past, as Nalcı and Dağlıoğlu (2011) describe, tombstones that once used to belong to the Surp Hagop Armenian Cemetery were later used as part of the stairs of the Gezi Park that was constructed after the cemetery was confiscated by the İstanbul Municipality.

In their discussion of the discourses of activists of the Gezi Park protests upon the Armenian origins of the Park and its later confiscation, Parla and Özgül (2016) point out to the lack of attention to such history, and suggest that the absoluteness of the phantasmatic in the denial of the genocide and confiscation has resulted in the almost complete disappearance of the phantomic, which has been reinforced by the passage of time. They hold that even when the phantomic does appear, it is quickly domesticated and dismissed.

The main question that underlies the present study regards the relationship between the memory regarding the area's history as recounted by the present inhabitants and the "affectivity of the remains." How do the present inhabitants of Yeldeğirmeni conceive of the history of the non-Muslim population of the area? When history itself is fragmentary and incomplete - what kinds of affective responses do the unfinished stories of the past of the area evoke? Do the present inhabitants relate to the ones who left, and if it does, how does space mediate this relationship? The neighborhood of Yeldeğirmeni, İstanbul is also a site where the traces of violence are not readily visible, though it may be one that the reverberations of such violence could be felt. The events that consist the violence for those minorities of the Yeldeğirmeni population, the 1915 Genocide, the 1974 Operation, and the 6-7 September events all took place elsewhere, though they appear as important milestones that led to the non-Muslim populations abandonment of the site, as mentioned in the interviews.

Yeldeğirmeni offers a good site for the fieldwork for several reasons. The history of Yeldeğirmeni is also parallel to the story of the formation and transformations of the Republic. It begins in the Ottoman era in the time of Abdülhamit with the construction of Haydarpaşa and the making of the windmills, continues with the settlement of Jews, Christians, and Turks; then most of non-Muslims are said to have fled after the deportation of Greeks and the 6-7 September events, the latter coincides with the migration of Kurds and people from Karadeniz mostly due to economic impoverishment, which, years later is followed by processes of gentrification and the start of urban transformation. This story makes the place a particularly interesting field to study memory, imagination, and their relation to national identity. What makes Yeldeğirmeni different than areas like Kurtuluş, Moda, or Beyoğlu however is that even though the area used to be a populated non-Muslim area, sometimes also known as a Jewish neighborhood, today,

this history is not much known, and before the period of gentrification, it was even less known. The area is just besides Kadıköy, in the center of Istanbul, however, including myself, most people visiting Kadıköy regularly would not have heard of Yeldeğirmeni or know its past before the gentrification period. Therefore the area had remained somewhat hidden from the eyes of strangers until the last five years. The present process of gentrification taking place has also made salient the issues of belonging to space, as there are constant discussions about the “newcomers” and the “actual inhabitants” of the site. Besides, the fact that the neighborhood has witnessed the squatting of a house in the Gezi Period makes the space unique in a certain way. Besides, the area can still be considered to be a “mahalle” [neighborhood], people are accustomed to each other, there are shops where people gather together.

1.3. Methodology

For this study, I have made use of mainly semi-structured interviews, along with textual and ethnographic analyses. The textual analyses consist mainly of the available historical accounts, of which some were autobiographical, of the area Yeldeğirmeni. The written resources on the history of the area are scarce and limited in scope. Still, there are few official accounts of the site, and more popular accounts such as blogs, books or magazine articles related to the history of the site. One important resource is the material on the “Yeldeğirmeni Canlandırma Projesi” run by the Kadıköy Municipality and ÇEKÜL Foundation¹. The book and blog of Arif Atılğan², an architect and long time inhabitant of the area who has been working on the history of Yeldeğirmeni, is also of special importance. The book edited by Anri Niyego and published by the Hemdat Israel Synagogue of Yeldeğirmeni and Orhan Türker’s research on the Greeks of Kadıköy published under the name of “Halkidona’dan Kadıköy’e” are used to provide resources for the Jewish and Greek population of the area. I will also be making use of books and articles that include personal accounts, such as “Kolay mı Fenerbahçeli Olmak” by Halit Deringör, “Çamlıca’dan Yeldeğirmeni’ne Rüzgarın Peşinde” by Melisa Gürpınar³.

The aim of using such textual material is to have a brief understanding of the social and institutional context in which the affective transmissions of space, imaginations of the people, and their constructions of history are taking place; in other words, such analysis will attempt to

¹ See <http://www.cekulvakfi.org.tr/haber/kadikoyun-tarihi-yeldegirmeni-mahallesi-canlaniyor>

² <http://atilganblog.blogspot.com.tr/>

³ I would like to thank Eser Sandıkçı and Zafer Ülger who has shared with me these resources that were not easily accessible.

analyze especially the phantasmatic through official texts and documents, in order to understand how, firstly this space was literally and practically crafted through transactions of the buildings, and secondly, the content of the dominant narratives of the history of the site.

The ethnographic fieldwork consisted mostly of semi structured interviews and participant observation that included brief encounters and meetings taking place in the field. As an inhabitant for the last 4 years, I had already been observing daily life in the neighborhood as well as occasionally meeting people living there, therefore having brief encounters with people who have spoken to me about the history of the site. I have conducted semi structured interviews with 9 people who have grown up in the neighborhood (of whom two identified as Jewish and the rest as Turkish, Kurdish, or Arabic) between the years 1950's and 1980's, 6 people who moved in in the last 20 years (one identified as Jewish, the rest as Turkish or Kurdish), and 2 people who grew up in Yeldeğirmeni in the 1980's (both identified as Turkish). Most of my interviewees –who had grown up in Yeldeğirmeni- had grown up in houses that had been built by non-Muslims. They were either in rent and living as neighbors with their landlords, or their families had somehow bought the houses. Only one interviewee had been presently living in a house he had occupied.

I had planned to speak especially with people living in the houses abandoned by non-Muslims; I had heard many instances of occupation of the abandoned houses in Yel değirmeni. However, it is said that many occupied houses have been emptied by their occupiers in the recent years. One of my informants, a teacher working in one of the schools of the neighborhood, told me that in the past many of her students' parents used to live in the abandoned houses, sometimes with no electricity and gas; and that they had moved away mostly in the recent years because of the gradual increase in the expensiveness of the neighborhood, as well as the recent renovation of some of the houses. Some houses had allegedly been burnt down because it was expensive to get accepted the projects for historical buildings. Therefore, it was quite difficult to reach out to people living in the abandoned houses; I could manage to speak with only one person living in an abandoned house he had occupied, but spoke with others who had grown up in the neighborhood in houses they had rented or bought from non-Muslims.

I have also done participant observation in a group in the social media where there are more than a few thousand people who used to live in Yeldeğirmeni. It is a very active open group where people who formerly used to or currently live in the area share with each other stories and photographs regarding their past life in the neighbourhood, and discussions take

place beneath the posts. Besides meeting with prospective interviewees, I also had the chance to observe for a long time the discussions in the group until I was banned from it, as I will discuss in the Chapter 4.

My interviews were semi structured with the content changing according to the informant, as well as my degree of covertness/overtness. I revealed my identity as a researcher in each case of interviews, apart from those encounters that occurred unexpectedly. The content of the questions and the presentation of the research differed, however, according to the profile of the informant. I presented my research more broadly and at times without mentioning non-Muslims at the beginning of the interviews, in order to see whether the issue would be brought up by the informant without being prompted, and if so, to see how it would be brought up. How would they narrate the stories when asked about their “history”, especially without being primed about the non-Muslims? During the interviews, I also made use of the space: How do the informants speak about the spaces they live in- their apartments, the streets, the religious buildings?

I had a peculiar position while conducting interviews; I was both a researcher and already an inhabitant. However, my position was regarded differently by different people: I was also one of the newcomers who had moved in in the latest years, and was therefore not the ideal insider. I had not seen how the neighborhood had “used to be” before the process of transformation. However, their positions as insiders were also contested, though they had been living there for years, they were also other migrants who had had hardships in getting to be a part of the neighborhood – but importantly, this was not something that was explicitly brought up by my informants.

1.4. The Case of Yeldeğirmeni

While searching for resources on the history of Yeldeğirmeni, at first I could find almost no source except the blog of Arif Atılğan (which would in the process be published as a book) and the description of the Yeldeğirmeni Vitalization Project. When I asked for help from my friends –and my gatekeepers- who had been quite active in the Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity Group that was formed during the summer of 2013 with the enthusiasm of the Gezi protests, I learned that at that period, they had been very interested with the history of the neighborhood, and sought out

and read what resources they could find. Thereby I was introduced to the semi-autobiographical book of Melisa Gürpınar, which then introduced me to a few other sources, and the book of the Jewish community of Yeldeğirmeni, published by the Hemdat Isreal Synagogue. For the written accounts, I have thereby primarily made use of Melisa Gürpınar's Çamlıca'dan Yeldeğirmeni'ne Rüzgarın Peşinde (2009), Arif Atılğan's Evvel Zaman içinde Yel değirmeni (2017), the project text of the Yeldeğirmeni Vitalization Project run by the Kadıköy Municipality and ÇEKÜL Foundation, the book Haydarpaşa'da Geçen 100 Yılımız edited by Anri Niyego and published by the Hemdat Israel Synagogue, Halit Deringör's autobiographical book Kolay mı Fenerbahçeli Olmak (2008), Orhan Türker's research From Halkidona to Kadıköy (2008), and the article written by Stella Ovadia in the Istanbul Magazine (1997).

Most historical accounts of Yeldeğirmeni begin with the time when a part of the area was given the name Haydarpaşa, and another part Yeldeğirmeni, "Windmill". The story goes that the place took its name during the Ottoman Period, from the four windmills built between 1774-1789 by the order of Abdulhamit the First, in order to provide flour for the soldiers practicing in the Haydarpaşa Meadow nearby. Most of the historical accounts also use a specific image of the windmills (see below) together with the story, an image architect Arif Atılğan (2017) claims has no historical accuracy and in fact belongs to somewhere else. This part of the area's history remains in most accounts salient and unchanging, and is the first story being told about Yeldeğirmeni, although solid historical resources of the depiction are missing. Atılğan (2017) remarks that the streets began to be formed towards the end of 1700's, but who lives in the area is unclear. In many sources, stories then unfold around the arrival and increase on Jews coming from Kuzguncuk, Greeks and Armenians appear in the story with no explanation as to how and from where they have come. Among the accounts I have examined, only the book of Türker who focused specifically on the Greek population involved an explanation of the Greek residence in the area. The book published by the Hemdat Israel Synagogue involved a detailed account of the Jewish settlement, and I found no source explaining the Armenian population.

According to Türker (2008) the non-Muslim population had increased in number in the second half of 19th century: following the Greeks, Armenians, Levantiens, and lastly Jews had arrived to settle in the area of Kadıköy. He describes that in the 1900's, Karamanlide Greeks had fled from Anatolia due to "poverty and upheaval" and arrived at Haydarpaşa by train, to settle in the closest neighborhood, that is, Yeldeğirmeni, transforming the area to a "populated

Greek neighborhood” in a few years. The church located in the main street of Yeldeğirmeni (Karakolhane Caddesi) was then built in 1919 as the churches available in Kadıköy was not much close. Niyego (1999), describes that the 1872 fire in Kuzguncuk had burnt down many houses of the Jewish community residing there, and led them to search a new place for living, which ended up being Yeldeğirmeni. He states that Jews and Muslims fleeing Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia had found refuge in Istanbul, and preferred to settle in Yeldeğirmeni as the architecture had reminded them of the homes they had forcefully left. He states that first Jews who were well off had settled in the area, followed by those Jews in harder economic conditions who had to flee (the reason why is unspecified) their towns in Anatolia.

Yeldeğirmeni had thus become a small but populated non-Muslim area, with mostly two floor houses and a central street with shops on both sides. In the first years of the Republic, the population of Yeldeğirmeni comprised of an equal number of Turks and Jews, and a lesser population of Greeks and Armenians (Niyego, 1999; Türker, 2008, Atılgan, 2017). Many of the neighborhood shops were run by non Muslims, and there were two stores where cocher meat could be found (Niyego, 2017). Both Niyego and Türker describe the neighborhood as conflictual at the time note that the construction of the Hemdat Israel Synagogue as being opposed by the Greeks and Armenians, and Niyego (1999) recounts that it was built against opposition, but with the support of the state.

There is hardly any explanation or description regarding the Turkish population in the neighborhood. Although my informants described migrations of Kurdish workers and their families starting from the first two decades of 1900’s, textual resources usually mention mass migrations as starting from the 1950’s. In most accounts, it is recounted that in the 1950’s and 1970’s Turks from Anatolia migrated in large numbers to the area. At times these “Turks from Anatolia” are described as coming from Karadeniz or from the “Eastern parts of Turkey”. Whether Kurds who have migrated in great numbers are not mentioned or mentioned beneath the category of “Turks from Anatolia” is not clear. Only Deringör (2008), who describes himself as “from Kurdish descent”, states that during his childhood in the 1920’s, Yeldeğirmeni comprised mostly of Jewish *and* Kurdish families.

Textual accounts depict a dramatic change in the multiethnic structure of the neighborhood population during the years, and today, the area is predominantly Turkish and Kurdish. The church is rarely open, the synagogue is visited mostly by those few people who have moved to other areas in Istanbul. The church bell does not ring anymore. One hears only

Turkish and Kurdish, and sometimes English or French, on the streets. The few non-Muslims still living in the area remain invisible, except for one or two exceptional cases. The names of the buildings and of some streets have changed: the Demirciyan Apartment built by Armenians now carries the name Tevfik Tura Apartment (Atılgan, 2017), Menase Apartment built by Jews has become Ankara Apartment (Atılgan, 2017), Hristovargi Street is now Misak-ı Milli Sokak (Gürpınar, 2009).

Türker describes the place in his own childhood in the 1950's; stating that even though the greek population was not dominant in number, the Greek still dominated the social and economic life in the Kadıköy in general. He states that in the 1950's the area was still multiethnic and the migration from Anatolia had not begun yet, implicitly relating the disappearance of the multiethnic life with the migration from Anatolia. In fact many of my informants, as well as other written sources have indicated that migration from Anatolia had taken place years before the 1950's, many of the Kurdish families settled in the area now had been living there for several generations.

