

Kurdistan: A Land of Longing and Struggle
Analysis of ‘Home-land’ and ‘Identity’ in the Kurdish Novelistic Discourse
from Turkish Kurdistan to its Diaspora (1984-2010)

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Signature:

Dedication

For my mother Xezal, and for my beloved Seyîtxan

Abstract

A comparative analysis of 100 Kurdish novels (written in Kurmanji dialect) examines how Kurdistan, the homeland of Kurds and Kurdish identity, is constructed within the territory of Turkish Kurdistan and in its diaspora. Stateless, mostly displaced and constantly in movement, Kurds lack a real territorial homeland, yet base their national identity on the notion of Kurdistan as their mythical homeland. Kurdish novelistic discourse suggests that definitions of Kurdish identity and 'home-land' are relative, depending on ideology and personal experiences, and that 'Home', 'homeland' and 'landscape' as social constructs, are not static entities but change constantly over time.

A humanistic geographical approach sees literature, particularly the novel, as an instrument of geographical inquiry into a society or a nation. Using that model, and employing textual and contextual approaches, the study shows how and why the nation/society is constructed and clarifies the sense of home-land and identity embedded in the texts. The novelistic discourse in which 'home-land' becomes an ideological construct is mainly shaped by the political views of the novelists. However, compared to the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan, the Kurdish diaspora novelists have gathered around more diverse ideologies and politics that have led to diverse 'home-land' images.

The novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan also offers more nostalgic elements whereas diaspora theorists and scholars had identified these as exclusive to the literary works in exile. It can be concluded that feelings of nostalgia are invoked as much by the reality of living in fragmented territory and in a situation of statelessness, oppression and domination, as they are when living at a distance, removed from such experiences. In other words, although living in home territories, the literary characters still experience a sense of migration and detachment from home, which is infused with alienation and loneliness as if they are physically away from their homeland.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Introductory Remarks

The Kurds, who belong to what is considered the world's largest nation deprived of its own state, live in the territories of the states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. They are regarded as being divided not only geographically, but also politically, linguistically and ideologically (Natali 2005; Rudolph 2003; Aknur 2012). Government policies towards the Kurds have differed from one sovereign state to another.¹ Following the 1991 Gulf War, the Kurdish question in the four regions became a particularly crucial issue within the Middle East region and in international politics. Hence, issues around Kurdish nationalism and political problems have received considerably more attention than matters of culture, including literature. However, though studies on Kurdish literature have remained rather peripheral compared with the historical and political aspects of the Kurds, research (undertaken mainly in Europe and the US) on their literature from all Kurdish regions and in both Sorani and Kurmanji dialects, has increased considerably in recent years.

The present study attempts to understand the way Kurds have experienced their 'identity' and 'home-land' through tracing themes of displacement and loss for both individual and collective history. Engagement in a deep and rigorous analysis of the

¹According to some researchers and to Human Rights Watch reports, Turkey is considered to have been very repressive in its cultural policy toward the Kurds, denying their existence as a separate nationality until the beginning of the 1990s (see the booklet on *International Conference and Turkey, The Kurds and The EU* (2005) organized by Kurdish Human Rights Project based in London; also W. E. Langley's chapter on Kurdistan in *Encyclopaedia of Human Rights Issues since 1945* (1999); Human Rights Watch Report entitled *Turkey: Human Rights Concerns in the Lead up to July Parliamentary Elections* (2007), and Human Rights Watch World Report for 1991, entitled *An Annual Review of Developments and The Bush Administration's Policy on Human Rights Worldwide*). Similarly, Kurdish linguistic, cultural and political rights were seen as threats to Turkish national unity and its Kemalist ideology (Ergil 2000; Yavuz 2007). Nor have socio-political and cultural circumstances been easy for Kurds living in other regions. In Iraqi Kurdistan, the existence of Kurds and their linguistic and cultural rights was recognized; however they suffered for decades from the bad governance of the Ba'th regime and were excluded from the political process, despite having some cultural rights. With the most recent Gulf War against Saddam Hussein, Kurds seized the opportunity to implement their aspirations for an autonomous state, which has undoubtedly led to a striking increase in the development of the Kurdish language and Kurdish publications. On the other hand, while the Kurds in Iranian Kurdistan have had a measure of cultural freedom, they have been militarily suppressed, their attempts at autonomy have been severely crushed, and they have been deprived of participation in the political process. In Syria, many Kurds have even been denied Syrian citizenship, while the registration of children with Kurdish first names, Kurdish cultural centres, bookshops, and similar activities were all prohibited (Gunter 2004: 203). Although Kurds have been subjected to different policies under the regimes prevailing in these four regions, issues of denial and oppression have been central in their lives.

object in its own right is required, and in this respect, the research attempts to focus on the representation of ‘home-land’ and how the search for identity of fictional Kurdish characters is embedded in the reconfiguration of Kurdistan as the national and ancestral ‘homeland’.

Linguistic diversity and the lack of political and national unity have not only shaped the fragmented character of Kurdish novelistic discourse, but have also forced the displacement and voluntary migration westwards of many Kurds in search of freedom. While some Kurdish intellectuals have, because of political conflicts, chosen the path of exile in various Western countries and have had the opportunity to publish their novels in their native dialects (Sorani and Kurmanji), others, despite political conflicts, have not left their homeland; nevertheless those who remained have from time to time been obliged, or have sometimes preferred, to write in the official languages of the state, such as Persian, Arabic, or Turkish.² In this context, a striking question arises: How is the Kurdish identity and the idea of ‘home-land’³ – both as a symbol and as territorial space – constructed in Kurdish novelistic discourse in both Turkish Kurdistan⁴ and diaspora? In other words, to what extent does being in ‘homeland

² One could compile a long list of Kurdish writers writing in the languages of their sovereign states. Use of the terms ‘obliged to’ or ‘preferred to’ is intended, first, to illustrate that until recently there has been a prolonged ban on Kurdish in Iran that continues in Syrian Kurdistan. Secondly, because of such prohibitions, Kurdish writers have been unable to attain the linguistic level for writing fiction in their mother tongue; i.e., they could not improve their Kurdish in its written form, being either limited to using it in daily life, or having never had the opportunity to learn their own language at all. Thirdly, they have had certain literary concerns, such as being acknowledged by the critics, institutions and writers of the states in which they find themselves. Well-known writers such as Yaşar Kemal, Suzan Samancı, and Yılmaz Odabaşı from Turkish Kurdistan have written in Turkish, Salim Barakat from Syrian Kurdistan has written in Arabic, etc. One of the best-received Persian novels called *Mrs. Ahou’s Husband* in 1970s was written by a Kurd from Iranian Kurdistan. Again Yaşar Kemal, in origin a Kurd, is considered one of the best writers in Turkish literature.

³ In this research, the concept of ‘home’ appears as more of an idea than a physicality that conveys a stable place of residence in which one feels secure, comfortable, and familiar. On the other hand, ‘homeland’ in a territorial sense refers to a place/land of origin to which one feels emotionally and physically attached. If the text invokes both ‘home’ and ‘homeland’, the keyword ‘home-land’ will be used.

⁴ Referring literally to ‘the land/homeland of Kurds’, the term Kurdistan has been in use for at least six centuries. Kurdistan is located in Eastern Turkey (Turkish Kurdistan), Northern Iraq (Iraqi Kurdistan), North-western Iran (Iranian Kurdistan), and part of Northern Syria. It includes an area of some 550.000 square kilometres (Hassanpour, Skutnabb-Kangas and Chyet 1996: 368) and more or less encompasses the Zagros and the eastern Taurus mountain ranges. The topography of Kurdistan is quite distinctive and its mountainous scenery is often emphasized in Kurdish cultural and folkloric materials. Three main mountain chains are considered to constitute Kurdistan – the Armenian or Eastern Taurus, the Inner Taurus, and the Zagros – while the numerous high uplands and large river basins such as the Tigris and the Euphrates are physical features characterizing Kurdistan (Jwaideh 2006: 4). Due to the lack of a state, there are no internationally-recognized Kurdistan territories. In Turkey even the term ‘Kurdistan’ itself has been banned since the early 1920s and people using this term have been convicted. On the other hand, large areas of the Kurdish regions in Iran are officially called ‘Kurdistan’. Despite international recognition of the existence of the federal Kurdistan region in Northern Iraq, the Turkish state authorities avoid using the term Kurdistan but still refer to the region as Northern Iraq. Historically it is believed that the term ‘Kurdistan’ first appeared in written sources in the sixteenth century, being mentioned by the Kurdish prince Sharaf Khan in his *Sharafname* (1596-1597). In this research, the regions of Kurdistan

territory’ or ‘non-homeland territory’ affect the literary imagining of Kurdish identity and ‘home-land’?

1.2. Kurdish Literature in Turkish Kurdistan and its Diaspora: An Overview

The Kurdish language is regarded as the leading marker of the Kurds as a distinctive nation (Fasold 2006: 377; Blau 1996: 155; Kreyenbroek 1992: 68; Llobera 2003: 212). Broadly speaking, the Kurdish language is linked to the Indo-European language group, and consists of some dialects and sub-dialects. As noted earlier, Sorani and Kurmanji are considered to be main dialects with regard to Gorani and Zazaki (also called Dimili or Dimli).⁵ It is evident that the prolonged banning of their language and other oppressions related to their lack of political unity have negatively influenced the development of the Kurdish language. As Hassanpour (1993:140) states, “the modern state plays a major role in the destinies of minority languages.” Until the First World War, Kurmanji was strong as most national movements were led by Kurmanji-speaking intellectuals or figures, e.g., the Bedir Khan brothers. In addition, early Kurdish journals, such as *Kurdistan* (1898), *Kurd* (1907), *Rojî Kurd* (Kurdish Day, 1913)⁶, and *Jîn* (Life, 1916)⁷ were written in Kurmanji (Kreyenbroek 1992: 71).⁸

However, the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the process of linguisticide in Syria meant that from the 1960s the development of Kurmanji slowed and publishing in Kurmanji effectively ceased (Uçarlar 2009: 200; Hassanpour 2005: 647; Izady 2007:

will be named as Turkish Kurdistan, Iranian Kurdistan, Syrian Kurdistan and Iraqi Kurdistan, thereby conveying its geographical and demographic territory rather than a political territory.

⁵ Different linguists and scholars identify various ways of dividing the dialects. Thus David McDowall (2004) divides the Kurdish language into two main dialects, respectively Sorani and Kurmanji; Philip G. Kreyenbroek (1992) divides it into five, i.e., Sorani, Kurmanji, Gorani, Zazaki and Kermanshahi; while Nader Entessar (2010) categorizes it as Kurdi, Kurmanji and Sorani. All these views confirm the fact that Kurdish consists of several dialects rather than a unified language. In her recent article (2011) Clémence Scalbert-Yücel defines Kurdish as one standard language, also noting that Kurmanji is the dialect most commonly spoken by Kurds in Turkish Kurdistan, Syrian Kurdistan, countries of the Former Soviet Union, and some northern parts of the Kurdish-speaking areas of Iraq and Iran. Sorani is spoken mainly in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan; Zazaki is spoken by Kurds in parts of Turkish Kurdistan, while Gorani is spoken by the Kurds in Kermanshah in Iranian Kurdistan. There are three different alphabets in use. While the Latin alphabet is used in Turkish Kurdistan and Syrian Kurdistan, an adapted version of the Perso-Arabic alphabet is used in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iranian Kurdistan, and the Cyrillic alphabet is also used in the countries of the FSU.

⁶ *Rojî Kurd* was a Kurdish monthly journal. It was first published by the Kurdish political group Hêvî in Istanbul in 1913, in both Turkish and Kurdish. It had four issues.

⁷ *Jîn* was the semi-official newspaper of the Society for the Advancement for Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Tealî Cemiyeti*), regarded as the first Kurdish nationalist organization (Özoğlu 2004: 81). *Jîn* appeared in 1918-1919 and had 25 issues, the last of which was published on 2 October 1919.

⁸ In relation to transliteration throughout the thesis, I have used the title of sources and names of figures in its original language with an English version in the bracket in their first use. Similarly, the English translation of the novels titles is given in their first usage but afterwards they are only referred with their original titles.

313), being replaced by the Sorani dialect which became the central dialect with regard to the number of publications and linguistic developments from that period. Since the 1980s, however, the lifting of embargoes in Turkey and Turkish Kurdistan on writing and publishing in Kurdish, and the contributions made by Kurdish migrants in Europe to publication and broadcasting, have revived and reinforced the use and development of the Kurmanji dialect, and have returned it to the way it was at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even so, the fragmenting of the Kurdish nation and the difficulties arising from social and political conditions mean that the various branches of Kurdish literature have developed quite separately from one another, despite the developments that have occurred in both the Sorani and Kurmanji spheres during the past two decades.⁹ Since this research covers novels produced in Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora, my focus here is mainly on this region's development of Kurdish literature in the Kurmanji dialect.

For various reasons, including socio-political conditions, the dominance of oral traditions and poetry over prose writing in Kurdistan, and the conservative nature of the Middle East vis-à-vis developments in the West, the Kurdish novel emerged quite recently. The Kurds have a rich, extensive, and mainly oral literature that goes back to pre-Islamic times (Blau 1996), but compared to poetry and epic writing, Kurdish prose writing developed rather late; this is not unusual since “the dominance of poetry over other literary genres has been a common phenomenon in the history of many oriental nations” (Ahmadzadeh 2003: 139). Aspects of the Kurdish folkloric heritage, i.e., the epics, lyrics, riddles, and stories that constitute the traditional literature and cultural activities of the Kurds, have been researched and collected by significant Kurdologists such as Basile Nikitine, Jaladet and Kamuran Bedir Khan, and Thomas Bois, among others.

To begin with, there is no denying the fact that Kurdish poetry and epics have been transmitted by oral traditions. Leading Kurdish epics usually concentrate on the central themes of love, war, and loyalty, and some of the best-known that have survived

⁹ Despite fragmentations and divisions, it is possible to identify similarities among the literary works emanating from different regions. For example, from looking at novels written in any part of Kurdistan, it can be seen that their themes and content are not confined to the specific socio-political and cultural aspects of a particular region, and that there is some sort of interlocking approach that covers and unifies all parts of Kurdistan through reference to political movements and changes in other regions. For example, Sidqî Hirorî, who is from Iraqi Kurdistan, refers in all three of his novels to political or cultural incidents that occurred in Turkish and Iranian Kurdistan. Similarly, Helîm Yûsiv, who is from Syrian Kurdistan, refers in his novels to Turkish Kurdistan in an attempt to avoid distancing the Kurdish issue in Turkish Kurdistan from that in his own region. Thus it would appear that Kurdish novelists focus not just on Kurdish issues in their own region but combine them with those of other regions.

to the present include *Memê Alan*, (Meme Alan)¹⁰ *Siyabend û Xecê*, (Siyabend and Khaje)¹¹, *Dimdim*, (Dimdim)¹², *Zembîlfiroş* (The Basket-seller)¹³, and *Binevşa Narîn û Cembeliyê Hekkarê* (Binevsa Narin and Cembeli of Hakkari).¹⁴

Because of the socio-political circumstances of Kurdistan, Kurds have been deprived of the conditions for creating their written literature; even so, this literature, in the form of poetry and epic writing, arose in the tenth century. It must be noted that most of these works were written in the dominant language of the rulers. Blau (1996: 154) argues that the use of dominant languages was widespread among historians and non-creative writers, who felt they belonged to “the ranks of the intellectual and ruling elites of their extra-ethnic communities”; however, creative writers, particularly poets, used Kurdish in their work, thereby “endowing it with the power of becoming a collective identity symbol and perhaps a medium of written communication outside the poetic domain.” Among the earliest leading classical poets and lyricists writing in Kurdish are Melayê Bateyî (1414-1495), Mele Perîşan (?), Elî Herîrî (1415-1490?), Melayê Cizîrî (1570-1640), Feqiyê Teyran (1590-1660), and Ehmedê Xanî (1651-1707).

¹⁰ *Memê Alan* is often regarded as the Kurds’ national epic. This epic, which is completely fictional and is unrelated to the history of the Kurds, exists in various versions. The protagonists are Mem, the son of the Kurdish Amir, and Zin, daughter of the Emir of Botan, and the story presents a panorama of Kurdish social relations, traditions and customs. The work by Ahmad Khani (in Kurdish Ehmedê Xanî) entitled *Mem û Zîn* (Mem and Zin) is based on this pre-existing epic/folktale, *Memê Alan*, and tells the story of two lovers separated by factors beyond their control. Xanî bases his historical and geopolitical analysis on the narrative of the ‘methnewî’ (a kind of poem consisting of rhyming couplets) of *Memê Alan*, which has come to be regarded as the symbol of the Kurdish language and is interpreted as an expression of nationalist sentiments. Regarded as the first work to be written down, it reveals the feeling that the Kurds were a distinct people. There are a number of versions of the *Mem û Zîn* methnewî; 16 variants have been analysed by the American linguist Michael M. Chyet (1991).

¹¹ *Siyabend û Xecê* (Siyabend and Khaje) is a love epic similar to *Mem û Zîn*. It takes place on Suphan Mountain in Van and concerns a desperate love that brings death for both Siyabend and Khaje. According to the story, Siyabend, an orphan, is expelled from his village because of his bad behaviour. While he is on the mountains, Siyabend finds his best friend and afterwards a woman, Xecê (Khaje), with whom he falls in love. However, the son of a wealthy man is also in love with her and kidnaps her. Differently from many other epics, Siyabend, the main character, is not a particularly good person. In Turkey, the 1991 film directed by Şahin Gök called *Siyabend ile Heco*, was based on this epic.

¹² *Dimdim* is a very old Kurdish epic. Following the Qasra Şirin agreement between the Ottomans and the Persians in 1639, in which Kurdistan was divided between the two empires, Castle Dimdim, which was left in the Persian side, became a symbol of struggle for Kurds.

¹³ *Zembîlfiroş* is a Kurdish epic that takes place in an unknown past in Farqin (the city’s Turkish name is Silvan). It concerns a prince who, realizing the temporality of life and the reality of death, abandons all his possessions and walks away. Together with his wife, he starts living as a dervish, making and selling baskets (‘zembîlfiroş’ means ‘basket seller’), and constantly travelling. He ends up in Farqin, where the wife of the highest-ranking official (*beg*) falls madly in love with him. However Zembîlfiroş loves his wife, and furthermore he is a dervish so he will not be tempted by earthly matters. The epic has two different endings; either Zembîlfiroş kills himself or he begs the gods to take his life.

¹⁴ *Binevşa Narîn û Cembeliyê Hekkarê* is a Kurdish epic that recounts a tragic love story. Dewrêş Beg wants to marry his cousin Binevş even though neither Binevş nor her family wants him. They move away to a different region that is controlled by Cembeli bey, who meets Binevş and falls in love. When Cembeli receives her family’s approval to marry Binevş, Dewrêş kills all her family and marries her by force. Cembeli becomes a dervish. Years later he discovers where Binevş is being kept, but when he goes to see her, through a terrible mistake she kills him, and afterwards kills herself.

Although they received their education in Arabic and Persian at ‘Medrese’ (*madrasah*, Islamic theological school), they expressed themselves through their poetry using their mother tongue. Being also well-versed in Sufism, these poets contributed a great deal towards developing Kurdish into the language of intellectuals.

Advocacy of the use of the Kurdish language continued during the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. According to Kreyenbroek (1990: 56), “over the course of the 19th century something like a Kurdish nationalism began to develop, and from the end of that century onwards we find Kurdish intellectuals writing periodicals in Kurmanji, some of which advocated the ‘liberation of Kurdistan’.” The poet Hacî Qadirî Koyî (in English Haji Qadir Koyi, 1817-1897) is among the intellectuals who were familiar with nationalist struggles in modern nations. Koyî, who wrote in Sorani and spent his last years in Istanbul, even urged Kurds to use modern tools such as newspapers and magazines for mass communication.

In this respect, one cannot ignore the role of the press in the development of Kurdish literature. In terms of developing Kurdish in a written form, the first Kurdish periodical, entitled *Kurdistan*, which began publishing a year after Koyî’s death, represented a very significant attempt. With the appearance of *Kurdistan*,¹⁵ interest in prose writing increased and the first Kurdish short story, *Çîrok* (Story) written by Fuadê Temo, the founder of *Kürd Talebe Hêvî Cemiyeti* (Kurdish Hope Student Organisation) was published in Istanbul in the journal called *Rojî Kurd*.¹⁶ Other members of the Kurdish *Rozhaki-Badirkhanid* (princely house), who included Thurayya (Sureya) Bedir Khan (1883-1938), Jaladet Ali Bedir Khan (1893-1951), and Kamuran Ali Bedir Khan (1895-1978), had developed a Latin-based alphabet for Kurmanji, and the Bedir Khan brothers used this alphabet for the first time to publish the journals *Hawar* (Cry) (1932-1943)¹⁷ and *Ronahî* (Light) (1935), which they smuggled out of French Syria into

¹⁵ The first issue of *Kurdistan* (1898-1902) was published in Cairo by Miqdad Midhat Bedir Khan, whose brother Abdurrahman Bedir Khan Beg took over responsibility for the periodical after six issues. From Cairo, it moved to Geneva, London, and Folkstone, appearing in both Kurdish and Turkish and focusing on cultural, literary and political issues.

¹⁶ It is important to point out the role of political organizations in disseminating Kurdish literary works at the beginning of the 20th century. Such organisations included Kurdistan Azm-i Kavi Cemiyeti; Kürd Teavun ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society for Cooperation and Progress); Kürd Talebe Hêvî Cemiyeti (Kurdish Hope Student Organisation); Kürd Tamim-i Maarif Cemiyeti (The Organization to Spread Kurdish Publishing and Sciences); and Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti (Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan): they published journals and newspapers in Kurdish and Ottoman Turkish, such as *Kürdistan*, *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi*, *Rojî Kurd*, *Hetawî Kurd* (Kurdish Sun), and *Jîn*, all of which gave a great deal of space to Kurdish literature.

¹⁷ Celadet and Kamuran Bedir Khan published *Hawar* from 1932 to 1943 in Kurmanji Latin script in Damascus in Syria, under the rule of French Mandate. *Hawar* was one of the first of a long series of Kurmanji publications in exile after the creation of the Turkish Republic (Kreyenbroek and Sperl 1992: 57).

Turkey. Kamuran Ali Bedir Khan then published *Roja Nû* (New Day) (1943-1946), which again contributed to the development and spreading of Kurdish literature within Kurdish society.

It should be noted that Kurdish novelistic discourse owes much to Kurdish intellectuals and writers of the Former Soviet Union (FSU), who made a substantial contribution to the development of the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish and thereby to the emergence of the Kurdish novel. It is useful to give a brief description of the situation of the Kurdish intelligentsia in the USSR and its influence on Kurdish literature and publications. During the 1920s Kurds were regarded as constituting a distinct nation, which played a part in the enhancement of Kurdish education, and literary activities. Former Soviet Kurds obtained a written form of their mother tongue after the 1917 Revolution, and first began writing Kurdish using the Armenian alphabet during the 1920s. In 1927, they shifted to the Latin alphabet, with improvements by Aisor Margulov and Erebe Şemo, until 1945 when the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed on them. At present Kurds in the FSU write using both Cyrillic and Latin forms. This level of literacy enabled the emergence of a striking number of writers “engaged in important literary and social-political activities including the creation of a literary language that is an instrument of social progress and communist education among this minority people” (Vanly 1992: 210). The first school textbooks to be written in Kurmanji were produced, and the principal steps towards modern prose writing were taken, in Soviet Armenia (Leezenberg 2011: 89), while the first Kurdish novel, *Şivanê Kurmanca* (The Kurdish Shepherd) by Erebe Şemo (1898-1978), which was based on the life of its author, was first published in Yerevan in 1935.¹⁸ Eliyê Evdirehman’s *Xatê Xanîm* (Lady Xate, 1959), and *Dê* (Mother, 1965); Heciyê Cindî’s *Hewarî* (Cry, 1967), and *Gundê Mêrxasa* (The Village of the Courageous, 1968); and Séidê Îbo’s *Kurdên Rêwî* (Traveller Kurds, 1981) are on the list of early Kurdish novels published in the USSR under Soviet rule.

Despite the development of Kurdish language and literature in the Kurmanji dialect in the USSR, the bans and prohibitions imposed by the Turkish Republic hindered the presence and growth of Kurdish publications and literature. In 1924, Kurdish schools, religious foundations and publications were banned throughout Turkish Kurdistan; Musa Anter’s poetry anthology *Kimil* (Aelia, 1962) and his play *Birîna Reş* (Black Wound, 1965), and Mehmed Emin Bozarslan’s short story compilation *Meyro* (Meyro, 1979) are among the few Kurdish works published after the

¹⁸ Opinions differ about the publication date of *Şivanê Kurmanca*. Some scholars assert that it was published in 1927; however, Ahmadzadeh (2003) and Aydoğan (2011), all confirm the date to be 1935.

1950s. According to Malmisanij (2006: 19), “...in the period 1923-1980 not more than 20 Kurdish books were published in Turkey.” The monthly literary journal *Tîrej* (Light Beam, 1979-1980)¹⁹ lasted for only four issues but holds a significant place because it was the first journal to be published in Turkish Kurdistan after 1923.

After the military coup of 12 September 1980 restrictions were enforced even more strongly. Under military rule, the new constitution in 1982 reverted to banning the Kurdish language, but in 1991 Prime Minister Turgut Özal inaugurated a more liberal stance on the Kurds by repealing the language laws. As a result, some books and newspapers started to be published in Kurdish in the early 1990s, but after Özal’s unexpected death, the official discourse on the Kurdish question returned to issues of national security, terrorism, and separatism, with the Turkish state’s policy of denial making it almost impossible to see a novel published in Turkish Kurdistan during that decade. The Kurdish writer from Turkish Kurdistan, Îhsan Colemergî, wrote his novel *Cembelî Kurê Mirê Hekarî* (Cembelî, Son of the Mir of Hakkari) in 1992 but was only able to publish it in Sweden in 1995, while Îbrahîm Seydo Aydoğan’s *Reş û Spî* (Black and White) was published in Istanbul by Elma in 1999.

With the dominance of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in the Turkish parliament following elections in 2002, language policies were reformed, due mainly to Turkey’s negotiations for membership in the European Union.²⁰ In 2004, a new regulation concerning radio and television broadcasts that contained different languages and dialects came into force with the Turkish national broadcasting channel (TRT: *Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu*); however, this amendment has not been sufficient to abolish entirely the process of linguistic. Because current Turkish language policy places constraints on educational and linguistic human rights, Kurdish linguistic rights remain restricted in public as well as private spheres.²¹ Despite this

¹⁹ The journal *Tîrej* was published in 1979 by *Devrimci Demokrat Kültür Derneği* (DDKD, The Organization of Revolutionary Democratic Culture), but only four issues appeared before its publishers fled to Sweden because of the 1980 military coup; thus the fourth issue was the last.

²⁰ The removal in 2002 of the statement in Article 26 of the Constitution on the prohibition of languages by law enabled some reforms in the use of Kurdish, and in August 2002 the Turkish National Assembly approved the rights of minorities to teach and to broadcast in their own languages. This change was considered to be related to Turkey’s desire to meet the requirements for EU membership rather than to any enhancement of linguistic rights of Kurds (McDowall 2007; Ucarlar 2009; KHRP 2006).

²¹ For a detailed account of Kurdish linguistic rights in Turkey see Nesrin Uçarlar’s work on Kurdish linguistic rights in Turkey (2006: 264-65). Through interviews with Kurdish linguists, intellectuals and publishers in Turkey and in Europe, she examines the links between Kurdish language and identity based on nationalist, cultural, and trans-national approaches. Whereas the nationalist approach favours standardisation of the Kurdish language on the basis of the strongest dialect (Kurmanji) and considers the Kurdish language as a political ideal in the struggle for Kurdish identity and political unity, the cultural approach sees dialects as offering various ways of regarding the language from a cultural affiliation perspective. The trans-national approach, in contrast, takes account of the European experience of

view, Malmisaniy's research reveals that, in relation to book publishing in Turkey, there has been a considerable increase in Kurdish publications. As he notes "in 2000 more than 40 Kurdish publishing houses were established in Turkey" (2006b: 26); however, nearly 50 percent of the output (305 books) came from eight publishers, with Diyarbakir and Istanbul as the main centres of Kurdish publishing houses and periodicals.²² These numbers suggest that the first decade of the twenty-first century has become somewhat of a golden age for Kurdish literature, mainly the Kurdish novelistic discourse. There is a striking increase among Kurdish writers in diaspora who now prefer to have their works published in Turkish Kurdistan (mainly by the Lîs and Avesta publishing houses), where an emergent literary circle goes from strength to strength.

It is important to mention that Kurdish literature, especially the genre of the novel, was developed mainly in the diaspora during the 1980s, primarily in Sweden and Germany. In this regard, Mehmed Uzun, Firat Cewerî, Mehmet Emîn Bozarşlan, and Bavê Nazê contributed to the enrichment of Kurmanji and enabled Kurdish (Kurmanji) in its written form to reach many more speakers. Certainly, the struggle in diaspora of Kurdish intellectuals and writers from Turkish Kurdistan to promote Kurdish language and literature has been to the benefit of novelistic discourse, and Mehmed Uzun (1953-2006) and Mahmut Baksî (1944-2000), who were in exile in Sweden for many years, can be considered the most productive novelists from Turkish Kurdistan. Uzun's *Mirina Kalekî Rind* (The Death of Old Rind, 1987) and *Siya Evînê* (In the Shadow of Love, 1989), and Baksî's *Gundikê Dono* (Dono's Village, 1988) and *Hêlîn* (Helin, 1984) were published in the late 1980s. Kurdish publishing houses in Europe include Nûdem, Roja Nû, Orfeus, Apec, Helwest, Sara, Welat, Pelda, Jîndan, Newroz, and Kurdistan.

In relation to the subject matter of this study, one wonders about other research conducted on the Kurdish novelistic discourse that might perhaps contribute to the present work. However, conducting research into the Kurdish novelistic discourse requires a detailed explanation of the limitations of previous research undertaken in this field. The political situation of the Kurds and the controversial position of Kurdistan have led scholars and researchers to engage mainly with the political and historical aspects of Kurds, and even though research on Kurdish literature has developed considerably in recent years, insufficient attention has been paid to the Kurdish

democracy and pluralism by appreciating the diversity of the Kurdish language and rejecting the dominance of any dialects.

²² These publishers included Komal (established 1974), Deng (1989), Doz (1990), Weşanên Enstîtuya Kurdî (1992), Nûbihar (1992), Avesta (1995), Pêrî (1997), Aram (1997), Elma (2002), Vate (2003), Lîs (2004), Bîr (2005), Tevn, Do, Ronahî, Bajar, Veng, Aram, Berfîn, and Belkî; most were set up by political organisations.

novelistic discourse in particular. On the other hand, due to the less restricted conditions prevailing in Iraqi Kurdistan, both literature and literary research have extended to a notable level. Although the future seems to be quite promising at the moment in relation to the Kurdish literary world in Turkish Kurdistan and in diaspora, and despite the growing number of fictional and non-fictional literary works becoming available, Kurdish literature, and in particular the novelistic discourse, still remains to be studied.

There are some relevant texts within existing research outputs, but either they are far from offering detailed textual analyses or they concentrate on a few specific novelists only. It cannot be denied that even after his death in 2006, Mehmet Uzun is seen as the pioneer of the Kurdish novel,²³ and is reputed to be the best-known Kurdish writer among both Kurds and Turks. Because so many of his books have been translated into Turkish and published, and also because of his distant and sometimes reactionary attitudes towards the politics of the PKK, the Turkish media paid more attention to him than to other writers, to the extent that he has now become a subject for academic studies. For example, Nüket Esen's essay on Mıgırdıç Margosyan, Mehmed Uzun and cultural pluralism in Diyarbakır (2009), in an article entitled "Mıgırdıç Margosyan and Mehmed Uzun: Remembering Cultural Pluralism in Diyarbakır",²⁴ and Alparslan Nas's unpublished MA thesis, "Between National and Minor Literature in Turkey: Modes of Resistance in the Works of Mehmed Uzun and Mıgırdıç Margosyan", which examines the works of Uzun and the Armenian writer Margosyan (2011), are both focused almost entirely on the works of Mehmed Uzun.

In her contribution, Esen (2009) examines texts from Uzun's non-fiction book *Nar Çiçekleri* (Pomegranate Flowers, 1995) and from Margosyan's *Gavur Mahallesi* (Giaour Neighbourhood, 2002) in relation to cultural pluralism, although her essay takes only *Nar Çiçekleri* into account.²⁵ She mainly deals with the daily experiences of Uzun and Margosyan in Diyarbakır, arguing that both writers go beyond the national literature to embrace "cultural intimacy" (134). On the other hand, with regard to Uzun's literary works and his literary life, Nas's dissertation is more inclusive than Esen's piece. Nas (2011) argues that both Margosyan and Uzun had been detached from national literature and managed to create their own minor literature by turning towards hybridity and

²³ See Hashem Ahmadzadeh and Christine Allison, "Mehmet Uzun: Defender of Kurdish in Turkey", *The Independent*, 16 November 2007.

²⁴ Esen's 2009 study had already been published two years earlier as a journal article with the same title, in *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No. 36, Spring 2007, pp. 145-154.

²⁵ Uzun's *Nar Çiçekleri* (Istanbul: Gendas, 2000) contains nine essays on the theme of multi-culturalism. Because of this book and another novel *Light like Love, Dark Like Death* (1998), the writer was put on trial in 2001 but released following the court hearing.

heterogeneity in their later fiction. Nas evaluates Uzun's novels as both a resistance to Turkey's colonialist discourse and the communal boundaries of Kurdish identity as dictated to him by Kurds. Most importantly, both Esen and Nas are very specific in the way they pursue the autobiographical motives in Uzun's books in relation to Turkish-speaking readers, which has meant that they do not really elaborate in detail on the textual analyses of the Kurdish novelistic discourse.

Like Nas and Esen, Per Erik Ljung (2006) focuses specifically on Mehmed Uzun in an article entitled "Inventing Traditions: A Comparative Perspective on the Writing of Literary History". His article, a comparative study on writing literary history, is a thorough attempt to explore Mehmed Uzun's literary methods and approaches in relation to the Swedish context. He mostly discusses Uzun's novelistic discourses within the Swedish literary system but does not go much beyond creating a general understanding of the kind of literary world in which Uzun produced these discourses in Sweden.

At the time of writing (2012), Hashem Ahmadzadeh's *Nation and Novel* (2003) can be regarded as the only specialized survey available in English of the Kurdish novel. In a strong study (built on a PhD thesis) that demonstrates the relationship between nation building and the novel, Ahmadzadeh gives a general overview of Kurdish literature, analyses the rise and development of the novel, and compares five novels selected from Persian as well as from Kurdish literature; this comparison shows clearly that, when measured against the Persian novel, the Kurdish novel is just starting a long journey. By comparing Iranian and Kurdish novels, and with reference to Anderson's argument that novelistic discourse can be a useful field for investigating nationalist discourses, he examines the relationship between the development of novelistic discourse and nation building. Because of the somewhat limited number of novels analysed in the book, the credibility of some arguments is perhaps suspect. Additionally, I believe that putting Sorani and Kurmanji novels from different regions of Kurdistan together and then comparing them with Persian novels might lead readers to make generalized assumptions rather than more complex conclusions specific to each region.

In contrast to Ahmadzadeh's methodology and scope of research, my intention in the present study is to analyse the Kurdish novel, not in comparison with the novel in other dominant nations but in terms of its own development. I also approach the Kurdish novelistic discourse regionally (i.e., Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora only) in order not to blur the contextualization of the novels. Again, Ahmadzadeh's academic

articles and essays,²⁶ which are based on close readings of several Kurdish novels, are helpful in understanding a broad initiative about the Kurdish novelistic discourse; however, in terms of theoretical perspective, the present study aims to go beyond general literary interpretation and to demonstrate particular thematic analyses on the construction of “identity” and representation of “home-land.”

My own book with co-author Abidin Parıltı, entitled *Kürt Romanı: Okuma Kılavuzu* (A Companion to the Kurdish Novel, 2010), which includes 50 novels, may also be helpful in understanding the basic structure of Kurmanji novels. Rather than pursuing a specific subject, the book provides introductory information to some of the novels, concluding with a section that focuses on certain elements, such as exile, the death wish, characterization etc., in the novels examined. As its title suggests this book is intended simply as a companion and there is no theoretical or conceptual framework on which to construct an analysis.

Two recent books on the Kurdish novel, published in the Kurmanji dialect, are Helîm Yûsiv’s *Romana Kurdî* (Kurdish Novel, 2011) and Medenî Ferho’s *Rewşa Romana Kurdî* (The State of Kurdish Novel, 2011). Both authors are severely critical of Mehmed Uzun on the grounds of weak content and lack of textual analysis; they label him as a “white Kurd” because of his relation to the project of the Turkish state aimed at creating “their Kurds”; i.e., those who would comply with their politics. These books by Yûsiv and Ferho (who are also novelists) have been helpful for my research, not because they present a portrait of Kurdish novelistic discourse but because they make one aware of the political views of writers, and how the politics introduced in the novels become the main concern of the novelists; this is a factor that completely supports one of my arguments throughout this research.

Apart from the books and articles mentioned above, there are also various magazines and newspapers that have given some space to Kurdish novelistic discourse. Two issues of the Kurdish journal *W* (January/February and March/April 2010)²⁷ included special sections on the Kurdish novel and Kurdish writers/novelists, such as Helîm Yûsiv, Medeni Ferho, Lokman Ayebe, Omer Dilsoz, and others. Neither issue included much textual analysis, in which writers either focused on novelistic discourse in general, with some theoretical and conceptual aspects, or, as in the case of the books by Yûsiv and Ferho, on Kurdish novels in particular. Instead, these two commented

²⁶ Hashem Ahmadzadeh (2007), “In Search of a Novel That Tells Who the Kurds Are”, *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 40, no. 5, December, pp. 579-592; (2005) “Traces of Statelessness in the Kurdish Novel”, in Annika Rabo and Bo Utas (eds), *The Role of the State in West Asia*, Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (Vol. 14 of *Transactions* of the Institute), and distributed by I B Tauris, London, pp.63-76.

²⁷ The journal *W* is published by the Diyarbakir Kurdish Institute.

rather sardonically on the views of certain novelists in their fiction writings, where the novelists rather than their texts had been made the centre of attention. For example, in the March/April 2010 issue of the journal, Medeni Ferho lists the elements that a good Kurdish novelist is supposed to include in his/her novels, mentioning explicitly that Mehmed Uzun did not practise this principle in his novels, and that rather than introducing the Kurdish struggle and culture to his readers, he negotiated with the politics of the Turkish state. These articles in the journal *W* might be useful for a better knowledge and understanding of the novelists and their political stance, but not of the texts themselves.²⁸

There have been various articles and books published on Kurdish literature, though not specifically on the novel as a genre. Mehmet Uzun's *Despêka Edebiyata Kurdî* (An Introduction to Kurdish Literature, (2005 [1992]), and *Antolojiya Edebiyata Kurdî I-II* (The Anthology of Kurdish Literature, 1995); a short presentation by Lal Laleş on "Kürt Edebiyatı" (Kurdish Literature, 2009);²⁹ a book by Feqî Hüseyin Sağniç (who is mainly known for his work on Kurdish language), *Dîroka Wêjeya Kurdî* (The History of Kurdish History, 2002); and Qanate Kurdo's *Tarîxa Edebiyata Kurdî II* (The History of Kurdish Literature, 1983) – all provide historical background to the development of Kurdish literature, in both Sorani and Kurmanji dialect, from classical Kurdish poetry to modern Kurdish literature. Mehmet Uzun's *Rojên Afirîna Romanê* (The Diary of a Novel 2007, translated into Turkish in 2010) chronicles his life and times, and the process of being a Kurdish writer during the period 1998 to 2003. Michiel Leezenberg's essay "Soviet Kurdology and Kurdish Orientalism"(2011) focuses mainly on Kurdish studies in the Former Soviet Union, which helps the reader to understand the background to the writing of the first Kurdish novel – Erebe Şemo's *Şivanê Kurmanca* – and other novels written during that period. Leezenberg's article examines the prevailing socio-political conditions but offers no textual analysis of the novels.

²⁸ *Radikal İki*, the magazine supplement of the Turkish newspaper *Radikal* (2009), includes some articles in Turkish on Kurdish novels. Written by Abidin Parilti with contributions by Ozlem Galip, the articles look briefly at characterization and common themes, and although without detailed textual analysis, they are a useful introduction to several novels written in Kurmanji dialect. A special issue on Kurdish literature published by the Turkish literary journal *Varlık*, entitled "Servet Erdem Türkçe ve Kürtçe Romanda Dil Meseleleri" (Language Issues in Turkish and Kurdish novels, September 2011), is helpful in explaining the differences in the role played by language in the Turkish and Kurdish novelistic discourse.

²⁹ Laleş's talk is published in *Sinir Tanimayanlar: 2007-2008 Faaliyetler* (Citizens Without Boundaries: 2007-2008 A Compilation). Produced in 2009 by Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (Anatolia Cultural Foundation) with financial support from the EU, this is a collection of documents from the *Citizens without Boundaries* project, conducted in 2007-2008 by Anadolu Kültür and the Diyarbakır Arts Centre. The book includes a great range of interviews, talks, and photographs assembled during the project.

In Kreyenbroek and Allison's edited book on *Kurdish Culture and Identity* (1996), the chapters on Kurdish written and oral literature³⁰ and the development of Kurdish publication (especially the contribution by Blau entitled "Kurdish Written Literature") have been helpful in understanding the background of Kurdish literature before the rise of a Kurdish novelistic discourse from the 1980s. Clémence Scalbert-Yücel's recent article "Languages and the definition of literature: the blurred borders of Kurdish Literature in Contemporary Turkey" (2011) tackles the issue of the boundaries of Kurdish literature, and whether Turkish-language writers can be included in the Kurdish literature category; it also surveys the literary world of both classical and contemporary Kurdish literature and looks at the history and development of Kurdish publishing.

In addition to the sources mentioned above, Amir's Hassanpour's article on "The Making of Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Sources" (2003a) is a useful analysis of the formation and awareness of the notion of Kurdishness in literary works from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. However, this study is placed within recent period (modern) and aims to explain the meaning of textual characteristics within an understanding of the social, cultural, and political elements that surround the text.

It should be noted that the books, chapters and articles mentioned that did not deal specifically Kurdish novels were nevertheless very useful for my understanding of Kurdish literature by providing a general overview alongside the more specific context and conditions in which the Kurdish novelistic discourse has been produced and developed.³¹

³⁰ For more on oral Kurdish traditions and literature, see Abidin Parilti's *Dengêjler: Sözüün Yazgisi* (Dengbejs: The Fate of the Word, 2006); Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Ulrich Marzolph (eds) (2011), *Oral Literature of Iranian Languages: Kurdish, Pashto, Valochi, Ossetic, Persian and Tajik: Companion Volume II* to Ehsan Yarshater (General Editor), *A History of Persian Literature*. See also Christine Allison's *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan* (2001), and her "Old and New Oral Traditions in Badinan", in Kreyenbroek and Allison (eds.), *Kurdish Culture and Identity* (1996).

³¹ In addition to the studies mentioned, two additional items (both unpublished PhD dissertations) must be mentioned that are relevant to my focus in this research. The first is "Conflit linguistique et champ littéraire kurde en Turquie" (2005) by Clémence Scalbert-Yücel who, in discussing the possible emergence and autonomisation process of a 'Kurdish Field of Literature' in Turkey, follows and challenges Bourdieu's theory of the fields (in, for example, *The Rules of Art*) in a context defined as a 'Linguistic Conflict'. She also analyses Turkish and Kurdish language policies from the 1900s to the present, examining Kurdish journals and the production, organization and autonomisation of the Kurdish literary field, in Turkish Kurdistan and in its diaspora. Joanna Bochenska's thesis, "Literatura i język kurdyjski; jako zwierciadło ewolucji kurdyjskiej tożsamości w Turcji" (Kurdish Literature and Language as a Mirror of the Evolution of Kurdish Identity in Turkey, 2009) presents the dynamically developing process of Kurdish national identity in the twentieth century with reference to the culture of the Kurds and especially to their literary achievements. She examines the works of chosen writers from Turkish Kurdistan who write in Kurdish or in Turkish, such as Yaşar Kemal, Mehmed Uzun, Seyit Alp, Ruşen Arslan and Hesenê Metê. Because Scalbert-Yücel's thesis is in French and Bochenska's is in Polish, I

1.3. Research Questions and Argument

This research examines what ‘home-land’ and ‘identity’ mean both for the narrative of ‘being at home’, and for the narrative of ‘leaving home’. In this context, one main question is posed in this research: What are the differences and similarities in the perception of ‘homeland’ and ‘identity’ in Turkish Kurdistan and diaspora? Applying a conceptual framework based on ‘home’, ‘homeland’, ‘place’, ‘diaspora’, and ‘identity’, the study investigates the geographical sense of Kurdistan, whether ‘symbolic’ or ‘factual’, in a selection of novels from Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora. It will also be based on two further questions: How is ‘Kurdish territory’ drawn? And what kind of meanings and values are attributed to Kurdistan?

The intention is to go further and examine whether the Kurdish novel represents Kurdishness as a national entity connected to a particular region and community? In doing this, the textual representation of Kurdistan and the novelists’ intentions in the way it is represented are discussed. Through comparative analysis, valuable insights can be obtained for understanding the geographical sense of Kurdistan. The differences or similarities that exist between novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora will demonstrate how statelessness and fragmentation affect the characters, society, themes, and the world of the novels chosen. This is crucial, especially in the context of an issue that will explore the achievements of Kurdish narrative discourse in emphasizing the reality and continuing damage of the statelessness that has been inflicted upon the Kurds in Turkish Kurdistan and in the diaspora.

Some secondary questions are also considered: for instance, considering the fact that the Kurds are a stateless nation and therefore fragmented, to what extent and in what way have Kurdish characters in the novels been influenced by this fragmentation and statelessness? And if fragmentation and statelessness have had a significant impact on the Kurds, has this influenced literary identities in different ways in Turkish Kurdistan on the one hand and diaspora on the other?

was not able to read them, but thanks to discussion/correspondence with both, I was able to share their main arguments and research findings.

1.4. Methodology: An Eclectic Approach beyond Analysis of the Text

In this study, a ‘Kurdish novel’ is a Kurdish-language work written in any dialect of Kurdish.³² This statement also relates to the discussions on Kurdish national identity in which the Kurdish language is regarded as one of the markers of Kurdish identity (Vali 2003: 100; McDowall 2004: 9; Kreyenbroek and Allison 1996: 1). There is as well an opposing view concerning several distinct dialects, to the effect that Kurds do not think of themselves as a group primarily along linguistic lines (Özoglu 2004: 17), since there are certain other cultural sentiments. Most importantly, the majority of the novelists examined in this research have also addressed the significance of Kurdish for the Kurds, both in their novelistic discourses and in their other publications, and often encourage the Kurds to read and write in Kurdish. Accordingly, this research considered that an essential requirement when selecting the novels was that they were written in the Kurdish language.

In order to draw a comprehensive picture of the Kurdish novelistic discourse and to ensure an accurate outcome, I have included all the novels published in Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora between 1984 and March 2010, covering altogether 100 novels. It is not my intention to discuss every novel that might conceivably be treated as proposing the same social, political, and cultural ideas. My point of departure for limiting myself to one region was primarily because identities and perceptions of ‘home-land’ are considered to have developed differently in relation to contextual and

³² Discussion is on-going as to whether a work written in any language other than the writer’s mother tongue should be regarded within the literature of its language, or within that of the original language of the writer. In this regard controversial arguments differ from country to country, and even from person to person depending on circumstances. In recent years, new terms have been coined to describe different situations that include both categories. For example, the work of an English-language writer of Indian origin is categorized as Indian English literature; while works of the Indian diaspora are referred to as Indo-Anglian literature since, in terms of characterization and thematic choices, such work reflects an Indian microcosm, including its culture and conditions. This debate regarding English language works written by writers of Indian origin is assessed according to the category of post-colonial literature, since India was formerly a British colony (Kumar and Ojha 2005; Naikar 2007). When thinking about the literature of nations like the Kurds, who have been writing in sovereign languages for years, the original Kurdish language comes forward as a cornerstone of Kurdish national identity (Hassanpour 1992; Yildiz and Fryer 2004; Fasold 2006). Therefore, this study regards Kurdish novels only as those written in the Kurdish language. However, one should mention Scalbert-Yücel’s article “Languages and the Definition of Literature: the Blurred Borders of Kurdish Literature in Contemporary Turkey” (2011) in which she argues that due to the specific conditions of Kurds or Kurdish language, Kurdish literature should not be considered exclusively in Kurdish since it may also include Turkish-language writers. She notes that this assumption might well change in the future when socio-political and cultural conditions for Kurdish literature, both worldwide and within Turkey itself, have improved.

political differences in each of the nation-states (Chailand 1993; Natali 2005; Romano 2006). The situation of the Kurds from Iraqi Kurdistan or Iranian Kurdistan is different from the circumstances of those in Turkey, owing to the different socio-political and cultural contexts of these non-Kurdish nation-states. Being dominated by different nations means that the Kurds are confronted by different policies that cause them to create different literary discourses. As Hashem Ahmadzadeh (2003: 135) points out, “the different backgrounds of the Kurdish societies provide the different conditions which lead to the production of the different literary discourses, which in their turn create different types of identities.” With this assertion Ahmadzadeh challenges the position of Ferhad Shakely, who regards Kurdish literature as a united literature “regardless of differences in dialects, alphabets or those political borders between the different parts of Kurdistan” (Shakely 1989:79, cited in Ahmadzadeh 2003: 134). Ahmadzadeh argues that such an approach creates a number of methodological and practical problems for Kurdish scholars. In line with Ahmadzadeh’s approach, this study confines itself to the novels peculiar to a specific socio-political and ideological context, which is Turkish Kurdistan.

This approach does not necessarily assume the lack of a common Kurdish literature; rather, it attempts to reach an accurate comparative analysis of literary texts within the same dialect and related to the same political, social and ideological environment. Moreover, to include novels from different regions would require research on different Kurdish regions and their diasporas, which I consider is not manageable for a literary analysis based on diverse methodological approaches. First, the novels from other regions are written in different dialects (Zazaki or Sorani) and different scripts (Arabic). Secondly, due to the number of novels, a comprehensive focus on one region is more feasible in terms of managing the research. This is why the scope of this thesis is limited to novels written by authors from Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora.³³

Essentially, the novels are divided in two categories, i.e., those written by

³³ The Kurdish diaspora extends over most of Europe although the novels examined in this research show that Kurdish novelistic discourse has developed mainly in Sweden. While there are several novels from Germany, there is also one from a Kurdish author in Australia. Compared to earlier times, more relaxed conditions globally as well as at the individual level have undoubtedly made it easier for Kurdish authors to travel back and forth, although this does not change the fact that they are still diasporic writers. There are two novelists, Torî and Aram Gernas who returned permanently to the homeland after some years in exile and who are placed in the Turkish Kurdistan category, both having written their only novels many years after their return, although most of the novels examined under the category of Turkish Kurdistan are written by Kurdish authors but are published either in Diyarbakir or Istanbul because of convenient publishing conditions. The study does not take the writers’ current city of residence into consideration but categorizes them as Turkish Kurdistan. My findings show that almost all of the novelists placed in this category currently live in various provinces of Turkish Kurdistan (mainly Diyarbakir, Mardin, and Hakkari).

novelists living in Turkish Kurdistan (36 novels, from 1988 to 2010), and those written by novelists in diaspora (64 novels, from 1984 to 2010). It should be noted that in categorizing these groups, it is the location of the novelist (whether in Turkey/Turkish Kurdistan or in Europe) that is taken into consideration rather than the place of publication. For various reasons, but mainly because of the ban on Kurdish publishing in Turkey until 2002, certain novels, such as those by Nuri Şemdîn (official name: Naci Kutlay) and Îhsan Colemergî, were published in Stockholm,³⁴ even though their authors were not in exile. Additionally, there has been a striking increase since the year 2000 among exiled writers, such as Hesenê Metê and Firat Cewerî, who have preferred to publish inside Turkish Kurdistan and in Istanbul. A novelist who lives in Turkish Kurdistan but who has chosen, or was obliged, to publish his book in Europe, is regarded as quite unusual in Turkish Kurdistan.

Similarly, novels published in Turkey or Turkish Kurdistan by exiled novelists are placed in the Turkish Kurdistan category. In this case, the place of publication does not determine the category, since the place of publication will have been determined by the writer's conditions and the socio-political restrictions of the sovereign state.³⁵ The point here is that this research will attempt to evaluate both the personal and the contextual factors behind the portrayal of the literary 'home-land' and 'identity' of the novelists, and how these factors have shaped their literary productions.

Broadly speaking, there were no novels published in Turkish Kurdistan before the 1980s. During the 1980s the only novel produced was *Zeviyên Soro* (The Lands of Soro, 1988) by Nuri Şemdîn.³⁶ Although Kutlay was not an exile, he lived for some time in Sweden, and his novel was published in Stockholm in 1988 because of the ban on Kurdish publications in Turkish Kurdistan. And even though there was an easing of restrictions on publishing during the 1990s, just two novels were produced in that

³⁴ Sweden is another important host country for Kurds, many from Iraq and Iran, and many of whom are politically active intellectuals (Schmidinger 2010). It is clear that the structure of Kurdish communities can differ from one European country to another; thus it is claimed that Kurdish migrants in Germany are very well organized politically (see for example, Emanuelsson 2005, Akkaya 2011). The Kurds in Sweden are socially and politically diversified, and since they live in the more favourable Swedish political environment, they maintain a diaspora discourse that is both flexible and more highly developed (Khayati 2008).

³⁵ For example, *Marê Di Tur De* (Snake in the Sack) by Medenî Ferho, who has lived in Sweden since the 1980s, was published in 1999 by Perî Publishers in Istanbul, although it was funded by the Kurdish Institute in Brussels. Similarly, Mehmed Uzun's *Rojek ji Rojên Evdalê Zeynikê* (One of the Days of Evdalê Zeynikê) was first published in Stockholm in 1991, and reprinted in Istanbul in the following year. Thus, place of publication of the novels does not depend on the location of the novelists but on available opportunities and suitable conditions.

³⁶ There has been some discussion as to whether Nuri Şemdîn wrote the book first in Turkish or in Kurdish. The Turkish version published by Firat publisher in 1992, states that it is a translation from Kurdish. However, the Kurdish writer Ibrahim Seydo Aydogan, who is also one of the novelists examined in this research, claims the opposite in the journal *Dilname* (2011:6).

period: Îhsan Colemergî's *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî*³⁷ and Îbrahîm Seydo Aydogan's *Reş û Spî*. Like Kutlay's novel, Colemergî's *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî* was first published by Apec in Stockholm, then a few years later by Avesta in Istanbul. This means that Aydogan's *Reş û Spî* was the only novel published during the 1990s in Turkish Kurdistan.

Compared to the 1990s, however, the first decade of the 2000s saw a striking increase in numbers, with 33 Kurdish novels being published, although it should be emphasised that some of the lists of Kurmanji novels compiled by certain Kurdish writers that appear on websites are unreliable and inaccurate. In the course of this research, some of the novels that I examined from these lists were either originally written in Turkish or were in the Zazaki dialect but were listed as Kurmanji, while on other occasions, some of the short story collections were actually listed as novels. The list compiled for this research was created on the basis of comprehensive research as well as direct communications with either the novelist or the publishing house.³⁸

The increasing number of Kurdish refugees and immigrants in European countries after the 1980 military coup in Turkey led to the development of Kurdish publications; therefore, because of the opportunities given by European countries to Kurdish immigrants and refugees, the novels selected from the diaspora also cover the period after the 1980s. Six novels were published in the 1980s (by Mehmet Uzun and Mahmut Baksî), and the number increased to 13 during the 1990s. As in Turkish Kurdistan, the first decade of the 21st century in the diaspora was very fruitful for novelistic discourse and the number of published novels increased to 49.

Because I aim to develop a deeper understanding of the formation and significance of 'home-land' and 'identity', my intention is to bring various approaches to bear upon those novels where they would be most appropriate for the analysis. Accordingly, apart from its concentration on the form and content of the novels, which are internal to the text, this research regards authorship or socio-political context as

³⁷ Colemergî wrote this book in 1992, managing to get it published in Sweden only in 1995 because of the Turkish ban on Kurdish publication. Even copies of the book posted to the writer by the Swedish publisher was embargoed. Colemergî was prosecuted over this case and released only in 1998.

³⁸ Although there are some discrepancies, one should nevertheless acknowledge the list of Kurdish novels developed by Ibrahim Seydo Aydogan and available at the *Dilname* website <http://dilname.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/rojnameya-dilname-hijmar-4.pdf> accessed 14 September 2012, as well as the list compiled by Hêlim Yûsiv, included in the Kurdish journal *W* (No. 31, 2010) and in his book *Romana Kurdî* (2011). However, it should be noted that these lists include the same discrepancies and are not reliable; though it is claimed they indicate Kurmanji novels, they contain Zazaki novels and even novels written in Turkish. By contacting the publishers or obtaining the books, I was able to see these inconsistencies. For example, after contacting the editor (Azad Zal) of the novel *Doktor Dîno* (2009) written by Mehmet Yilmaz, I discovered that, although written by a Kurdish writer the book is, in fact, in Turkish.

tools for reaching a better understanding of the text. In other words, this research is positioned among diverse methodological considerations that, by raising concerns for the different symbolic, political, and social meanings of the novels, attempt to illuminate the meaning of textual portrayals within an understanding of the social and political arrangements surrounding them. Most importantly, this research employs a humanistic geography approach to literature, arguing that literature, and the novel in particular, constitutes an instrument of geographical inquiry into a society or a nation (Bordessa 1988; Cosgrove 1989; Lowenthal 1961; Porteous 1985; Pocock 1981, 1988). Thus one should take the contextualization of the novels/novelists into consideration in order to shed light on how the nation/society is constructed, and why. In this account, I have benefited from both contextual and textual approaches.

A textual approach, applying the techniques of close reading and detailed textual analysis inherited from the Russian Formalists and New Critics, requires the researcher to concentrate on the actual words of the novel(s) examined rather than to bring extrinsic information into the criticism. In other words, textual critics pay little or no attention to the author's biographical information, or to information about his/her culture/society and the historical period of the novel. By excluding extrinsic factors, textual approaches consider literature, or a genre such as the novel, as a self-enclosed system that can be studied in terms of itself. Through close reading and a textual analysis of the selected novels, their linguistic, semantic, structural and cultural aspects of the novels can be taken into consideration. These four aspects of close reading contribute to presenting a detailed examination of what the novel has been constructed to convey; how the novel is organized and structured; and what sort of words (e.g., which word is used in the text to mean 'homeland' or 'country') the novelist chooses in relation to the theme of the novel.

Textual analysis requires analysis of the novels in a stylistic context, which is significant for a deep understanding of the text both semantically and linguistically. Although this research adopts textual analysis, it must be noted that it will not seek the stylistic and linguistic analysis invoked by the textual approach because of the large number of novels chosen. Also such analyses are not obliging with regard to the subject matter that the research attempts to derive from the novels. The texts are interpreted mainly from their socio-political and cultural subtexts, since it is essential to keep the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts in mind in the analysis of the Kurdish novelistic discourse.