There is not much resource available regarding the number and the life circumstances of non-Muslims living in Yeldeğirmeni. In one of the few resources, Türker (2008) reports that according to the Kadıköy Greek Metropolitan accounts, 2692 Greeks were recorded as settlers in Kadıköy in 1942, of whom 471 were registered in the Yeldeğirmeni Ayios Yeorgios Church, and in 1961, 403 Greeks from 143 families were registered in the Yeldeğirmeni Ayios Yeorgios church (Theofanos Theofanidis, as cited in Türker, 2008) and provides an abbreviated version of the list of the people registered. The people registered are dispersed in the neighborhood and the most populated streets were; Duatepe Street, Uzunhafız Street, İzzettin Street, Recaizade Street, and Taşlıbayır Street. Also provided is a list of the names of the Greek artisans of Yeldeğirmeni, which include (mostly) grocery store owners and doctors, as well as barbershop, tailors, a butcher, miliners, carpenters, herbalists, hat shop. The area around the synagogues is also known as the area where Jewish families were dominant (Niyego, 1999).

It is commonly said that the area remained multiethnic up until the 1960's even though there were decreases in the non-Muslim population. (Türker 2008, Atılgan, 2017). Atılgan remarks that the Armenian, Greek, and Jewish esnaf who were many gradually decreased in number towards the 1970's, and none remain to this day. Accordingly, the Greek Primary School in Yeldeğirmeni where 40 students were taught between the years 1954-1955 and 30 between the years 1963-1964 was closed as there were no students following the school year

of 1971-72 when there were only 3 students (Türker, 2008). In 2008 when the book was written, Türker reports that the Greek population of Kadıköy is estimatedly not more than a hundred. As I skimmed through the few resources I could find, I realized that I could find almost no answers to the question of how such a dramatic change of population had taken place in the area. These resources involved a description of the past life of the neighborhood as multiethnic and “cosmopolitan”, they did mention or emphasize that such life was now past, but there were only few mentions regarding when, how, or why such change had taken place.

1.5. The Textual Material Available

It is difficult to find commonalities in the texts, as their motivations appear to be quite different from each other. In these accounts and in the short narratives one would come across online, there are certain narratives that are dominant. The recounting of the history of the site begin mostly with the story of the name Yeldeğirmeni (windmill) and in many cases, the dominating stories are those that take place before the foundation of the Republic, and those that recount the harmonious life led by Turks, (sometimes Kurds are mentioned separately, sometimes not), Jews, Greeks, and Armenians. There are certain anecdotes such as the description of the “Paris mahallesi” where sex work is told to be prevalent, that can be found in almost any account.

Examined more closely, the description of the neighborhood life and the non-Muslim population remain rather superficial and stereotyped. The Yeldeğirmeni Vitalization Project, the only official account available on the site, is a project of urban renewal run by the Kadıköy Municipality and the ÇEKÜL Foundation. In the information booklet of the project, the most detailed narratives of historical events and the most elaborate descriptions of the area are those that took place in the Ottoman Period. There is a common “non-Muslims” category which remains unspecified, undefined, and ambiguous; Jews are mentioned separately for building the most elegant houses in the area, and there is no mentioning of Greeks or Armenians. In other cases, non-Muslims are either listed among the shopkeepers of the neighborhood, or mentioned separately from others, while emphasizing that they were peacefully present in the neighborhood.

The neighborhood life in the multiethnic period is depicted largely as harmonious. Only Türker and Niyego very briefly mention the conflicts between Greeks and Armenians and Jews,

which dates before the 20th century, however, in most cases, however, the relationships between different groups of non-Muslims are not considered. Otherwise, as in the quotation from Deringör below, the central emphasis is on the harmonious cohabitation of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Yeldeğirmeni of Kadıköy was a very different neighborhood where the poor lived. Kurds, Alevites, Sunnis, Jews, Armenians all lived together in this neighborhood. The sound of the bells mingled together with the Ezan. There was never a conflict in this mosaic. Everyone was very respectful to each other. (Deringör, 2008, p. 18)

The relations between different groups of Muslims are as well not mentioned, and the account of Deringör is the only account where Kurds and Alevites are named explicitly - most accounts take Kurds under the category of “Turks” or “Turks from the East”: both Muslims and non-Muslims are commonly undefined and are mentioned under an unspecified general category. Accordingly, in the written and oral accounts, one group of non-Muslims can be easily forgotten – for instance Deringör, in this quotation, forgets Greeks, even though he is in fact mentioning the sound of the bells which must have belonged to the Greek church.

Another important point is that in most accounts, the emphasis on the harmonious life in the neighborhood carried with it an implicit statement of being different than the rest of the life in the country. However, the life “outside” the neighborhood that was implied to be unharmonious was not described.

The mingling of different sounds is a central theme in these accounts that emphasizes cohabitation and harmony; this is sometimes described in the mingling of the Ezan with the church bells, and sometimes in the mingling of different languages in the street. Languages themselves remain unspecified still. It is recounted that the Jews spoke Ladino and French in the neighborhood (Ovadia, 1997), but the language Ladino is commonly confused with Hebrew⁴ by those not Jewish, which leads many to describe how they used to hear “Hebrew” in the street.

Even though in many accounts there is an apparent sense of loss of the harmonious life in the neighborhood, the historical account of why and how such life had changed remains rather ambiguous. It is a difficult task to introduce in a socially and historically situated context of the non-Muslims’s abandonment of the area, following the exclusively harmonious depiction

⁴ I owe this explanation to Işıl Demirel.

of the cohabitative life. For instance, in Atılğan's book which is solely on Yeldeğirmeni, there are many chapters regarding the buildings, schools, shops, sports clubs and the like, but there is no section assigned for the change in the population residing there. In the whole book, there is only one mention of the Wealth Tax, where in the chapter on the pharmacies, he recounts that due to the Wealth Tax (date and event unspecified), the beloved pharmacist Soryano Efendi had lost his pharmacist to a young man, who "did not make him feel the change" and Soryano Efendi continued to work in the pharmacy that used to belong to him. In another instance, he describes another anecdote (which he had been told), that in 6-7 September, people from outside the neighborhood had come to loot the shops in the area, and the mahalleli had protected the non-Muslim shops, only forgetting one that was not in the center. Therefore Pandelli's shop had been looted, and the owner had committed suicide following the event. This is an explicit example that goes against the unnarration of the events that threatens the harmonious depiction of the life in the area. However, it can only be told in a context where such harmonious depiction is not threatened, because the event has been realized while the mahalleli had been actively trying to protect the shops from the looters. Interestingly, the event is mentioned not in regard to the changes in the neighborhood, but in order to ground the claim that the street names should not be changed according to the major events taking place there: Atılğan dismisses as inappropriate the request to change the name of the main street of Yeldeğirmeni to Nuh Köklü Street in order to honor Köklü who was murdered there in 2015, and uses the example of 6-7 September to illustrate that the names would be constantly changing if they were given according to the events that took place there:

Lived together, Turks, Armenians, Greeks, Jews...(...) It became even more colorful when our citizens from Karadeniz and the East migrated in. (...) The Yeldeğirmenlites who have lived in these times felt very lucky. Between the years 1980-2010, we see that Yeldeğirmen, just like Istanbul had changed. The old houses in the area were replaced with apartments. (...) Especially the non-Muslims that were the colours of the neighborhood were leaving, disappearing. (...) And people were changing, too. Nevertheless, Yel değirmeni still made its historical identity felt, and could adjust to the day with its new inhabitants. (...) Then came the Yel değirmeni Vitalization Project in 2010. The people of the neighborhood could not stay in their own neighborhood. The memory of Yel değirmeni was destructed. (Atılğan, p.154-155)

Even though he does not elaborate on the subject, his take on the change in the population associates the change with urban renewal in a time period he roughly defines as between 1980-2010. He associates the change in the neighborhood population with urban renewal that took place in the 1980-2010 period. In the account of Gürpınar and Türker, the migration from

Anatolia is also implicitly regarded as damaging to the neighborhood, and although it is not explicitly stated, it is mentioned along with damage to the neighborhood and the abandonment of the non-Muslims. In his account, Türker briefly mentions the “holy springs” that were present in Kadıköy, stating that they were damaged following the population increase in the area in the 1970’s (2008). A similar trend is visible also in Gürpınar’s account:

Let’s look at today, or what had happened 20 years ago. Let Yel değirmeni become a quite different place. Let’s speak about the departure to other areas of Istanbul or to other countries of our Greek, Armenian, Jewish citizens that we call minority, but are in fact have always been as effective as the majority in their significance. (...) Suppose that we are in the late 1980’s. Yeldeğirmeni is crowded following the migration from Anatolia. Once, in the formative years of the Republic, an equal amount of Turks and Jews, and a lesser amount of Greeks and Armenians used to live in Yel değirmeni...(Gürpınar, p.67-68).

The book of Gürpınar is filled with a sense of loss and nostalgia, along with a tone of anger for the change in the neighborhood, without explicitly stating the why and the how. Only once she mentions that in the 1970’s those who were economically well of had moved to other parts of Kadıköy. In recounting her stories, she speaks about the “1955 summer” in Yel değirmeni had resulted in complex feelings without specifying why, and jumps to the 1970’s fastly. It is striking that even in her account, 6-7 September, 1964 migrations, and the events taking place in 1974 are missing. At times her tone becomes reproachful, but it is difficult for the reader to understand what exactly she is referring to, as she does not historically situate her statements:

After gathering what has been left from those departed, it was time to appropriate the properties of the treasury that was assumed to be disowned. I was a child, then I grew up, what I could do as a personal reaction was only to write the poem of an Istanbulite poet women who had been long forgotten. (Gürpınar, p.42).

Perhaps numerous people who had lived in Yel değirmeni had flew away to never come back (...) one would never know if the reason is fate, helplessness, obligation, or happiness. Its life. (Gürpınar, p.52).

Only once, she states that she finds it “difficult to write”, because she could not dare to criticize her family who “could not break through the codes of thought inherited from a hundred years of empire” (p.66). Importantly, these issues are not subjects that she discusses on their own right, but can be found only in her digressions while speaking about something else.

Türker’s study on the Greeks of Kadıköy seems to have a different take on the history, due to his critical take on the subject. It is a part of Türker’s broader project of publishing books on the Greek history of different parts of Istanbul, and therefore pursues the change of these

areas across time from being populated Greek areas to Turkified areas – his book is accordingly named, “From Halkidona to Kadıköy”, illustrating the change in the name which accompanies the change in the population. He claims that the decrease in the Greek population of Kadıköy is mostly due to the forced migration in 1922. He also mentions 6-7 September, and notes that “similar events” of destruction of stores and houses had taken place in Yel değirmeni too, but does not specify. He describes the event as a motivator for the migration of the Greeks following the 1964 population exchange, and states that the Greeks of Istanbul were anxious following the deportation of Greek citizens, and many had thus migrated themselves, leading to a dramatic decrease in the Greek population of Kadıköy, and accordingly to the emergence of a “Muslim, Turkish Kadıköy” in the 1970’s. He briefly mentions that the population decrease of Jews in the area was due to “the migration” in the 1950’s (where they have migrated and why are unspecified), and their moving to other parts of Kadıköy, namely Erenköy-Caddebostan. For a reason unclear, the formation of Israel is not mentioned as one of the reasons for migration.

The book “Haydarpaşa’da Geçen 100 Yılımız” (1999) edited by Anri Niyego (he has changed his name to Harun Niyego, and now prefers to use this name commonly) and published in 1999 is a book that seeks to pursue the hundred years of the Jewish community in Haydarpaşa. It includes historical information on the area, as well as oral accounts provided by Jews who have lived in the area, and was intended as a brochure to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Hemdat Israel Synagogue. Niyego notes that although their work had begun aiming for a brochure, the abundance of documents had led them to turn to preparing a book instead, which resulted in the production of more than two hundred paged book.

While researching the historical accounts of the area, I have made much use of this resource. However, parallel to other resources, the book focuses mostly on the early years of the life in the neighborhood - the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. There are also accounts regarding especially the everyday lives in the Republican period, however, when one pursues the dates mentioned, the stories wander around the 1950’s, and 1960’s, on many different subjects, but 6-7 September or any other major social and political event is not mentioned. Although the book is a celebration of continuity as it is implied in the title, the striking decrease in the population is not spared much space. Unlike other sources, there is not much emphasis on the peaceful cohabitation of people from different religions; the emphasis is rather on the state’s support for the community and the synagogue in particular. Other non Muslims are mentioned

rarely, except the description of the conflicts with Greeks and Armenians during the construction of the synagogue.



CHAPTER II

THE HARMONIOUS NEIGHBORHOOD AND ITS LIMITS

Basing her ethnography on Kuzguncuk, Mills (2004, p.3) states that the “mahalle... is not defined by its geography or administrative relationship to the city, but rather by social practice and cultural meaning”. Rather than examining the spatial organization of neighborhoods, she proposes to examine the social and cultural practices by which it is formed for its inhabitants, arguing that, the “relationship to one’s place of origin and mahalle of residence is central to how people introduce and identify each other. This identity is defined by conventions of social practice as well as the narration of events and characterizations of place. The mahalle, then, is not a static and bounded unit of the city, but is the spatialization of the relationship to place as a locator for identity”. (Mills, 2004, p.5).

The social crafting of Yeldeğirmeni neighborhood starts with its name. The area itself has administratively been named as “Rasimpaşa”, however, those who live in the neighborhood –both those who have been living or had lived there many years ago, and those who have moved in in the recent years- refer to the place as “Yeldeğirmeni”. While living and researching in the neighborhood, I never heard anyone use the term Rasimpaşa to refer to the place. Accordingly, the history of the windmills that is said to have given its name to the place is very popular, though I have not heard much the story of the name of the Rasim Paşa whose name has been given to the neighborhood later on. As emphasized repeatedly by my interviewees, the identity of being a “Yeldeğirmenlite” necessitates a position where living together in the same neighborhood is prioritized over any other differences, ethnic, religious, or political. Some

defined these differences in ethnic and religious terms, the cohabitation of people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and some defined these differences in terms of political view. Although the multireligious life has come to an end in the neighborhood, the narrations about that period still comprise the major narrative told by those who have grown up there.

The Yeldeğirmenlite identity of inclusiveness and harmony is thus what makes it a neighborhood –as this is the meaning socially crafted by my interviewees and many others I have met in the neighborhood-, distinct from its exteriors. Commonly, my interviewees emphasized the exceptionality of Yeldeğirmeni in terms of the harmony between religious and ethnic groups. Surely, in any neighborhood people would be living from different ethnic backgrounds and of different political views. The difference of this neighborhood was explained not as inhabiting the same place, but inhabiting the same place together, visibly, and by relating with each other. This identity is comprised especially with –not tolerance or respect- but by close, intimate connections in the everyday life, intertwined lives, sharing, participating in each others’ rituals, helping and protection, and learning from each other. Even though the accustomed discourse about the cohabitation of non-Muslims and Muslims are based on the themes of tolerance and respect for the other, these discourses were rarely used by my informants. The narratives of my informants were rather based on their admiration for non-Muslims, and close everyday lives. Below is a quote from Ali, sharing a typical description of the multireligious life of the neighborhood:

In our times at Yeldeğirmeni, education was different, customs were different, people could leave their children to the street with no worries. Because they would know that someone would be keeping an eye on them even if they themselves were away. If someone fell down, 4-5 people would rush to help. And most importantly, what makes Yeldeğirmeni Yeldeğirmeni is that ...in our neighborhood there were Greeks. There were Armenians. There were Kurds. There were Christians. There were such a multitude of people that no one would differentiate between the groups. For instance there was a Jewish woman living in our apartment. That Jewish woman would come to our iftar dinners, or when she herself was fasting she could not light the fire –Jews they cannot light fire during their times of fasting- she would call us and we would do it for her. (...) My father had dropped out of school in 3rd grade, but he could communicate with the customers in his bakkal in French. In Hebrew. In Kurdish. We are not Kurdish but there were many Kurds in the neighborhood, he learned it from them and could sell them things while speaking Kurdish. Just across our bakkal was the bakkal of Albert Amca, he was Jewish and some Jews would come to our shop instead of his, because my father spoke Jewish. (...) I remember very well 12 September 1980, we were just across the police station. But the police were such people that, you see, even the police of the neighborhood was different. During the coup there was a waiting line in front of the bakery, they did not implement the curfew until noon. Living in the same neighborhood was more

important. I really don't know if there is any other neighborhood like ours in Istanbul. Perhaps there is, but I have not seen or heard of any neighborhood that values friendship and humanity as much as we do. (...) there would never be a fight, the most common fight was between my father and my uncle. (Ali)

Living closely together with non-Muslims was one of the core aspects of Yeldeğirmenli identity. And it was engraved in everyday social practices itself. Demir had told me that his elder brother had been quite mischievous as a child. Helpless about what to do with him, his parents had sent him to the priest of the church in the neighborhood, who had sent his mischievous brother to the priest of the neighborhood church so that the priest would read a prayer for him to stop, and said they both calmed down after that instance. There were many other instances recounted to emphasize the joint lives of Muslims and non-Muslims. Participating in each others rituals, and destabilizing the usual boundaries between religions was one of the main themes, as well as sharing food and protecting and learning from each other. Different informants told me about how their non-Muslim neighbors came to eat with them in Ramadan, and how they themselves painted eggs in Easter or ate with the Jews the special bread in Passover. For instance, Gül recounted a memory when her grandmother who had grown up in the neighborhood had asked her to bring Gül's close Jewish friend over for Passover because she had missed the bread. The synagogue that had not been surrounded with walls before the attacks on Neve Şalom, was used as a passway between the two streets Uzunhafız and Recaizade. My informants recounted wandering around in the yard of the synagogue, and I heard from different Jewish resources that there was a place in the synagogue assigned for Muslims to pray on Fridays as the mosque was further away. I had heard from various people that on Saturdays when devoted Jews would not do work (including house work) out of religious reasons, Jewish women used to call out to the Muslim children playing in the street to that they would drop by to light their oven. Though not all, some recounted participating in the wedding ceremonies in the church or in the synagogue. Ali had told me that his father, a shopkeeper of Karadeniz origin, could speak Kurdish, Greek and "Hebrew" and could communicate with people in their own language - a feature of him that made him favoured over other shopkeepers. Protecting and helping out to each other was another central theme in the narratives regarding the neighborhood, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

2.1. Limits to multi-religious life

However, there were limits to such harmony, referred to as “invisible boundaries”, by one informant. In her groundbreaking work *Faces of the State*, Yael Navaro (2002) proposes that,

“...the political is not readily available to the consciousness of its subjects. Studies researching the political in informants’ consciously articulated narratives or ideologies are only partially revealing (...) maintain ourselves within streams of consciousness: that which is not stable, not rearticulable, but which blinks, momentarily shows itself, and escapes (...) more than in consciously formulated ideology or formalized conversation, humour and rumour reveal an unconscious precipitation of remembered discursive forms in the present” (2002, p.15-23)

As an attempt to have a look at the sites where the political momentarily “blinks”, I would like to examine the sites at which the general discourse of harmony and inclusiveness of the neighborhood is disrupted by humour, rumour, envy, dismissing as trivial of essential aspects of others, and unexpected affectionate responses, and which in turn reveal the contours of the undifferentiation between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Even though there was no mentioning of any discrimination against non-Muslims in the neighborhood and a constant claim to sameness and inclusiveness, there were certain moments in the interviews where certain discourses or affective responses unsettled the accounts – whether it be a response or discourse that appeared during the interview, or a recounting of such kind that had been experienced before. This is surely not to claim that there was no sharing, no intimate connections, no unique relations that survived the differentiation between Muslims and non-Muslims, however considering the limits to such inclusiveness is essential. Such dissonances make themselves visible not in consciously formulated discourse, but in affective responses when an intermarriage disturbs families who have been living peacefully as neighbors in the same apartment –but disturbs more specifically the Turkish side who has a hard time with acquaintances. Intermarriage was not common, and when it happened, it had its costs. I heard of only one family in which intermarriage was common, one of my Jewish informants, Elif Hanım had married with a Muslim man from the neighborhood, and had other relatives who had married with people that were not Jewish. This was the only instance of intermarriage that I heard about, and it was told to me by other informants, as well. Elif Hanım had then changed her official religion to Muslim, and had overtaken a Turkish name and kept her and her parents’ Jewish identities secret from her daughter until she found it out for herself in her adolescent years. Until they started dating with her future husband, her family and the family of her husband used to get along quite well, living in the same apartment as neighbors; but upon

learning their relationship there had been great opposition, and the family of her partner had moved away hoping that they would stop seeing each other. “My mother in law could not explain it to her friends and family over in Yalova”, she told me, “they would not understand”.

Other instances were when despite one of them living in the same house with a Jewish woman, two informants spoke of being afraid of Jews in their childhood due to horrifying myths, or when another informant spoke of his parents as feeling being looked down on by their non-Muslim neighbors higher in terms of class. These were those instances recounted by my informants themselves, and in the interviews, there were other instances that unsettled their claims to undifferentiation and harmony when, for instance, a few of my informants dismissed as trivial the original names of their non-Muslim neighbors living in secrecy, or their religious identities and rituals, could not remember when the 6-7 September events so major for the non-Muslim communities in Turkey had taken place or trivialized them –though unwillingly- by miscalling major events (calling the Wealth Tax the Wealth Peace, misremembering the days, month or year of the events), joking about non-Muslim characters or stereotyping them by overgeneralization. In this chapter, I will examine more closely three of such sites which have turned out to be the major ones in the narratives of my informants; the confusing of different religious groups, class differences and its consequences, and the humour and rumour regarding the non-Muslims.

2.2. “We did not know who was who”: Inclusion by exclusion

Non-Muslim and Muslim, religious or atheist, Turk, Kurdish, Laz, Greek, Alevite, Sunni, there were people from all kinds of nations. No one knew who was who, no one was curious about it. There would be jokes, like saying Jews are penny pinchers. But no one wanted to know about each other’s identity,” said Birol. With the aim of emphasizing that they did not discriminate on the basis of religion, it was occasionally pointed out that they “never knew who was who”. Not knowing the ethnic/religious background of others is treated as the proof to equality and harmonious cohabitation. This position entailed a particular balance between knowing and not knowing about the non-Muslim identity of their neighbors. At one hand, my informants underscored how they participated in the rituals of their non-Muslim friends, and celebrated their holidays, at the other they spoke of not equality but undifferentiation between the groups- that they did not “see them as not Turkish”. The inclusion of the non-Muslim was realized at the discursive level with the exclusion of their identity as non-Muslim, with a disregard for their

religious beliefs different than themselves, but at the practical level, there was a great acknowledgement of their own religious and cultural practices and rituals.

At one point in our interview, Özlem explained,

In our childhood, we didn't point out, 'This is Greek, this is Armenian'", said Ali. "In no way did people see them as Greek. They were one of us". "I would never see them as different from Turks", said Handan. "It's not that I think they are not Turks, so they were born here and they grew up here. It's not us who chooses at birth where to be born, into which religion to be born." "Jews were living in the adjacent house- of course, Jews, as people call them, me- I never saw them as Jews. I have a global outlook, a human is a human, I am a humanistic person and this is how we were brought up in here.

At times, the case was really that the ethnic/religious identity of the mentioned person was not known. Most of the non-Muslims in the neighborhood used double names (both their original names and a Turkish name that commonly sounded similar with the original), and although in most cases those from the neighborhood knew and used the original name, sometimes the original names, and even the actual ethnic/religious identities were unknown, the person remained as someone, as one of my informants said, who "had a different name in fact, he was Greek? Jewish? But I don't remember". However, the obligation to secrecy that non-Muslims felt and that led to the use of two names was completely disregarded by my informants who rarely mentioned any condition that would disturb the image of the neighborhood has harmonious and all inclusive. It was also common that as children they had used nicknames to refer to non-Muslims, and forgot about their real names, one other informant had shrugged his shoulders, when I asked the real name of someone he was mentioning with a nickname, and told me that it was "something in Hebrew, that he just could not hold in his mind".

2.3. "Jewsgreeksarmenians"⁵

Unless they were very close in their personal lives, Jews, Armenians, and Greeks were listed among the rubric of "non-Muslims", with few differences made among the different groups, or within the groups themselves. Indeed, in most cases my informants knew who was not Muslim, but they confused their religious identities. The same person could be labeled by one interviewee as Jewish, by another as Greek, and still by another as Armenian. On many occasions, they wondered out loud, "Was she Greek or Armenian?". A woman living in one of

⁵ The naming is inspired by the term "womenandchildren" conjoined by Enloe (1990).

the famous Jewish buildings in the neighborhood told me that it had been constructed by French Armenians. Emre, while recounting how close his family was with the Greek family living upstairs, referred to them as Jewish. While speaking about the past multireligious life of the neighborhood, and counting the different groups living there, occasionally an informant would miss either Jews or Armenians although in different parts of the interviews they would display their knowledge of all three groups. Occasionally, someone, while counting the names of the different religious groups that had lived in the neighborhood, would use both of the words for Jewish in Turkish (*Musevi/Yahudi*), treating them as different groups⁶

A similar fate was shared by the religious buildings; many of my informants did not know whether the church was Greek or Armenian. There had been many instances outside my interviews when I heard that the synagogue was referred to as “the church” by someone from the neighborhood, however my informants –except one- knew and referred to the synagogue as “havra” (Turkish for syangogue), even though at times they had slips of the tongue and called it “the church”. The church and the synagogue were therefore used interchangeably while referring to the synagogue, but there was no instance when the church was miscalled. Similarly, the rabbi was referred to by some as “the rabbi”, by others as “the priest”. Strikingly, one informant who had worked in the cleaning of the synagogue for some years usually referred to it as “the church” and referred to the rabi as “the priest”. Another informant, while talking about the shared rituals, explained to me that the “Hamursuz” (Passover) –which she first referred to as the “Tuzsuz” (saltless) was a holiday of the Greeks.

Indeed, it can be assumed that when Özlem referred to the “Hamursuz” [flourles] as the “Tuzsuz” [saltless], she was perhaps remembering the taste of the bread from her childhood days- which can be quite saltless. But is this sufficient to explain how, my informants, people who recounted having lived in very close connection to non-Muslims, still so commonly confused their religious/ethnic backgrounds, their sacred days, the names of the religious institutions?

⁶ I have been told by Karel Bensusan that such confusion may be due to the fact that some Jews prefer to identify as *Yahudi*, and while others prefer the term *Musevi*.

2.4. Differences of Class

A Jewish couple lived in the flat across ours. The man used to sell old stuff. My father was a teacher, and he was a waste collector. One day, my father came to Haydarpaşa with the ferry, and it was very cold. He had to walk home. Our Jewish neighbor went out from the ferry to grab a cab. As he was passing by my father, he said, neighbor, come, come. He collects waste, but is economically better off than my father. (Birol)

Differences in social and economical status between the Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants of the neighborhood was mentioned repeatedly by almost all of my informants, except one or two who had grown up in families of similar social and economical conditions. My informants differed in how they approached such differences. While Ali said that the non-Muslims were, “more elite, this is nothing to hide, but they never underestimated us because we were wandering around in jeans, as they wore their suits”, Ahmet recounted how his parents felt pathetic because the non-Muslims owned everything: “The buildings were theirs, they had clean, nice clothes, were well groomed. The holiday for Jews is Saturday, they would go to prayer in “grand tuvalet”. It was as if they were showing off – its just the frustration of our people you know. We were in rent in their apartments. We were working for them.”⁷

Being oppressed tied closer some of the non-Muslims to Muslims, but differences of class were also determining. Eda, a Kurdish woman of Bingol origin, expressed how although they shared a common fate due to oppression, such differences were also very determining. Even though she spoke about the class differences within the Jewish community, and about the commonalities between herself and her more economically disadvantaged Jewish friend, the everyday rituals –exemplified with the habits of eating in this case- was a very explicit difference that affected her deeply, making her feel inferior:

There were so many Armenians, Greeks, Jews. The Kurds came here to be their workers, they came to be cleaners, apartment guards. In fact it was a torturous job, my mother got along well with Madam Sara but she would come home at 10. (...) What was different about them was the way they ate, drank, they behaved like Istanbulites- and that was what they were. (...) the torment of an Armenian is the same with the torment of a Kurd. There were Armenians who were not well off, Jews and Greeks were in better condition. (...). Greeks were like more aristocrats, maybe that’s a wrong word, they were more urban, more Istanbulite. Jews would not let outsiders in their community, they were closed in themselves. They hardly ever took people in, and that was to make sure that their neighbors would stand up

⁷ Original quote: “Binalar bunların, temiz giyinirlerdi bakımlılardı. Yahudilerin bayramı cumartesi, ibadetlerine grand tuvalet giderlerdi. Sanki hava atarlardı. bizimkilerin ezikiği işte. Evlerinde kiracıyız. İş yerlerinde çalışıyoruz.”

for them. I would treat people from my family as *köylü* [rural], I would tell them, “don’t come near me, you speak bad Turkish”. When you’re a kid, you can communicate with other kids. That was how I started going in and out their houses. I witnessed their cultures, their weddings, and funerals. (...) When people from the East dominated, they moved away, and the place was left to us. They said the place has become suburb, too rural.