The contextual approach consists of sociological, biographical and psychological aspects, since analysis of the selected novels shows that the Kurdish novel can only be fully appreciated in the context of the social, economic and cultural realities experienced by the Kurds during their struggle and their quest for national identity, why and how they have been exiled, and how political and cultural factors have influenced those who stayed in Kurdistan. It is worth mentioning that I found the contextual approach indispensable for this particular study after reading those novels in which the dominance of authorial intentions in writing them is explicitly reflected in the texts. As will be argued in the following chapters, the meanings of Kurdish novels are mainly shaped in relation to contextual factors such as the setting and ideology of the novelist and the period in which the novels is written. Thus, in relation to Kurdish novels, “an understanding of the intentions of an author can be supplemented by knowledge of the contexts in which a text was being written” (Lee 2008: 3), and it can be said that Kurdish novels affirm an understanding of “what sort of society the given author was writing for and trying to persuade” (Skinner 1969: 40). Therefore, in order to go beyond the text, the other literary approach that I attempt to practise, along with the textual, is the contextual approach which “ seeks to comprehend the meaning of a text in terms of social and intellectual context and of the writer’s intention incorporated in it” (Lee 2008: 3). In this regard, what is apparent within the Kurdish novelistic discourse is the dominance of the real or imagined socio-political context of Kurdistan, which undoubtedly affects the way ‘home-land’ is perceived and narrated.

The novels are considered to signify and create a reality derived from lived experiences or memories. It is therefore argued that the process of constructing meaning within the Kurdish novel is shaped mainly by autobiographical and realistic elements intertwined with socio-political and cultural aspects of Kurdish existence. Moreover, this autobiographical and realistic dimension is reinforced through the intervention of the novelists themselves in the text. This suggests that this aspect of the Kurdish novelistic discourse is opposed to the ‘New Criticism’, which, in relation to the emergence of modernism, was dominant in formalist literary theories from the beginning of the twentieth century. By ignoring a reader’s response, a writer’s intention, and/or the historical and cultural context, ‘New Criticism’ rejects the ‘intended meaning’ of the authors (Beardsley 1975). This challenges one of the central arguments of this thesis, which states that the ‘intended meaning’ of authorship is very dominant in the Kurdish novelistic discourse, and argues that ascertaining the meaning of the chosen novels, along with the direct or indirect meanings intended by the novelists, requires the

use of a contextual approach which “presupposes the meaning of a work lies outside the work” (Rapaport 2011: 6).

In order to provide an answer for the role of authorship in the Kurdish novelistic discourse, some attempt must be made to define the ‘intended meaning’ of the authors since the dominance of the author in the text creates the issue of ‘implied author’. As noted by Chatman, “The real author can postulate whatever norms he likes through his ‘implied author’” (Chatman 1978: 148-149).

The concept of the ‘implied author’ was introduced by the American literary theorist Wayne C. Booth, who explains how “the ‘implied author’ chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices” (1983 [1961]: 74-75). The ‘implied author’ appears behind the scenes, shaping the values that the narrative projects onto his readers. Accordingly, it is argued in this study that in Kurdish novels, the actual novelists are disguised behind the narrators or the text as fictional authorities, accurately termed ‘implied authors’. The narrator, as the real authority and storyteller, plays no part in the story but from an omniscient third-person perspective tends to dominate the whole narration, including the characters’ thoughts. In other words, the novelist does not appear as an actual being in the text but reveals his stances and views through the characters, mainly the central character or the narrator.

This relation between factual and fictional discourse in the novels is linked with the novelists’ perceptions of reality. The discourse may be dependent on, or opposite to, a novelist’s everyday life. However, it is particularly necessary to note that by applying various techniques for being direct and explicit, the novelists are able to place their own reality, world, and perspective at the centre of the discourse. Using a contextual approach, it becomes possible to understand the setting of the author’s own society and his position within it, both as an individual or a member of a group, and in this respect, biographies of the novelists are taken into consideration. It should be noted that biographical aspects of each novelist are emphasized only when required, with the main focus on such questions as: ‘what information points to material that had a determining effect on the writing of the novel?’, and ‘what information is relevant?’ This research argues, with Rogers (1991: 35), that “biographical data are [...] capable of suggesting how novelists’ social worlds affect them both practically and aesthetically”, since their personal histories shape their work in the process of novel-making as well as their everyday lives. Moreover, this issue is close to the ‘author-oriented approach’, which argues that the autobiographical elements of writers might have entered the text

subconsciously or involuntarily. In other words, the author can be in the text in an encoded form. Again, this approach is taken into consideration throughout the analysis of the novelistic discourse, since the study emphasises the intense influence of the intentions and experiences of Kurdish authors on their texts.

Recognition of the contextual approach should not be viewed as disregarding the meaning of the text; in fact the contextualized reading seeks to disclose the underlying intent in the text. As suggested by White,

[The] social-scientific need for knowledge of the author should not [...] be taken as negating the use of certain texts; instead it produces the possibility of embedding the reading of texts by reference to the social, political and economic context in which they were written (1995:9).

With regard to textual and contextual approaches, this research also employs a Marxist approach that attempts to relate novels and aspects of novels to social conditions. According to the Marxist approach, the novel is a product of the social, economic and cultural changes within a society that end in capitalism,³⁹ so that it is necessary for Marxists to question what kind of ideologies and values are embodied in novels and the manner in which a reader is positioned in relation to those novels. Therefore, the political and ideological necessities that persuade a novelist to write about a particular subject are also investigated in this study, in relation to the evidence and the reasons provided by the novelist to support his discourse. In other words, the authorial intent, which is explicitly manifested or implicitly encoded in the texts, is considered to be important in Marxist literary theory.

In addition, there is an attempt through thematic analysis to identify the themes that relate to the concepts already classified – mainly ‘identity’, ‘home-land’ and ‘diaspora’ – so as to form a comprehensive picture of the novels. Thematic analysis enables the researcher to create a link between each text, and to compare similarities and differences. While it might be thought that contextual, textual and thematic analyses contradict each other, in reality it is quite the reverse, and the method I have outlined is intended to promote a comprehensive and flexible approach to the reading of novelistic discourse which allows every factor that contributes to meaning to be taken into

³⁹ Georg Lukács, one of the most important Marxist critics of the novel, was especially interested in the novel because of its affiliation with realism. According to Lukács (1962), the artist is required to represent “the totality of reality”, which the writer can display through representative selection. The writer’s task will be similar to the one set by Marx, and will mean “understanding the world’s history as a complex and dynamic totality through the uncovering of certain underlying laws” (Hawthorn 2001: 55).

account. Through textual, thematic and contextual analyses, the social, psychological, and political circumstances of the characters, the setting, and the thematic concerns of the novels will be interrogated, in an attempt to describe how the idea of ‘home-land’ and Kurdish identity, mainly the national identity, are constructed in each of them.

Due to the nature of this research, comparative analysis is applied in the novels as a method within which interrogation precedes any analysis of similarities and differences between Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora. According to Arendt Lijphart (1971), the comparative approach is a fundamental method that is used to test the validity of general empirical propositions. Hence, while keeping the period of the novels in mind, they will be compared with each other in order to evaluate changes and the reasons underlying them. It is therefore essential to consider how any particular novel is related to the other novels that have been read, in order to create unity in terms of the study’s main argument. The comparative analysis approach also attempts to uncover the diverse novelistic discourses that are filled with changing cultural and political attitudes, shaped by migration experiences, towards identity and ‘home-land’. Overall, it will show the complexity of the novelists’ responses to Kurdistan and Kurdish national identity arising from their differing contexts, a variety of influences, and changing socio-political circumstances.

1.5. Theoretical Considerations

The theoretical framework of this research is in two parts. The first focuses on literary theories, mostly those concerned with novelistic discourse linked with ‘space’ and ‘identity’, and also applies theories to do with ‘identity’, and the concepts of ‘home’, ‘homeland’, and ‘diaspora’. These multi-layered concepts, which appear to shift in different contexts, are examined against a theoretical and methodological background that raises questions about the framing of the research. The second part of the theoretical consideration relies largely on the assumption that ethnic groups and nations are always social constructions; thus there can be no objective criteria for what does and does not constitute a nation. Again, this research does not regard ‘identity’ from an essentialist perspective, but considers it instead as constantly in a process of change and transformation (Hall and Du Gay 1996; Smith 1991, 1999).

There are various ways to analyse literary works but my approach here is to consider novelistic discourse as a literary sphere that represents nationhood and national territory. This implies a modernist understanding of the relationship between literature

and nation. By tracing developments in the study of nation-building, national identity, and literature from Benedict Anderson (1983) to Frederic Jameson (1988) and Homi Bhabha (1990; 1994), this study affirms the connection between the making of national identity and the making of literary texts. However, it also underlines the territorial aspects of literary works, which contribute to the constructing of national identity. In this context, it is argued that the settings and literary expression of places in the novels can provide data for territorial reality, geographical facts, or the imagining of a nation.

1.5.1. Novelistic Discourse: Reality, Identity, and Humanistic Geography

There are various theoretical approaches to the literary works. For example, on the one hand is a 'text-oriented approach' that includes philology, rhetoric, formalism and structuralism, new criticism, semiotics and deconstruction in literary studies; it is "concerned with questions of the 'materiality' of texts, including editions of manuscripts, analyses of language, and style and the formal structure of literary works" (Klarer 1999: 78). On the other hand there is an 'author-oriented approach' covering biographical criticism, psychoanalytic criticism, and phenomenology, in which the stress is on the author attempting to link his/her biography to the text (Klarer 1999). With regard to the 'author-oriented approach', details in the form of dates, facts, and events in the author's life are crucial contributions to the analysis. This approach proposes that literary works are fictional, but that authors dramatize incidents from real life. In addition, contextual approaches such as literary history, Marxist literary theory, feminist literary theory, new historicism, and cultural studies attempt to situate literary texts against the background of historical, social or political developments, while trying at the same time to classify texts according to genres as well as historical periods (Klarer 1999: 78). It is argued that literary works are not independent and must be put forward in a larger context.

As the methodology part of this research has suggested, a contextual approach is just as useful as a textual approach for evaluating the representation of 'identity' and 'homeland' in the Kurdish novels chosen for this study. However, this comment gives rise to a troubling matter concerning the extent to which we should rely on literary narratives as factual documents while arriving at conclusions related to 'identity' and 'home-land'.

A novel has long been thought of as some sort of vivid experience that allows its readers to identify with particular situations and encourages them to feel and act in the same way as the characters. The novel is defined as a genre through its attempt to create

a reality by deriving meaning from an individual's life (McKeon 2000; Lukács 1971; Watt 2001 [1957]). However, reality in novels cannot be regarded simply as reflecting the personal experiences of novelists, since the society, setting, and social environment of the novel might be used for various ideologies, issues and beliefs rather than for representing reality on its own. Thus, in a form of representation, there may be a symbolic interpretation of the characters, as well as the themes, society and world of the novels.

It is considered that the novel genre in literature is a form that depends mainly on mimesis (the imitation of reality through realist techniques) and the fact that “novels depend on their ability to make readers feel as if they are witnessing not art but life” (Davis 1987: 250). Consciously or sometimes unconsciously, they reflect, ‘real’ cultural and political differences between nations because they are integral to the process of constructing national, cultural, and political differences. “Novels are pre-organized systems of experience in which characters, actions and objects have to mean something in relation to the system of each novel itself, in relation to the culture in which novel is written, and in relation to the readers who are in that that culture” (Ibid: 24). In other words, the stories in the novels are not distant from living experience, and their subject matter is heavily oriented towards national and cultural differences.

According to Lukács ([1950] 1972), who bases his arguments mainly on Marxist realism, the novel is involved in social reality. He believes that the novels of European writers such as Walter Scott, Honoré de Balzac, Thomas Mann, and Leo Tolstoy deal with realist achievements that reflect social change in society by illustrating social details. Novels provide a special access to the real world. According to the famous novelist and critic, Henry James ([1888] in Edel 1956: 11), “the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life [...] The characters, the situation, which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most.” In other words, novelists themselves follow the notions of Aristotle, which include the belief that imitation of life is the cornerstone of literature and that human actions are represented in literary works. As Duncan remarks, “[...] representations not only reflect reality, but they help to constitute reality” (2000: 703). Literature has also become a vehicle for the expression of strong and profound collective or personal identities since “literature contains some of the most effective explorations of identity issue” (White 1995: 2). Concerning novelistic discourse in particular, Culler (1997:108) points out that “the novel has not only made identity a theme: it has played a significant role in the construction of the identity of the readers.”

The connection of certain disciplines with each other has received less attention by literary critics and writers. In this respect, the relationship between geography and literature has been discussed mainly by geographers, who see fictional literature as an alternative account of their texts because, as Meinig (1983: 316) remarks, it is “a valuable storehouse of vivid depictions of landscapes and life.” However, some geographers (Crang 1998; Claval 1998; Shurmer-Smith 2002) have taken up literature from a geographical perspective and have concluded, “true synthesis of geography and literature would produce an entirely new approach to meaning” (Bordessa 1988: 273). In this respect, my analysis in this research derives from the cultural and literary theory that claims “literature [...] is not *just* the idiosyncratic product of an author, but both reveals and conceals social and cultural practices as it produces and reproduces spaces and places” (Gilbert and Simpson-Housley 1997: 237).

This study again argues that an author’s mode of perception of space and places, and thus his/her treatment of space and places is culturally, socially and politically conditioned, reflecting the culture and ideology to which the author belongs. In this case, the engagement between geography and literature appears through the way they are described as a depiction of a specific ‘space’ and ‘place’; in terms of the cultural context of people’s notions and views for a particular place, this can offer insights into the nature of their spatial relations.

Geography is part of the literary project of some authors and through their fiction they attempt to achieve a geographical project. Humanistic geography, defined as “humanistic conceptualization of place” (Rose 1993: 41), is interested in literature and describes the place as a “centre of meaning constructed by experience”, thus confirming the fact that authors might somehow accurately represent the experience of ‘place’ (Brosseau 1994). In the context of geographical interpretation of literature, Thomas O. Beebee (2008: 1) focuses in his *Nation and Region in Modern American and European Fiction* on “the role of literature in the production of national, regional, local, global, and local mental maps.” He concentrates on such significant geographical ideas as mental maps and ‘heterotopias’, deriving the term ‘heterotopia’ from Michel Foucault’s article “Of Other Spaces” (1967).⁴⁰ Heterotopias are described as “the ‘counter-sites’, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which...all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted” (Beebee 2008: 24). In response to Foucault’s definition, Beebee also argues that ‘heterotopia’ refers to a “true imaginary place”, in which ‘place’ is endowed with imaginary qualities,

⁴⁰ Translated into English in 1986.

“...again using ‘imaginary’ in the sense of imaging something rather than perceiving it, as in the act of remembering” (2008: 3-4). Foucault states that a mirror embodies the concept of ‘heterotopia’: it includes both the unreal, due to illusion, and reality, due to the reflection of the image.

Concerning a humanist approach to the geographical interpretation of literature, Porteous (1985: 117) notes that, “within the broad realm of imaginative literature, geographers have again been highly selective. Plays are not considered, poetry is but occasionally used, the novel reigns supreme.” Thus, novels become the leading genre as documentary sources that depict the “geography of the text” (Brosseau 1995: 96). Porteous further explains that the advantages of the novel “lie in its length (meaty), its prose form (understandable), its involvement with the human condition (relevant), and its tendency to contain passages, purple or otherwise, which deal directly with landscapes and places in the form of description (geographical)” (1985: 117). In light of Brosseau’s argument, novelistic discourse, within other literary types, becomes the most convenient genre for analysing literary geographies as sources of “geographical data” (Darby 1948; Jay 1975), and in this respect, Brosseau (1994) coins the term ‘novel-geographers’ for those investigating people’s experience of space through novelistic discourse. In other words, novels can be analysed for their construction of a geography that explores the interaction between people as a group, and particular places.⁴¹

With regard to the foregoing, Said (1994) and Moretti (1998) both question the basis of the novel’s ideological prominence and investigate its status as the only symbolic form that projects the nation-state and the homeland; both have also examined Jane Austen’s works as examples. Austen depicts a few families in a particular region and community by bringing to life “a social world that, because it is varied and yet unified, stratified and yet symbiotic, can be taken as a whole, can be felt to represent ‘English’ life” (Hale 2006: 657). Highlighting this point in relation to Austen’s novels, Moretti notes how the characters “take the strange, harsh novelty of the modern state and turn it into a large, exquisite home” (1998: 18), pointing out that “Jane Austen’s space suggests an equally strong affinity between the novel and the geo-political reality

⁴¹ It is possible to find some useful articles and books that enlarge on interactions between real and imaginary geographies in various literary genres. For example, *Geography and Literature: A Meeting of the Disciplines*, edited by William E. Mallory and Paul Simpson-Housley (1987), focuses on realistic regional geography and symbolic landscapes in several literary works from Arnold Bennett to Thomas Hardy, an approach that can be applied to the geographical sense of Kurdish novels. The explicit goal of this study is not only to represent visibly the territorial aspect of the selected novels, but also to identify the connection of the characters with these textual places and attempt to answer how the particular national ‘places’ contribute to the construction of identities.

of the nation-state” (ibid: 16-17). Thus the details of the locations in her novels contribute to the construction of English identity and the idea of England as ‘homeland’, while their reflection of England as the ‘national homeland’ of the English nation demonstrates the novel’s geographical sense.

As Hale also argues, Said (1994) and Moretti (1998) both “find ideological power in the novel’s formal construction of space” (2006: 657); they distinguish the novel from other literary genres because ‘space’ is personalized in the novels. The location or space that is drawn as geography in the novel becomes clearer and more visible with the personal sentiments projected onto it, and this personifies the landscape.

Regarding ‘landscape’, which is a cultural construction of the nation and homeland (Olwig 1993; Matless 1998; Olwig and Lowenthal 2006), Nancy Armstrong (2005) also illustrates how the novel presents the national landscape as one in which individuals can become fully themselves. The plots, characters, contexts, and vocabularies of novels trigger the imagination, allowing readers to re-describe and reconstitute the ‘identity’ and ‘home-land’ within this world.

Novels also enable individuals to establish a bond with each other across different contexts. Novelistic discourse, like national projects, produces national places, geographical territories, and identities that appear as a nation. So, in adopting a constructivist view of the nation, the peculiarity of the novel closely matches the processes of nation building. This being the case, one can state that the nations fictionalized in novels are ‘imagined communities’. In this regard it can be argued that, through combining fiction and reality, novelistic discourse contributes to constructing ‘true imaginary places’, and in this context, the figuration of ‘true imaginary places’ parallels the representation of the nation and issues of national identity constructing what Jameson (1988) calls a “national allegory.”

Taking the above discussion into consideration, I argue in this research that this constructive imagining of ‘territorial reality’, ‘nation’ and ‘identity’ also occurs in Kurdish novels; however, taking note of humanistic approaches to geography and literature, the study also considers Kurdish novels as “stimulating data, information, and suggestions about individual and social perceptions of places and landscapes” (Fabio 1996: 4). In this respect, I construe the Kurdish novelistic discourse as an influential element in the constructing of territorial bases of human subjectivity and the “territorial consciousness of a society” (Fabio 1996: 8), since as Fabio notes, “a writer is not only an individual gifted with descriptive ability but, as a member of society, he reflects and interprets that society’s ideology” (ibid.). Through fictionalizing literary landscapes,

transferring the attitudes, values, and responses of the characters to the place and landscape experience, and by narrating the histories and myths that create an outline of a nation, the literary text may challenge, support, and preserve certain ideologies based on national identity and homeland.

1.5.2. Constructing 'Identity', 'Place', 'Home-land', and 'Diaspora'

This second part of the theoretical consideration focuses on the concepts of 'identity', 'home-land', and 'diaspora', which are crucial for the discussions throughout the study. It also covers a wide range of theories regarding the concept of 'place', which plays a potentially significant part in the symbolic and physical dimensions of an identity, while arguing that the experience and the idea of place are socially constructed and that the perception of it changes according to time and place (Altman and Low 1992; Proshansky 1978; Relph 1976; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996; Tuan 1977). Accordingly, the concepts of 'home' and 'homeland' are defined and formulated here through the interconnecting of discussions around the concepts of 'space' and 'place', which can be considered as larger conceptions. At this point, it is necessary to present a brief introduction to all the concepts emphasized above.

1.5.2.1. Discourses on 'Identity' and 'Kurdish National Identity'

Since identity is an essential phenomenon in everyday life, there is a growing literature alongside various social and socio-psychological theories and approaches that addresses the question of how identities are constructed. Broadly, the central theoretical claim about the concept of identity made in this study is that identity is not essentialist but is instead undergoing a perpetual process of change and transformation. The study considers national and ethnic identities as constructed, collective, and political. Nor is identity fixed; it is fluid and relational because individuals change constantly during the course of their lives.

The modern view of identity with its constructed nature, is, as noted, deeply related to the experiences that an individual undergoes through his/her social relations. This modern view of identity leans heavily towards the provisional and performative, in which, according to Smith, "the self is composed of multiple identities and roles, familial, territorial, class, religious, ethnic and gender" (1991: 4-7). Therefore, the emphasis here is on the multiplicity of identities and differences rather than on a single

identity; in other words, identity defines identities by marking differences, since identities are in fact based on differences.

There have been various factors in the development of the Kurdish identity. The building of nation-states in the region caused Kurds to be dispersed into four territories, a process that also imposed different socio-political and cultural conditions upon them. Hence, while being a Kurd in origin is of central importance, the course of Kurdish identity formation has differed from one region to another depending on the shifting of political spaces. This certainly does not allow for a fixed and essentialist Kurdish identity (Van Bruinessen 1992b; Kirisci and Winrow 1997; Özoğlu 2004). Therefore there are different ways of defining Kurdish identity and different factors that are effective in constructing that identity. In this research, discourses on Kurdish identity are exclusively concentrated on Turkish Kurdistan, due to the particular scope of the research. More precisely, the model of identity that I include in this research is defined in accordance with the experience of displacement, that is to say diaspora, because a person's identity is constructed through, and with, that individual's interaction with his or her socio-cultural environment.

Attempts over time to suppress the Kurdish identity in the four regions of Kurdistan (Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria) have acted as a stimulus for Kurdish nationalism. Indeed, it is widely known that the dominant states in Kurdistan have maintained a stubborn denial of Kurdish identity and have often repressed cultural and linguistic expressions of Kurdishness with great severity (Chailand 1993; Allain 2004; Ozcan 2006). However Kurdish culture in the Middle East "has maintained its distinctiveness and integrity throughout the centuries" (Nisan 1991: 28). Thus, despite so much subjugation and oppression, Kurds have emphasized their identification with a distinct ethnic nation by sharing such common features as language, religion, cultural and national symbols, myths, and values, while, notes Hassanpour, they have embraced "the feeling, the idea or experience of belonging to a collective entity called Kurd" (2003:110). In so doing, even in the earlier oral and written literature, e.g., Ehmedê Xanî's *Mem û Zîn* (1695) written in Kurdish, and *Sharafname* (1597) by Sharaf Khan, written in Persian in the Kurdish emirate of Bitlis, the distinctiveness of Kurdish identity is underlined.

Certainly, Kurdish identity, because of internal and external change, has been unfixed and shifting throughout history. Such alterations in the historical and political context of Kurdistan have been the major factor in this fluidity, with Kurdish identity constantly readjusting itself to the requirements of a changing context. In relation to

diverse internal and external factors shaping Kurdish identity, Kedourie (1996:226) argues, “the politics of Islam, the autonomous political structures of tradition, and the resistance of the ‘periphery’ to an integrated national economy were all the components of the constitution of Kurdishness.” The common discourse on Kurdish identity gathers around the idea that the exclusion and denial of Kurdish identity is very much related to the Turkish political project of a modern and secular nation-state, which has increased the politicization of Kurdish identity. Therefore, the fluid and unfixed structure of Kurdish identity should be tied to the Kurds’ fluid and unfixed historical, socio-political and cultural contexts, mainly characterized by the regime and by the ideological changes of the political apparatus.

Kurds, as a distinct group in the Middle East, have not created a state identity through tools such as nationalist parties, uprisings, literary advances, and the intelligentsia, but have still managed nevertheless to create a distinct national identity.⁴² The main components of this national identity notably include territory/homeland, shared experiences and memories/past times, national symbols, and language (Smith 1991). When reflecting on what constitutes a person’s national identity, special attention should also be given to territory, since this plays a major role in the development of group identity as well. Every group, especially at the level of ethnicity, requires a territory with which the members can identify themselves. In other words, shared territory among group members is a crucial component in the process of identity formation. For Smith and Hutchinson (1996), nations have ethnic roots, and the history of ethnic communities is defined in fundamental ways by an ancestral ‘homeland’ or territory.

In relation to the territorial identity of Kurds, Özoğlu (2004: 173) also comments that Kurdish identity is tied very closely to a territory that was called Kurdistan; and that it revolves around a ‘core area’ that has been referred to as territory-Kurdistan. Like ‘identity’, ‘territory’ itself is also subjected to changes and new formations through the years. In other words, we can say that the perception of Kurds regarding the territory of Kurdistan changes as the socio-political and cultural context of Kurds alters over time.

It is known that Kurdistan does not encompass a homogenous population that includes diverse religious and linguistic groups. However, territorial, linguistic and religious fragmentation did not stop the Kurds from sharing a common myth of Kurdistan as ‘ancestral homeland’. As Conversi (2004: 243) notes, “national homeland

⁴² For a comprehensive discussion of the construction of Kurdish identity in political discourse see Gunes (2011).

images continue to exert a powerful influence on popular perceptions of identity and remain among the most effective instruments that nationalists have at their disposal to mobilize their national communities.” Conversi’s understanding of perceptions of “national homeland” applies very much to the Kurdish situation. Similarly, the ancestral and national homeland has been a crucial instrument in constructing Kurdish identity and nationalist myth, just as territorial geography has played a significant role in the relationship of Kurds to Kurdistan, not only in ‘homeland territory’ but also in ‘diaspora’.

Images of the ‘imagined territory of Kurdistan’ in nationalist discourse have become one of the unifying elements of the Kurdish imagined community, in both ‘homeland’ and ‘diaspora’. Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 11) point out that “homeland [...] remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples, though the relation to homeland may be very differently constructed in different settings.” Kurds are certainly classified among those mobile and displaced peoples. However, here one needs to ask how Kurds are able to build and maintain a sense of national identity when the territorial base to which that identity refers is divided by other nation-states?

Central to this question is the well-known practice of Kurds discursively constructing images of their ‘homeland’ in their narratives. The following chapters will argue that some Kurdish novels create mental chorographic maps for their readers that have relevance to national history and identity. The analytical chapters that follow suggest that through the use of character, plot, and subject matter, specific territorialized national spaces rely on a variety of symbolizations, including distinctive natural features and landscapes. This occurs to such an extent that in some novels, rural features are often given pride of place in the construction of national identities because they attempt to verify this historical connection with the national territory. In relation to this argument, Maria O’Shea focuses on the elements that shape the development of the Kurds’ mental map of Kurdistan and its relationship with the political map with which they are forced to live, pointing out the contradiction between the Kurds’ strong sense of identity and the lack of a clear geographic expression of that identity. In her *Trapped Between Map and Reality* (2004) she claims that perceptions of Kurdistan and Kurdish identity have changed over time and space, and examines “the ways in which these perceptions have been projected into historical, political, and cartographic realities” (2004:1). Through her analysis, which is based on documents and maps produced by myths and real events, she attempts to illustrate the link between ‘territory’ and

‘identity’ in the Kurdish case.

In parallel with this, my purpose in this study is to examine literary landscapes and settings, and to question the meanings and values attributed to these places, as well as the link between these places with the identities revealed by the fictional Kurdish characters in the novels.

In addition to the territorial identity of Kurds in the context of Turkish Kurdistan, my view is that the Kurdish language becomes the most salient emblem of Kurdish culture and national identity (Vali 2003: 100; McDowell 2004: 9; Kreyenbroek and Allison 1996: 1). Indeed, many Kurds regard their language as both proof and symbol of their Kurdish identity, and the Kurdish language is considered to be one of the major grounds for the Kurds who claim to be a separate nation.⁴³ Furthermore, it is often argued that the death of the Kurdish language is associated with the death of Kurdish identity. It is, therefore, impressive that efforts have been made to preserve and develop the two main dialects of Kurdish (Sorani and Kurmanji), particularly in their written forms. The emergence and increasing development of Kurdish novels in both diaspora and Turkish Kurdistan demonstrates the significance of language. Anne-Marie Thiesse (1999) who considers ‘the nation’ to be a recent phenomenon, argues that nations and national identities are invented such a way that a nation’s national territory and boundaries are protected through myths along with such elements as national history, heroic past, national character, and cultural artefacts. Following the line of this argument, national symbols like flags, maps, and national anthems seem to be defining components of a national identity (Billig 1995; Smith 2003, 2009, 2010). For Kurds, myths, songs, legends and old stories become a way to construct Kurdish identity in the present. Similarly, by referring to historical events, past tragedies and classical works, epics and myths, Kurdish novelists attempt to sustain or construct Kurdish national identity through their texts and narratives.

1.5.2.2. Conceptualisation of ‘Place’ and its Meanings

Related to the imaginations of ‘home-land’, there has been an emphasis on ‘place’, theories of which used to be limited to spatial disciplines such as geography, urban and

⁴³ Two articles by Kreyenbroek, “Kurdish Identity and the Language Question” (in T. Atabaki and M. Dorlejin (eds), *Kurdistan in Search of Ethnic Identity*, 1990); and “On Kurdish Language” (in P. Kreyenbroek and S. Sperl, (eds) *The Kurds: Contemporary Overview* 1992) provide a socio-linguistic assessment of the Kurdish language which, with its diverse dialects, is defined as an essential component of Kurdish identity.

regional planning, and architecture. However, after 1960 and almost exclusively during the 1970s, the dimension of 'place' was revealed to be multi-layered, and studies on 'place' headed towards a humanistic rather than a merely physical paradigm. While physical geographers regard 'place' simply as empirical, objective and able to be mapped, some human geographers emphasize the sensual, aesthetic and emotional dimensions of 'place'. Common knowledge suggests that although 'place' and 'space' are reflected as synonyms, 'place' should in fact be conceptualized as a particular part of 'space', or what Holt-Jensen (1999: 224) calls "a portion of geographical space" with defined settings.