Invisible boundaries were explicitly articulated not in relation to Muslims and non-Muslims, but in relation to the relationships between Turks and Kurds and Muslims and Alevites. eda, an Alevite Kurd, stated that her Turkish friends appeared to “silently know that she was not Turkish”, even though this was not openly spoken about. Demir, from another viewpoint, spoke about how there was always a distance kept between “them” (the children of Sunni Muslim families) and the children of Alevite families, although this was not explicitly discussed, somehow the two groups went to school in separate groups although the general rule was that children from the same class would walk to school together.

2.5. Humour and Rumour: Fear, Suspicion and Curiosity Towards the Jewish Community

A few of my informants who emphasized harmony with non-Muslims did mention jokes they used to make about different religious groups; some were in fact adopted by non-Muslims themselves. Birol spoke about having “jokes” regarding the “penny pinching of Jews”, and Ali mentioned that his father had been joked by a Jew who said that he was just like a Jew when it came to merchandise. These jokes were, as they are commonly, about the economical status of Jews.

However, an instance with Demir also showed me how the use of such humour can change. As we were chatting over the dinner table, Demir was explaining to me his father’s recitation of the “famous Jews” who had lived in the neighborhood. Hearing the word “Jew”, his 6 year old daughter interrupted him with excitement, “Dad, you used to say that *I* was a Jew?” He turned to her and replied in an affectionate voice, “Of course, you are my little Jew”. Surprised, I wondered, what did they mean? Then he turned to me to explain: “It is something that we have taken over from our family. So, we are Arabic, and still, though not extremely, they are not really fond of Jews. Let’s not call it enmity, but Jews are known to be cowards. And I was a real coward as a child. Animals would chase me. My grandfather would call me a

Jew because of my cowardice. So I have taken it over from my family, but its not something hateful, it is more like a word of affection. Would I say anything bad to my child?"

While his father used to use the term "coward Jew" as an insult towards his son Demir; Demir used the term as an affectionately humourous word for her daughter, and her daughter, stripping the word off its context of bravery, told me that she was "his father's little Jew". According to Navaro (2002), "discourse has truth effect only if the receiver of the oracle transfers his or her structure of feeling onto it." In this case, each generation had transferred a different structure of feeling onto the joke that is transmitted from generation to generation, changing its connotations, and thereby the affective tone that colours the image of the Jew in the joke.

Two of my informants, Ahmet and Birol recounted a myth about Jews that they remembered from their childhoods. Birol said that his parents had told him not to get too close to Jews because they would "throw him into the *iğneli fiçi*"⁸ he had been scared and had believed in the myth until later in his adult years when he learned that it was not true. Similarly, Ahmet recounted that his parents had told him that Jews would "steal the children, put them in pinned barrels, turn and turn the barrels and drink the leaking blood". Two informants who told me about the rumour of the pinned barrel had met which each other only in the later years, came from different backgrounds, two men of different age groups, one Turkish, one Kurdish. This was the first time I had heard about such a myth, however as I looked into other sources, I saw that at least several Turkish online forums were to be found which recounted horrible stories about Jews putting children in pinned barrels and drinking their blood. Examining the circulation of rumours that produce fear about their subjects, Das (2007) notes how "words come to be transformed from being a medium of communication to bearers of force", and "the virtual is always more encompassing than the actual". Such rumours were indeed effective, as they had been convincing for my informants even though one of them was in fact dwelling in a house rented by a Jewish woman that he referred to as "the Madam's house".

Citing from Das (2007), "...the event grows out of everyday life, but the world as it was known in everyday life is obliterated: instead what comes into being is a world that bears resemblance to the structure of paranoia. *My fear of the other* is transformed into the notion that *the other is fearsome*." The father of Ahmet who was one of the parents involved in the

⁸ The myth resembles the myth of the "blood libel" which holds that Jews kill Christian children and drink their blood. How that myth was adjusted to the Turkish context is worth attention.

disseminating of the myth of the pinned barrel had, as a child, been involved in the assaults on non-Muslims taking place in 6-7 September. With further fieldwork, it could perhaps be suggested that their fears of others could be related to their own acts of violence. However, at this point, it will suffice to propose instead that, for those receiving the myths, it was the fearfulness of the other that was “transformed into the notion that the other is fearsome.” The rumours regarding non-Muslims were interweaved together with the veil of secrecy that came from their isolation from others. It appeared that the Jewish families’ fear, and their following self-isolation was apprehended by the those receiving the rumours as pertaining not to their *fearfulness*, but to their *fearsomeness*. Such self-isolation of the Jewish community as recounted by my interviewees, arose in them the feeling that there was something in the Jews that should be concealed from the others, that is perhaps frightening. They easily stated that the Jewish community was “closed in itself”, did not interact much with others; however, their stories included close ties with them anyway.

As stated by Taussig (1999), “secrecy magnifies reality.” It seems that there was an enigmatic character to the Jews in the eyes of my Turkish and Kurdish informants (except for a few who had much close friends from the community). While speaking with my interviewees and with others, I had observed that several figures of the Jewish community were described with a tone of suspicion, as if there was something obscure about them. A prominent figure of the Jewish community described to me as very cherished by my Jewish informants were described by Muslim informants as a suspicious figure who was “probably involved in illegal business”, “up to something”, “claimed he was a carpenter, but had perhaps a more messy business”, “the derin devlet of the Jews”. There were other instances where my informants told me that a specific Jewish neighbor was “up to something they could not understand”, for instance Ahmet said that a Jewish neighbor was selling stamps in the neighborhood, and “to this day, he still did not find out what his real job was, but was very curious”, implying that he had another secret job.

As mentioned before, Jews mostly used double names –one in the family, community, and sometimes neighborhood, and the other in the “outside”- and some concealed their original names in the neighborhood, while others concealed their identity as Jewish altogether. Speaking about two childhood friends, Ali said that “we knew them from primary school, they were so beautiful and walked in the very front. I don’t know their real names... When the grandfather died, he was buried in the Jewish cemetery, for years we called him Engin and the man turns out to be Jewish!” A younger woman stated, “Some non-Muslims use Turkish names here. You

would never know. We call him Yusuf Amca, but I don't remember the original name". A shopkeeper I was speaking with told me a shopkeeper across his own shop was Jewish, told me to speak with him for my thesis, but then quickly changed his mind and said, "No, don't ask him anything. Look, he has a [Turkish] flag at his window. Maybe he'll be offended or something". When I told the incident to someone closer to the Jewish community, she laughed and told me that he was not Jewish, but was confused as such because he was "a friend to the Jews".

I had been told by some of my informants that the synagogue had been open to all and served as a passway between two streets, and also that there was a space spared for Muslims to pray. With the attacks on synagogues, high walls had been built around the synagogue, separating the inside firmly from the outside. The walls are covered with barred fences and there are security cameras watching the surroundings. The door is firmly closed, and it not possible to see what is inside from any angle. When I asked Bahadır whether he had seen the synagogue, he replied, "But you can't get inside. It's somewhere over there. With barred fences and security cameras, you say, Allah Allah, what's inside it?" While recounting the myth of the pinned barrel, Ahmet first states that the Jewish families kept their distance to them, and then recounts how his family had warned him against them. The sequencing of his narrative implies that it was their rituals of pinned barrels that made the Jewish families stay away in what appeared to others as their ambiguous milieu. In both examples, it appeared that the attempts of the Jews for security was, in the eyes of others, a sign showing that they had something to hide. Asking "what's inside it", Bahadır interpreted the fences as related to something that is *inside* the synagogue, not to something outside it, and the instance in Ahmet's family showed that the Jews stayed away because of their own secret and dangerous customs, again pertaining to something that is going on *in* the community, not to something that might come from the outside.

However, not everyone was related to non-Muslims in the same way, and their degrees of proximity appeared to be effective in whether or not they adapted those myths. Handan and Ali, when I asked them whether or not they had heard about the myth of pinned barrel, laughed and told me that they were too close with non-Muslims to have believed in such myths. On many occasions, I had been told by people living in the neighborhood that the church was closed and the gatekeeper of the church was a solemn lady who treated negatively curious eyes. However, my informants who had grown up in the neighborhood with close everyday ties to people from the Greek community was surprised when I asked them if I could visit the church.

There was a similar case regarding the rumours of potential attacks from Greece during the conflictual period in Cyprus; while one interviewee told me that they had been very prepared for the attacks, two other told me that they were not scared because their Greek neighbors had told them that the warnings were false rumours. However, as intimately connected as they could be with their non-Muslim friends and neighbors, there could be an instance when an interviewee could express an overly generalized and stereotypical opinion on a non-Muslim neighbour.



CHAPTER III

“THE REAL ISTANBULITES”:

NOSTALGIA, BELONGING AND CLAIMS TO PLACE

As examined more closely in Chapter II, one of the main narratives that is evoked when one is asked about the neighborhood of Yeldeğirmeni is the harmony and all inclusive life in a multiethnic neighborhood. This narrative is always coloured with an intense tone of nostalgia for the neighborhood life that has been lost. According to Bassin (1993), nostalgic fantasies are “... a thwarted attempt, but an attempt nevertheless, at mourning play (...) nostalgia... is an incomplete mourning, an attempt to reenact reunion with the lost object.(p.425). The central question that arises then, is, what exactly is the loss that is being mourned in these narratives of nostalgia? In this chapter, I will argue that with the leave of the non-Muslims, my informants had also felt that their claims to being the authentic Yeldeğirmenlites had been shattered, together with their share on the ways of living they spoke of having adapted from the non-Muslims.

3.1. “The Real Istanbulites”

“Of course, they are the owners of Istanbul. Today, 90% of the fishing industry is at the hands of people from Erzincan. I met the son of one of them. They all were taught by Greeks, my father had also learned it from a Greek master. These Greeks, they are craftsman. We took Istanbul over from them. You know these infamous years of the population exchange, we took

everything from these men,” said Emre. A middle aged man, he came from an Arabic Alevite family living in different parts of Istanbul for several generations. He described himself as “still pure Arabic in terms of race”, but told me that this was not important because he was an Istanbulite in the end. He himself had been born and had grown up in Yeldeğirmeni, in an apartment his family had rented from the Surp Hagop Church, and told me that the Church owned 90% of the Kadıköy bazaar. Similarly, Ahmet, a Kurdish Alevite man whose family had settled in Yeldeğirmeni when his father was a child, told me that the neighborhood of Yeldeğirmeni was actually “a neighborhood assigned to the Jews by the municipality”. It was thus implied that the territory in fact belonged to the non-Muslims, and not to themselves.

There was a common emphasis on the richness of non-Muslims and their ways of living, with a sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit focus on the difference between their own lives. Özer had described the Greek house in which he had grown up as “more like a castle”. Birol, a Turkish man from Tokat, centered on the clothes, and on the difference of clothes worn while praying. Such difference was a subject of attention, that emphasized the higher status of non-Muslims.

Özer: The church near the high school was closed then, the church in Karakolhane was open. What I remember is, I think it was on Sundays, people would come all dressed up, unlike ours. We were astonished. Men would be dressed up in grand toilet, women would wear high heels. Wearing jewellery. Greeks were also like that, but Jews looked much more exaggared. It would really grab our attention, we would go to the mosque with clothes less...

Aylin: Did that look rich?

Özer: Sure sure. We taught they were rich, and they were. The non-Muslims were the more rich population.

“We saw them as superior to ourselves, they were real Istanbulites, the way they dressed up... Their mothers would wear make up, they were well-groomed. The men would wear ironed pants and ties,” said Ahmet. Non-Muslims were defined almost exclusively as “the real owners of Istanbul” or “the real Istanbulites” by the people who spoke to me about their past of living together. They explained being real Istanbulites predominantly as being related to education, craftsmanship, and being well groomed as well as having a certain level of income, and what appeared to be the characteristics of a good life- promenading, dressing up, eating well. In most cases, they spoke with a tone of admiration and gratitude for “having learnt from them”, to what was added at times, a tone of jealousy. Non-Muslims were perceived as rich, and referred to as being “elite”. This difference between them and themselves was stated or implied to lead them

to look up to the non-Muslims, and to perceive them as superior, and though rarely explicitly articulated, to envy them.

So, in the weekends, our friends would wear their best dresses, we would desire to imitate them. We were joyful in their holidays just like in ours, the Tuzsuz [Saltless], or Easter... They made good money, and they knew how to spend it, they knew how to live well. Like, she would work in the market, but you would not know it. Of course they had plenty of money. How is it possible to own a house in Büyükada today, the islands all belong to the Greeks and Armenians. (Özlem)

In her examination of the place of Western attire in the modernization process during the Republican Period, Kavas (2015) discusses the relations between the secular and modern nation state programme of the newly formed Republic and the reforms of Westernization. She describes how, during the formation of the nation state, the Turkish Republic placed emphasis on a Western mode of modernization with attention to changes in the political, administrative, and educational spheres, as well as in the cultural sphere. She discusses that the everyday life was pervaded with a split between the aspired Western modes of behaviour with which progress was identified, and the perceived “backward”, Ottoman-Turkish modes of behaviour. However, she argues, in the Turkish context, modernity was associated primarily with “outward appearance”, that is comprised of certain indices such as “the adoption of Western ways of life, the social and domestic manners of the west, listening to classical music, dressing in western style, going routinely to balls and mixed gender dinners”.

While as Kavas points out there are different positions with regard to the adoption of modernity, my interviewees were all in a position where it was much praised and admired. For instance, Ayşe, a teacher working in the neighborhood for 12 years, had never witnessed the multireligious life in the neighborhood. However, she had learned partly about the history of the neighborhood and while speaking about its non-Muslim past, used similar references to describe non-Muslims:

In college I had a friend that I liked much, I found her elite. She was having piano lessons, a few times I could also touch the keys. If I had not left my town, I would never have even seen a piano in my life. But my friend, in college, would leave saying that she needed to catch her piano lesson, I really liked that. I would think that she was educated. And she treated me so well.

...[In the island] you know there are mostly people from the minority. I would like to live with them, to get along well with them. I came to Istanbul later on, they were always here. I would like to meet the locals of the city (...), to be in their lives, to share their ways of living. I am curious, will they accept me, will they keep their distance, hide things from me?

For her, being treated well by someone who was “elite”, more educated and well off than herself was important. In terms of inclusion, she told me about her fantasies of being a teacher in one of the islands of Istanbul, where she hoped many non-Muslims would be living, to test how they would react to her. Would these “locals” who had been there long before she was, accept her? Would they include her in their ways of life?