The humanist concept of 'place' is interested in people's attachment to a specific place linked with particular incidents and attitudes from which a world of meanings is constructed. Human geography underlines the significance of person-place interactions, through which people create personal attachments to particular places that produce a sense of belonging and symbolic meanings. They conceptualize 'place' as collectively and individually delineated.

Following from this introduction, two distinct approaches to 'place' can be evaluated. The first approach conceptualizes 'place' as stasis, a flat, immobilized surface defined as a singular, fixed, and unchanging location. This can be considered as an essentialist conception of 'place'. The second approach is concerned with a constructivist perspective in which people are creators of places, and in this regard, my theoretical framework proposes the idea that 'place', as a social construct, is not a static entity but one that evokes an ever-shifting process. According to social constructionists, humans construct both the meaning of 'place' and the material structure of 'place'. This approach is concerned with the social forces that are involved in the construction of particular places.

In addition, this study explores the significance of 'place' in a person's existence and recognizes that 'place' is more than context; it is an integral part of the identity process. According to certain scholars (e.g., Blunt 2005; Dodman, 2007; Marden, 1997) there is a general feeling that sense of 'place' and sense of 'self' are intimately bound together. Thus, it is argued that Kurdish places, cities, and landscapes (i.e., Kurdistan in general) will be constructed as a source of both the Kurdish individual and social identity (O'Shea 2004). Kurdistan is a "spatial context where identities are worked on" (James 1998: 144); one in which the identities of Kurdistan and the Kurds are not fixed, but are constantly re-imagined and reconstructed.

Whereas Tuan (1975: 152) argues that ‘places’ can be given meaning through many possible modes, Harvey (1996: 309) asserts that ‘place meanings’ are “the contested terrain of competing definitions.” However, there is no inherently true meaning associated with ‘place’ (Davis 2005). Since this study aims in part to reveal the complexity of the meanings of historical and contemporary Kurdistan in Kurdish novels, the impossibility of attributing single and one-dimensional meaning to a place is easily understood in the context of Kurdistan. The diversity of Kurds, who hold different ideologies and beliefs and live in different territories, leads to the construction of multiple and multi-dimensional Kurdistan meanings, in physical as well as symbolic aspects. Therefore, it can be argued that in the Kurdish novels examined in this thesis, Kurdistan is reflected as complex and contingent in meaning. Rather than the meaning being equated to the function of Kurdistan, I aim to analyse how Kurdistan meanings are created through the associations and affiliations linked to Kurdistan.

As already noted, the concept of ‘place meaning’ shows that there is an intimate link between a ‘person’ and a ‘place’, which undoubtedly affects the identity formation of both. Bachelard (1958) focused on ‘topophilia’⁴⁴ (love of place), and ‘topoanalysis’ (investigation of places) as essential notions for studies on self, memory and the mind, arguing that explorations of ‘self’ and also of ‘love’ could be possible through exploration of a ‘place’. The term ‘topophilia’, which combines two Greek words to mean, “love of place”, is thought to have been coined by a Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who defined his concept as “the affective bond between people and place or setting” (1974:4). The word “implies that individuals have an emotional need to identify with often personal and intimate places, and hence ‘construct’ these places for themselves on the basis of repeated experiences, the formation of behavioural routines, and ties of spirituality and kinship” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 75). Through his definition, Tuan (1974) challenged the conceptualizing of physical geographers. He explained ‘place’ as an emotional, bounded area to which an individual or a group has a strong emotional relationship, arguing that people structure geographical as well as cosmological ‘space’, with themselves at the centre. He describes this attachment to ‘place’ through the term ‘topophilia’, which can be

⁴⁴ ‘Topophilia’ as a human geography concept is close to the ‘geosophy’ concept of J. K. Wright (1947), according to which, place is considered to evoke feelings and perceived symbols. ‘Geosophy’ is “man’s sense of terrestrial space” (Whittlesey 1945). For ‘topophilia’ see also A. Buttimer and D. Seamon (1980), and S. Wapner, S. B. Cohen and B. Kaplan (1976). For ‘geosophy’ see D. Lowenthal and M. J. Bowden (1976). Tuan (1976) also uses ‘geopieté’ as a way to understand place attachment; the term refers to loyalty and attachment to a place or to one’s land of origin. ‘Geopieté’ also serves to explore the emotional bond between an individual and home.

“induced by familiarity, a sense of history, spiritual and political associations”, while another form of ‘topophilia’ is ‘place attachment’ which can vary in scale from the nation to the homeland.

Tuan suggests that such attachment can be based upon memories, or on pride of ownership or creation. In this respect, ‘topophilia’ often takes the form of an aestheticizing of national place or landscape (Tuan 1975: 93-102). In light of this, it can be argued that ‘topophilia’ applies to the relationship of Kurds with Kurdistan. Kurds have intense and complicated experiences with Kurdistan as their homeland, and have been struggling for centuries to protect their homeland against external forces, while experiencing pain and nostalgia.

In order to capture the relationship between ‘person’ and ‘place’, the concept of ‘sense of place’, in which the values and beliefs attributed to that particular ‘place’ affect the development of the ‘sense of place’, also need to be addressed (Jorgensen and Stedman 2001; Relph 1976; Buttner and Seamon 1980; Tuan 1977, 1980; Hay 1998). It is a broad and encompassing concept that contains two narrower concepts – ‘place attachment’ and ‘place identity’ (Jorgensen and Stedman 2001); and it has been used to describe the attitudes, beliefs, meanings, and interpretations that people associate with a particular ‘place’. Stedman (2002: 563) describes the ‘sense of place’ as being “a collection of symbolic meanings, attachment, and satisfaction with a spatial setting, held by a group or individual”, while Nanzer (2004: 363) defines it as “the manner in which humans relate to, or feel about, the environments in which they live.” The physical and symbolic features of a ‘place’ influence the symbolic meanings of the landscape perceived by people, and contribute to constructing a ‘sense of place’ in their lives. The setting is thus a blend of physical and social features; the ‘sense of place’ is an experience created by the setting, combined with what a person brings to it. To put it more simply, to certain extent we create our own places; they do not exist independently of us. The strength of the link between the person or group and the ‘place’ is defined with another concept called ‘place attachment’; this latter is regarded as a component of ‘sense of place’.

‘Place attachment’ is described as the bond between people and their environment (Bricker and Kerstetter 2000; Kyle et al. 2003a, 2003b; Altman and Low 1992; Williams et al. 1992; Giuliani 1991; and Hidalgo and Hernandez 2001). People develop an identity through a compound interaction with the ‘place’ to which they are related. The relation of identity with place is developed gradually and spontaneously, starting in childhood and continuing throughout life, with the level of ‘place-identity’ affected by

the individual's aspirations, needs, and experiences. Ian Nairn (1965: 6) also emphasizes strongly the importance of association with place, noting that "it seems a commonplace that almost everyone is born with the need for identification with his surroundings and a relationship to them – with the need to be in a recognizable place."

In this respect, identification with place is not a choice but a necessity that is a constituent of human nature; thus, people's sense of both personal and cultural identity is intimately bound up with 'place-identity'. In this context, places can be associated with particular memories forming an individual's or a community's place-related memory. The discussion above concerning the concept of 'place' also contributes to the understanding of 'home-land', since the idea of 'home-land' in general, and in particular in this research is related to the larger concept of 'place', which is looked at in more detail in the next section.

1.5.2.3. 'Home-land': A Fundamental Aspect of Identity

Traditional meanings of 'home' as a fixed and territorial-based entity have been modified and expanded by new and more fluid approaches and perspectives through which individuals move continuously (Rapport and Dawson 1998; Ahmed 1999; Rapport and Overing 2000; Mallet 2004; Lucas and Purkayastha 2007). Thus, new conceptual prisms have formulated 'home' as mobile, multi-dimensional and in a way de-territorialized.

'Home' is usually interpreted in relation to a physical structure that is territorially tied to a particular location in which social relations among individuals are established. However, on a different scale, 'home' also can signify a country, nation-state or homeland (Ahmed 1999, Basch et al. 1994; Glick-Schiller and Fouran 1999; Povrzanovic Frykman 2002). Interpreting 'home' as the country of a group of people conveys the notion that 'home', as an actual physical place, is territorially based. Therefore, meanings attached to it can be as real as the actual territory. However, in addition to its territorialisation, 'home' as a symbolic place for a group of people can also evoke various symbolic feelings, e.g., love, safety, belonging etc. (Mallet 2004). Thus, 'home' can also be "a place where personal and social meanings are grounded" (Papastergiadis 1998: 2).

There are many different answers can be provided from different locations and times to the question 'How does one describe 'home'? As Sarup says:

It is usually assumed that a sense of place or belonging gives a person stability. But what makes a place home? Is it wherever your family is, where you have been brought up? (...) Where is home? Is it where your parents are buried? Is home the place from where you have been displaced or where you are now? (1994: 5)

Sarup also argues that 'home' is a term to which every individual ascribes different meanings, since 'home' as a 'sense of place' resonates differently from different locations for different subjects, and often even for the same subject at different locations. When separated and distant from this particular place, one feels some sort of division between oneself and the world. One's identity changes according to the individual, group, or consensus image of that place. The character of 'home' does not just resonate differently from different locations – it is also subject to changes throughout time. Consequently, the notion of 'home' is not fixed or static, but is open to change in relation to distance and time.

One of the important dimensions of 'home' is its link with social relations, which strengthens the way it is envisioned by an individual. Lindholm Schulz (2003: 19) maintains that "home can be placed in interpersonal relations rather than in a certain house's place/geography or it may be laced in habits, styles, and memories." Thus, through social and political issues, 'home' evokes not only individuality but also collectivity. Terkenli remarks how:

Personal homes may be closely linked to and articulated by familial and communal associations. Collective homes may be delineated by ethnic, nationalistic, civic or ideological factors. As the sense of a collective home is connected to the past and to the future, ethnicity and nationalism constitute powerful poles of attachment (1995: 326).

Thus, collectively and not just individually, 'home' becomes the system of interwoven elements of belonging and attachment. As already mentioned, collective and individual regions of 'home' are not simply an attachment to a particular setting or a particular environment to the extent that they are continuously constructed and deconstructed. Members of a group or a nation can share the same depictions and ideas.

Based on the discussion above, 'home' can also be related to the larger concept of 'homeland', taking the idea and the reality of 'home' from the individual into the collective sphere of cultural norms. The assessment made for 'place attachment' and 'sense of place', which is a universal experience for humans, can also be made for 'homeland'. When one is deeply rooted and attached to a place, i.e., to the 'homeland',

it becomes the foundation of one's existence and a fundamental aspect of one's identity. Thus, the sense of belonging to the 'homeland' is very intense and profound. A group or an individual may even define the 'homeland' as the centre point of the world. Thus, 'homeland' (that is, country and land) becomes an archive of memories and experiences, which creates an organic link for an individual.

As already discussed, different contexts invoke different meanings and productions of 'home-land'. This being so, being outside the borders of 'home' (whether voluntarily or by force), will certainly influence the way 'home' is articulated. As this research is concerned with the novels in diaspora – distanced from home – it is essential to look at the possible changes that distance from 'home' might create in the articulations of 'home' and 'homeland'. Due to colonization, political actions, and social and cultural changes in the past and also in the present day, there is a wide range of people who are exiled and/or in diasporas who experience this detachment from 'home-land' (Stalker 2000; Sayad 2004; Appadurai 2006; Bercovitch 2007). It is also possible to be in a situation of internal exile within the 'home-land', or to find when one returns to one's 'home-land' that it is not the 'home-land' that he/she had left behind or was expecting.

Up to this point, it has been shown that 'home' is perceived as fundamental to being, and that the social and cultural meanings attributed to it arise from the social interactions within its boundaries. It is flexible in scale, and so can carry meanings from a piece of land or a village to the larger unit such as homeland. In this case, 'home', as a point of departure for the significance of 'homeland' on national and territorial grounds, should be elaborated in order to examine the construction of Kurdistan as the national and the ancestral homeland of Kurds in the novels.

'Homeland' joined with national identity accurately expresses the land that one calls 'home'. From a broader perspective, it can also be the place of origin and native land including an entire ethnic group, or as Jürgenson puts it, "homeland is the largest concentric sphere of home territory" (2004: 104). The notion of 'homeland' has acquired an important position in nationalism and political geography debates, based either on conventional ideas of homeland imposing fixity and bounded territory, or on constructed notions of homeland that value cultural links rather than geographical and racial ties. While some theorists in the field of inquiry (e.g., Williams and Smith 1983) emphasize the significance of the territory of the nation, others (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983; Conversi 2004) do not make special claims for a given national territory since they define communities as culturally rather than territorially bounded.

'Homeland' is claimed to be a concept to promote a form of nationalism attempting to maintain the territorial entity and lands of origin. Traditional understanding of 'homeland' evokes multiple meanings such as "community, belonging, and a sense of rootedness", all of which are relevant "to the construction and purpose of national representation" (McLeod 2000: 72). Territory in general is considered to be a significant element in constructing the national homeland of a nation (Williams and Smith 1983), and in this respect there are two different theories that focus mainly on the role of the national territory of homeland in nation-building. On the one hand, according to Portugali, the main elements of nation building are "territory, place and environment, i.e. spatial entities, in relation to people and their collective memories, i.e. temporal entities" (1993:37). On the other hand, however, Benedict Anderson (1983) pays less attention to territorial or ethnic aspects of national identity, arguing that nations have been constructed as 'imagined communities' by emphasizing the invented nature of nations and nationalism. It is noted that nations are considered as 'imagined communities' intermingled with a constructive character; however, the role of territory is also taken into consideration in the construction of nationhood.

Ideas of 'territory' are also connected to concepts of 'place', a multifaceted phenomenon referring to people's connections to some particular spaces. Thus, for an ethnic group, national 'places' are identified with bounded sites of intersecting social relations, collective meanings, and collective memory. Taylor (1999: 102) suggests that, "by combining state and nation in nation-state, sovereign territory has been merged with sacred homeland to convert a space into a place"; however, this reveals a deficiency in Taylor's argument because Kurds, who lack a territorial nation-state of their own, have shown how 'space' transforms into 'place' by way of various of literary, cultural and political discourses. This issue suggests that transformation of 'space' into 'place' does not necessarily require the formation of a recognized nation-state.

Among the theories that approach nationhood from a spatial frame of origin, particular attention must be given to the influential article by Colin Williams and Anthony Smith (1983) on the link between nationhood and territory; this makes explicit reference to the importance of land for political and nationalist projects. They argue that, "the 'land' allows (one) to realise his goals of sovereignty, fraternity, identity and regeneration" (Williams and Smith 1983: 510): in other words, the notion of 'homeland' is linked with ties in history. National lands and landscapes are delineated as the lands of origin and ancestors. In light of this, a crucial question arises: how is the notion of common national territory and ancestral homeland preserved?

Schetter (2005: 2) considers that by using shared memories and history “ethnic groups make geography and produce space to legitimize their existence in space and time”, while Smith (1996: 453-54) believes that “to become national, shared memories must attach themselves to specific places and definite territories”, which will contribute to their becoming “ethnic landscapes (ethnoscapes).” The significant term ‘ethnoscape’ was first introduced by Arjun Appadurai (1991); it explains the connection between ethnic perceptions and space. To Smith (ibid: 454) ‘ethnoscape’ is “the territorialisation of ethnic memory”, through which national landscape “is invested with ethnic kin significance, and becomes an intrinsic element in the community’s myth of origins and shared memories” (Smith 1999:150). As he also notes, by emphasizing a nation’s landscape, ancient ties with lands and ethnic kin, which serve as repositories for collective memories, are given prominence.

In addition, Smith (1996) notes that landscapes are often associated with “miraculous or sacred sites [...] their significance for their inhabitants derives from the joys and sufferings associated with a particular ethnoscape [...] through a picture of poetic landscapes filled with the resonances of great events and exploits in the ethnic past” (1996: 454-55). Here, linking the space with the ethnic past is crucial, since it carries continuity to existing landscapes over time. In so doing, “the nation’s unique history is embodied in the nation’s unique piece of territory – its homeland”, which again conveys the idea that “time has passed but the space is still there” (Anderson 1988: 24).

It is important to note that national landscapes are constructed through myths, which, in turn, also provide continuity to cultural myths and traditions. In this connection, Schama states, “our entire landscape tradition is the product of shared culture; it is by the same token a tradition built from a rich deposit of myths, memories, and obsessions” (1995: 14). This constructed landscape is filled with national myths and shared memories that become national symbols binding the members of the nation together. “Through historicization of nature and the territorialisation of ethnic memories” (Smith 1999: 16), such memories become like vast “mnemonic system[s] for the retention of group history and ideals” (Lynch 1960: 126). As social constructions, ‘ethnoscapes’ also underline the unstable, complex and heterogeneous aspect of national territories in discursive practices. In other words, ethnically territorialised space does not denote a fixed and clear-cut definition but is subject to shifting in time and according to a point of view.

Since this research focuses on the concept of ‘home’, it is necessary to consider the Kurdish equivalent of the concept and also the way it is depicted in Kurdish novelistic discourse. ‘*Mal*’ in Kurmanji literally means ‘home’. Another closer term, ‘*xanî*’, is associated with a physical, structured dwelling house containing no mental or emotional meanings. In this study, however, ‘home’ is regarded as broader units of space, i.e., as ‘*welat*’ rather than ‘*mal*’ or ‘*xanî*’, and ‘homeland’ is considered to be a larger sphere of the ‘home’ territory, which is associated with ‘*welat*’ in Kurdish. In the present study ‘*welat*’ is perceived through wider meanings comprising physical and cultural landscapes together with the homeland environment including social relations. Different Kurdish dictionaries provide more or else similar meanings.

According to Torî’s *Ferheng Kurdî-Turkî* (2004), ‘*welat*’ means “*memleket, ülke*”⁴⁵ in Turkish, which refers to “motherland, country.” Musa Anter’s *Ferhanga Kurdî-Turki* (1967) defines it as “*vatan, memleket*”, again in Turkish, and sharing similar meanings with Torî’s ‘homeland, country’. In Çelebî and Sipka’s *Kurmanji Kurdish-English Glossary* (2002), ‘*welat*’ refers to “mother country, country.” In Michael Chyet’s *Kurdish English dictionary* (2003) it means, “homeland, fatherland, country’. In other words, dictionary meanings of ‘*welat*’ almost all refer to one expression, which is usually ‘homeland’. ‘*Nîştîman*’ and ‘*war*’ have also been used to refer to the homeland; however, whereas ‘*Nîştîman*’ is not addressed at all in the Kurdish novelistic discourse, ‘*war*’ is sometimes used, mainly with in the sense of ‘land’.

However, use of ‘*welat*’ is multi-dimensional and the diverse usage of ‘*welat*’ regarding its physical boundaries, with borders of different sizes or mental nuances, is depicted differently in the novels. Accordingly, with regard to the use of ‘*welat*’ in the novelistic discourse, the term in this research refers to the ‘soil’ or ‘earth’ that a nation inhabits, to a particular region, or to smaller scale locations such as towns and villages. Nevertheless, the place of origin is the central characteristic that principally determines the phenomenon of ‘*welat*’. Some novels broaden the boundaries of ‘*welat*’ to include, apart from the particular place of origin, entire landscapes and other regions of Kurdistan, and in some of the novels the main settings, which are Hakkari (Colemêrg)

⁴⁵ *Ülke* refers in English to ‘country’, and denotes physical and geographical location only. Quite differently, ‘*memleket*’ which has similar connotations to ‘*welat*’, refers to both symbolic and physical meanings related to a piece of land. Whereas ‘*vatan*’ refers literally to ‘motherland’, it is usually associated with “Turkish statehood, the regime and the official construction of history and identity in Turkey” (Demir 2012: 826). In this account, in the Turkish translations of ‘*welat*’, ‘*memleket*’ is closest in terms of meaning whereas ‘*ülke*’ is very limited and ‘*vatan*’ is mostly identified with the Turkish nationalist mode of expression of homeland or country.

and Diyarbakir (Amed)⁴⁶, are differentiated by the term ‘*welat*’.⁴⁷ It is worth noting that it not only refers to physical land but also conveys meanings of bond and attachment. In the translations of ‘*welat*’ that are used in extracts throughout the thesis, either conveying ‘homeland’, ‘home’ or ‘country’, such meaning is based on context. In some cases, as shown above, ‘*welat*’ might even suggest more than one meaning at the same time, as in both ‘home’ (intimate relationship based on attachment or bond) and ‘homeland’ (geographical location). In such cases, ‘home-land’ as a key phrase is used to cover both meanings.

1.5.2.4. Defining ‘Diaspora’ and ‘Kurdish Diasporic Identity’

Informed by the theoretical writings of Bhabha (1990, 2004), Brah (1996), Clifford (1994, 1997), Gilroy (1993), and Hall (1990), and bearing in mind the stateless situation of the Kurds, this thesis looks at how diaspora can be regarded as a factor that influences themes and approaches in Kurdish novels. The study approaches the concept of diaspora in a constructed category and does not define it in essentialist terms, arguing on the basis that diaspora groups are not essential communities but constantly reconstructed ‘imagined communities’.⁴⁸ This argument also connects the concept of diaspora with the constructivist perception of identity, and in this respect, diasporic identity does not result simply from natural, forced, or voluntary migration, exile or dispersion, but is constructed in, and has evolved over, a period of time.

A number of diaspora communities retain a strong attachment to the territorial aspect of their original identity, even if they are physically distant and unlikely ever to travel to that territory. In some cases, as the essential value of territory starts to diminish with the focusing of daily activities in the new host country, the homeland’s symbolic importance can increase. ‘Homeland’ and ‘diaspora’ have been used as interlinked

⁴⁶ In most of the novels, ‘Amed’ is used to refer to Diyarbakir, which is regarded as the capital of Greater Kurdistan. ‘Amida’ was the old name of the city. It can be argued that using ‘Amed’ instead of Diyarbakir is a political act, as well as a form of resistance to the changing of Kurdish placenames after the founding of the Turkish Republic. The use of ‘Amed’ or ‘Diyarbakir’ throughout this research depends on the choice of the individual novelist.

⁴⁷ ‘*Welat*’ has become part of a political vocabulary with a significant role in the national consciousness of Kurds. The first Kurdish daily newspaper, founded in Turkey in 2006, is even called *Azadiya Welat*; it is very political and usually focuses on the Kurdish national struggle.

⁴⁸ Modern communication tools and the social networks are used to draw in scattered members to construct an imagined diasporic community. Many scholars specialising in the Kurdish diaspora also stress the significance of satellite TV channels and other Kurdish media for creating the idea of a Kurdish imagined community (Hassanpour 1998, 2003b; Alinia 2004). Even Kurdish virtual museums are considered as contributing to the construction of such a community. Mellinger’s article (2008) on the Norwegian Kurdish Virtual Museum argues that as such institutions represent Kurdish culture and heritage in diaspora they too contribute to this imagined community.

terms for centuries, as diaspora populations are deeply influenced and implicated, ideologically and culturally, by their links with their homeland. Indeed, as Avtar Brah (1996:190) has claimed, “the concept of diaspora embodies a subtext of home.” In the settlement countries, these communities and groups, which have not necessarily migrated by force, recreate a territorially discontinuous identity and maintain a link with other members in their claimed or imagined homeland (Safran 1991; Chaliand and Rageau 1995; Marienstras 1989).

In light of the above, it is clear that ‘homeland’ continues to play a defining role in the orientation of immigrants. According to Hall (1990), Gilroy (1993), Bhabba (1990, 2004), Appadurai (1996), and Clifford (1997), the concept of diaspora includes within itself the powerful cultural, social, and political relationship between immigrants and the mythology, dreams, and memories of their historical homeland. For Cohen (1997) too, this issue is more than maintenance or restoration of the homeland; it involves the actual creation of a homeland. This suggests that the mythologized homeland is re-imagined in diaspora. In this respect, and because of my subject matter, the concept of diaspora that I wish to propose here is embedded within the concept of ‘homeland’ rather than the country of settlement.

Much migrant writing is concerned with concepts of ‘homeland’ because, as a result of separation from ‘home-land’, the writer centres his attention on his sense of ‘home’ as a requirement for the search for identity, and because of the absence of home, the vision of ‘home’ is constructed on the basis of memories and imagination. In other words, by acts of imagination and memories, ‘home’ can be moved and rebuilt. Similarly, according to Hall (1990: 236), displacement increases the yearning for home and recreates “the endless desire to return to ‘lost origins’, to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning.” In relation to diasporic experiences, Avtar Brah also identifies which “‘home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’” (1996: 192).⁴⁹

The lack of a sovereign entity undoubtedly distinguishes the Kurdish diaspora from other state-bound diasporas, and Kurds are certainly included in the ‘stateless

⁴⁹ For example, in this context Lemelle and Kelley in *Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora* (1994) state that the African diasporas continuously reinvent and imagine their ancestral homeland. Similarly, Ma and Cartier’s anthropological study, *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*, which is based on published accounts and personal interviews, shows that for Chinese diasporic subjects in Germany home “is not a place taken for granted, bounded and fixed in a certain geographical territory”; instead homes “are more often places at different geographical scales and multiple locations” (2003: 253).

diasporas' category. The stateless and divided Kurdish 'territorial minority' forms a diaspora (extra-territorial minority) consisting of immigrants and refugees from four 'countries of origin' spread throughout many nation states (Emanuelsson 2005: 20). Nor can the major role played in Kurdish history by forced migration be ignored. In recent years large numbers of people have fled from Kurdistan and Kurds now make up a broad range of diasporic communities⁵⁰ dispersed around the world.⁵¹

This is one reason why estimates of the number of Kurds outside Kurdistan are imprecise. Van Bruinessen estimated that a quarter to a third of all Kurds was now living outside Kurdistan, and that only a minority of them were likely ever to return (1992b: 66). Kurdish refugees from Turkey constitute the majority of Kurds in Europe, at a rate of approximately 80 to 85 percent (Wahlbeck 2001: 73-99); substantial numbers are to be found in Europe and the US; and there are also indigenous Kurdish populations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkmenistan (Kendal 1993). Kurdish diaspora numbers include refugees, migrants, and second- and third-generation members of the diasporic communities, and the figures keep changing. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the size of the displacement increased once again. In 1980, Kurds fled from the military takeover in Turkey, and later from the armed conflict and continuous human rights violations that followed (Emanuelsson 2005: 84). During the 1990s Kurdish refugee numbers increased drastically because of the escalating suppression and conflict between Kurds and other states (Van Bruinessen 2000: 10-12; Wahlbeck 2001: 74). As a result, there has been some very important research carried out on Kurdish diaspora issues, including that by Wahlbeck (1999), Emanuelsson (2005), Alinia (2004), and Østergaard-Nielsen (2006), as well as chapters or articles by Faist (1999), Van Bruinessen (2000), and Hassanpour (2003b). Each work discusses Kurdish diaspora from a different perspective.

For Kurds, forced exile becomes essential to the heightened sense of longing for 'homeland' and is central to this understanding of the Kurdish diaspora. Kurds who are legally accepted in the host country are tied to each other as members of the same

⁵⁰ The term 'Kurdish diasporic community' is commonly used by researchers and scholars (Alinia 2004; Sirkeci 2006; Soguk 2008) who specialize in Kurdish diaspora. I also prefer to use this term as it includes all sorts of Kurdish migrants such as refugees, workers, and exiles etc. By diasporic novels, I mean the novels written by all types of Kurdish migrants in diaspora.

⁵¹ By 'Kurdish diaspora', I mean Kurdish communities and settlements located in the West, but the term does not apply to all Kurds who live outside the territory of Kurdistan (e.g., Kurds living in Khurasan, Istanbul, Baghdad, Tehran, Damascus, Armenia, and so forth). Currently, the Kurdish diaspora is scattered throughout various European countries including Germany, France, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands. For the Kurds from Turkish Kurdistan, Germany became the leading host country. However, Sweden leads in terms of the number of Kurdish publications, mainly novels.

community through various networks, such as associations, community centres, and foundations that link them with their real and ‘imaginary’ ‘homeland’.

It is also significant to note that apart from the migration of Kurds to the European countries based on economic and political factors, the forced migration in Turkish Kurdistan has also had a significant impact on their geographical distribution. Internal migration in the Kurdish provinces during the 1970s occurred because of economic factors (Wedel 2000:182), whereas the migrations of the 1980s and 1980s happened mainly for political reasons, with thousands of Kurdish villages evacuated or demolished under the Emergency Decree policies of the Turkish State. While some of the Kurds migrated to other Kurdish urban centres – mainly Diyarbakir, Urfa, and Van - the majority settled down in various metropolitan cities of Turkey – mainly Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Mersin.⁵² Regarding the forced migrations, Van Bruinessen (2000: 79) points out that the “first deportations were simply reprisals against rebellious tribes. In later years, deportations became part of the concerted effort to assimilate the Kurds.”; a view supported by other researchers (Jongerden 2001, 2007; Besikci 1977).⁵³ In terms of displacement, one could regard the Kurds living in Turkish cities as located within the Kurdish diaspora sphere. However, this research uses the term ‘Kurdish diaspora’ to convey the sense of Kurds migrating beyond Turkey and Turkish Kurdistan.

Finally, I would conclude that the concept of diaspora, as with the concept of identity, is in a continuous process of construction. Kurds are increasingly characterized by exile, migration, and diaspora; thus, the displacement from ‘homeland’ has become a part of Kurdish identity. Akkaya notes that, “diasporic experience has allowed the Kurds in diaspora to have multiple identities rather than one based on a very strong reference to ‘the homeland’” (2011: 8). Kurdish diasporas have thus contributed to the reproduction and articulation of a collective and trans-state Kurdish identity (Alinia, 2004; Hassanpour and Mojab, 2005; Wahlbeck, 1999; Van Bruinessen, 1999; Khayati 2008; Akkaya 2011). The interaction between ‘homeland’ and ‘diaspora’, which is also central to the issue of diaspora, is very influential within Kurdistan, as well as in the

⁵² For more, see J. Jongerden’s *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds* (2007); the report on *The Status of Internally Displaced Kurds in Turkey and Compensation Rights* (2005), produced for KHRP by L. Claridge and S. Linzey; also M. Müller and S. Linzey’s *The Internally Displaced Kurds of Turkey: Ongoing Issues of Responsibility, Redress and Resettlement* (2007).

⁵³ Some years since the criteria and conditions related to EU accession obliged the Turkish government to lift the state of emergency, the Turkish state has begun to favour the return of Kurdish villagers under village-town projects, while pressure from the Council of Europe with the Law On Compensation for Damage Arising from Terror has created the possibility of full compensation for the villagers for the loss of lands and possessions (Claridge and Linzey: 2005). Despite these policies, however, the resettlement of evacuated villages is considered to have failed to restore damaged and destroyed structures in villages (Human Rights Watch Report 2005; KHRP Legal Review 2005).

varied contexts within which Kurds are living. As the idea of ‘home-land’ for Kurds has been a contested and evolving notion, the ideological notions of Kurds in the ‘homeland’ affect Kurds in the diaspora, and vice versa.

1.6. Chapter Overview

In relation to the structure of this research, it should be noted that the second and third chapters are formed and structured according to the two categories of novels; i.e., novels in Turkish Kurdistan and in its diaspora. The comparative analysis approach adopted to establish the similarities and differences between these categories is elaborated on in the fourth chapter. Because of the high number of novels and because the first Kurmanji novel from Turkish Kurdistan was written in the diaspora, this research focuses initially on analyses from the diaspora. The main aim in Chapter Two, which covers 64 novels, is to shed light on the multi-layered characterization of cultural geographies of ‘home-land’ and the ambivalent articulation of ‘identity’, as a result of diasporic experiences intertwined with changing visions and evolving political relations. Informed by diverse discussions on ‘diaspora’ and ‘diasporic identity’, the chapter reveals these diverse constructions of ‘home-land’ and Kurdish national identity through the textual and contextual analysis of sixty-three novels. These range from the first novel published in Europe, Mahmut Baksî’s *Hêlîn*⁵⁴ which is structured round a child’s imagination and narration, up to Silêman Demîr’s recently-published mythological *Kassandra* (Cassandra, 2010).⁵⁵ It is suggested that mobility and displacement lead to a diverse imagining of homeland politics that is expressed in literary narratives as a form of political action rather than a literary performance.

The third chapter, which covers 36 novels in Turkish Kurdistan aims to reveal the rural/urban space, regions, and landscapes as a framing device to show the re-creation of symbolic or real Kurdistan, and the way the idea of Kurdistan as an ancestral homeland contributes to the formation of Kurdish national identity in novelistic discourse created in Kurdistan. The textual analyses of the novels show that the real geographical sites and imaginary locations presented in the novels can offer a useful context for understanding Kurdish national and cultural identity. Within the novels,

⁵⁴ Ibrahim Seydo Aydogan maintains that the novel *Hêlîn* was first written in Swedish and then translated into Kurdish (2011: 6). However, in relation to the way it emerged, the present study considers *Hêlîn* as a Kurdish language novel that was translated at a later date into Swedish.

⁵⁵ Cassandra is a mythological Greek figure. The novel is based on the legend in which she is cursed by Apollo when she does not respond to his love. There are also many allusions to Kurdistan mainly with reference to the destruction of Troy.

there are also various meanings attributed to national ‘places’, ‘territories’ and ‘national landscapes’, which clearly demonstrate symbolic, emotional, cultural, and political sentiments, and the strong individual/communal attachments to the idea of Kurdistan.

Chapter Four, based on a comparative analysis of 100 novels, argues that the contexts of ‘homeland territory’ and ‘non-homeland territory’ are influential factors in creating different Kurdistan images and identities. In addition it suggests that, apart from territorial differences, political awareness and ideological differences in relation to the Kurdish national struggle also contribute to producing different discourses for the portrayal of Kurdistan and identity. This confirms the great influence of authorial intentions on the part of the novelists, displayed either explicitly or implicitly in their novels.

Chapter Five draws together the final arguments based on the analyses of the novels. It concludes that overall the analysis has produced different outcomes because in diaspora, on the one hand, the meanings of ‘home-land’ and ‘identity’ are effectively altered by detachment from the territories of Kurdistan, involvement in the environment of the host countries, and prevailing global conditions. On the other hand, proscriptive socio-political contexts such as having to confront statelessness in daily life, and being of a younger generation compared to the diasporas, are factors that will have a crucial impact on the literary expression of the recurrent themes outlined in this research.

CHAPTER TWO

The Kurdish Novelistic Discourse in Diaspora: Constructing ‘Home-land’ and ‘Identity’

Through analysis of sixty-four novels in diaspora of Turkish Kurdistan,⁵⁶ this chapter will attempt to explore the experiences of displacement reflected in literary articulations, to illuminate diasporic memory in relation to individual and collective pasts, and to depict the imaginary of ‘home-land’. The main question asked by this chapter is: how do the novels articulate ‘identity’ and ‘home-land’ beyond national boundaries?

Diasporic authors make extensive use of both factual and memory elements in order to represent the Kurdish historical past, including crucial incidents, war, state oppressions, and personal traumas. In this regard, the chapter, which is in two parts, employs theories and concepts of ‘temporary space’ and ‘collective memory’ in relation to the autobiographical accounts of novelists and their experiences, as well as to realist aspects of diasporic novelistic discourse. The first part, entitled “A Critical and Realist Overview of the Diasporic Novelistic Discourse” examines interventions by the novelists within the text along with their ideologies and views. It also looks at the portrayal of Kurdistan, which is considered together with a realist perspective and critical frame.

The second part is called “Diasporic Memory: The Narratives of Individual and Collective Pasts”. Interrogating the use of Kurdish historical past and personal memories in the novelistic discourse reveals diasporic reflections on ‘home-land’ and Kurdish identity, and it is essential to underline the autobiographical aspects of the novels that are involved in transforming personal experiences in an attempt to create social and collective memory. The narrative articulation of traumatic experiences, such

⁵⁶ Initially I compiled a list of 68 novels published in the diaspora spaces of Turkish Kurdistan. Despite contacting the publishers (some of whom have closed down) I was unable to acquire copies of four of these novels: Suleyman Demir’s *Koç* (1998), Mahmut Baksî’s *Lawikê Xerzî* (2000), Serkan Brûsk’s *Sê Teriş* (2006), and Zarife Demir’s *Kela Bilind* (2008). Firat Cewerî, owner of the Nûdem publishing house (Stockholm), and Ali Çiftçi who owns the Apec publishing house (Stockholm) confirmed that the novels they had published are out of print. Ali Çiftçi also stated that Zarife Demir, who is the only woman novelist, had withdrawn her only novel *Kela Bilind* from both the publishing house and the market. Thus, my analysis of diasporic novels in this research is actually based on 64 novels. It is also important to note that the discrepancies (e.g., in some texts, ‘traveller’ is spelled as “rêwî, and in others as “rêwi”), or mistakes in the spelling and/or grammar of the original text because of the lack of standardization of Kurmanji or local usage, belong to the novelists. I did not make any changes in the original texts in the thesis.

as the harsh conditions and the fallouts from Diyarbakir prison and the 1980 Military Coup again convey communal memories and didacticism in considering the novelistic discourse as “vehicles of memory” (Yerushalmi 1982). Set against theories in the study of memory such as ‘Collective Memory’, a term coined by Maurice Halbwachs (1992), I argue here that the narrativisation of remembered experiences, based on autobiographies and personal recollection of events, is an attempt by modern historiography to create social and collective memory.

2.1. Novelistic Discourse in Diaspora: Realist and Critical Reflections

The meanings of ‘home’ for diasporic communities have attracted the attention of a great range of researchers and scholars in the real world (Gakavian 1997; Levy and Weingrod 2005; Ryang and Lie 2009) as well as diasporic literary productions (Mishra 2007; Nayar 2008; Al-Maleh 2009). The common view is that diasporic experiences play a part in transforming the way that diasporic individuals imagine their ‘home’. As Kain (1997) also argues, a diasporic member lives in a ‘home’, but is torn by the need to make it authentic and real. Accordingly, imaginary Kurdistan in the diasporic novels, involving cultural, historical, and political elements, is characterized by the intersection of various cultural and socio-political realms; this is an absolutely fragmented space with a tragic history and horrendous living conditions. In this regard, one can argue that the use of ‘Formal Realism’ (Watt 1957) through lengthy and detailed descriptions and an emphasis on ‘time’ and ‘place’, probably becomes the commonest feature of Kurdish novels in diaspora, since novelists reproduce a view of an actual Kurdistan by relating it to their own lived experiences and recognized realities. Diasporic novels depending on mimesis, i.e., “the imitation of reality through realist techniques” (Davis 1987: 25), contain intense references to Kurdish historical/political figures, political parties and lived incidents related to the Kurds.

The realism in the novelistic discourse is shaped within the socio-political and cultural world of the author as Watt (2001 [1957]: 11) also mentions: “[the] novel’s realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it [...because...] the novel embodies a circumstantial view of life” (Ibid: 32). Accordingly, the realism utilised in Kurdish diasporic novels is presented subjectively, with personal exploration of the past and the constant intervention of the authors. It is also clear that the point of view of the narrator or the central character is characterized along with the viewpoint of the author. Most of the novelists attempt to drive forward

the non-fictional aspects of a narrative rather than the imaginary and fictional aspects. In this account, this part of this chapter will argue that the portrayals of 'home-land' in diaspora novels are based on real spaces that are described through actual aspects and facts as interpreted by the subjective (mostly critical) viewpoints of the novelists.

However, before concentrating on the meanings of Kurdistan as 'home-land', it is essential to examine the articulations of diaspora experiences in the novels, and question whether or not a host country is considered as 'home', since the place of settlement does not necessarily refer to one's real home. In this sense, the following sub-section questions the perception of settlement country for the characters in the novels.

2.1.1. The Experiences of Displacement: Diaspora as a 'Temporary Space'

Analysing lack of attention or negative pictures of diaspora in the novelistic discourse is essential for understanding the meanings of the original homeland. Accordingly, this section asks whether the country of settlement is considered as home? If not the country of settlement, where, then, is 'home' in these Kurdish diasporic novels? This raises another question – what does their country of residence mean to them if it is not a 'home'? Pursuing answers to such questions will not only result in the meanings of country settlements for the novelists as diasporic members, but will also contribute to revealing the constructions of Kurdish identity and 'home-land' in the narratives.

Apart from the exceptional conditions of Kurds in relation to their stateless 'homeland', 'home' is already a multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. However, in the case of migration and detachment, the notion of 'home' conveys more complicated meanings that arouse a sense of temporality. In this respect, these Kurdish novelistic discourses reflect the general notions of diasporans in terms of a disrupted construction of 'home-land' from abroad. The novels have a critical perspective towards both the homeland and the country of settlement, which, either through lack of attention or negative pictures of diaspora countries is seen as a 'temporary space' rather than a new 'home'. Surprisingly, however, one observes that the novels that have been produced by writers who are also diasporans rarely refer to the diaspora itself. Khalid Khayati (2008:4) argues in his research on Kurdish migrants in Sweden and France, that Kurdish diasporas derive from negative elements, "such as the tragic Kurdish migratory movement and refugee trajectory, the somber condition of being asylum seekers, the unfortunate state of refugehood, the sentiments of homesickness and nostalgia." Contrary to what Khayati (2008) argues, the diasporic novels do not usually focus on

any sort of exilic experiences. Put more simply, in most of these novels, the story is set in any region of Kurdistan and very few of them focus on migrant or exile experiences in the diaspora.

In relation to this, it can be argued that socio-political identity related to ‘home-land’ appears more significant than diasporic and exile experiences. The main reason is not simply that the ‘homeland’ lacks a state deserving of much attention, but, as noted earlier (and as the definition of diaspora also suggests), because such displacement evokes the hope of a return one day to that ‘homeland’, and this causes the authors to focus on ‘home-land’ rather than on diasporic spaces. In this case, it can be argued that out of the 64 novels analysed in this research, only three focused entirely on the diasporic experiences of the novelist: *Siya Dema Borî* (In the Shadow of Past Time, 2009) by Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç, Laleş Qaso’s *Ronakbîr* (Intellectual, 2003), and *Pêlên Bêrikirinê* (Waves of Longing, 1997) by Mustafa Aydoğan.⁵⁷

To begin with, blending in with the culture of the host country is not seen as an option for survival. In *Pêlên Bêrikirinê*, which depicts an exile’s day on the streets of Stockholm, the unnamed protagonist, through an intra-fictional narration technique that positions the narrator as part of the story, explicitly introduces the readers to his life, in which he is entirely encircled by Kurdish institutions/organizations and other Kurdish migrants like himself. Through the highly didactic language of the narrator, these Kurds demonstrate that they are not attempting to create a habitat that is different from the ‘home-land’ left behind, since they tend to regard their existence in exile merely as a temporary and transitional period. However, they are aware that this period has lasted for a longer time than they had expected, and have therefore struggled not to become

⁵⁷ There are no official figures for the number of Kurds in Europe. As Ayata (2011: 143) suggests, the actual size of the Kurdish diaspora “remains an enigma...no recent reliable census of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe has been carried out.” However, the most widely accepted estimates suggest there are some “850,000 Kurds in Western Europe, of which 500,000-600,000 live in Germany” (Baser 2011: 8). The socio-cultural and political conditions of Kurdish migrants differ from one European country to another. For example, although the Kurdish Institute in Paris, founded in 1983, has contributed to the development of the Kurdish language, there have as yet been no novels in Kurmanji (by Kurds from Turkish Kurdistan) written in France. The United Kingdom has hosted an increasing number of Kurds since the 1990s; however, despite well-organized associational networks with a great range of political and cultural activities, studies or research on Kurdish language or literature do not go beyond individual efforts. As noted earlier, Sweden has become the leading host country in relation to the number of publications and literary advances due to generous state contributions, thanks to which most of the diasporic novels have been produced in Sweden. In addition, there are four novelists living in Germany; Zeynel Abidin, Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç and Diyar Bohtî who have all produced several novels, and Jîr Dilovan who has one novel. While Medenî Ferho and Reşat Akgül live in Belgium, Rıza Çolpan lives in Australia. The rest of the novelists living in Sweden are from the generation born between 1944 and 1963. It can be said that compared to the generation that migrated during the 1980s (almost all the diasporic novelists examined in this study), members of the younger migrant generation either do not produce literary works, or prefer to engage in more academic or scholarly studies. The easing of censorship of Kurdish publications in Turkish Kurdistan is also a factor behind the reduction in the diaspora’s responsibility for preserving the Kurdish language.

attached to the new environment or to become involved, in exile, in any actions apart from transnational socio-political activities for the sake of their 'homeland'. The narrator of *Pêlên Bêrikirinê* with an implicit access to his mind describes the protagonist's relationship with exile: "the life of exile had tied up his hands and feet" (126),⁵⁸ which conveys the desperation of many years of exile, and the impossibility of return.

In some ways, diasporic conditions in the place of settlement are characterized by the sense of non-belonging and isolation due to strong feelings about the return. *Pêlên Bêrikirinê* shows that Kurdish migrants have not managed either to return to their homeland, or to adapt to the new life offered by their host countries. In this regard, the protagonist shares his views on his experience of exile: "At the beginning of my exile life I was hoping that when the ivy in my living room completed its second round in the room I would go back home. The ivy, however, has completed its fourth round and myself and the ivy are still in an unknown place looking into each other's eyes" (166).⁵⁹ Unlike *Pelên Berikirinê*, the narrator in the more recent novel *Siya Dema Borî*, which captures and expresses satirical criticism about two other Kurdish novels written by Kurdish novelists, does not describe Germany, where the story is located. The setting is mentioned, but instead of a physical description of Germany, subjective feelings about this settlement country are emphasized. These detailed accounts of feelings, in effect, underline the insecurity and discomfort experienced by the Kurdish migrants. Europe, in general, does not signify the peaceful life as the protagonist remarks: "We lounged against Europe, dancing with deceptive freedom; only the holy land, our wounded mother became our first place and homeland" (33-34)⁶⁰ which, in a way, implies that Europe fails to meet Kurds' needs and expectations.

Laleş Qaso's novel *Ronakbîr*, with first-person narration and based on the diasporic experiences of the protagonist named Ronakbîr, mentions that is impossible for a Kurdish migrant to regard the host country as his home country, and how the sense of loss and loneliness always remains, even if the migrant has lived there for many years. Ronakbîr as both the narrator and the main character lives in Stockholm, has problems with his wife, and frequently changes jobs, as he cannot find an occupation that suits him. From time to time, he expresses regret for having left his homeland to

⁵⁸ Jiyana sirgûnê dest û lingên wî girêdabûn.

⁵⁹ Dema min dest bi jiyana surgûnê kir, min weha hêvî dikir ku lavlavka min a li odeya rûniştinê, du caran li dora odeyê bizîviriya, ez ê vegeyiriyama welêt. Lê wê dora xwe ya çaran jî tamam kir, hîn ez û ew li warekî nenas li çavên hevdu dinihêrin.

⁶⁰ Me pal avêt Ewropayê li ber azadiyeke xapînok em reqîsîn; tenê ev xaka pîroz dayîka birîndar ji bo me bû war û cihê pêşîn.

come to Europe: “Whatever happens, I would like not to abandon my homeland” (48).⁶¹ He remains a total outsider, neither returning to his ‘home-land’ nor becoming part of a new community and a new culture. This, for him, means rejecting the path of assimilation into the dominant majority, as evident from the narrator’s omission of any details about Swedish culture or even a physical description of Stockholm. He expresses his strong sense of disappointment:

I do not accept (...) after studying at university, knowing the world, the universe and the rottenness of human beings; for twelve years burning down the fire of Turkish prisons; struggling for twenty years against cruelty and in the end to come here and become a protector of this mess, ha! (...) And above all, in Europe! Even without studying, anyone could possess this shit (47).⁶²

Ronakbîr considers himself useless, since he can do nothing for his country nor can he return: “When I cannot do anything good for my people and sit in front of the toilet, then what I am looking for in this country?” (47-48).⁶³ On the other hand, his sense of loneliness and loss increases because of his half-hearted relations with other Kurdish migrants in Stockholm. He does not approve of their lack of national consciousness, and prefers to keep his distance, even from his wife, who wears a necklace with the image of Atatürk (Founder of the Turkish Republic) on it and listens to Turkish music. In addition, the atmosphere of Kurdish politics and migrants in Europe also make him question the necessity and benefits of his national struggle, which causes him trouble. He points out: “Their [Kurds] struggle is a struggle from fire! Those involved in this struggle, those against this struggle and those remained silent burn down!” (58).⁶⁴ In brief, he manages neither to adapt into the new environment, nor to keep alive the national values in which he once believed.

Apart from the three novels mentioned above which are set completely in exile, certain other novels also refer partly to the same situation. Medenî Ferho’s *Dora Bacinê Bi Dar e* (Bacin Amongst the Trees, 2007)⁶⁵ is based on the experiences of Ape Cemîl

⁶¹ Çi diba bila bûba, divabû min welatê xwe terk ne kiriba.

⁶² Ez qebûl nakimmm (...) Unîversîtan bixwîne; dinyayê, kayinatê û rezaleta insên nas bike; duwazdeh salan di nav agirê zindanên tirkan de biqijqije; bîst salan li himberî zilme tekoşînê bide û di dawiyê de jî were bibe nahtorê pîsiyê, ha! (...) Û bi ser de jî li welatekî Ewropayê! Bêyî xwendinê jî mirov dikaribû bûba xwediyê vî gû yî.

⁶³ Gava ez ê li vî welatî jî bo milletê xwe nikaribim tiştekî baş bikim û li ber qedemgehan rûnim, ez li vî welatî li çî xwe digirim?

⁶⁴ Doza wan (Kurds) dozeke ji êgir e! Ên ku bi vê dozê radibin, ên ku li himberî wê disekinîn û ên ku bêdeng jî dimînin dişewitin! Ev dozek e ku herkesî dişewitîne.

⁶⁵ Bacin’ is the name of the Yazidi village where most of the narration takes place. The inhabitants of the village have been massacred and displaced because of their religious beliefs. ‘Tree’ (*dar*) as a metaphor

living in Germany as an exile; even so his narration is concentrated on questions relating to Kurdistan, mainly to a Kurdish village named Bacin which witnessed a brutal massacre of Yazidis. Again, within Mezher Bozan's quartet of novels, *Av Zelal Bû I, II, III, IV* (The Water has Become Clear, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008), the narrator rarely refers to Sweden except in passing to praise its democratic system and high living standards. In Bozan's bildungsroman novel *Asim* (Asim, 2007), it is impossible to see anything related to diaspora; everything is concerned with past experiences in the homeland. Similarly, Silêman Demîr's *Piştî Bîst Salan* (After Twenty Years, 2007), Mihemed Dehsiwar's *Çirîskên Rizgariyê* (The Sparkle of Liberation, 1995), Mehmed Uzun's *Mirina Kalekî Rind* (The Death of Old Rind, 1987) and *Siya Evînê* (In the Shadow of Love, 1989), and Firat Cewerî's *Payiza Dereng* (Belated Autumn, 2005) all refer to life in exile only in the most general of terms. Their main characters appear as exiles returning to their lands, some struggling to re-adapt to their original lands after many years, and some searching for alternative ways to save their homeland from the hands of others. However, as emphasized earlier, exilic experiences or issues related to the host country do not become the main concern of the novelists.

By focusing in their novels on original 'home-land' rather than country of settlement, the novelists construct an idea that Kurdistan is their priority in their discourses. Their minds are still engaged with the 'home-land' they left behind and this can show, for them at least, that the re-homing process is not valid. In some cases this notion is expressed explicitly, as in *Çirîskên Rizgariyê* where the main character, Sevdîn, stresses that, "the country of others cannot be home to someone" (13),⁶⁶ or as in Mustafa Aydoğan's *Pêlên Bêrikirinê* (1997), in which the unnamed protagonist reiterates that no country can replace someone's original country.

As emphasized earlier, while most novels take place in Kurdistan, very few are set in, or refer to, the diaspora. It is important to note that even those focusing on diasporic experiences argue about a lack of material relating to internal and external environments, criticizing the external environment of a different culture and the lack of attention of Europeans towards Kurdish issues, in addition to the internal environment and the problems and complaints that migrants have with each other. In this respect, within the novels above, there are a few, including *Çirîskên Rizgariyê*, *Payiza Dereng*, *Dora Bacinê Bi Dar e*, *Ronakbîr*, and *Wêran* (Ruinous, 2002), that mention complaints regarding the host country; such complaints concern the system (or its culture) as well

in the novel does not refer to the natural barrenness of the area, but to the dryness of hope because of the tragic incidents that happened in the village.

⁶⁶ [...] Jî welatê xelqê ji meriv re nabe mal.

as unreliable relations among Kurdish migrants. For instance, Mihemed Dehsiwar's novel *Çirîskên Rizgariyê* is very critical of European countries for paying less attention to the suffering of Kurds than they do towards the rights of the Palestinians. The protagonist condemns these countries for ignoring violations of the human rights of Kurds back in Kurdistan, while his comments on Europe's policies towards the Kurdish case show that the distance between the host country and Kurdish migrants has occurred because these countries have paid insufficient attention to the Kurds. In other words, the novelistic discourse shows that the Kurdish characters find their host countries neither reliable nor supportive towards the cause of their struggle.

Similarly, *Payiza Dereng*, fictionalized in an epistolary novel type by Firat Cewerî, is a good example in terms of depicting the negative aspects of host countries. Through parallel narratives, one half of the novel takes place in the host country, Sweden, and the other in Diyarbakir, hometown of Ferda, the protagonist. In his letters to his close friend in Sweden, Ferda sometimes compares Sweden and Kurdistan, either explicitly or implicitly, and considers Swedish culture to be founded on self-interest and lacking any sense of community. The individualistic environment in Sweden deepens his sense of homelessness and loneliness, although he praises the openness that respects different identities and cultures. Before leaving Stockholm for his hometown, Ferda explains his feelings to his son, claiming that "one cannot easily enter into their world, become friends with them, [even] through this path of friendship, you cannot forget your sorrows of foreignness and the longing for homeland" (29).⁶⁷ He explicitly underlines his dilemma during the years of his exile in Sweden: "I have been living here for twenty-eight years with the intention of returning. My body was here but my mind was in my homeland. Half of me was here, the other half of me was in the homeland" (20).⁶⁸ Clearly, for a diversity of reasons, Ferda and other exilic characters in the novels are unable to bond with their new society, which causes them to turn their eyes to the place left behind.

In *Veger* (Return, 2001), a biographical/memoir novel by Reşad Akgul,⁶⁹ life in Europe is described as '*monotony*' (monotone) and '*sexte*' (fake) because of the way "no person [in Europe] talks to people [though] a person will talk to the dogs. Nobody

⁶⁷ Mirov nikare zû bi zû têkeve cîhana wan, bi wan re bibe heval û bi riya hevaltî û dostanîya wan êşa xerîbiyê û bêrîkirina welêt ji bîr bike.

⁶⁸ Bûn bîst û heşt sal ku ez bi niyeta vegerê li vir dijîm. Laşê min li vir, serê min li welêt bû. Nîvê min li vir nîvê din li welêt bû.

⁶⁹ In some sources, one of Resad Akgul's books, entitled *Evdalkovî*, is regarded as a novel. This work is in fact a compilation of the author's notes and observations concerning PKK guerillas.

listens to a person [...] a person has less value than a dog has” (27-28).⁷⁰ This resonates to such an extent that a group of Kurdish youths sets out to reconnect with the homeland by joining the guerilla war in the Kurdish mountains.

From their criticisms and complaints about the political attitudes and socio-cultural features of host countries towards the Kurds, it is clear that the characters in the novels, mainly the protagonists, believe that the diasporic lifestyle causes Kurdish migrants to lose their cultural identity and diminishes their national consciousness. In *Siya Dema Borî*, the narrator compares the homeland and Europe: “Men here [Kurdistan] do not look like those in Europe (...) who use women for their usefulness in the selling of their products” (59-60).⁷¹ However, the narrator also disapproves just as strongly of Kurds as of Europeans. The novel makes a bitter attack on two other Kurdish diasporan novelists and their works, arguing that, due to the self-interest of certain Kurdish writers, Kurdish women guerrillas have been portrayed as prostitutes. Not only does this denigrate Kurdish women, it also undermines the national struggle. Thus, it is important to note that apart from external factors relating to the host countries, internal elements within the Kurds themselves can be the reason for the failure of the re-homing process in diaspora.

Like *Siya Dema Borî*, Medenî Ferho’s *Dora Bacinê Bi Dar e* also draws a very pessimistic picture of Europe, not only because of its new culture but also because of the Kurdish migrants. The novel’s protagonist, Apê Cemîl (Uncle Cemil),⁷² suffers after being dislodged from his ‘home-land’, and grieves that dreaming about the future as he used to do is no longer possible: “Hope was killed and our dreams are lost in the mist and haze” (19).⁷³ He believes that exile has caused Kurds to lose everything:

We were viziers in our homeland, in our lands and sheep and goats, in our vineyards and harvest. It is true that we did not have telephones; it is true that we did not have electricity; it is true that we did not have cars, but we were still viziers of our home. We had our language, we had our *azan*^[74] and we had our voice... Now we are got rid of on the streets and roads of Germany. There are no wives and children... There

⁷⁰ Li vir insan bi insan re napeyivin. Insan bi kûçikan re dipeyivin. Kes guh nade insan (...) qasî kûçikekî jî qîmeta mirov nîne.

⁷¹ Mêrê li vir û li welatên Ewropayê jî nedişibiyên hev (...) Jinan wekî metayekê ji bo firotina hilberînên xwe bikartînin.

⁷² ‘Apê’ derived from ‘Apo’ literally means ‘uncle’. However, among Kurds this term can be used, as it is in this novel, to signify respect for any one who is elderly.

⁷³ Hêvî hatine kuştin. Xewnên me di nava mij û moranê de winda ne.

⁷⁴ Azan – in its various spellings, is the Muslim call to prayer that summons the faithful five times daily.

is neither our *azan* nor our voice... Even if I live as much as my age, I cannot get used to their *azan* and voice” (37).⁷⁵

In addition to the loss occurred by exile, Apê Cemil criticizes Kurds living in Germany for neglecting their culture and values. In light of his statements, one can argue that migration from the ‘home-land’ is the enemy of values connected with the ‘ancestors’ (*bav û kal*). Throughout the novel, Apê Cemil, who has been a migrant in Germany for many years, describes the living conditions of other Kurdish migrants in the diaspora and underlines the danger of losing ties with one’s homeland. He also discloses his feelings about being far away from ‘home’. Whatever he does, he feels lonely; he has failed to adapt to the living conditions and culture of his host country because, as he says, “we were terrified and escaped...But we did not know that exile would be hostile to us, too” (46).⁷⁶ Among the migrants, these strongly negative feelings about being in exile reinforce their feelings of homelessness, alienation, and being unable to regard Germany as their new ‘home’.