3.2. “We learned everything from them”

One of the most common phrases I heard from my interviewees about the non-Muslims was, “we learned from them”. Almost all of my informants who had lived together with non-Muslims pointed out to the differences between their life styles and the life styles of non-Muslims, and described how they had changed many aspects of their ways of life, as they were affected by the non-Muslims. Some emphasized the attention given to education by non-Muslims and related it to the comparably high level of education in the neighborhood. Others described how they had changed their clothing; Ahmet, the child of a Kurdish Bingöli family and a man who had grown up in a house rented from a Jewish man, first described in awe how the [non-Muslim] men wore suits, ironed pants, and ties, and the women used make up and were well groomed; and then went on to tell me that his father, impressed by their clothing, both wore ties himself and made his children use bow ties even as children. He continued, telling me that classiness was important and he was enraged when he saw people dressed casually at weddings, because he considered it very rude.

Özlem, a Kurdish Bingöli woman, emphasized the “culture of food” in the making of an Istanbulite, together with promenading, taking care of oneself, and resting:

The food culture... Let me put it straight, Istanbul is non-Muslim. Because surely, we learned the whole food culture, the culture of picnics, from them. Everything. They would never clean their houses in the weekends. They finish it on Thursday. And on Saturdays and Sundays they would dress up well, go to their church, go to dinner, and they would do it all with us. We would even go to church, out of curiosity. (...) I’m telling you, the Turks living here have adapted the Istanbulite culture and customs from non-Muslims. Wandering around, trips... In fact, we took their culture, and named it the Istanbulite culture, there is no such thing. My mother started not cleaning the house in the weekends, because that was what she saw from Aunt Sara. They would dress up, do their make ups... Even at my darkest days, I visit the hairdresser, they are my idols... there was Sister Rachel, my idol, she was

so cool, would come home with the artists of the time, we really desired to be like her, to dress like her.

For her, not doing housework and wandering outside with elegant clothes was a part of the “non-Muslim culture.” She called it the “Istanbul culture” that they (she referred to Turks/Kurds in the first person plural) had appropriated and adapted to themselves. The use of the first person plural for Turks and Kurds and the third person plural for non-Muslims was common in these narratives; almost all of my informants told me that “they had learned much from them”. Both herself and her mother had identified with the Jewish women living next door, and her way of resting, stopping housework at certain days, which was a religious rule, but was decontextualized and reinterpreted by Özlem as a willful act, and adapted for herself.

From a different angle, Ayşe, a teacher in the neighborhood, described how she thought a parent she knew from school had been “taught” in the neighborhood by the non-Muslims to treat animals rightly:

In Anatolia people don't like cats or dogs, they treat them badly. Even people coming from those areas like cats and dogs here, they don't treat them badly, it is something that has been learnt, something that this neighborhood has taught. People in the villages are hostile, they do not love. They kill a cat because it has eaten their chicks. But it's not the case here. I found a kitten in the school one day, I sent it to a woman from Batman, who has only a primary school degree, she looked after it. Maybe she wouldn't care if it was in her own village. The neighborhood has an aura, it is influential.

3.3. Identification: Becoming Istanbulites through the non-Muslims

Such praised and admired Western ways of living “modern” however, for my interviewees, pertained essentially to the non-Muslims, and they themselves could be a part of such ideal only by acquiring a share from their lives, and learning from them. According to Leyla Neyzi (1999),

An important problem faced in Turkey is that the project of crafting a nation-state from a multiethnic and multireligious population, has aimed at forming a national identity based on a monolithic citizenship and cultural identity (...) In the project of crafting a nation, it is not only the other who is being negated, but the individual as the bearer of a cultural heritage that has been taken over in the historical process (...) we all suffer from the problem of identity –or lack of identity- we are all on the borderline.

Below is a quote from Zeynep, a Kurdish Alevite woman who had, as a child, many non-Muslim friends and grew up by frequently visiting their houses and spending time with them, spoke of how much impressed she had been by their ways of life, and at the same time, how she dealt with difficulty and with shame with the difference between her family and her friends' families:

In our house, people coming from the village eat on the floor, on a newspaper. As I was visiting their [non-Muslims'] houses, I learned how to use napkins, to eat with knives and forks. I would never then eat börek without cutting it. I belonged to neither part. I don't know if it is about wishing to be accepted, just a childish wish... (...) But if I wasn't trapped in being a Bingölü, it is about them [non-Muslims]. In fact I am *Türkiyeli*. Upstairs was a Greek aunt, I was always curious about Beyoğlu. I would go with her there, a tailor would make her hats. My mother was working. I was both in that world, and outside it. For a long time, I wondered, who am I, what am I? I have one identity but many cultures.

(...) I like both of my identities, I have learned from both of them. I lived Istanbul, with those who lived it as Istanbul. I did not merge the two cultures.

Zeynep ended her words, saying, "I lived Istanbul with those who lived it as Istanbul". The narratives of my informants on the subject of living together with non-Muslims were based not on the popular discourses of respect and tolerance for non-Muslims; but rather on an intense admiration of non-Muslims and their ways of life, on learning from them, on being accepted in their rituals –sacred and profane-, and adapting from them "the ways of an Istanbulite".

Sara Ahmed (1999) likens home to a second skin, "a skin that envelops, that is inhabited by the subject, and that delineates the contours of what is inside and what is outside, and creates a space for belonging. As emphasized by my informants, the neighborhood appears to be an extended version of a family, of a home. The mahalle is conceived of not in spatial, but in interpersonal terms; it is not recounted as a geographical area, but as an area of sociality based on familiarity, intimacy, protection, mutuality. It is a space of belonging, and at the same time, is determining in how my informants position themselves vis-a-vis the nation. I suggest that it was this position that was lost with the leave of the non-Muslims, and was actively attempted to be regained with the use of nostalgic discourses in the present, especially at the face of a process of gentrification where positions are at once being shattered and reformed.

3.4. Nostalgia and Claims to Place

It has been suggested that nostalgia should be conceived not as a mere statement about the past, but as a “strategy that serves the present” (Parla, 2009; Özyürek, 2006; Boym, 2001). However, in her work where she examines the nostalgic reminiscences of Turkish migrants from Bulgaria, Parla warns against conceptualizing nostalgia only as a strategy that serves the present in a way that completely overlooks the materiality of what is being remembered.

The presentist take on nostalgia shows how such tone can be used as a strategy for survival as in the case of displaced people (Boym, 2001), a discursive stance that silences conflicts by praising the past (Mills, 1999), a position taking that seeks to maintain the advantages priorly held (Özyürek, 2006). Commonly in the contexts where nostalgia over the former years of a nation is described, the focus is on the idealized past where the citizens gathered around commonalities in unison (Özyürek, 2006). In the present context and study, it would perhaps not be misleading to suggest, such as in the case of Mills, that the nostalgic narratives of my interviewees that focused on the harmonious multireligious life silenced and dismissed any counternarratives that would disrupt the harmonious life narrative and present the inner conflicts that were thereby silenced. However, the focuses in the nostalgic harmony narratives of my interviewees came with a twist: These were narratives, I suggest, not of including and accepting non-Muslims, but rather of being included and accepted *by them* into a life they admired and –for some- found superior to themselves; and therefore, served another purpose, along with the first one.

It would perhaps not be misleading to state that there are many different kinds of losses involved in the loss of the non-Muslim population for those who remain. The narratives regarding the departure of non-Muslims were described mostly in general terms, with an emphasis on the loss of the joint life, sometimes with focusing on known figures of the neighborhood, and with less description of the loss of certain loved ones who had moved away. When Boym (2001) describes the danger of nostalgia as the tendency to “confuse the actual home and the imaginary one”, she emphasizes the role of the imaginary over the actual in nostalgic structures of feeling. In the case of Yeldeğirneni, the loss of the multireligious life itself entailed not only the loss of friendships (which was certainly true for some, though not for all), but also a kind of loss more symbolic, the loss of my interviewees’ inclusion in the ideal of the cosmopolitan Istanbulite life that was embodied by the non-Muslim population living in the neighborhood. Therefore, I suggest that the nostalgic image of the harmonious

neighborhood with non-Muslims that has not been given up, and is retold over and over again with an emphasis on its loss, can be explained with their -now hopeless- desire to take part in the image of the non-Muslim as the holder of a Western way of life, which was also related to the negation of their old ways of life, reminded to them by those who had migrated in from Anatolia in the later years. Surely this is not to dismiss the potential feelings of loss people may have felt following the departures of their friends and acquaintances, but is rather to underscore that there should have been a different form of loss in the departures that leads to the nostalgic reminiscencing. With the leave of the non-Muslims, my informants had also felt that their claims to being the authentic Yeldeğirmenlites had been shattered, that was characterized by a share on the ways of living they spoke of having adapted from the non-Muslims.

In her work “Nostalgia for the Modern” that elaborates on the relation between Kemalist nostalgia and neoliberalism in Turkey, Özyürek (2006) relates the pervasiveness of nostalgia to the yearning for the 1930’s Turkey, following the end of the hegemony of Kemalist principles, to what she adds the nostalgia stemming from the loss of the Republican elite who no longer held their economical statuses and social positions following the transformations in the 1980’s. The focus of my interviewees was, however, in fact on the ways of life they had adopted from the non-Muslims. It was not exactly their own positions that was lost, but the positions they had seemingly gained through shared life with the non-Muslims. The aspect of disillusionment in the nostalgic tone (Berdahl, 2010) can be related to the realization that my interviewees had not in fact occupied such positions themselves, but were implicated in such positions via others. Perhaps, considering the “presentist” aspect of nostalgia, it can be said that my interviewees had not only gained such positions in the past and lost them, but were actively constructing themselves as occupying such positions by claim to having lost them. Importantly, such nostalgic tone has emerged and become prevalent especially at a time when the area is going through gentrification, and provides once more an important position, indicating again a presentist strategy.

Today, narratives about Yeldeğirmeni by its old inhabitants almost exclusively center around the good old days of living with non-Muslims, which allegedly ended with the period of “corruption with the coming of migrants from Anatolia”. The outsiders and latecomers were related by my informants to the loss of the authentic, the essential Yeldeğirmeni. It was frequently mentioned together with the departure of the non-Muslims. The late comers were held responsible for what some called the “corruption” of the neighborhood, and the

“Yeldeğirmeni corrupted with those migrating from the outside” was commonly contrasted with the lost “Yel değirmeni, harmonious and well-off, where they lived together with the non-Muslims.” When I asked about the loss of the multireligious life and the departure of the non-Muslims, I was repeatedly told about the migration from Anatolia, though with no explicit connection. For instance, Ahmet said, while explaining, “Their leave... It was with the formation of Israel. They decreased towards the end of the 60’s, and in the 70’s was a migration from Karadeniz. They came afterwards, and oh, they shouldn’t have come!”.

Although it is implied that the change of the neighborhood and the departure of the non-Muslims is closely linked with “the migrations from Anatolia”, no one actually stated that those who had migrated directly led to the departure of the non-Muslims; any event shattering the image of the peacefulness of the neighborhood were not included (with one exception). What was, then, the relation between the loss of the idealized life with non-Muslims, and the “migration from Anatolia”? For my informants who used such discourse, the migration was related not to the loss of the non-Muslim population itself, but with the loss of a specific image of the neighborhood that was contingent upon the presence of non-Muslims, and that was even more disturbed with the migrations from Anatolia. While the lives led by non-Muslims represented for my informants a mode of living that was compatible with the dominant (for their period at least) modernist values of “being Western”, being educated, being “urban”, dressing up well, and the like; those who had migrated from Anatolia and had taken the place of the non-Muslims who had left were for them, the contrary -in their words rural, illiterate, vulgar. Birol described the newcomers as “people from rural areas, people whom those from the neighborhood would not get along”. Eda, whose family had migrated from Bingöl, said while speaking about those “she had learnt from non-Muslims”, said: “I was always with my [non-Muslim] friends, I learned so much from them. But only years and years later, did I come to realize that I, too, had much to teach them. I used to think I would not be accepted. You know what they call Kurds, “kıro”, “hanzo”.”The period in 70’s and 80’s when migration from Anatolia was at its peak, and, at the same time, the non-Muslim population had almost disappeared also corresponds to the time when the neighborhood became infamous – until the last five to ten years, it was still known as a rather economically disadvantaged neighborhood and potentially dangerous.

The problem is not that people from Karadeniz came to the neighborhood. Kurds were always here, people from Bingöl. It wasn’t their arrival that changed our lives. But it was that the old people who had been living in the neighborhood went away... when people came to the neighborhood, the old ones taught them how to live

properly. How to live in line with the customs of the neighborhood. I never saw any Kurd fighting with a Jew, or Armenian, or Turk. The leaving of the old led to the disappearance of the old ways of life, and led the newcomers to live as they wish. So things couldn't be transmitted. (Ali)

The constant emphasis on this loss is in a way an attempt to maintain the lost image for themselves in the face of the threat of being identified with what they identify with migrants from Anatolia. It is at the same time, an attempt to claim ownership over the place, claiming the identity of the Yeldeğirmenlite which has been shattered by the departure of the non-Muslims. Therefore, the narratives of multireligious harmony were less narratives of inclusion, of accepting non-Muslims, and more, narratives stemming from the desire to reinforce their sense of having been included by them into their ways of life, and into the neighborhood which they dominated, and “owned”.

3.5. Resettling Others: Constructing Locality by Exclusion and Inclusion

While speaking about the 6-7 September events, Ali started his speech saying “So, the Jews came from other places to *our* neighborhood...” (italics are mine). In the beginning of our interview, as in most of my interviews, Ali, as did other informants had recounted the story of his family's arrival to the neighborhood - his grandfather had arrived in the neighborhood to settle in a old Greek house which he had later bought. Who came first was always an essential question: the first group of informants I spoke with, those who had grown up in Yeldeğirmeni between the 50's and 80's, defined themselves as authentic Yeldeğirmenlites, and spoke contemptuously about those they referred to as “outsiders” or “latecomers”. In most cases, my informants drew distinctions between “Yeldeğirmenlites” and “latecomers”, and “Yeldeğirmenlites” and “outsiders”. Some whose parents or grandparents had arrived and settled down in Yeldeğirmeni had been born there, some had moved to the neighborhood with their families as small children any case, all of my informants (except from those interviewees who had moved there in the recent years), identified as Yeldeğirmenlite, and used the terms “latecomers” (sonradan gelenler”) and “outsiders” (dışarıdan gelenler) to refer to people who had moved to the neighborhood after themselves. As we spoke more on the issue, it appeared that “latecomers” referred to those who had moved in after the informant, especially after his/her childhood years, and “outsiders” referred to those who had not been born or had not grown up in Yeldeğirmeni and had missed those values commonly taught to be passed from generation to generation in the neighborhood.

In *Faces of the State*, Navaro (2002) has shown how nativity and locality is actively and discursively negotiated, contested, and constructed against the other who is deemed not-native. She also asserts that there is no Turkish culture as such, and that the concept of Turkish culture is made and remade in discourse and in practice as a claim to being the authentic local. My informants were claiming locality in Yel değirmeni –and in Istanbul- and constructing themselves as the real natives by one inclusion and two exclusions. They were claiming that the non-Muslims embodied the real Istanbulite identity, and at once constructed themselves as the authentic natives by taking part in the side of non-Muslims (self-inclusion), and at the same time, constructed themselves as the real natives by announcing the foreignness of the non-Muslims (other-exclusion). On the other hand, they constructed themselves as authentically Yeldeğirmenlite by comparing themselves to what they called “outsiders”, “latecomers”, or those “migrating from Anatolia” (other-exclusion).

Though not all, some of the informants at times referred to the non-Muslims as “*yabancı*” –a Turkish word that can be translated as “foreigner”, “stranger”, and “outsider”, connotating commonly that they were outsiders to the country. Özer, who was living in the house he himself had occupied, told me that it belonged to a “*yabancı çift*”, an Armenian couple who had passed away. Similarly, one informant had referred to Jews as “*Israilli*”, and Ali had mentioned a Greek who had fled to Greece following the 6-7 September events as having “returned to his own country, his country of origin”, still another referred to one of her neighbours as “originally from Greece”. Though, in other parts of the interview, I was told by almost all informants that non-Muslims were “just like one of them”, the narratives were characterized by statements that implied that non-Muslims were not essentially from there - from the country in general, or from the neighborhood in particular.

As Kadioğlu (2011) points out, the antonym of non-Muslim is commonly used as “*Türk*”, not as “*Muslim*”. Such use is common in different religious and ethnic groups, and non-Muslims are considered as “not *Türk*”, in line with the concept of the “step citizenship” put forth by Ekmekçioğlu (2016). According to Ekmekçioğlu (2016), in the formation of the Republic, there were two different conceptualizations of the *Türk*: the authentic *Türk*, and the citizen-*Türk*. Those citizens who were not Muslim, or who did not have Turkish as their mother tongue were citizens, but were never fully treated in the same way with the “authentic *Türks*”. Ekmekçioğlu thus refers to the second category of *Türk* as citizen as “step citizens”, arguing that these step citizenship was in a way a continuation of the *dhimmitude* in the Ottoman Period where people were aligned according to their religious identities.

Quoting from Hobsbawm (1990, p.10),

Nations and their associated phenomena (...) are constructed from above but cannot be understood unless analyzed from below. That is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings, and interests of the ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist.

How were the hopes and needs, the interests of my interviewees, associated with their lexical choices? My interviewees oscillated in their discourses between distinguishing non-Muslims from Turks, and stating that there was no difference between them and that they were “no different than Turks”, or as quoted from one interviewee, that they “did not see them as different from Turks”. However, especially while speaking about the leave of the non-Muslims, they emphasized their “foreignness”, by referring to non-Muslims as “from Israel, or from Greece”, subtly implying that they did not in fact belong to the country. As clearly stated by Lewis, the population exchange between Greece and Turkey did not refer to people’s return to their own countries, but a forced deportation of people in both countries (Aktar, 2006). It is important to consider these choices implying origin, together with their repeated emphasis on the non-Muslims as the “real owners of Istanbul”. Interestingly, some of my interviewees themselves were “step citizens”, in that either they or their parents had languages other than Turkish –such as Kurdish or Arabic-as their mother tongue. Either their grandparents, their parents, or themselves as children had settled at Yel değirmeni from places in Anatolia. The “secular dhimmitude” of non-Muslims however, provided them a chance to claim ownership on the basis of religion –though it was not articulated as such, this difference grounded the claims- in contrast with the non-Muslims, and desettle them to resettle themselves as authentically local.

CHAPTER IV

AFTERLIFE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Once home to an equal amount of Jews and Turks, and a lesser amount of Greeks and Armenians, Yeldeğirmeni today is a very populated area comprising mostly from Turks and Kurds, that has been going through a period of gentrification in the last years. Known as a place with “cheap rent and many empty buildings” as a young interviewee told me, in the last 10 years, the neighborhood became a target for the opening of studios and a few art galleries. Before that, in the 1990’s, it can be said that the neighborhood was rather infamous as dangerous, and though very close to the center of Kadıköy, a social center, was not visited by people other than its inhabitants, and was even avoided. The last 4 years has witnessed another turn; following the squat house of Don Kişot by people in the neighborhood who were active in the Gezi Park uprising, and with the growing interest of Kadıköy Municipality towards the area, cafes started to be opened, more and more people started to move in, houses began to be rebuilt or restored, and the neighborhood went through a striking transformation.

In *Where Memory Dwells*, Gomez-Barris (2009, p.6) proposes to use the term “afterlife”, instead of aftermath, to refer to the “continuing and persistent symbolic and material effects of the original event of violence on people’s daily lives, their social and psychic identities, and their ongoing wrestling with the past in the present”. In this chapter, I would like to examine the “afterlife in Yeldeğirmeni”: How is the history of Yeldeğirmeni recounted in the present by its present inhabitants and by those who have grown up in the area after the

1950's when the non-Muslim population gradually left the area, and what is the role of material place in remembering and forgetting such past?

As I was planning my interviews in the beginning, I had planned to speak with people who had been born following the 6-7 September events, after which I assumed (based on my prior talks with people in the neighborhood who had moved in in the recent years), the non-Muslim population had disappeared. However, as I spoke with different people born in the years between 1940's and 1980's, I realized that they all expressed having lived in the multireligious period of the neighborhood, and spoke of living in close connections with the non-Muslim population in the area, which was still quite dominant and visible –though perhaps not as dominant as they used to be in the beginning of the 1900's. A few of my interviewees had witnessed directly the events, the others had heard about them afterwards, but had grown up in the climate following the events. Most had witnessed the tense climate of the Cyprus conflict. Therefore the theories of my interviewees on why and how the non-Muslim population had vanished were based on both their experiences and on what they inferred from other resources.

4.1. Remembering Violence

Narratives regarding the 6-7 September events were dominantly narratives of unity and protection: many of my informants recounted stories of how “people outside the neighborhood” had arrived at Yeldeğirmeni to attack non-Muslims and their property, but had failed as their families or other people from the neighborhood had protected them.

I don't know if it is written in the book, but in the 6 September events, the houses and shops of Jews, Greeks, you know people who are not Turkish, were looted. In our neighborhood, everyone went to guard their houses and shops. Those coming could therefore not loot. There was only one shop in Düz Street that they could not guard, and it was looted, and the keeper died from his pain. He was a shopkeeper, old in the neighborhood. Jewish. The mahalleli was very sad about it, but they say that the man died sorrowing over how it could have been done to him.

This story had been recounted to Ali by his father and his uncle. What was transmitted to him by the elderly in his family was a narrative of harmony and unity in the neighborhood, as well as the pride of having protected them. Perhaps this was also why he had told me the story of 6-7 September even before I asked him – a story of pride, it was among those he would like to tell an interviewer. He identified with the neighborhood and the neighbors of his family while recounting, referring to people as “everyone in our neighborhood went to their houses and shops.” The story was also written in the book on Yel değirmeni, and was commonly referred to by both who had lived in Yel değirmeni in those years, and those who have moved there in

the recent years. Handan too told me about the 6-7 September events without being asked; her story was again centered around themes of protection and unity in the neighborhood:

I am the daughter of a soldier. When the 6-7 September events took place, I was 11. The shopkeeper in the corner was Greek, they lived in the house nearby. Because my father was a soldier, he took his gun and went downstairs, and took the family to our flat to save them.

Living in close connection with non-Muslim appears to lead to access to a different kind of knowledge that is not readily available in many popular historical accounts. Demir, spoke to me generally about learning history from his own experiences, and told me the story of their Greek neighbor of his childhood who was exiled from the country and had come back many years later. As a sign of neighborhood intimacy, he told me how, when she had come back for a visit, she had stayed with them for some time even though his father was a devoted Muslim man.

However, there were also narratives that contrasted the general narrative of protection and unity. Ahmet and Eda were more sceptical about the part of those living in the neighborhood. When I asked him about the 6-7 September events, Ahmet told me that his father had been involved in the events, adding that his father would say that he was very young, almost a child at the time. He then went on to tell me that the people in the neighborhood had been “enlightened” by their children, and could have easily been “conservative”:

Ahmet: My father was involved in the events, and he went to his village when people started to be arrested. He says that he was too young, that he was a child. (...) If he had been educated... the people here were enlightened by their kids, they could have as well been conservative. (...) We knew [about the events]. People from our community got rid of them, dismissed them, made them flee. They circumcised the Greek priest. It's so ugly, so sad. My father was involved. It was the times when nationalism was at its peak. In the Republican Holidays, the flag was obligatory.

Calling his father and the group in general “bizimkiler” , he does not take a distance from the group itself, but takes his distance from the act by calling it gross and very sad. He then goes on to speak about the part of Kurds in what he calls the “massacres against Armenians”. Similarly, Eda, who had been born in 1963 after the events, had listened about the events from his father. She recalls in the interview being told by his father that people from Karadeniz had intruded into the houses and had taken the valuable objects and thrown out others. Upon his father's stories, she tells me that Kurdish people had not been involved in the events, but is sceptical about why:

Eda: The houses of non-Muslims changed hands in 1974. They were appropriated by whoever grabbed them. Our people say that people from Karadeniz was good at it, but we could not do it. Maybe they did not have the courage, maybe they were losers. There were people who said that people from Karadeniz did everything, why can we not also have a house? My father knows about the 6-7 September, he says that in our neighborhood, people from Karadeniz, from Rize went in the houses to throw out the beds and take the valuable stuff. Maybe people from the Easat did not have the guts, or maybe they had conscience. I do not know. They were also victims. My father says that my grandfather used to speak about the Dersim Massacre. He says that the 6-7 September events reminded him of the stories he heard from his father. Maybe that was why they could not do it, they did not have the heart.

However such events that disrupted the narratives of protection appears to pass down in families only; both Ahmet and Eda who spoke of such events had listened to them from their families. Those who had listened to the events from others did not mention any assault from inside the neighborhood. My informants were also mostly very trustful of the written resources, as well as the transmission of stories in the families; when I asked them whether they had heard anything about 6-7 September in the neighborhood, one replied that “nothing must have happened because it is not written in the books”, and another replied that “nothing must have happened because he had not been told by the elderly in the family”.

According to White (1992), the use of poetic and rhetorical devices are what makes narrative accounts more than a list of mere facts. When there are competing narratives, their contrast is not due to their disagreement in the facts of the event, but rather on “the different story meanings with which the facts can be endowed by emplotment”. None of my interviewees were doubtful about the 6-7 September events, or that the non-Muslims had gradually decreased to completely disappear in the following years; but they described the events with emplotments that differed from each other. While Zeynep was sceptical as to the reasons why Kurds had not been involved in the attacks, this was a narrative of pride for another informant. Similarly, the story of the suicide of the Greek shopkeeper was for one informant a story showing that “something happened” in Yel değirmeni, but for others, it was –even though it was the story of a suicide- a narrative that emphasized again the good will and harmony of the neighborhood as it focused on the will to-though failure of- protection, that was followed by an instance

However, it appears that certain parts of the events were silenced in the transmission of memory from generation to generation. Generation here does not only pertain to the family, but also to the generations in the neighborhood. Eda recounted a fable she had listened to many times as a child from a Greek shopkeeper in the neighborhood.

Aylin: Would they speak of 6-7 September?

Eda: My father would, my mother was more in the house. They say there was only one street then near the sea. My father remembers that, he does not know if it was the shopkeepers or the people living in the neighborhood, but the street was filled with things, plates, glasses... Greeks he says, and maybe Jews and Armenians. Turkish flags were hung at their windows. The bakkal Foti would secretly tell us about it when we were kids. He was so old, he spoke like he was reminiscing. He would be crying in the inside. When we asked him to tell us a tale, he would tell us this story, and we taught that it was a tale. I learned about it when I was 15, when my father spoke to me. He used to tell me when I was in primary school, 2nd grade. The tale was like this, "Once upon a time, there was a neighborhood. All kinds of people lived in this neighborhood. People loved each other. But then bad people outside the neighborhood who had no love came, and threw people's belongings out the windows to make these people who love each other into enemies. They were so afraid, they hid in the basements of their apartments. This is a tale, and I am telling it to you so that you never do bad things to each other."

When she was 10 years old, she had asked him to retell the tale for her. However this time, Foti had replied, saying instead that the story was not a tale but was a part of his life, and that he had spent 12 days in the *kömürlük* with his family, and had been assaulted by people from outside the neighborhood. Not everyone was told these kinds of stories; even though other informants had known Foti bakkal, they were either not told by him the story, or did not remember them.

Today, one would, under normal conditions, not hear about the story told by Ahmet about the attacks on the priest, the involvement of the neighbors in the events, or the hiding of a shopkeeper in his attic for 12 days, even though they were kept in the memories of some of my interviewees. The only story that is collectively told in the neighborhood and that is transmitted to those moving in in the recent years is the story of the suicide of a shopkeeper. According to Halbwachs, social frames imposed by groups on individuals are what determine what is remembered and what is forgotten at the collective level, and "it is thus the desire to belong that regulates the interaction between remembering and forgetting. Each social frame necessarily excludes a whole spectrum of memories which are either considered relevant or not acceptable from the point of view of the group" (p.5). Instances coloured by guilt and responsibility hardly find themselves place in these social frames, because collective pride is pivotal in the assemblage of national memory. This is surely not to dispute the many incidents of solidarity and protection that my informants told me about; but to say that the "social frame" of the neighborhood that focused on moments of pride and unity, permitted only certain kinds of stories to be told, while leading to the disappearance of others.