Cemil also thinks that their dreams do not match the place to which they have migrated: “Our world and their world are not the same. And therefore our dreams, hopes and expectations cannot be the same either” (93).⁷⁷ When he compares everything from living conditions to the weather in the new location with their places of origin (115), Kurdish migrants seem unable to adapt or to gain any sense that they belong to the host country: the truth is that this is not their home. The narrator explicitly reveals the lack of adaptation of Kurdish migrants:

A life, within the death of hope and aspiration, headed from the lands of Kurdistan to the lands of Europe. The people who left their soil, deserted their estates, left their flocks of sheep, goats and cattle, left their love as an orphan next to the rocks and stones and on the streets and closed ends of ruined villages and cities (...) In this foreign country where they know neither the language, nor even when they know the culture, do they understand its love (134-135).⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Em li welatê xwe, di nava pez û zeviyên xwe de, di nava rez û firazeyên xwe de wezîr bûn. Rast e telefonên me nebûn, rast e elektrîka me nebû, rast e trimbêlên me nebûn, lê car din em wezîrê mala xwe bûn. Zimanekî me hebû, bangake me hebû, awazeke me hebû...Niha em ritalê nava sikak û kolanên bajarê Elmanya ne. Ne zar heyê, ne zarav...Ne banga me heyê, ne awaza me...ez hewqas temenî din bikim ez nikarim fêrî awaz û banga wan bibim. ‘Bang’ originally means ‘azan’ or ‘call’; thus when he says in the last sentence ‘I cannot get used to their azan’, he is probably referring to church bells.

⁷⁶ Em reviyên bi hawar e!... Me nizanûbê ku xerîbî jî bi nepar e!...

⁷⁷ [...] Cîhana me û wan nabe weke hev. Xewn û xeyalên me, hêvî û niyazên me nabin yek.

⁷⁸ Jiyanêke di nava kuştina hêvî û daxwazan de ji xaka Kurdistanê rê girtiye hatiye xaka Ewropa. Ev mirovên ku axa xwe berdane, xanûmanên xwe terikandine, pez û dewarên xwe hiştine, evîna xwe sêwî li ber lat û kûçan, di nava sikak û zaboqên gund û bajarên wêran de hiştine (...) Li vî welatê biyanî ku ne zimanê wî dizanin, ne toreyên wê dizanin, ne evîna wê fam dikin.

In the same novel, Feleknas Uca, a Kurdish politician in Germany who appears as a minor character, offers advice to other Kurdish migrants in Germany:

Wake up from the dreams of the past ... The day of 'here' is neither the day of homeland, nor is the night... Neither is the weather of here the weather of homeland nor the life... From now on, you are in a different world... The world does not evolve according to your thoughts and demands, nor according to your hopes... (115).⁷⁹

For the Kurdish migrants in the novel, adapting to a new country and its culture in some way suggests that they have forgotten their original values or assimilation, and that they struggled against sovereign states for many years before their exile. This lack of reliance undoubtedly causes them to regard the diasporic settlements, as no more than 'temporary spaces' that preserves the idea of a return.

However, Kurdish novels also problematise the political nature and meanings of 'home', and suggest a dynamic and complicated process. The imaginary 'home-land' of the characters is based on a tragic past, a destroyed present, and a bleak future. Their perception of past, present, and future through a distinctive vision of Kurdistan complicates the conceptualization of 'home', so creating dual homelessness. According to George (1996: 175), both male and female literary immigrant characters, in the absence of 'home', will hesitate between a "yearning for the authentic home" and "the recognition of the inauthenticity or the created aura of all homes." Her argument examining the changing representations of 'home' in twentieth-century English literature is strongly related to the meanings of 'home' that can be derived from the Kurdish novelistic discourse, where weak perception of alternative 'homes' in the novels suggests, to an extent, that there is no possibility of considering a new environment as their new home in the near future. In other words, it is hard to speak about an on-going 'homing' process constructed in the new country.

In sum, the sense of de-territorialised and transnational socio-political relations with the homeland has become the focal point in almost all of them, and concentrating on a far-off homeland causes them to occupy their current locations differently from their home locations. Geographical shifts and the consequent social and cultural changes seem to be insufficient to enable Kurdish characters to go through the process of 're-homing'. Thus, migration for these characters contains elements of strangeness

⁷⁹ Ji xewnên berê şiyar bibin...Ne roja vir roja welat e, ne şeva vir...Ne hewa vir ya welat e, ne jiyana vir...Hun êdî li cîhaneke cuda ne...Cîhan jî ne li gorî hiş û ramanê we, ne li gori daxwazên we, ne li gorî hêviyên we dizivîre...

and, by extension, embraces homelessness, thereby leading to the failure of re-homing in the diaspora. They regard the new environment as a ‘temporary space’, not as a ‘home’; nor is the notion of returning to the ‘homeland’ an actual plan. However, this also locates them in a different sense in which feelings of belonging and embellished affiliation toward the original homeland are also lacking. This will be examined in detail later in the thesis.

2.1.2. Between ‘Implied Author’ and ‘Overt Narrator’: Purposeful Narratives

Writing on models and concepts of reality leads to the constructing of actual rather than abstract spaces, as is done in diasporic novels, where the factual and documentary aspect of the novel would appear to be more dominant than its fictional and imaginary aspects. In this account, it is crucial to note that the realist portrayal of actual spaces or events in diasporic novels is employed for a purpose, with the obvious presence of an ‘implied author’ and ‘overt narrator’ in the texts. With an authorial voice, the overt narrator, as a personified agent writing of the burdens of authorship (Chatman 1978: 248), narrates the author’s values, views and ideological stances. The voice of the author concerning the purpose of the novel, or a lot of general background knowledge of the novel in the authorial foreword or throughout the novel, will strengthen the role of the ‘implied author’ in the Kurdish diasporic novel, as described in the methodology of the thesis.

The “implied author” who “communicates a message disengaged from an immediate situational context to an addressee (implied reader)” (Leech & Short 1981: 261), sends such messages directly or indirectly to the receivers. In some cases, the narrator addresses the reader directly. The message is overtly directed at the reader as if the reader is expected to share experience(s) with the narrator. The present section aims to question the voice of the authors behind the narrations and examine the authors’ reasons (which are usually expressed explicitly or implicitly) for writing these novels. It is important to focus on this subject since doing so will present the differences with the novels from Turkish Kurdistan and will also help in understanding or examining the configuration of identity and ‘home-land’ based on the novelists’ intentions.

In parallel with the phenomena of ‘implied author’ and ‘overt narrator’, diasporic novelists often ask their readers, mainly in the foreword of the novels, to perceive their novels as a primary source or sometimes inform them directly that their stories are based on real lives. For example, in *Dilên li ber Pûkê* (Captives in the Snowstorm,

2002), the writer explicitly states in the foreword that the story is from real life and not imagined: “These adventures in the novel are based on real lives. In other words, they are not stories of imagination” (5).⁸⁰ Similarly, Mezher Bozan in his novel *Asim* states openly that he wishes to give a picture of the Kurds through the main character, Asim, who has been subjected throughout his life to discrimination, migration and conflict because of his Kurdish identity. It is also clear that *Gardiyan* (The Guardian, 2006) portrays conditions in Diyarbakir prison and the way Kurdish prisoners were treated in the 1980s. In the foreword to the novel the author himself, Bûbê Eser, emphasizes that his aim is to highlight the difficulties experienced by the prisoners in Diyarbakir prison after the 1980 military coup. He approaches the novelistic discourse with a didactic perspective intertwined with personal traumas, so that in a way the novelistic discourse is considered as a source for national and historical issues rather than as a literary work.

In this sense, Lokman Polat in *Robîn* (Robin, 2004) takes an extract from Flaubert (a realist writer) to demonstrate that “the writer should be like the owner of the world during his/her novel writing (...) So that the readers will rely on the novel” (4).⁸¹ It is implied that a novelist should, at the time of writing, give priority to facts rather than fictions in order to be more reliable. As Suleiman (1983: 7) notes, in relation to such authoritarian narratives, this should be undertaken “in a realistic mode [...] which signals itself to the reader as primarily didactic in intent, seeking to demonstrate the validity of a political, philosophical, or religious doctrine.” Here fiction, under the authority of the author, becomes an agent for manifesting the values and perspectives of the novelist.

While involvement in novel writing for specific purposes, relying on facts and lived experiences through journalistic technique also appears as a central aspect of the Kurdish novelistic discourse in diaspora. Thus it is clear that Diyar Bohtî, through *Mexmûr* (Makhmur, 2007), also attempts to narrate the conditions of Kurdish refugees in the Makhmur camp through journalistic and documentary approaches based on real lives and stories as the novelist confirms in the foreword. In the author’s foreword in *Veger*, Reşad Akgul reveals that the novel is based on true stories of guerillas, while Mehdi Zana, through *Oy Dayê* (Oh Mum, 2005), shares a similar purpose with other novelists in his attempt to record past experiences and fill gaps in Kurdish history. This aim is clearly mentioned in the foreword. Since the novelist wishes to narrate the true story of a Chaldean man during the 1915 Armenian genocide whom he encountered in

⁸⁰Ev çend serpêhatiyên di vê romanê de di rastiya ber çavî de hatiye jiyane. Yanê ne çîrokên xeyalî ne.

⁸¹Nivîskar di nivîsandina romanê de gereke bibe weke xwedayê cihanê (...) ji bo ku xwendevan bawerîya xwe bi romanekê bîne.

the Diyarbakir prison, there is a publisher's note to this effect:

All the incidents in this novel were experienced and it was created out of these memories. With this book, one voluntarily or involuntarily rambles through the last century and arrives at today. One brings them together and the truth comes to earth; the picture of cruelty (6).⁸²

The stories narrated in the novels are delineated as lived experiences which aim both to increase credibility from the reader's perspective and function as a record of collective experiences and history. In *Xidê Naxirwan û Tevkuştine Dêrsim* (Xide Naxirwan and Dersim Genocide, 2001), Çolpan mentions in the foreword to his novel that the story is based on facts in an attempt to uncover truths about a particular period:

No imaginary things were written at all. It is a real life and a real story. I witnessed many things, and also became familiar with the life of Xidê Naxirvan's family. I went with his youngest son Ali, to graze the sheep and goats and the calf (3).⁸³

The narration of lived experiences can go beyond the territories of Kurdistan, as occurs in another of Çolpan's novels, *Serpêhatiyên Rustem û Namerdiya Namerdan* (The Adventures of Rustem and the Vileness of the Vile, 2004), which is set mainly in Istanbul. In a foreword by Celilê Celîl we are explicitly told that the lives of all Kurds are portrayed through the story of Rustem, the main character of the novel. In other words, it appears that Çolpan's purpose in writing this novel is to reveal aspects of the migration experiences of Kurds in Istanbul.

Adopting a personal and intimate tone in almost all his novels, Lokman Polat, too, underlines the purpose of his writing, which is generally to inform others about the experiences of Kurds and to document the history of those Kurds who lack an official record. The characters do not speak only for themselves; instead, the narrator also intrudes, comments, or directs the discourse. In the author's preface to *Rojnamevan* (The Journalist, 2002), the novelist, rather than focusing on literary concerns, reflects on the realist aspect of the novel, which is considered to be the most important component of novel writing. Polat says, "this novel for assessing the conditions of Kurds draws a broad picture and can be a useful introductory source but I think it was written for

⁸²Bûyerên vê romanê hemû hatine jiyandin û ji wê bîranînê hatine dahûrandin. Bi vê pirtûkê mirov bixwaze nexwaze geryanekî li sere sedsala çûyî dike, ta îro tê. Mirov wan dide ber hev û wê gave rastiyeke derdikeve holê; wêneyek zilmê.

⁸³Qet tiştêk bi xem û xeyali va nehatiye nivisandin. Çirokek û jiyaneke bi rastiye. Min bi çavên xwe va ji gelek tiştê ditine, ez bûme nasê jiyana malbata Xidê Naxirvan, li tev kurê wî Alî ê piçûk çûme ber berx, kar û golikan.

foreigners who have no knowledge of the Kurds, rather than for Kurds themselves” (4).⁸⁴ Another of Polat’s novels, *Fîlozof* (The Philosopher, 2002), has no fictional characterization or settings; in other words it is like a history book. It discusses the Sheikh Said rebellion and the Khoybun organization. The narrator himself often interferes in the text with such comments as, “Dear Readers! Up to here I have talked about the adventures of a literary man, a knowledgeable, intellectual Kurd, assistant to the immortal Sheikh Said, and a philosopher and great patriot, Fehmiye Bilal. The things I mentioned were true and historical” (43).⁸⁵

Similarly, in Polat’s *Kewa Marî* (The Partridge Mari, 1999), the book’s aim is expressed in the foreword: “Novels in Kurdish are few. Patriotic Kurdish writers need to produce their output in Kurdish. It is a condition of patriotism” (6).⁸⁶ During a conversation with Marî, the central character, one of the minor characters argues about the significance of novel writing for Kurds, saying that the Kurdish national struggle and all the conflicts should be recorded through novel writing. Marî therefore asks Serhad to write in novel form about her experiences as a Kurd, so that people can learn the sorts of obstacles that Kurds have faced because of their identities.⁸⁷

Like Polat, Medenî Ferho, in the forewords of *Xaltîka Zeyno* (Auntie Zeyno, 1997) and *Xewnên Pinekirî* (The Patched Dreams, 2001), explicitly states that his intention in these novels is mainly to reveal and record the sufferings and struggle of the Kurds. In the foreword to *Mamostayê Zinaran* (The Teacher of Grottos, 1999), Aykoç reveals that the purpose of writing the novel was to unearth the assimilative influences of Turkish education on Kurdish students: “I wrote this book in order to reveal the impact of politics in Kurdistan, and the effect of Turkish teaching on the children and adults, and if I have achieved this even a little, I will be very happy” (7).⁸⁸ As an ‘implied author’, Aykoç “chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read” (Booth

⁸⁴Ev roman ji bo têgihîna rewşa gelê kurd wêneyek pir reng dide û dikare bibe serekaniyek baş lê bi baweriya min ew ji kurdan re zêdetir ji bo kesên biyanî, yên ku qet ji rewşa me ne agahdar in, hatiye nivîsîn.

⁸⁵Xwendevanên hêja! Hetanî vir, min qala serpêhatiya edîp, zana û ronakbîrê kurd, katibê Şêx Seîdê nemir, filozof û welatparêzê mezin, Fehmiyê Bilal kir. Ev tiştên ku min behs kire hemû jî tiştên rast yên dîrokî bûn.

⁸⁶Romanên bi zimanê Kurdî gelek hindik in. Nivîskarên welatparêz yên Kurd divê berhemên xwe bi Kurdî biafrînin. Ev vatîniyek welatperweriyê ye.

⁸⁷Marî says “bi deh salane ku şer dikin, hêj tu kesekî romana şer û şoreşê ne bi tirkî û ne bi jî Kurdî nenivîsandiyê” (for dozens of years, they have been fighting, none of them has written any novel of this war and struggle neither in Turkish or Kurdish so far.) Serhad replies “Dê roj bê ew kesên ku bi xwe di nav şer de, di çîyan de bi salan mane, şer kirine, têkoşiyane, ew dê romanên şer û şoreşê binivîsin (the day will come, those in the war, staying on the mountains for years, fighting, struggling, they will write the novel of war and struggle.) (260-261).

⁸⁸Ji bo ku bikanibim li Kurdistanê bandora vê polîtîka û karê mamostetiya Tirk (...) yê li ser zarokan û mezinan zelal bikim, min ev pirtûk nivisand eger piçek jî be bi serketibim, gelek bextiyar bibim.

1983: 74). Although not referred to directly, the content of Ali Husein Kerim's *Şopa Rojên Buhurî* (The Trace of Blazing Days, 2008) with its instructive and informative features narrated from the perspective of Kalo Cimşîd (literally 'elderly' Cimşîd), is very didactic in style; the text includes several interruptions to allow for the inclusion of sections providing information on Kurdish literature and history. Clearly Kerim's novelistic discourse attempts to offer guidance towards understanding the Kurdish past in its cultural and social aspects.

On some occasions, the character becomes the voice of the author, combined with a response and criticism as in Lokman Polat's *Kewa Marî*. When Marî asks Serhad to write a novel based on her life, he explains, "if I write this novel, such people will sharpen their swords and attack me. They will make nonsensical and empty criticisms. Because the people who stand up as critics do not understand literature" (263-264).⁸⁹ These words undoubtedly reflect the author's true feelings and thoughts, which he has also addressed in certain articles he has published on websites.⁹⁰ This argument is reinforced by the fact that Polat refers in almost all his novels to internal conflicts among Kurdish writers; the verbal duels fought through his novels should be taken into consideration.

Importantly, developing Kurdish is among the main concerns of the novelists and is mentioned either in the authorial foreword to their novels, or implied throughout the narrations. For example, in *Bigrî Heval* (Cry Friend, 2007) and *Fîlozof*, there are discussions among the characters about the significance of Kurdish literature in terms of its contribution to the development of Kurdish. *Bigrî Heval*, in particular, provides some background for the lack of expansion in Kurdish literature through the words of the female protagonist, Avjîn: "Very few have sacrificed their lives for the research and development of Kurdish literature. Also our Kurdish institutions have never done that" (88-89).⁹¹ Avjîn then quotes her father's words about those who value Kurdish literature, since it is a crucial component of Kurdish national identity "you must keep the Kurdish culture alive, you must improve and enrich my Kurdish library, and if our country is rescued one day, you will donate this library to the ministry of culture of our

⁸⁹ Ez vê romanê binivîsim dê kesên weha şûrên xwe tûj bikin û êrişê min bikin. Dê rexneyên pûç û vala, rexneyên tewş li min bigrin. Çûnkî gelek kesên ku bi ser navê rexnegiriyê derketine holê ji edebiyatê fêh nakin.

⁹⁰ See http://www.rizgari.com/modules.php?name=Rizgari_Niviskar&cmd=read&id=1900, accessed 14 September 2012, and <http://www.mesop.net/osd/?app=izctrl&archiv=220&izseq=izartikel&artid=1840>, accessed 14 September 2012.

⁹¹ Hejmara kesên ku jiyana xwe di rêya lêkolîn û pêşxistina wêjeya Kurdî de fêdakirî, pir kêm in. Rêxistinên me Kurdan jî ev tişt heta niha qet pêk neinane.

free, united government” (89).⁹² The narrator in *Pêlên Bêrîkirinê* (1997) also underlines the necessity of writing in Kurdish as a form of resistance against oppression and assimilation. In this regard, writing in Kurdish becomes the duty of everyone: “Our homeland is fragmented and oppressed. Therefore, patriotism requires writing, it is a mission to use it [...] As long as it is written in our language, it does not matter what it is, but it needs to be written” (9).⁹³ The narrator explains the importance of the mother tongue by offering explicit advice: “First of all, everyone must learn their language and use it everywhere. It is especially very important for people who are in the same situation as we are” (12).⁹⁴

Similarly, at the beginning of *Serhildana Mala Eliyê Ênis* (The Rebellion of the House of Eliye Unis, 2001), the novelist advises readers to learn their language. The novel deals with the rebellion of Eliyê Ênis, which occurred at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Turkish Republic, and is based on a story that the novelist heard from his father. Thus, writing about this rebellion is rather like implementing his father’s will. It is clear that writing about this event in Kurdish serves the main function of the novel genre, as it is both didactic in content and beneficial in terms of contributing to the development of Kurdish language. In *Rojnamevan* by Lokman Polat, there are again explicit messages to the Kurds to struggle for the preservation of their mother tongue from assimilation as “Kurds must do anything to save their language against the assimilation” (20-21).⁹⁵

In the examples given above, the implied author, who is “given an overt, speaking role in the story” (Booth 1983: 71), explains the mission of the novelistic discourse. Literature is considered as a vehicle through which one can deliver messages to others, or transmit crucial incidents related to a nation. In *Siya Dema Borî*, Berjîn to whom certain values are attributed, asks her father: “Why do they not write about the heroism of Kurdish women? Thousands of Kurdish women have lost and are still losing their lives, fearlessly and impulsively, for the country’s freedom, and even for creating opportunities for writers to write” (16).⁹⁶ Such discussions are informative and

⁹² Hûn dê çanda Kurdî bidin jiyandin, hûn dê pirtûkaxana Kurdî ya min zêdetir û dewlementir bikin, û eger rojek welatê me rizgarbû, hûn dê ev pirtûkaxana li Wezerata Çandî ya dewleta me ya yekgirtî û serbixwe bibexşînin.

⁹³ [...] Welatê me bindest e û hatiye perçekirin. Ji ber vê yekê, welathezî nivîskariyê li ser me ferz dika [...] Hema bila bi zimanê me bê nivîsandin, çi tê nivîsandin, bila bê nivîsandin...

⁹⁴ Divê herkes berê fêrî zimanê xwe bibin û di her warî de bi kar bîne. Ev nemaze ji bo yên ku di rewşa me de ne, bûyereke pirr girîng e.

⁹⁵ Divê Kurd li hember asimîlasyonê, çi bikin zimanê xwe biparêzin.

⁹⁶ Çima li ser qehremaniya jina kurd nanivîsînin? Bi hezaran jinên kurd ji bo azadiya welêt, heta ji bo ku bikanin derfetên nivîsandinê ji bo nivîskaran biafirînin, bê tirs, bê dudiliyekê cane xwe di wê rêyê dan û didin.

apparently also contain messages for readers introducing a movement for the development of Kurdish. And on the back cover of *Ronakbîr*, Laleş Qaso emphasizes his opposition, both politically and linguistically, to the translation of his novels from Kurdish into Turkish:

No matter whoever tells me what; whoever gives me whichever nicknames; the biggest threat for my existence and my Kurdishness is to translate my books into Turkish and that Kurds will be reading it in Turkish before the Kurds in the North have set up a country, or a state similar to a country, and the Kurdish language is used in all areas. This would be my death and the ruining of all my efforts. I will never forgive that! And I do not want the Kurds to forgive it either. This is my will [back cover].⁹⁷

Eser, in the novel *Gardiyan*, straightforwardly states that writing Kurdish is not different from any other missions or duties, since “every product written in Kurdish serves to promote Kurdish language and literature and enrich the Kurdish culture. That is why we need to struggle to create good products in the Kurdish language only” (5).⁹⁸ According to this notion, the novelistic discourse is featured prominently as a means of preserving and developing Kurdish rather than as a literary artefact.

In the light of the above analyses, it can be argued that the ‘narratological’ voice that is not distinct from the voice of the author disrupts the narration with commentaries conveying the perspectives and values of the ‘implied author’. Thus, the real opinions of the Kurdish novelists in diaspora generally reflect on the text, which is also enforced with the strong reflection of the political and ideological orientations of the novelists, which are discussed in the next section.

2.1.3. Ideological and Political Orientations of the Novelists within the Narratives

It has been argued that, either overtly or through some implicit or explicit narrative discourse, the implied author within the texts addresses the readers directly or indirectly and reveals his purposeful attitudes towards literature, particularly novelistic discourse as a suitable literary genre. In addition, novelists do not hesitate to “present their

⁹⁷ Kî ji min re çî dibêje bila bibêje; kî çî navî li min dike bila bike; heta ku kurdên bakurê welêt nebin dewlet, yan jî tiştekî ku bişine dewletê bi best nexînin, û zimanê kurdî di her hêlê de geş nebe, bi insanetiya kurdayetiya min re dijminahiya herî mezin ew e ku kitêbên min wergerî tirkî bibin û kurd jî van kitêban bi tirkî bixwînin. Ev mirina min û bînpêkirina keda min e! Ez ê tu carî efû nekim! Û ez nexwazim ku kurd jî efû bikin. Ew wesyetekî min e.

⁹⁸ Her berhemeke ku bi Kurdî tê nivîsandin xizmetekê ji ziman û edebiyata kurdî re dike û çanda kurdan pê dewlemend dibe. Lew re jî, dive em hewl bidin bi tenê bi zimanê xwe berhemên hêja biafirînin.

ideological message or position in an ‘authoritarian’ way” (Davis 1987: 25). In this context, the present section argues that diasporic novelistic discourse is highly influenced by the political and ideological orientation of the novelists. Furthermore, these orientations are explicitly uttered in the narratives through conflicting and critical attitudes rather than in a peaceful solidarity and unity approach covering all Kurds.

This matter can be related to the notion of diaspora itself, which is defined as heterogeneous and de-territorialized, and includes a sense of multi-locality and multiple identities. As Sheffer (2003: 153-154) argues,

Neither the members of state-linked diasporas nor the members of stateless diasporas will have uniform attitudes toward their national histories... [thus] attitudes will differ according to the extent to which identities in various segments of the diaspora have been hybridized and to the extent which their experiences in the host country have begun to take precedence over memories of their experiences in their homeland.

Accordingly, Kurdish exiled novelists demonstrate through their literary works that, in terms of literary construction of alternative narratives of identities and politics, their own political and identity implications are often at odds because of a diversity of views and ideologies. Examining the political and ideological affiliation of the novelists within the texts is crucial, not only in expressing the significance of politics in the narratives but also to show that Kurdish identity and ‘home-land’ will also be characterized according to such politics. This issue is discussed more broadly in Chapter Four of this research.

When analysing the novels in diaspora, attention is drawn to two main ideologies; one strand tends to support the ideology of the PKK (*Partiya Karkarên Kurdistan* or Kurdistan Workers Party),⁹⁹ while the other either rejects its ideology and promotes other options, or ignores the politics of the PKK completely. Thus, within diverse organizations and ideologies in diaspora, special stress should be placed either on support for the PKK or on resistance against the PKK, since its position “...as an overarching orchestrator makes visible ...a related characteristic of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe” (Soguk 2008: 182). However, different articulations of homeland politics can be clearly seen through the differences between diaspora in Germany and Sweden, since the PKK organization has been more successful in Germany than in Sweden.

⁹⁹ The PKK, an armed Kurdish guerrilla organisation, was formally established in 1978 by Abdullah Ocalan; it began its guerrilla war with the Turkish military in 1984.

Due to a lack of consensus among diaspora members, different narratives could even lead to conflicting attitudes and controversies about the PKK, and this is explicitly reflected in the novelistic discourse. In some novels, although socio-political conditions in Kurdistan are reported, there is no reference to the PKK and its struggle as a Kurdish national movement. Despite the references to the conflicts in Kurdistan in the following titles – *Sorê Gulê* (Rose Red, 1997) and *Piştî Bîst Salan* by Silêman Demîr, all of Mezher Bozan’s novels *Av Zelal Bû I-IV*, *Zarokên Me* (Our Children, 2008), *Asim*, and *Zêna* (Zena, 2007), Qaso’s *Ronakbîr*, Eser’s *Gardiyan* and *Jiyanek* (A Life, 2006), and Cewerî’s *Ez ê Yekî Bikujim* (I will Kill Someone, 2008), Aydogan’s *Pêlên Bêrîkirinê*, and also Uzun’s *Mirina Kalekî Rind* and *Tu* (You, 2005) – these novels do not refer to the PKK’s national struggle in any way that would set it above or apart from the entire Kurdish national struggle against the Turkish state. In Mirzengî’s *Sînor* (Border, 1995) and Uzun’s *Ronî Mîna Evîne Tarî Mîna Mirînê* (Light like Love Dark like Death, 2007), the national struggle is narrated through the stories of guerrillas, although there is no attempt to promote the party’s ideology by dramatizing their stories. On the contrary, the narrations in these two novels aim to reflect the central characters’ more personal experiences as guerrillas involved in political movements. In other words, they try to reflect the involvement or struggles of individual guerrillas rather than the communal objectives of their parties.

In addition to the novels mentioned above, others – such as *Gundikê Dono* (Dono’s Village, 2009) *Hêlîn* (Helin, 2007) *Xezeba Azadiyê* (The Wrath of Freedom, 2000), *Belqitî* (Belqiti, 2004),¹⁰⁰ *Nado Kurê Xwe Firo*t (Nado Sold his Son, 2001) and *Serpêhatiyên Rustem û Namerdiya Namerdan* by Çolpan – are set during a period earlier than the 1980s and of course do not mention the national struggle of the PKK, which had not yet begun operations as an active political party. The remaining novels – *Siya Evînê*, *Hawara Dîcleyê I-II* (The Cry of Tigris I-II, 2002-2003), *Marê Di Tûr De Rojek ji Rojên Evdalê Zeynikê*, *Sê Şev û Sê Roj* (Three Nights and Three Days, 1999), *Serhildana Mala Eliyê Ênis*, *Tofan* (Flood, 2005), *Xidê Naxirwan û Tevkuştine Dêrsim*, *Dîlên li Ber Pûkê* and *Evîna Mêrxasekî* (The Love of a Young Man, 2008) – are historical and naturally do not refer to any issues related to the PKK. To be precise, despite their engagement with political conflicts during historical times and in the more recent past, in the majority of diasporic novels the ideologies and actions of the PKK are effectively ignored throughout the texts.

¹⁰⁰ Belqitî is the name of one of the main characters. Literally ‘belqitî’ stems from the verb ‘belqitîn’, a slang word for dying, for which the English equivalent might be “crap out” or “croak.” In this case, ‘Belqitî’ means the one who is crapped out or has croaked, i.e., is dead.

However, some novelistic discourses have determined their distanced attitudes to the PKK and do portray various political struggles. Thus, in some novels it is also possible to observe severe criticism of its politics. For example, certain novels – such as Lokman Polat’s *Robîn*, *Kodnav Viyan* (Nickname Viyan, 2006), *Fîlozof*, *Rojnamevan*, and *Kewa Marî*, Laleş Qaso’s *Wêran*, Cewerî’s *Payiza Dereng*, Dehsiwar’s *Çirîskên Rizgariyê*, and Xurşîd Mîrzengî’s *Sînor* – deal with Kurdish national movements through fictional characterization and plotting, and reference to the actions/ideologies of the PKK appears in the form of strong censure.¹⁰¹ The main characters of the novels are either highly critical or pronounce the inadequacy of the PKK as a Kurdish national movement, and the novels thus convey the notion that there is no hope for national liberation through the PKK’s politics. The novelists mentioned above reflect their real ideologies in their fiction, through various references to their resistance against the ideology of PKK and their preferred affiliation with the politics of the Kurdistan Federal Region in Iraqi Kurdistan.

In some novels, the criticisms can become so harsh that it seems the novel was written solely to criticize the PKK. Laleş Qaso, who lives in Sweden, is one of the writers who is severely critical of the PKK’s politics. Qaso’s statements and approaches in his real life also confirm this notion, while the Wikipedia page that includes his bibliography states “the works of Laleş Qaso are in general satirical and severely critical towards both the Turkish state and the PKK.”¹⁰² He is also a columnist for the online journals *Rizgarî* and *Kurdistan Aktüel* through which he frequently criticizes the PKK’s political activities and politics. Accordingly, in all his novels, the party’s system, its practices, and particularly its leader Abdullah Öcalan, are severely criticized through the use of satirical language and veiled implications. As noted earlier, he castigates the PKK in his all novels, although he does not mention Öcalan by name directly. He has even published a book in which he creates an imaginary character as the leader of a Kurdish party simply to satirize Öcalan. His book *Serok Altaxus* (The Leader Informer, 2006) is based entirely on mocking Abdullah Öcalan through scathing language. Like

¹⁰¹ The novelists’ ideologies are also consistent with those of the publishers, the majority of whom are linked to Kurdish institution or organization in Europe. It is possible to know the ideology of a novelist by the choice of publishing house, and each publishing house is open about its specific ideology. Thus, for example, while Mezopotamya (Cologne) and Rewşen (Stockholm) are known for their affiliation with the politics of the PKK since they publish various material for the organization, it is equally known that publications from Pelda (Stockholm) and Roja Nû (Stockholm) are linked to Kom-Kar (Komela Karkerên Kurdistan – the Kurdish Workers’ Association, first established in Germany in the 1970s), and to the PSK (Partiya Sosyalîsta Kurdistan – Socialist Party of Kurdistan founded in 1974, initially under the name of TKSP, Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan); both of these are known to be opposed to the PKK.

¹⁰² “Berhemên L. Qaso bi gelemperî satîrîk in û rexneyên tûj in hem li dewleta Tirkîyeyê û hem jî li PKKê.” Article available at: http://ku.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laleş_Qaso, accessed 23 August 2012.

Qaso, Lokman Polat, who has lived in Sweden since the 1980s, sets out to censure the PKK in his novels; he too is a columnist for the journals *Rizgarî* and *Kurdistan Aktüel*.

However, there are a few diasporic novels that have embraced the ideology of the PKK, and there are clear indications that this also reflects the actual ideology of the novelists. In the novels *Binefşên Tariyê* (The Violets of Darkness, 1999) and *Bigrî Heval* by Zeynel Abidîn, *Rondikên Hêviyên Wenda* (The Tears of Lost Hopes, 2009) by Fergîn Melîk Aykoç, *Gul Bişkivîn* (The Budding Rose, 2006) by Diyar Bohtî, *Veşer* by Reşad Akgul, and *Xewnên Pînekirî* by Medenî Ferho, the central characters are guerrillas. In Ali Husein Kerim's *Şopa Rojên Buhurî*, a guerrilla character called Akif, whose courage is greatly admired by all the villagers, plays a crucial role in the novel. There is also explicit support for the party in *Mamostayê Zinaran* and *Siya Dema Borî*, by Fergîn Melîk Aykoç, *Mexmûr* by Diyar Bohti, and *Xaltîka Zeyno* and *Çiroka Me* (Our Story, 2009) by Medenî Ferho.

A quick glance at the personal background of these novelists shows that the correlation between the ideology in their fiction and the ideology in their actual lives is very striking. For example, Medenî Ferho all of whose novels mirror a tendency towards the PKK, was involved in founding the first diasporic satellite television channel, called Med TV,¹⁰³ which is regarded as being pro-PKK. He has also been a columnist in *Yeni Özgür Politika*,¹⁰⁴ a pro-PKK daily newspaper published in Germany, and presented programmes on Roj TV (now called Stêrk TV) in Belgium, through which he explicitly declared his support for the PKK. Similarly, Aykoç (1951) who fled to Germany after the 1980 military coup, strongly criticizes those fighting against the PKK and attempts to defend the politics of the party in his column in *Yeni Özgür Politika*. Likewise Bohtî (1958) presented a programme called 'The Voice of People'

¹⁰³ The Kurdish satellite channel Med TV (1995-1999) started broadcasting in the UK and Belgium. Shortly after its closure, it re-emerged as MEDYA TV, the successor of Med TV, which was licensed by France. MEDYA TV too was shut down, as a result of pressure from the Turkish State over its transmission of PKK propaganda; however in 2004 it was continuing to broadcast from Denmark, under yet another new name, Roj TV, with its central production studio being located in the town of Deenderleux, not far from Brussels. Roj TV's broadcasts were transmitted in all the dialects of Kurdish, as well as in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. On 10 January 2012, following a trial against the channel that had begun on 31 August 2010, the Copenhagen City Court found Roj TV guilty of spreading propaganda for the PKK and it was heavily fined. Its appeal against the fine was rejected, and the Paris-based television satellite provider, Eutelsat, duly suspended broadcasts by Roj TV. However, the channel is still broadcasting with two satellite channels, Stêrk TV and Nûçe TV.

¹⁰⁴ *Yeni Özgür Politika* (New Free Politics, 2006) is a daily Kurdish newspaper published in both Turkish and Kurdish, and based in Germany. It is the successor of *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda) and *Özgür Politika* (Free Politics), which were closed down by the German Interior Ministry for their contribution to money transfers from Europe to the PKK in 2005 (Eccarius-Kelly 2010: 173). Currently the newspaper is distributed all over Europe; however Internet access to the publication is prohibited in Turkey.

(*Dengê Gel*) on Roj TV, and published articles in *Azadiya Welat*¹⁰⁵ that were severely critical of the oppressive policies of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) against the Kurds, and defended the PKK which he regards as the representative of the Kurds.

Similarly Reşad Akgul (referred to in some sources as Sorgul), as a journalist himself, concentrates in his novel *Veşer* on the full experiences of guerrillas, and makes direct references to the politics of the PKK: “The PKK is the mechanism for the freedom travellers” (74-75).¹⁰⁶ He is also a presenter of news bulletins on the pro-PKK satellite channel Stêrk. Jîr Dilovan who has been living in Germany since 1995, wrote sketches for Med TV and has translated two books by the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, while Abidîn disseminates his supportive views on the PKK through the website *Kurdistana Bakur*.¹⁰⁷ The internet usually becomes the mechanism through which these writers are able to declare their political stances, since nowadays each ideology usually maintains its own websites and publications.

Within these novels, the attachment towards the PKK is not fixed, since the power of the PKK has clearly not remained static during the last thirty years, and “PKK’s hegemonic influence, as exercised in the 1980s and 1990s, has declined substantially since the capture and imprisonment of its leader” (Soguk 2008: 189). Indeed, it is possible to register such downturns in the texts. Abdullah Öcalan’s capture and imprisonment caused fragmentation within the party and this led to a falling-off in diaspora, mainly in Sweden.¹⁰⁸ It also produced despair and controversies among

¹⁰⁵ *Azadiya Welat* (Free Homeland) a Kurdish daily newspaper in Kurmanji dialect started published in 1996 as the successor of two other Kurdish newspapers *Welat* (Homeland, 1992-1994), and *Welatê Me* (Our Homeland, 1994-1995) which were closed under Turkey’s Anti-Terror laws. Up to June 2011, *Azadiya Welat* had been suspended nine times under the claim of disseminating propaganda for the PKK. Internet access to the newspaper is currently prohibited in Turkey. For more on the bans against the Kurdish press and other publishing enterprises, see *Turkey: Violations of Free Expression in Turkey* (1999) by Human Rights Watch Organisation; *The Kurds: Culture and Language Rights* (2004) by the Kurdish Human Rights Project; and *World Report 2011* (2011) by Human Rights Watch.

¹⁰⁶ PKK mekanîzma ye, ji bo rêwiyên azadiyê.

¹⁰⁷ Available at: <http://www.kurdistana-bakur.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3000>, accessed 24 August 2012.

¹⁰⁸ The PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan) was founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan and its national movement got under way in 1984, under Öcalan’s leadership and with its Marxist-Leninist ideology. Subsequently, having sought asylum in several countries including Italy and Greece, Öcalan was arrested by Kenyan officials in February 1999 and handed over to Turkish officials. Sympathizers responded to his capture through various strident demonstrations, protests, and riots in Europe. Since then he has been held in semi-isolation in Imrali Island Prison. The PKK’s power is considered to have declined since 1999 since, along with changes in the regional balance of power in the Middle East and increasing disenchantment with the PKK among the Kurds, Öcalan’s detention was a major blow to the party itself (Radu 2006: 87) and discussions have started about its political future and actions (Akkaya and Jongerden 2011: 143). The main reaction from its supporters is whether the party has given up the ideal of a United Greater Kurdistan. According to Akkaya and Jongerden (ibid: 143-144), although the PKK has not completely abandoned the idea of a united Kurdistan, it has been transformed from a classical political party to a ‘complex party’ that includes different parties and organizations within its framework and that has proposed a democratic confederalist system. Changes in organizational structure, democratic confederalism as an alternative to the state, and new ideological and political approaches, can be seen as

political figures and the Kurdish intelligentsia. Some terminated their contacts with the party and turned instead to the political movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, others were influenced by the disagreements within the party and become more critical of its actions. These changing attitudes can be observed through analysis of novels published by the same writer at different times.

Zeynel Abidîn's novels show clearly that ways of perceiving the PKK diminished during the 1990s and the early 2000s. In *Binefşên Tariyê*, which focuses on the desperate passion between two lovers and their decision to go and fight in the mountains, the narrator reveals his ideas about saving Kurdistan and setting it free. In a jubilant tone, he addresses the existence of the PKK as the saviour of Kurdistan and the only hope of Kurds: "Now the girls and boys of my homeland are protecting their own country" (58).¹⁰⁹ He claims that Kurdistan is supported and defended by its people and that "Kurdistan, the country of history and civilizations will no longer remain abandoned" (120).¹¹⁰ However, in Abidîn's more recent novel, *Bigrî Heval*, it is easy to see that the narrator is critical of the PKK's politics, and his statements contain neither hope nor belief in the future. *Bigrî Heval* focuses on the personal struggle of a woman guerrilla against her party, rather than the national struggle against the enemies that was the basis for *Binefşên Tariyê*. Most of *Bigrî Heval* deals with her escape from execution, which the Party committee had confirmed because of her inappropriate attitudes, and through which the narrator expresses his disbelief concerning the party's politics. It is also possible to see similar changes in the novels of Medenî Ferho, whose suggestions concerning Kurdish cultural and political activities in his earlier novels differ from his most recent one.

Unlike other novelists living in Sweden, he paints a positive picture of the politics of the PKK that is very apparent in his novels. In the novels published in the 1990s, e.g., *Xaltîka Zeyno*, it is only through the heavily-felt influence of the PKK that Kurdistan can be saved and set free. However, by the 2000s his attitudes and arguments, like those of Abidîn and Aykoç, have changed. In *Xaltîka Zeyno*, the protagonist, Zeyno, makes an explicit appeal for support for the guerrillas: "It is enough, we also have to help them" (319),¹¹¹ because she thinks that "from now on we have a protector" (Ibid.).¹¹² In this

new attempts by the party to reinvent itself. However, Öcalan's statements at the time of his arrest and similar statements issued later via his lawyers that praised his prison conditions and emphasised his wish to negotiate with Turkish officials were seen as a reversal of his position and were regarded as a betrayal of the PKK's struggle by some Kurds, especially by Kemal Burkay, leader of the Kurdistan Socialist Party (PSK) who accused Öcalan of being a coward (Marcus 2007: 284).

¹⁰⁹ [...] Keç û xortên welatê min êdî xwedî li welatê xwedî derdiketin [...]

¹¹⁰ Kurdistan, welatê dîrokê, welatê şaristaniyê, êdî wê bêxwedî nemîne.

¹¹¹ [...] Bes e, dive em jî bibin alîkar ji bo wan...

novel, many characters quote directly from Öcalan's views in their statements about the war and conflicts. The novel also gives a rough outline of the emergence of the PKK, and there is a clear call for support for the guerrillas, in such a way that the novel can be even seen as a manifesto promoting, or propaganda for the PKK. Like the main characters in other novels, Zeyno is idealized for adopting the ideology of the PKK, and throughout the novel it is implied that the only enemy is the Turkish state and its militias. Kurds are very 'patriotic' (*welatparêz*) and are ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their Kurdistan.

However, the voice of complete loyalty towards and belief in the party is shattered in Ferho's next novel, *Xewnên Pînekirî*. Here the struggle is presented from the perspective of an injured guerrilla, and in contrast to the earlier novel's strong and determined tone for the struggle, here the descriptions tend to refer to its failure. The main character, Serdar, who is injured during one of the conflicts, does not perceive a positive future in his thoughts. Although the theme is not abandoned entirely, after 2001 there is no longer any direct support for the PKK in Ferho's novels, such as *Dora Bacinê Bi Dar e* and *Çiroka Me*, although it is still possible to see elements of the organization, e.g., minor characters as guerrillas. This time, however, there are questions about other methods of struggle. Thus, in *Dora Bacinê bi Dar e*, a legal party system in the European Parliament is highly recommended and regarded as a successful step towards a permanent solution. Here it should be noted that the approaches of pro-PKK novelists are different from the pro-PKK novels written in Turkish Kurdistan.¹¹³ The narrator, in 'implied author' attitudes, quite often sends messages about unification in his novels; nevertheless, he does not hold out the same hope of a positive future for Kurdistan as those in Turkish Kurdistan do.

Most importantly, following the success of the Kurdistan Federal Region in Iraq since 2003, a political solution that is outside both Turkish Kurdistan and the PKK has become central for many diaspora members. As an alternative to the PKK, the politics of the government in Iraqi Kurdistan are supported in most of the diasporan novels, and in this regard, the idea of 'home' and Kurdistan is influenced by this affiliation to

¹¹² Êdî em bi xwedî bûn.

¹¹³ It should be noted that the novel categorizations of pro-PKK and anti-PKK in this research have been derived from both the content of the novelistic discourse (i.e., the direct statements, the choice of narration and characterization etc.), and the political affiliations of the novelists who have not hesitated to reveal them on various occasions. The anti-PKK groups in Europe mentioned in this thesis are those who used to be engaged with other left-wing Kurdish organizations and movements in the 1970s and who were forced to leave Turkey and Kurdistan after the military coup. Even after leaving their lands, diasporic novelists have usually continued to support the political programmes of the parties with which they were involved.

politics in Iraqi Kurdistan under the governance of the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government).¹¹⁴ There is praise for the system and a profound focus on places in Iraqi Kurdistan. For the reader of these novels, Iraqi Kurdistan is a reminder of the image of Kurdistan. It is also important to note that the novels affiliated to the PKK do not necessarily reject the national struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan since they recognize a unified struggle that includes all four Kurdish regions; however the settings of these novels are mainly located in Turkish Kurdistan.

Through Laleş Qaso's trilogy, the novelist's political affiliation is clearly shown. Not only is the PKK severely criticized, but the narrators in the novels explicitly announce the position that they are supporting, which is the national struggle conducted by Mustafa Barzani and his supporters. In *Wêran*, the protagonist Circîs does not want to keep the guerrillas in his house as he is against their actions. He compares both sides. On the one hand, he praises Barzani who is "held in high honour / treated with great respect" (40),¹¹⁵ and celebrates his struggle: "Mollah Mustafa Barzani was in the mountains together with his all people and because they feared him, the Arab army did not even dare to look at the mountain" (37).¹¹⁶ He also criticizes the party of the guerrillas: "and why doesn't your party find rockets, just like the falcons in the Kurdish mountains, to bring those war planes down?" (37).¹¹⁷ On the other hand, he finds the politics of the PKK and the Turkish state to be the same (49).¹¹⁸ Apart from Circîs himself, other villagers also name the guerrillas as 'non-believing' (*kafir*) and terrorists.

¹¹⁴ The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is a self-government that had administered Northern Iraq since 1992. New legislation in the 2005 Iraqi constitution, gave official recognition to the KRG as a constituent state in a democratic federal Iraq (Gunter 2010: 184) that includes two main parties – Massoud Barzani's KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) led by Jalal Talabani – as well as others such as the KDP (Kurdistan People's Democratic Party), PASOK (Kurdistan Socialist Party), the Kurdistan Branch of the Iraqi Communist Party, the Assyrian Democratic Movement, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (KHRP 2003: 65). Kurdish federal region includes three Kurdish provinces Dohuk, Arbil and Sulemania as legal autonomous regions. The conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK often affects relations between the KRG and Turkey, which has blamed the KRG for failing to eradicate the PKK from territory under its jurisdiction (Inbar and Gilboa 2009: 223) and providing it with logistical and political support. However, there have also been many disputes between the KRG and the PKK. During the 1990s, for example, the PKK placed an embargo on trade between Turkey and Northern Iraq in order to pressure the KRG into remove its blockade of PKK camps. The KRG also accused the PKK of evacuating villages and collaborating with Iraqi officials against the Iraqi Kurdish movement. Tensions increased between the PKK, KDP, and PUK with the assault against the PKK in 1992 in order to avoid the Turkish threat and retain their support. With the interference of Turkish troops in the conflict, the situation worsened. In 1995, the KDP and PUK remained silent while partially cooperating with Turkish troops over crossing into Iraqi Kurdistan to destroy PKK units (Gunter 1997: 119-122); after this, relations between the PKK and KRG became problematic and party and organization leaders regularly made allegations against each other via the media.

¹¹⁵ Taca sere me ye.

¹¹⁶ Mele mistefa Bezanî bi temamê xelkê xwe ve di çiyân de bû û ordiyên Ereban jî tirsê wî newêrîbûn li çiyân bineriyana.

¹¹⁷ Erê ev partiya te jî, çima wek wî bazê çiyayên Kurdistanê, tope ku teyaran dixîn peyde nake?

¹¹⁸ Exlaqê van û romîyan yek e.

Nor, in this novel, are Kurdistan's image and village life glossed over, so that self-interest becomes more important than national solidarity. In Qaso's next novel *Ronakbîr*, the main character Ronakbîr as an exile in Stockholm, decides to move to South Kurdistan, which he regards as an independent and free land.¹¹⁹ In this sense, the character adopts the politics of Iraqi Kurdistan, considering it as his homeland.

The same attitude can be observed in many other novels, mainly those of Lokman Polat and Bûbê Eser. In Eser's novel *Jiyanek*, the narrator praises the politics in Iraqi Kurdistan and considers Mustafa Barzani as a leader of the Kurds. He idealizes his struggle; as the character Îbrahîm says, "we must work for our nation with all our power and strength. The voice of struggle is rising here in South Kurdistan with the leadership of precious Molla Mustafa Barzani" (156).¹²⁰ Similarly, in his novels Polat usually glorifies Iraqi Kurdistan and explicitly supports its political system. Furthermore, in *Robîn* and *Kodnav Viyan*, which follow each other, the main characters, Robîn and Viyan as agents, struggle for the sake of Iraqi Kurdistan and support a political organization in this region. For them: "South Kurdistan (...) [is the] part of Kurdistan that is now free" (133).¹²¹ Both characters fight against the Ba'ath regime for the freedom of South Kurdistan. Robîn and Viyan even marry and move into Dohuk. In Mirzengî's *Sînor*, the novelist dedicates his narrative to the memory of Mustafa Barzanî, saying, "God rests his soul" (x),¹²² which reveals his personal perspective.

Mihemed Dehsiwar's *Çirîskên Rizgariyê* takes place largely in two of the big cities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Arbil (*Hewlêr*) and Sulemanîa. Arbil is considered to be the capital city of Kurds from South Kurdistan (*Paytexta Kurdên Başûr*) (247); however, the division within the Kurdistan regions is very apparent in the novel, in which 'South' is used as a geographical concept, not in the sense of a unifying political concept. Again, in *Av Zelal Bû I*, Davud remembers his childhood when his family was assisting the Peshmergas (armed Kurdish fighters)¹²³ of South Kurdistan:

His father and forefathers all have been subjected to the cruelty and repression of the Turkish government. His grandmother, his mother... everybody was always cursing

¹¹⁹ Ronakbîr describes how, in Başûr (South Kurdistan), he could do many things: "He was able to read and write as well. Society existed and society would appreciate his intelligence and wisdom" (Dikarîbû bixwenda û binivîsanda jî. Civat hebû û civatê jî wê bi qîmetê jîr û zanahiya wî bizanîbûya (111).

¹²⁰ Divê em bi tevahiya hêz û quweta xwe ji bo gelê xwe kar bikin. Wa ye dengê şoreşê li Başurê Kurdistanê, bi serokatiya Mela Mistefa Barzaniyê qedirbilind geş dine

¹²¹ Kurdistanê Başûr (...) perçeya Kurdistanê niha azad e.

¹²² Xwedê rehma xwe li wî bike.

¹²³ Peshmerga (Pêşmerge in Kurdish, means those who face death) refers to the armed Kurdish soldiers in Iraqi Kurdistan.

the (Turkish) state and they secretly aided the Peshmergas from South Kurdistan (44-45).¹²⁴

In the later stages of the novel, Davud, in his dreams, sees himself as a Peshmerga fighting against Arab and Turkish soldiers. Clearly the Peshmergas are considered to be the hope for national liberation, rather than the guerrillas. The novelists Laleş Qaso, Lokman Polat, Bûbe Eser, Mihemed Dehsîwar, Firat Cewerî, Hesenê Mete, Silêman Demîr, and Mustafa Aydogan have signed various petitions in support of the Kurdish Regional Government: These are published through the *Dengê Kurdistan* (The Voice of Kurdistan) website.¹²⁵

Occasionally, however, imaginary political groups are created as an alternative to the PKK; alternatively the struggle is emphasized as resistance by the public rather than by an organized legal (or illegal) group. As well as referring to a diversity of actual political activities, it is also possible to see imagined organizations or parties created with the aim of saving the 'homeland'. In his only novel, *Çirîskên Rizgariyê*, Mihemed Dehsîwar, who lives in Sweden, strongly disputes the strategies of PKK; he does so by imagining the way it would be done by a new party he calls "*Parastina Mafên Kurdan*" (Defending the Rights of Kurds). This party is organized by the main character Sevdîn, who intends to reveal genocide, mass evacuations, killings and human rights violations, and thus draw Europe's attention to the Kurdish issue. As the leader of this new political organization, the main character attempts to spread the Kurdish issue to European countries, the mass media, and international news agencies worldwide. The PKK is not regarded as a political solution for the liberation of Kurdistan, and Sevdîn argues that his new party will not get involved in any terrorist activities; "the barbarian and slaver state leaves the Kurds no chance but defend themselves and resort terror" (199).¹²⁶

While referring to the fact that diasporic novelists are found in Europe, it is important to repeat that these authors are located only in Sweden, Germany, and Belgium. Only Medenî Ferho lives in Belgium, a few live in Germany, and the rest of them live in Sweden. While the novelists presenting an affiliation to the politics of the PKK are based in Germany, those strongly against it or who ignore its politics live in Sweden; this brings us different Kurdish political structures in Sweden and in Germany.

¹²⁴ Bav, bapîrên wî tev zulm û tahdeya hikûmeta tirk dîtîbûn. Pîrika wî, Diya wî... herkesî, her tim dij dewletê xeber didan û bi dizî jî alîkariya pêşmergêyên kurdên başûrê Kurdistanê dikirin.

¹²⁵ Available at: <http://www.kurdistan.nu/dk-yazilar/name.htm>, accessed 14 September 2012, also at http://www.kurdistan.nu/dk-yazilar/nameyeke_vekiri.htm, accessed 14 September 2012.

¹²⁶ Dewleta koledar û barbar gelê Kurd jî mecbûrî xwe parastinê û terorê dikir.

Van Bruinessen (1999)¹²⁷ argues that the heightened awareness of the PKK in Germany or the failure to gain much support from diaspora members in Sweden depended on the how much the identity of diasporic groups was politicized before the appearance of the PKK in Europe. Kurds in Sweden were already politicized when the PKK began its recruitment, which led to its obtaining less sympathy than it found in Germany where, since “...the large mass of workers were not politicized, PKK organizers found a much more fertile field for recruitment” (Ibid.)

It can be argued that Kurdish diasporic novels are highly political novels in which the novelist, from an authoritarian standpoint, expresses his political and ideological affiliation in such a way that other novelists end up strongly debating the ideologies of certain political parties and organisations. ‘Home’ for the diasporic novelists is transformed into a ideological object. On the one hand the novels tending to support the PKK as a national movement are produced by the novelists in Germany, while on the other, those involved in standing against the PKK or total ignorance are produced by the novelists in Sweden. This also shows that the prevalent movements in the host countries in which they live mostly shape the novelists’ political perspective. While those opposing or ignoring the politics of the PKK adopt Iraqi Kurdistan as ‘home-land’ of Kurds, those affiliated to the PKK’s ideology form more unifying attitudes towards different regions of Kurdistan. However, in general the constructions of ‘home-land’ and ‘identity’ in the diasporic novelistic discourse are not only fragmented in parallel with different ideological agendas, but they are also intertwined with realist elements with a pessimistic tone that is deprived of any idealisations. This issue is elaborated in the following section.

2.1.4. Diasporic Imagining of Kurdistan: Under the Lens of Realist Portrayal

In addition to the explicit statements of some novelists about the realist features of their novels and the expression of their political orientations, the novelists also attempt to draw a realistic picture of Kurdistan without idealizing or imagining it differently from its actual status. This approach creates the idea that ‘home-lands’ in the diasporic narrations are real rather than fictive, and is again related to the arguments made in the earlier sections, in which I discussed the way diasporic novelists consider novelistic

¹²⁷ See Martin Van Bruinessen’s working paper on “The Kurds in Movement...” (1999), at the website http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Kurds_in_movement.htm, accessed 24 August 2012.

discourse as an appropriate channel through which they can contribute to improving the Kurdish language, share their political views, criticize other political orientations, and record personal and communal experiences. Accordingly, this section argues that Kurdistan as the ‘home-land’ of Kurds in the majority of the novels is portrayed alongside realist and factual elements. The main indication of this argument is not to imagine that Kurdistan is united according to the idea of Greater Kurdistan,¹²⁸ but to recognize the existence of borders between each Kurdish region.

Greater Kurdistan as a pan-Kurdish sovereign state refers to the establishment of a possible Kurdish state that could include Kurdish regions in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. When all the diaspora novels examined in this thesis are taken into account, it can be seen that most authors do not challenge Turkish national borders or the sovereignty of the nation-states of the countries located in other Kurdish regions; e.g., Kurdish cities are perceived as parts of Turkey rather than as independent entities. In some novels, the Kurdish region is defined as ‘Southeast Turkey’, the officially recognized term for Turkish Kurdistan, while others, as already discussed, use the terms ‘South’ (*Başûr*), ‘North’ (*Bakur*), ‘East’ (*Rojhilat*) and ‘West’ (*Rojava*) in relation to geographical terms, although not to political concepts. The division of Kurdistan into four parts and the lack of a state are spoken of to a degree that the fragmentation of Kurdish identity as territories is revealed throughout the narratives. In this respect, the term ‘Kurdistan’ is generally used to describe the geography of the lands in which Kurds are located, and occasionally for political purposes, as few of the novels reveal. The territorial expression of Kurdistan is an important issue, since the lack of recognized territories has led to different perceptions of, and borders for Kurdistan; this is also related to the different political agenda, which lacks any common national ideology. Analyses of territorial definitions of homeland in the novels therefore help in understanding the perception of ‘home-land’ and identity in general.

As noted above, most novels recognize the official territory of Turkey and narrate their story within this frame; in addition they usually aim to portray Kurdish cities and villages as being ruled by other sovereign countries. They mainly depict the tragic conditions of Kurds, and tend not to emphasize the creation of a possible independent Kurdistan in the future. Thus, it is difficult to talk about a struggle organized to establish an independent Kurdistan. Even the novels that engage with the struggle and

¹²⁸ Although the maps encompassing the regions of Greater Kurdistan have a common core area, definite borders are not consistent. There are different visions of the map of Greater Kurdistan: the map of Greater Kurdistan proposed by Sharif Pasha for the Treaty of Versailles (1919), or the map proposed by the Rizgarî Party to the United Nations (1945). For more on this topic, see Maria T. O’Shea’s “Kurdistan, The Mapping of a Myth” in *Kurdistan: Political and Economic Potential* (1992).

resistance focus mainly on ways of maintaining cultural and linguistic rather than political rights, or how to save the Kurds from oppression and repression by other nation-states. For example, in Mihemed Dehsiwar's *Çirîskên Rizgariyê*, the protagonist constantly refers to the problems of Kurds living in Turkey. He sets up an organization that explains the Kurdish situation to European countries and presses them to make the Turkish state impose democratic rights for Kurds. These demands are, however, restricted to cultural and linguistic rights only.

The main character in Lokman Polat's *Rojnamevan* is a Swedish journalist, who pursues a similar path. By revealing the inhuman conditions of the Kurds to the foreign media, the protagonist attempts to raise awareness and compel the European countries to act to improve the Kurds' living conditions. This novel supports Kurdish demands, including such basic human rights as the freedom to speak their mother tongue, and while it does not pursue a political agenda for constructing an independent homeland, it constantly refers to Kurdistan's division into four parts, as a result of which the Kurds were deprived of their rights: "Not only Turks, but Arabs and Persians also are like that. They divided Kurdistan into four parts and did not give them their democratic and national rights" (21).¹²⁹ Similarly, Polat refers in several of his novels, including *Robîn*, *Kewa Marî*, and *Kodnav Vîyan*, to the fragmentation of Kurdistan, and emphasizes the national struggle to gain rights within these officially-recognized territories. This is also narrated in *Rojek ji Rojen Evdalê Zeynikê*, which is set during the nineteenth century: "The Kurdish homeland is still separated, as it has always been. It was a country under Persian and Ottoman sovereignty without dwellings, without intellectuals or a state" (62).¹³⁰

The concepts of 'Başûr' and 'Bakur' utilized in some novels generally refer to the map of 'Greater Kurdistan', but not to the idea of 'Greater Kurdistan'. It is important to note that the novels narrating stories related to the pre-1980s period do not draw on the idea of 'Southern Kurdistan' (*Başûrê Kurdistan*) or 'Northern Kurdistan' (*Bakurê Kurdistan*) etc. For example, Uzun, who usually concentrates on historical figures in his novels, does not use these concepts, but describes Kurdistan as 'The homeland of Kurds' (*welatê Kurdan*). Similarly, in his two novels *Nado Kurê Xwe Firof* and *Serpêhatiyên Rustem û Namerdiya Namerdan*, Riza Çolpan focuses on the conditions of migrant Kurds in the 1950s and 1960s in Istanbul, acknowledging not only the official

¹²⁹ Ne tenê tirk, ereb û faris jî weha ne. Kurdistan kirine çar perçe û tu mafê demokratîk û netewayî nadin kurdan.