During my field, I had attended two neighborhood tours, and two speeches on the neighborhood. In all four, the life of harmony of the Muslim and non-Muslim groups that once took place in the neighborhood was recounted, but why such life now remained in the past was not at all touched upon. This was the case in the tours led by Turkish leaders as well as the tours –and speeches- given by Jews. However, when we had private interviews, the speakers and tour leaders spoke about 6-7 September events, and especially the Wealth Tax which led to many changes in the neighborhood as plenty of buildings had to be sold by the non-Muslims to Turks who then named the buildings after themselves or after places or people linked to the state. Even though these instances –mostly upon my asking- were recounted in private interviews, they were not mentioned in the public speeches and tours. My interviewees in fact knew that I would be writing about the incidents that they were speaking about – and so they knew that our talk was not private. Taussig proposes the term “public secrecy” to refer to those facts which are no secret to the people, but are hidden as secrets in the public. I suggest therefore that this difference in their speeches between the private and public interviews were not due to the concealment and exposition of a secret they knew, but was more about being compatible with the common affective ground upon which the past about the neighborhood was discussed. Writing about what she terms “affect aliens”, Ahmed describes how certain affective commonalities conceal the violence. After our interview with one of these tour leaders, I posted on an online group where people who used to live in Yeldeğirmeni had gathered, asking them if they would like to participate in my thesis. I was half overt, describing my thesis as related to the neighborhood relations in the past of Yeldeğirmeni. I was quickly expelled from the group –and my post erased- because my former interviewee thought that I was deceiving the group by concealing the fact that I was researching about “non-Muslims”. This incident made me consider, again, that researching about non-Muslims, thinking especially that our own interview had involved his remarks on the 6-7 September events, was potentially dangerous and could disturb the common affective ground of their group which was exclusively based on the good memories of unity and harmony.

Examining the creation of silences in history and its relations to power, Trouillot (1995) sketches out four moments at which silences are produced: at the moment of production, at the moment of assembly, at the moment of retrieval (in narration), and at the moment of significance in terms of the present. In this case, not much was available in written sources about Yeldeğirmeni. While researching for my thesis, I had great difficulty in finding any material resources on the non-Muslim history of Yeldeğirmeni. In time I managed to reach to

the book published by the Hemdat Israel Synagogue, which was quite difficult to access (was available only in Şalom the newspaper) to learn about the past of the Jewish community, and there were only a few paragraphs in Orhan Türker's book on the Greeks of Kadıköy that referred specifically to those who had been living in Yeldeğirmeni. To date, I have found no resource on the Armenian population of the area. The only book exclusively written on Yel değirmeni I know, Arif Atılgan's book, described only the Wealth Tax in one instance (in how the pharmacist Soryano had to sell his pharmacy, but the young Muslim man who bought him did not make him kept him as responsible from the pharmacy and he did not feel that anything was different), and the 6-7 September events in another instance which described the protection of the neighborhood and the sadness over the suicide of the Greek shopkeeper. In narration, as I have described, commonly the stories that were available in written resources were used, apart from a few examples if people had heard from their families. What I found striking about retrospective significance was that some of my questions especially on the change of the names of the buildings were dismissed as trivial.

4.2. The Void: “Vanishing” of non-Muslims

(...)The haberdasher vanished in a day. Foti bakkal vanished over a night. Without saying goodbye. They departed with no farewells, perhaps they did not trust us so much after all (...). One day, we saw the shop, and they said it was closed, Yanni had went away. (Ahmet)

A common aspect of the narratives told by my interviewees when I asked them how and when the non-Muslim population completely disappeared from the neighborhood was that it had happened “all of a sudden”. There was a striking void for my interviewees regarding the leave of the non-Muslims. Though some lived in very close relation to their non-Muslim neighbors, it was very difficult for them to make meaning out of their leaving. Ahmet who lived in an apartment rented from a Greek family spoke of feeling distant from the non-Muslims, and even a bit frightened due to the myth of the pinned barrel, and did not have very close friends from different religious communities – he knew them only from his class. He expressed that their (meaning Jews, as Greeks and Armenians were already very few in number in his childhood) leave was perhaps related to the formation of Israel, and that he did not know if they left “happily and merrily, rushing to leave” or not. He did not mention any major event of violence that had effected the community on my question, and related it only to the formation of Israel.

When I asked him how the non-Muslim population had decreased, Ali answered that the second generation did not want to continue shopkeeping and moved, besides the problems with parking. He did not automatically relate their leave to any discomfort on part of the non-Muslims. In another part of the interview, he told me how sad they had been when their non-Muslim neighbors had left, and said, “We just couldn’t understand. Why did they leave? Why did they abandon us?”

There is one very sad memory from my childhood. I remember very well the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation. I started school in 1973. We had a bookstore, Yanni he was called, Greek. An old man, he was, that we very much liked. He was so funny, not at all a cold person. After the peace operation, he closed his shop fearing that it could be like the 6 September, and went to Greece. It was such sorrow in the neighborhood, why did he leave, why did he leave us? But of course he can have his reasons. (Ali)

“Abadoning” [terk etme] was the phrase that was most commonly used while referring to the leave of the non-Muslims, two interviewees also used “exile” too. Özer, who had grown up in what he called “the house of the Madam”, and has been living for some time in an abandoned house that once belonged to an Armenian woman, said that “there were many Jews, but they just went, or they died.” He mentioned that though he had heard about the “September events”, nothing must have happened in Yeldeğirmeni, because it was not written.

There was a stable social frame for remembering the 6-7 September events, but when asked about the leave of their non-Muslim neighbors, my interviewees were having difficulties explaining how and why, and when that had happened. There was a lack of a stable social frame that would aid my interviewees into making meaning about their memories of living with and being “left by” their non-Muslim neighbors. In *Seven Types of Forgetting*, Connorton (2008) defines a form of forgetting at the collective level which he labels as “repressive erasure,” and states that it “can be employed to deny the fact of a historical rupture, as well as to bring about a historical break... [it] need not take malign forms, and can be encrypted covertly and without apparent violence”. I suggest that although it appears that many interviewees had some narratives available for the 6-7 September events, the fact that these events were coloured with silences and omissions made it difficult for them to tell integrated narratives about the subsequent leave of non-Muslims, and interpret its reasons in general. The omission of discomfoting stories has preserved the notion of the neighborhood as exclusively harmonious, but at the same time, has come with a cost by creating ruptures and voids in the social imagery for my interviewees, who were shocked at what they saw as the sudden leave of the non-Muslims.

Özlem recounted how she remembered in a fragmented fashion that their neighbors would hide in their houses, but could not articulate what was happening. She said upon reading about the events she could understand better, but said at the same time she really did not know how they had been eradicated:

Özlem: They were done away with, but trust me I have no idea as to how it happened. But I remember they properties were seized, they were searched for, my mother would tell people that they were not home. She would say that they moved away, stand up for them, I remember this well. Economic hardships, the course of the country, I feel as if they did not let them live here (...) Now I read, and I think to myself, how could we not see what was going on? Only now, when I am conscious.

Aylin: And then?

Özlem: No I understood nothing... Just that they were hiding in their houses. I really liked Aunt Selin, they would lock themselves in, and my mother would give them food from the balcony. She wasn't doing this consciously either, we never thought that there was racism and oppression. We never knew.

For another interviewee, who did not recount any close connections with non-Muslim population in the neighborhood, my question as to how non-Muslims left, he replied thinking that it could be related to the 6-7 September events that he had learnt about in his adulthood, but he did not know about it back then.

Özer: I learned about the Wealth Tax after reading about it. About what Jews had gone through... (...) As I researched, I saw that the non-Muslims left following the 1960's. At the time, we were not aware of anything. In the 2000's, we see, in movies, in books that there was much oppression. At one point, our Jewish friends, with no reason started moving to Israel. Greeks and Armenians moved rather to Moda. Only later on we learned about what happened, but we did not sense anything then.

Aylin: Did you say goodbye?

Özer: Sure, they left in tears. But they never told us anything. We thought they were leaving because Israel was calling them.

But when I asked him about how a specific Greek shopkeeper had left, he told me that he had left somewhere in the 1970's, and when I asked further, dismissed my question, "I have no idea. He just went some time". The same shopkeeper was recounted to me by another informant with intense affection, and was told as an unforgettable memory because he had left very suddenly, leaving without even closing his shop. The transmission of the stories shared the similar form of suddenness and unannounced. When I asked Bilge whether her grandmother

who continuously told her stories about the Yel değirmeni of her childhood told her about the 6-7 September events, she replied;

Bilge: She never speaks about that. She just says that the non-Muslims, all of a sudden, had to flee one by one, that they left everything and ran away. Maybe they were not that effected. I don't know if there was looting here- it happened in Beyoğlu.

Veli: We would know if that had been the case..

Bilge: I don't think anything like that happened, but we would need to ask. My grandmother would remember. I don't think such events would happen here, but maybe someone coming from another place can do such a thing. You know, my grandfather would leave his shop open and unguarded, they would keep an eye on each others' shops.

While discussing the omissions in collective memory of genocide, Habip (2015) states that there is a great difference between a past forgotten and a past denied. Denial “attacks its object, and deforms it – deforms the reality of the events, devaluates them, ridicules them.” Accordingly, these events were in a deformed fashion in the narratives of my interviewees; despite their intimate relationship with non-Muslims, and despite the fact that they told me that they had researched and learned about the events that caused discomfort for the non-Muslims, they had great and clear difficulties in naming these events and identifying them at a historical point. Even the most educated interviewee who had researched the 6-7 September events asked me if it had taken place in the 1970's, another who had researched much repeatedly referred to it as the 6-7 October events, still another interviewee referred to it as the 7-8-9 October events, one other interviewee said that the events took place in the times of the massacres against Armenians. It was not only the dates that were confused; as mentioned in the first chapter, there was great confusion regarding the religious backgrounds of non-Muslim neighbors – a too great confusion for those people who had lived together with them. Another interviewee told me that the building she as living in – a famous Jewish building- was owned by French Armenians who had suffered much in their time in the building.

Instead of using the autobiographical memory and historical memory distinction, Assman & Czaplicka (1995) distinguish between communicative memory and cultural memory; defining the first as the pattern of instable, disorganized, and non-specialized everyday communications (that pertain to the transmission of memory too), and the latter as “objectivized culture” that “comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose “cultivation” serves to stabilize and convey that society's self image.” When communicative memory, in this sense, was very partial and could not aid them in making

meaning about their experiences, they took aid from cultural memory, however the social frames that were effective in cultural memory still determined the extent of their interpretation. One reason, besides the presence of denial in communicative memory, was that the cultural memory regarding the 6-7 September events too is fraught with silences, and is not very readily accessible.

According to Trouillot (1995),

The production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production (...) history is the fruit of power, but power itself is never so transparent that its analysis becomes superfluous. The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility, the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.

In its invisibility, denial appears as one of the main ways in which power has operated at this matter by creating omissions and deformations regarding the events in the minds of even those who have been living with those who were largely affected by them. But, then, what of the materialities that have been left by those who had left the neighborhood? What were their part in the working through of these events?

4.3. “Domesticating” the Phantomic: Appropriation, Protection, Looting

Crimson (2005) proposes to conceive of the city as “a physical landscape and collection of objects and practices that enable recollections of the past and that embody the past through traces of the city’s sequential building and rebuilding”. We are now going through a period where the neighborhood of Yeldeğirmeni –along with others- is being in a sense “rebuilt”, especially with the recent attention of the Kadıköy municipality. There are historical buildings being restored –among them also schools and religious buildings such as the church- though they may be used this time for different purposes. How is the past embodied in the recent rebuilding of Yeldeğirmeni – if it is; what is retained and what is lost in the embodiment? How is such embodiment determined?

The neighborhood today is quite popular and attractive, a place found to be beautiful and striking with its historical buildings. I have also seen that priced tours have started to be organized for getting to know the neighborhood, and have participated in two tours, one led by two Turkish architects among them one who has grown up in the neighborhood, and the other led by a young man from the Jewish community. Both tours centered around the historical

buildings, schools, and religious buildings of the neighborhood- the first tour was organized on a Sunday with a visit to churches during prayer, and the latter was organized on a Saturday with a visit to the synagogue in the neighborhood during prayer. In both, the historical buildings were described, with specific references to when and by whom they had been built. There was no mentioning, in either tour, of the change in the population in the neighborhood, except the implicit reference of the use of past tense in the common phrase, “In the past, Jews, Greeks, Armenians used to live in the neighborhood...”. when and how such change had taken place was not touched upon. The names of the buildings have changed, but whether the past of the buildings are not visible is dubious. Due to their structure, the houses built by non-Muslims easily catch the attention of those passing by.

In her ethnographic work in northern Cyprus with the Turkish Cypriots who have come to habit the spaces left by the Greek Cypriots in the 1974 Invasion, Yael Navaro (2012) describes that she attempts to understand “what is retained in material objects and the physical environment in the aftermath of the disappearance of the humans linked or associated with that thing of space” (p.17). She seeks out to understand the affective transmission between the new inhabitants and the space left by the others, in order to understand whether such remains which she terms the 'phantomic', discharge a specific affective state that conflict with the dominant ideological, social, and political practices (which she terms the 'phantasmatic'). Based on her ethnography, she concludes that the Greek Cypriots, though physically absent, nevertheless remain affectively present in the form of their material remnants and accordingly, through the imagination of the Turkish Cypriots who live with those remnants. Is the phantomic always retained in the materials, despite the passage of time and the work of the phantasmatic? In their examination of the discourses on the history of the Gezi Park (in that it used to be a cemetery belonging to the Armenian community), Parla and Özgül (2016) hold that the absoluteness of the phantasmatic has led the phantomic to almost complete disappearance, which is reinforced by the passage of time. They refer to the “domestication” of the phantasmatic, in that when the phantasmatic emerges in some way, it is quickly dismissed.

There were only a few instances where the phantasmatic appears to emerge, I would like to describe the instances and then, to describe in what ways the phantomic was being domesticated in the case of Yeldeğirmeni. İpek Hanım, a woman in her 40's, had been living for the last 20 years in one of the historical buildings, famous for having been built by Jews in the beginning of the 1900's. When I asked her about the history of the apartment, she replied;

İpek: So many lives have passed through this house, 107 years... So much pain, and joy, and sickness...

Aylin: Pain?

İpek: One night, something really peculiar happened. I was sleeping, my husband (my ex-husband) had been dead for years. Then I saw a really hairy hand resting on my body. Well I was not really like I was sleeping but a bit like I was awake, it was like a night terror. Then I pushed the hand off my body – it was really heavy. I turned to look, but there was no one. Later I asked around, and they told me there used to be a “yatır” there. I don’t know... But then I thought... Someone must have suffered much in here...”

Aylin: Who was living here?

İpek: The French, Jews, Armenians...

Aylin: You mean its them who suffered?

İpek: Well, they are said to have left on 7-8-9 . They were kicked out of here. My father used to tell me how there were Jews living at the Ada, their houses were occupied by those who went there in groups with the ferries. Maybe some of them came back to see their houses, you know, like the ones who came here to look.

Aylin:But I thought those who used to live here were the French? [she had told me that the apartment had been built by the French]

İpek: Yes, but there are also Jews and Armenians among the French. But those Armenians in France, you know, they like the Kurds too much.”

Earlier in our conversation, she had told me how two women had come to visit her house as one of them had been born in that house. She had welcomed them inside and shown all over the house. The woman had been surprised in not a much positive manner and had told her that the flat had changed much. İpek Hanım spoke of the incident as a positive encounter for she liked the idea of meeting those who had previously lived in the flat. According to İpek Hanım, her dream of the hairy hand was related to the history of suffering of the non-Muslims who had lived in the apartment. Even at this point, it is possible to see the fragmented quality of her memory, even though the apartment is quite famous for its Jewish past, she expressed that it was the Armenians – and French Armenians- who had used it before. I learned that she had heard this from the tailor whose shop was just across her apartment – he had grown up in the neighborhood, and İpek Hanım said he knew all about it (because she had come “later”). We called out to the tailor, who said that the building had been used by Armenians as a hospital.

In his book, *The Unconscious of the House*, Eigner (2013) touches upon the subject of house ghosts, writing, “a ghost is the dead that cannot leave the place. Why can it not leave? Because its death has been ill-timed, too early, or suspicious. It can be related to an injustice,

or to an incident that is shameful. Therefore, it begs reparation, and is determined not to give peace to the inhabitants of the place before all accounts have been settled.” (p.41). However, the case of İpek Hanım was exceptional in my study. Despite the lack of reparation, how were the ghosts dealt with, or the phantomic domesticated?

There are certain ways in which my interviewees, as many others, and the texts on the area (especially the text of the Kadıköy Municipality which is central as it is the main shareholder of the gentrification and renewal process), dealt with the phantomic residing in the materialities. One was the equating of the renewal of the houses with the renewal of the lost past. At this point, I suggest that the materialities left by those who have abandoned the place have a double function in the present discourse: on one hand, they, as remainders and reminders of those who have left, remain as to present the history of the non-Muslim population, on the other hand, they mystify their absence by arising the feeling that there is something that is remaining and that can be preserved related to those who have left. This appears to be a dubious position, as in most cases it does not include an ethical position while engaging with the remains that acknowledges what has taken place in the past, nor a position that interests itself with the present relation of the houses with those who have left.

There is a cafe in the neighborhood carrying the name of a Jewish doctor who used to live in the apartment. As I spoke with one of the owners, he said, with a tone of trivializing, “If we had given it another name, it would be made up. We thought it would be best if we kept the original name, so that he would somehow continue [in here].” He went on then, to tell me, that afterwards someone had visited them to tell that the doctor had been migrated to Israel (he said he did not know why, but maybe he was forced to), and committed suicide there. Crinson (2005) refers to this as “memory with the pain taken out”, where a symbolic remainder of the events – such as the presence of buildings or names- without an acknowledgement of its contents suffice in terms of keeping the memory. While discussing the change of the neighborhood as in a aforementioned quote, Atılğan states in his book that even though the non-Muslims had “disappeared”, the historical identity of the neighborhood could have been maintained if it weren’t for the policies of urban renewal:

Especially the non-Muslims that were the colours of the neighborhood were leaving, disappearing. (...) And people were changing, too. Nevertheless, Yel değirmeni still made its historical identity felt, and could adjust to the day with its new inhabitants. (...) Then came the Yeldeğirmeni Vitalization Project in 2010. The people of the neighborhood could not stay in their own neighborhood. The memory of Yel değirmeni was destructed. (Atılğan, p.154-155)

Thereby, he takes the materialities as the containers of the history/memory and identity of the place, in the absence of the people themselves. In another part of his book, he remarks, "...the apartments Mıgırdıçyan, İsmail Bey, Avador, Ali Bey, Filibey and many others remain standing, reviving what was here a hundred years ago." Atılğan's position, in this regard, is very parallel to the position of the Yeldeğirmeni Vitalization Project, who uses the same underground metaphor of vitality, [canlılık/canlandırma], that refers to the site of Yeldeğirmeni as a living organism that is close to dying and is in need of revitalization. The use of figurative language can serve at times to the diverting of the attention away from the object (White, 1992). As connoted in the project title "Vitalization", and in other lexical choices along the Project text, the project frames the neighborhood as a living organism that is on the edge of dying, evoking a certain feeling or attitude of concern, responsibility, compassion, and accordingly, attempt of recovery. Such connotations are supported again by other word choices such as "worn out" or "torn out". At the same time, referring to the neighborhood as an organism connotes a certain amount of autonomy for the space, which then, by reducing the role of the stakeholders to only revitalizing something that already exists autonomously in its own specific form, appears to diminish the potential role of the positionality of the institutions involved; thereby rendering the renewal a neutral process that does not interfere from outside with the life of the neighborhood and that seeks only to re-vitalize what has been waiting unchangingly. By taking the structures as the containers of history that can be revitalized, such discourse mystifies the actual change that has taken place, what has happened to the communities that have been related to the building and maintenance of these structures, and gives the readers the feeling that if the buildings can be revitalized, what has been lost can be recovered. Segal (1957) refers to this as "symbolic equation", when the symbol is taken as identical with what it symbolizes, describing how this is the case when especially the loss of the object has not been dealt with.

My interviewees who had moved in in the last few years emphasized the importance of learning about the past of the neighborhood. Cem explained how he had started to learn about the history of the neighborhood, and about the history of the non-Muslims in Turkey in general in the last years. But when I asked him about the buildings, he said he wasn't interested in the particular stories:

All of the streets had different names, they were changed in time. With such things you realize, the period I am living in is so short. I live like as if these places were always like this, but learning makes me want to read and understand more what it was like in the past. You start asking, especially if you find old people, what happened here, what was here?

Knowing about the past was determining in how they related to place. Selim came from a different background than my other interviewees; in his late 20's, he was the child of a Jewish mother and Armenian father, brought up by the Jewish customs. He had moved in to the neighborhood a year ago, and said at first he did not relate to the neighborhood much until he listened to the stories of his elder family members told by an electrician in the neighborhood who said he had grown up with them. Then, he had started to feel closer to the neighborhood. But for him, the most important part was the presence of a synagogue that he used to visit in his childhood, and which made him feel local in the neighborhood; the houses, he said belonged to people he did not know and therefore did not relate to.

Most of my interviewees –who had grown up in Yeldeğirmeni- had grown up in houses that had been built by non-Muslims. They were either in rent and living as neighbors with their landlords, or their families had somehow bought the houses. Only one interviewee had been presently living in a house he had occupied. Interestingly, none of them knew anything about the history of the houses they were living in. They were very interested in the life of the neighborhood, had many stories about its past, but the histories of their own houses were not among the subjects of interest. Only one second generation interviewee told me that the family's house had been built by Greeks and that there were crosses in the house which was later broken by her very religious grandfather. The rest, had no knowledge about the past, or about when the apartment was built, by whom, how was it rented or bought by their families. When I asked them about these apartments, and about the historical buildings in general, they spoke not of the histories of the buildings, but about their own histories that was somehow contained by the materialities that, according to them, “witnessed” their lives.

Ali explained how he would definitely prefer to live in a old house than in a new one because they reminded him of the past. As I inquired further, he explained:

I really long for the years of my youth. You can't find the kind of humanity now. There are no real friendships. I see the friends of my son, we would never give up on each other like they do. Let alone your house, even an old electricity button can make you feel sorrowful. It carries you back to the past, what a feeling! When one is 20 years old, he never thinks about death, it starts in your 40's. You start losing your parents, and missing them. When I say yearning for the past... there are some things, you feel as if they carry you back to the people you love; they of course don't, but you feel as if they do.

For him, the old houses represented the times he had spent in them, the times that belonged to the period of his childhood. Similarly, Ahmet, while telling me how he felt about living in a

neighborhood with historical buildings, told me that he “had a memory in each building, had played in each apartment”. Özlem recounted how much she had cried when a very old house just across hers was burnt down (she stated it was in order to bypass the law on the restoration of historical buildings) and her daughter had made fun of her. “It was my childhood that burnt down and disappeared with it”, she said. Yusuf explained to me how he had not painted the walls of his room for many years because he wanted his experiences to remain on those walls, and read to me a poem he had written for the ruined house across the house of his childhood. In the poem, he spoke about how this ruined house had seen him in states no one else had seen, and was the only witness.

Therefore, it appears that for my interviewees the houses were less home to the phantomic than their own memories. Using the concept of the “temporal alterity of the objects”, Bryant (2014) suggests that due to their temporal character, objects have a life that exceeds our own, and that this in fact is uncanny: though it means much to us, the house in fact is indifferent to us. My interviewees dealt with this alterity by claiming the sole ownership over the house, treating them only as the containers of their own memory, as was sometimes evident in their wishes to buy the houses they had grown up in. Few informants told me that if they had much money, they would have wanted to buy either the house they had grown up in, or (as two of my informants told me), in the “oldest house of Yeldeğirmeni”. They could afford perhaps to rent, but buying was important as it meant that the house would belong to them.

One other way of appropriation was the trivialization of the events in history. Özer, a man in his 40’s who had been living in a squatted house that used to belong to an Armenian couple who passed away years ago told me,

At first we were living in the İzettin Street, and then in the İskele Street. We lived there for 30 years. I myself occupied the house we are living in now. They said that there was an empty house here. I searched, I opened the door, and went in. I cleared it up and it is nice now. I’ve been there for 5 years now, and there have been no problems. Once someone came and claimed that he had bought the house, I asked for the documents, and he could not bring them. But in any case, I found a backup squat, I will move there if there is a problem. The neighbors stand up for me as well. We are all going around in theft, the state steals, so do I.

He called it as “theft” but said that it was not a problem for him to steal, as the state stole as well. When I asked him about what happened to the owners of the house, he replied that the house had belonged to some foreign, Armenian woman who died. In a different part of the

interview, he said that nothing should have happened in 6-7 September in Yeldeğirmeni, because if something had happened, it would have been written somewhere or told.

There were many houses who shared the fate of Özer's house; abandoned houses abound in the neighborhood, and it was commonly said that the invasion of abandoned houses was widespread. Ayşe, a teacher working in one of the schools in the neighborhood who spent most of her time with students and their families, once told me that many of the parents in the schools lived in the abandoned houses in which they had settled, with no electricity and gas most of the time. No one was expected to come back, but according to Ayşe, because of the change in the neighborhood, many of the families had had to move away as they could no longer economically afford to live in the area.

Though less frequently mentioned, there was also the case of the objects that remained from non-Muslims. Some non-Muslims had fled by leaving their objects behind, while some others had died and no one had taken over their property. The materials were sometimes treated as objects potentially hiding gold that must have been left from those who have left. In other cases, the objects symbolized its previous owners, and were either protected or damaged accordingly. While speaking about his childhood neighbor Yanni, Demir recounted how both himself and his elder brother was interested in what remained of him after he had left, but in ways that were different from each other:

Demir: I was probably around 18-19 when our neighbor died. Yanni. He was Jewish. We would cook fish frequently. And we would always have a share for him. (...) Sadly, when he died, he had no one, and it was left to us to loot his house.

Aylin: How did that happen?

Demir: Well, he died... and... we were kids and there was no one watching around. You just want to meddle in things. And I really like collecting things. So I would go in and... there was this cartoon. I would enter the house. With a little push of the shoulder, the door would open. It would not break down. So I would enter and little by little, I would read the cartoons and put them back. Then, the other children saw me. And the worst part was that my brother had seen me. He is this kind of guy, when he was 18, he used to say that at the case of war, he would go to the islands to kill all of the non-Muslims. Unfortunately he is my brother, but we do not speak to each other, we cannot be from the same parents. We have nothing in common (...) The sad thing is that no one from our family keeps such hatred. We never have guns. (...). There was this book from the house of Uncle Yanni, I think it was the Torah, I really tried to hide it from him. But eventually he found it and burnt it. I tried so much to hide it but he searched everywhere. (...) When I went to the army, he carried out the necessary massacre.

Taking over the objects abandoned by those who have left in a sudden, or have died with no one to take care of the remainings is usually regarded as looting, however Demir positioned himself both as looter and as a protector of the materials left from Yanni. He referred to his brother's burning of the religious book as a "massacre", symbolizing the neighbor in his object. His narrative also showed strikingly how, his brother, living in the same apartment with Yanni, sharing the same food as he emphasized, would easily turn into a perpetrator when the circumstances were permissive. However he emphasized how different they were with his brother, taking distance not only from his act but also from himself, and positioning himself as a protector of the materials he had taken over from his neighbor. Both looting and protection appear to be ways, though different ways, for attempting to "domesticate the phantomic". In a striking memory of Yusuf, he tries very hard to keep safe the religious book of his dead non-Muslim neighbor, which is later caught by his older brother to be burned. Though in different manners, both siblings are interested in the object that has a specific quality for them in signifying its passed away owner. Ali told me how an elderly woman from the neighborhood had kept his radio (he said she had perhaps bought it, but it was unclear from whom it was bought), and had shared the instance with others in the facebook site "Eski Yeldeğirmenliler".

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Neighborhood studies have become much common in critical studies on identity and nationalism in Turkey over the years. Such repeated track of studies, of which the present study comprises a part, shows again and again the contradictions and ambiguities immanent in the formation of national identity, and how individuals identify, disidentify, and negotiate with such identities at the personal and collective level. In her ethnographic work with Syrian Christians, Arabs and Kurds in Mardin, Biner (2010) states pursues what she refers to as the “fragmented forms of implicit knowledge” and examines how the events of 1915 find themselves place in the everyday interactions of the inhabitants of the city, even when they are not actively discussed. In the present study, I have attempted to explore, among the unannation of any conflict –violent or not- between the non-Muslims and Muslims in the neighborhood, how my Yeldeğirmenlite interviewees describe the past multireligious life, what goes unsaid among the narratives of harmony, how those unsaid momentarily “blink” in their articulations, and how they position themselves vis-a-vis non-Muslims and their ideal of the Turkish citizen. In this regard, I have also aimed to examine how, the fragmented quality of their knowledge reflects in their narrations of the past, and also how it had rendered contemporary events impossible to understand for them by creating voids.

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