¹³⁰ Welatê kurdan, mîna her gavê, hingê jî, perçe û peregende bû. Welatê bêmal, bêkewal û bêdewlet di bin nîrên hukimdariyên Ecem û Osmanîyan de bû.

territories of Turkey but also limiting the problems of the Kurds on cultural and social grounds.

Since the division of Kurdistan into four parts is often mentioned, the presence of borders as an image is also strongly felt in the narrations. Speaking about territories and borders is crucial for a realist perspective that destroys the vision of a metaphorical and imagined 'homeland'. Thus, 'home-land' becomes some pieces of land divided by the territories of four countries, which, in fact, reflects its actual position at this time. In most of the novels, events often take place on the borders or else there is strong emphasis on the existence of the borders, mainly of Syrian and Iraqi Kurdistan. In Silêman Demîr's novels *Piştî Bîst Salan*, and *Sorê Gulê*, the focus is exclusively on the borders between Syria and Turkey that have caused Kurds to be parted from each other. In addition, Laleş's trilogy *Sê Şev û Sê Roj*, *Xezeba Azadiyê*, and *Wêran*, and Xurşid Mirzengî's novel *Sînor*, are all based on tragic-comic happenings on the Syrian and Turkish borders. People are involved in cross-border smuggling in order to make a living; also many people are killed by landmines along the borders. In addition, soldiers subject villagers to suspicious and violent treatment. All these factors convey the meaning that borders simply destroy the lives of Kurds.

As mentioned earlier, each diasporan novel covers a specific period and captures details relating to that period based on factual incidents and documents. This aspect of diasporan novels is consistent with Lukács' emphasis on the reflection of reality through novelistic discourse. Lukács mentions how "the novel has the task of evoking directly the full of span of life, the complexity, and intricacy of its developments, the incommensurability of its detail" (1962: 139), and in this connection, one can argue that all the details depicted in the Kurdish novels in diaspora present the circumstances of Kurds in a well-documented perspective. For example, Mezher Bozan's novels stretch back to the Kurdistan of the 1960s, and clearly demonstrate the obstacles that were preventing the Kurds from developing their national and cultural identity. In particular, the *Av Zelal Bû* quartet of novels conveys, through a camera-like eye, a great range of information about Kurdistan over different periods. For example, *Av Zelal Bû I* focuses on 1970s Kurdistan, and recounts the Maraş massacre,¹³¹ which led to the death of many Alevi Kurds. The narrator also uses the social and economic problems of Kurds to indicate factors behind the internal migration of Kurds to Western Turkish cities to work as labourers. Kurdistan is portrayed in realistic detail as a place of conflicts and

¹³¹ This refers to the massacre that occurred in 1978 in the Turkish/Kurdish province Kahramanmaraş, when Alevi Kurds were set on by some Islamic rightists. The massacre led to the deaths of dozens of civilians.

difficulties, but instead of describing these struggles, the novelist chooses to portray the usual daily difficulties of any ordinary Kurd.

Similarly, in *Asim*, Bozan offers an account of everyday Kurdistan, as seen through the eyes of Asim in his portrait of Kiziltepe, which is also his hometown. Asim describes a Kurdistan where, because of the immoral governing of Turkish political parties, freedom is victimized; where speaking Kurdish is strictly banned; and in which any expression of Kurdish culture is violently suppressed. The city is “full of soldiers and police” (11),¹³² and the children are forced to speak in Turkish at school. As Asim gradually discovers the changes in his hometown, the language of his observations becomes increasingly objective. In *Zêna*, which was published in the same year as *Asim*, Bozan speaks of Kurdish cities as prisons in which people exist under strict military control, and in which the existence of Kurdish identity is strongly denied. Describing Kurdish villages, the narrator says, “there was always war and conflict. There was even death. From time to time the soldiers would come to the village and round up the villagers using their bayonets and rifle butts, and take them to the military station” (70).¹³³ The following year, Bozan published his next novel, *Zarokên Me*, which, without praising or idealizing the landscape of Kurdistan, displays a panorama of Kurdistan under pressure from the Turkish state, although there is no mention of any popular resistance or retaliation. Turkish soldiers raid villages constantly and villagers are arrested from time to time.

Similarly, *Xezeba Azadiyê* (2000) and *Tu* (1985) reveal how Kurds are oppressed and assimilated as their culture and language are banned. Both these novels focus on the 1980s when conditions for Kurds worsened daily because of the increased influence of the military after the 1980 coup. The novels describe how the power and the pressure of the military dominated all Kurdish cities and villages, where people were subjected to discriminatory treatment and forced assimilation. In *Hêlîn*, Baksi records the pressure of the military in Kurdish villages from the perspective of a child. Hêlîn, the main character, witnesses how their village is constantly raided by soldiers, and how villagers are assaulted in front of everyone. Her father and then her mother are taken by soldiers and severely tortured. Even villagers who are not politically active are treated the same way. In *Sînor*, villagers who are not involved in any political actions are accused of being terrorists and arrested; and in *Rojnamevan*, Kurdish villagers suffer from constant raids and ill treatment by soldiers. Kurdistan is no different from an open prison, under

¹³² Tîjî leşker û polis bûbû.

¹³³ Her tîm şer û qirên hebû. Heta ku kuştin hebû. Ji çendakî carekê leşker dihatine gund û gundfyan tev didane ber xwe û bi singûyan, bi qontaxên çekan li wan didan dibirin qereqolan.

the strict control of the Turkish military. The villagers have to leave their lands, which are burnt down by the Turks (93). Kurds lose their lives for no reason and, as in *Marê Di Tur De*, this reinforces the comment “Kurdistan is the land of the cemetery” (*Kurdistan wargehê goristanê*) (30).

Like *Filozof* and *Sorê Gulê*, many novels also offer a panorama of Kurdistan during the 1990s, a significant period that is regarded as particularly gloomy since the conflict between the PKK guerrillas and the Turkish military was at its height. Although the novels covering this period report certain events explicitly and journalistically, they focus less on the continuing conflict between the Turkish state and the guerrillas. By isolating such encounters from their narration, they present the period from the standpoint of an individual who is uninvolved in these struggles. The reference by Turgut Özal, Turkey’s then prime minister, to ‘Kurdish reality’, unknown killings, and mass migration, was calculated to create a mainly literary representation of the actual ‘home-land’. For example, rather than focusing on the conflicts, *Çirîskên Rizgariyê* attempts to reveal the recognized conditions of the Kurdish community and intellectuals. The novel illustrates realistically how Ismail Beşikçi and Vedat Aydın are persecuted because of their works on the Kurdish issue; and refers to the extra-judicial killings of Apê Musa (Musa Anter), Mehmet Sincar and Metin Özdemir because of their political deeds. It also addresses the attack by Turkish security forces against the Newroz celebrations in various Kurdish cities such as Cizre, Nusaybin and Şırnak. Similarly, Lokman Polat’s *Rojnamevan* also refers to the Newroz celebration in Cizre during the 1990s when some people were killed. These are all pieces of factual information designed to serve the articulation of ‘home-land’ as a real space, not an imaginary one based on desires and fantasies.

Some novels try to present the reality of ‘home-land’ through the perspective of any ordinary Kurd, which enables them to maintain a neutral stance. Through the protagonist’s viewpoint, *Piştî Bîst Salan* reveals the chaos and tension in Nusaybin without explicitly discussing political issues. Generally speaking, without a romantic nostalgia, Kurdistan is described as somewhere in which one feels neither safe nor secure. Demîr’s previous novel *Sorê Gulê*, however, refers more to economic than political matters in 1990s Kurdistan. Landowners’ (*Aghas*) oppression against workers, the restricted conditions of students, and the Kurds’ economic problems are emphasized as significant problems for Kurdistan. Diyar Bohtî’s *Mexmûr* also presents a panorama of Kurdistan during the 1990s from the perspective of refugees who escape from Turkish militias to the Iraq border. The narrator shows the changes and developments,

year by year, in the lives of refugees who are badly treated by all sides. The novel realistically and perceptively documents the misery of Kurdish refugees oppressed by both the Turkish and the Iraqi states. In poverty and hardship, the refugees move from one camp to another; thus “one becomes a migrant in one’s homeland” (*mirov di welatê xwe de bibe koçber*) (8). In Bohtî’s other novel *Gul Bişkivîn*, the portrayal of Kurdistan is similarly realist, emphasizing economic issues such as smuggling and migration to other places to survive. Those novels affiliated to the politics of the PKK, such as *Xaltîka Zeyno*, *Xewnên Pînekirî*, *Çiroka Me*, *Bineşên Tariyê*, *Rondikên Héviyên Wenda*, *Mamosteyê Zinaran*, *Gul Bişkivîn*, *Veger* and *Şopa Rojên Buhurî*, refer to the idea of ‘Greater Kurdistan’ by including all parts of Kurdistan in their narratives, along with the achievements of the PKK as the party increasingly gathers Kurds from all four parts of Kurdistan for the national cause. Nevertheless, Kurdistan in general is still portrayed objectively alongside factual happenings and aspects, with neither praise nor idealization of the conflicts; and betrayal among Kurds is reported in a negative or pessimistic tone.

In sum, Kurdish diasporic novelistic discourse can be considered as authoritarian fiction, in most of which the novelists, either explicitly in the forewords of their novels or implicitly throughout the novels, express the notion that novelistic discourse is supposed to reflect reality and facts. Stretching back to the past, the novelistic discourse also confirms the fact of fragmentation and divisions amongst Kurds throughout the centuries. In addition, instead of an imaginary and fictionalized Kurdistan, Kurdistan images are based on facts, in an attempt to record the events of the past; thus dates and names are used for verification of their arguments. In 49 novels out of the 64 analysed, the predominant discourses on issues of borders and fragmentation show that Kurdistan is usually represented within the existing borders of four sovereign states, which is also parallel to the political views of the novelists.

2.1.5. Re-visioning Kurdistan within a Critical Frame

Through a unique set of feelings, an individual undoubtedly makes an emotional link with a place; thus, an emotionally complex ‘place attachment’ with the geographical location develops through experiences over time. Ahrentzen (1992: 114) also emphasizes how “place attachment is experienced as a central and centring bond between an individual and a particular setting, but the emotional interpretation of the meaning of that bond can be positive (e.g., Contentment, security) or negative (e.g.,

Anxiety, ambivalence, avoidance).” The mainstream Kurdish diaspora discourse most often portrays the ‘homeland orientation’ among diasporan Kurds in negative terms, such as “*azar* (trauma), *sitam* (oppression) and *qurbani* (victim)” (Khayati, 2008: 3, italics in original). Likewise, in relation to Kurdish novels as “national allegory” (Jameson 1988) it can be argued that Kurdistan as the ‘homeland’ of the Kurds in the novels also evokes traumatic experiences, internal conflicts, a destructive feudal system, and conflicting ideologies towards national struggle.

Construction of a unified imagined community is prevented primarily by the continual emphasis on the Kurds’ failure to achieve statehood, and severe criticism of social-political and historical aspects of Kurdistan, with geographical, social, political and cultural experiences repeatedly shown as negative elements. The narratives make clear that the descriptions of Kurdish places, or of identities surrounded by these places, involve either plain or realistic observations only, based on destructive facts, or depend on a pessimistic future for Kurdistan and Kurdish identity. This pessimistic portrayal of Kurdistan is formed by internal and external factors.

The significance of Kurdish as a component of identity is often underlined, and the degeneration of Kurdistan is narrated through a lack of use of Kurdish. When the novel’s characters prefer to speak Turkish rather than Kurdish, this signifies their assimilation, according to the narrators. In *Payiza Dereng*, for example, returning to his hometown from Stockholm after 28 years of exile, Ferda perceives a damaged Kurdistan in which people ignore the necessity of their mother tongue. Throughout the novel, he criticizes Kurds for speaking Turkish instead of Kurdish, and sometimes even regrets coming back, since observing the behaviour of his assimilated nation has made Kurdistan seem almost like a foreign land to him. As Ferda comments, “I feel as if I have returned to a foreign country rather than to my own country, with foreign people, foreign culture” (221).¹³⁴

In Cewerî’s second novel *Ez ê Yekî Bikujim*, Kurdistan is described in a similarly negative tone that addresses the assimilation and reckless attitudes towards the national consciousness of Kurdish people. When Temo is released from prison after 15 years, the only thing left of his homeland is devastation and ruin, so that he begins to regret having wasted his life in struggling for homeland and nation. Most of the novel is formed from Temo’s observations. He sees that Kurds speak Turkish even in daily life, and that the number of prostitutes has increased while Kurdish children are begging in

¹³⁴ Wek ez venegeriyabim welatê xwe, lê ez vegeriyabim welatekî xerîb, nav mirovên xerîn, kultureke xerîb.

the streets for money or stealing to survive. He feels that people have lost respect for their values and have forgotten about their identity and culture. The homeland is not as pure and united as Temo had imagined in prison, nor does he see any difference between prison and Diyarbakir; even the prisoners were friendlier than the people of Diyarbakir. He expects to be respected because he has stayed in prison in order to save his nation; but after his prison experiences, his dominant emotion is disappointment. Returning after so long to his hometown, Temo cannot even feel happy about being released since he feels like an alien in Diyarbakir: “I see myself as a stranger to this city after 15 years imprisonment (...) this city hasn’t protected me (...) the city and its inhabitants do not care” (31).¹³⁵

Again, Diana, the other leading character who is a former guerrilla and appears as a prostitute in the novel, has the same attitudes as Temo. She too describes Diyarbakir: “there are thousands of orphaned children on the streets of this city Two thousand women sell themselves in this city” (74).¹³⁶ The negative picture of ‘home-land’ is so disappointing that like Temo, Diana too frequently regrets sacrificing her life for the national cause:

This ancient city has become hell to me. This city, in whose rescue I was involved, now eats me, makes me suffer. I thought to return as a hero to this city, but I have become a prostitute in it. This city whose honour I wanted to save from the boots [army] of foreigners, now has [crushed] my honour under its foot (107).¹³⁷

A similar sense of assimilation in homeland is also apparent in the novels of Mezher Bozan and Lokman Polat. For example, Bozan refers in *Asim* to Kurdish soldiers who have adapted into the Turkish state system, ignoring their own national and cultural identity. In Polat’s *Robin* (2004), it is also argued that censure of Kurds for speaking Turkish rather than Kurdish results from a national deficiency in common sense that increases daily. The ignorance and negligence among Kurds about their national and cultural identity is emphasized through various criticisms.

As noted above, speaking Turkish and not the mother tongue signifies a lack of national awareness that leads to a pessimistic image of Kurdistan. For example, in

¹³⁵ Piştî panzdeh salên hepsê, ez xwe xerîbê vî bajarî dibînim (...) vî bajarî tu xwedîtî li min nekiriye (...) Qet ne xema bajêr û bajariyan e.

¹³⁶ Aniha li vî bajarî bi hezeran zarokên bêxwedî li kuçan hene. Du hezar jin xwe li vî bajarî diforişin.

¹³⁷ Ev bajarê qedîm li min bûye dojah. Ev bajarê ku ez demekê li dû rizgarkirina wî bûm, niha min dixwe, êşê bi min dide kişandin. Ev bajarê ku min bawer dikir ez ê rojekê mîna qehremenekê lê vegerim, niha lê bûme qehpik. Bajarê ku min dixwest rûmeta wî ji bin postalên biyaniyan rizgar bikim, niha rûmeta min lê di bin lingan de ye.

Xurşîd Mîrzengî's *Belqitî*, Kurds are deprived of their basic rights and there is no resistance to this destructive repression. The novel narrates life in Kurdish cities, mainly Diyarbakir, during the 1930s when speaking Kurdish was comprehensively banned. It focuses not only on the oppression of Kurds, by the new Turkish state but also concentrates on the deteriorating relationships among Kurds who fail to struggle at all. Although Kurdistan is controlled by the Turkish authorities, the Kurds do not launch any resistance movement against them, preferring simply to speak Turkish and avoid any problems. According to the circumstances in the novel, there can be no positive or optimistic prospects for Kurdistan.

In Diyar Bohtî's *Gul Bişkivîn*, the narrator explicitly mentions that speaking Turkish is regarded as a high-status symbol of prestige (78), since Kurdish characters are involved mainly with their own needs rather than with national concerns. For instance, in Xurşîd Mîrzengî's *Sînor*, Kurdish characters either conform to the restrictions imposed by Turkish soldiers, or comply with the dictates of the Turkish state, or conceal their Kurdish identity and introduce themselves as Turks. Their economic concerns and personal safety become their priorities. To be able to survive becomes their main concern even if this leads to immorality or a betrayal of the national struggle. In *Nado Kurê Xwe Firof* by Riza Çolpan, not only does Nado, the main character, ignore the national struggle but he also makes a deal with somebody over his son, whom he considers an obstacle in his life. In this case, Kurdistan does not refer to a land of struggle for independence, but a land of struggle to survive.

In this sense, the passive attitudes of Kurds towards the Turkish state system are seen as one of the internal reasons for the negative image of Kurdistan. In some novels, even if the protagonist is patriotic enough to struggle, the other Kurds do not support him. For example, in Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç's *Mamostayê Zinaran*, the only patriotic teacher in Seydo's village cannot get help from other Kurdish villagers to fight against the assimilative Turkish education system. They are either too scared to become involved in any resistance or else they become easily compliant with the Turkish military and spy on the rebels. The increase in banning and oppression does not lead to a rise in resistance but to complete resignation.

Indeed, when all the novels in diaspora are taken into consideration, it is clear that the conflicts and discordances within different political parties stand as a significant obstacle to unity and solidarity. Diyar Bohtî's novel entitled *Mexmûr*, which focuses on the harsh conditions in Makhmur camp, is the main example underlining this argument. With regard to the external reasons forcing Kurds to migrate from their lands to the

refugee camps, the novel also considers how the conflicts between the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party, in Kurdish *Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan* [PDK]),¹³⁸ and PKK negatively affect the lives of refugees. The setting of the novel, which deals with political conditions during the 1990s, encompasses the borders of Turkish Kurdistan and reaches to the borders of Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurds from Turkish Kurdistan seeking asylum in Iraqi Kurdistan are forced to leave the refugee camp and go to Mosul, which is included in the territories under the Ba‘th regime.

These refugees live in poverty and difficulty due to the KDP Peshmergas, whose actions represent further opposition toward the PKK. The novel argues that different ideologies within Kurdish political parties complicate the lives of Kurds so that Kurds not only suffer at the hands of sovereign states, but are also victimized because of internal disunity. The Kurdish refugees are confused by the approach of the Peshmergas and question the reasons:

Some used to say it is the fate of the Kurds; some used to say it is due to our stupidity; some used to swear to the KDP; some used to criticize the management of the camp; some of them even used to criticize the party itself (77).¹³⁹

The narrator states that Kurds are caught between two fires; the KDP says “the PKK is operating very openly in the south and as a result of this the Turks are aiming at us” (83);¹⁴⁰ while the PKK asks, “why the KDP is collaborating with the enemy and attacking us” (96).¹⁴¹ The narrator strongly criticizes the Kurds but particularly the Kurdish political parties, which are in conflict with each other: “The Kurds consider punching as children’s play. If they do not smash each other’s heads, break each other’s arms, smash each other’s noses they feel as though they have not had a fight” (Ibid).¹⁴² In these conditions, freedom appears as a weak option that drags all the characters, but mainly the protagonist, into hopelessness since, “unless one has his own free country, it does not matter wherever he goes; all places are the same for him” (140).¹⁴³

Like *Mexmûr*, Zeynel Abidîn’s *Binefşên Tariyê* refers directly to the conflict between the KDP, the Peshmergas and the PKK guerrillas. The novel’s narrator states

¹³⁸ A Kurdish party based in Iraqi Kurdistan, the PDK was first established in Iranian Kurdistan in 1946 under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani. The party currently plays a leading role in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

¹³⁹ Hina digot; qedera me Kurdan wiha ye; hina digot; ji bêaqiliya me ye; hina dijûn ji PDKê re dikirin; hina rêveberiya kampê rexne dikir û hina jê partî rexne dikir.

¹⁴⁰ PDK dibêje; PKK li Başûr eşkere xebatê dike; ev jî dibe sedem ku Tirk bi ser me de werin.

¹⁴¹ PKK jî dibêje; çima PDK bi dijminê Kurdan re dibe yek bi ser me de tê.

¹⁴² Di nav Kurdan de şerê bi kulman weke listoka zarokan tê dîtin. Ku serên hev nekin derav, destêan hev neşkînin, pozên hev neperçiqînin çawa ku li hev nexistîn. Bêhna wan bi tiştên piçûk dernakeve.

¹⁴³ Heta welatekî azad yê mirov tune be, mirov bi kû ve jî biçe weke hev e.

that in the past there was unity among Kurds as they used to support both the Peshmergas and PKK simultaneously; however, this was no longer the case: “Many dear people among us at that time aided Molla Mustafa with loyalty. But today? [Look] What are we Kurds doing to each other? What are they doing against us?” (124).¹⁴⁴ Along with these novels, the main issue in almost all of Lokman Polat’s novels also becomes the fragmented and divided counsels between ideologies, strategies and objectives, along with the political deadlocks dictated by the Iraqi and Turkish states. In *Kodnav Viyan*, both the main characters, Robîn and Viyan, who are involved in the national struggle against these states, also struggle against various Kurdish organizations and parties. The narrator in *Zêna* describes the conflicts between the Kurdish parties in the villages of Kurdistan; “there were two groups in the village. Wherever they came across each other, blood would be shed. The party that found a higher and more secure place would defeat the other” (70).¹⁴⁵

Laleş Qaso’s *Xezeba Azadiyê* takes place in Kurdistan during the 1980s, when the persecution and constraints on Kurds had increased; however, rather than highlighting the national struggle by way of the characters, the fondness of men towards women is repeatedly emphasized throughout the narration. In addition to all the novels mentioned above, Lokman Polat’s *Filozof* can be exemplified as the main novel to portray the common negative image of Kurdistan. The novel, based mainly on the failures of Kurds rather than their glories, reconsiders Kurdistan under the lens of deficiencies and mistakes,

since the Kurds do not have their own state, they have lost everything. Kurds have been deprived of everything. Due to lack of a state and national bodies, all the Kurdish institutions are a mess. This chaos shows itself in everything from politics to literature. A council that includes all four parts of Kurdistan has never been established. No national institutions have been founded (146).¹⁴⁶

This negative image of Kurdistan is due not only to the lack of a nation-state and unity among Kurds but also to prevailing socio-cultural conditions. As well as politically, ‘home-land’ is also destroyed socially and culturally, and throughout the

¹⁴⁴ Çi însanên me yê hêja di wê demê de bi dilsozî alikariya Mele Mistefa kirin. Lê ev ro? Em Kurd çi tînin serê hev... Ew, çi li serê me tînin?

¹⁴⁵ Li gund du partî hebûn ku li kûderê hevûdu bidîtana, xwîn dirijîya. Kê cihê asê û bilind, yanî kaş zeft bikira, zora partîya din bibir.

¹⁴⁶ Ji bo ku dewleteke kurdan yê netewî tûne ye, kurdan her tiştê xwe hûnda kirîye. Kurd ji hemû tiştan bêpar mane. Ji ber tûnebûna dewletê û dezgeyên, sazgehên netewî di hemû tiştên kurdan de tevlihevî heye. Karên sîyasî bigir hetanî yê edebî tevlihevî xwe dide nîşandan [...] Ji bo herçar perçeyên Kurdistanê Konseyek netewî nehat damezrandin. Dezgehên millî yê gelêrî nehatine avakirin.

novels, a great range of references to issues associated with the destructive aspects of the feudal system is referred to. For instance, the honour killings, arranged marriages, oppression and threats to which Kurdish women have been subjected, and through which they have been deprived of any rights and enterprises, are frequently narrated. Internal factors destroying the Kurdistan image are also evaluated through different portraits of women who share the same sufferings. In addition to external factors imposed by sovereign states, emphasis is placed on the feudal, conservative, and patriarchal features of Kurdistan that have prevented Kurds from establishing a nation-state or improving their quality of life.

Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç in particular, in his two novels *Siya Dema Borî* and *Rondikên Hêviyên Wenda*, criticizes the feudal system in Kurdistan where women are oppressed and killed in the name of honour. In *Siya Dema Borî* one of the characters, Leyla, tells Berjîn that

over there the wing of fairies were broken, their colours faded, and they were destitute. No one heard their groaning and crying (...) Those women in the South [Iraqi Kurdistan] of the homeland have been killed, burnt up, and suffocated by feudal and backward men in the name of honour and grace (208).¹⁴⁷

In *Ez ê Yekî Bikujim*, both Temo and Diana complain about the patriarchal personalities of their fathers, who refuse to let them speak about their lives or take any action based on their free will. In *Zêna* by Mezher Bozan, Zêna is forced to marry the son of a tribal leader who had previously kidnapped her. As the narrator says, “Zena, like other Kurdish girls, has been deprived of luck and fate as well. She has not attained her desire (...) it has been the same everywhere and throughout all time” (176).¹⁴⁸ In this case, Zena is forced to separate from her beloved. In contrast to novels written in Kurdistan, separation between lovers does not always occur for political reasons; here it is due mainly to the conservative and feudal structure of Kurdish society.

In addition to negative elements focusing on conservative, patriarchal and feudal aspects, the narrations express how Kurdistan is corrupted by the actions of immoral betrayers. For example, *Xidê Naxirwan û Tevkuştine Dêrsim*, by Riza Çolpan, is based on the massacre in the Dersim region in the 1930s in which many *aghas* betray the

¹⁴⁷ Baskên periyên li wir şikestî, rengên wan kîmyaya xwe wendakirî û stûxwar in. Kesî axîn û hewara wan jî nebihîst (...) Ew jinên li başûrê welêt bi nave namûs û şerefê, bi hêla mêrên feudal û mêtîngeniyan ve hatine kuştin, hatine sotin, hatine fetisandin in.

¹⁴⁸ Zênayê jî wek pîr keçên kurdan bê sût û bê qeder mabû. Miradê xwe nekiribû (...) Ev yek di her wextî de û li her deverê eynî bû.

rebels and cause the rebels lose their case. Similarly in *Gundikê Dono* by Mahmut Baksî, villages are described in relation to conflicts between tribes, the misuse of religion by shaikhs, and pressure from landowners against the peasants, while *Sê Şev û Sê Roj* and *Wêran* by Laleş Qaso both show that ‘home’ is not only destroyed by political conflicts and on-going war. In fact, internal conflicts among Kurds also lead to the corruption of Kurdistan. As one of the characters in *Wêran* states, “our homeland is also a hell” (*ceheneme jî welatê meye*) (293). *Gundikê Dono*, which recounts a negative aspect of Kurdistan caused by the oppressive behaviour of *aghas* in Kurdish villages, ends on a pessimistic note when a character called Zibeyrê Ehmê says in the final sentence: “Hacı Zorav went away, his son replaced him (...) I know the land of Xerzan will change one day, but I will not [live to] see it” (94).¹⁴⁹

Even in Diyar Bohtî’s non-political novel *Soryaz* (2008), it is stated that betrayal is the worst situation in the world. In this respect, in Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç’s *Dîlên li ber Pûkê*, cooperation by Kurdish tribes with the Turkish state and joining the war as a member of the Turkish army are considered as betrayals. These tribes are seen as the enemies of the Kurds and like a disease they need to be treated as soon possible since “the sense of tribe was above the sense of Kurdishness” (269).¹⁵⁰ The storyteller in the novel questions his role in the Dersim massacre and feels that he has betrayed his own nation, saying, “I carried the gun of the enemy, isn’t it betrayal?” (24).¹⁵¹ He accepts the fact that the state has deceived them, but still regrets what he has done during this period and cannot forgive himself for believing this bloodthirsty country (269). In *Xewnên Pînekirî*, the narrator clearly emphasizes that the issue of betrayal is very common among Kurds: “Betrayal has left its mark on Kurdish history as a filthy and besmirched label” (59);¹⁵² she also emphasizes the traitorous Kurds themselves rather than the enemy, asking, “why do the Kurds produce so many traitors?” (96).¹⁵³ Similarly, in *Xaltîka Zeyno*, Ferho once again questions the prevalence of betrayal among Kurds through the protagonist Zeyno; she is the mother of a guerrilla and for political reasons has been in prison. She regards the tribes as the source of betrayal since:

Tribalism causes dichotomy and lives on fratricide and hostility. Even the enemy deepened and extended this hostility and dichotomy among the Kurds. It is conflicted and

¹⁴⁹ Hacî Zorav çû, kurê wî ket cihê wî (...) ez dizanim, Warê Xerzan ê rojek biguhere, lê ez nebînim.

¹⁵⁰ Hestê eşîrî li pêş hestê Kurdayetî bû.

¹⁵¹ Min çeka dijmin hilgirtiye ev ne xiyamet e!

¹⁵² Xiyaneta mîna demxeya reş î kirêt ku li pê çavên dîroka Kurdan ketiye [...]

¹⁵³ Çima hewqasî xayin ji Kurdan derdikevin?...

sees life from the viewpoint of fratricide and hostility; until the enemy came, the conflicts and destructiveness of fratricide were deepened among Kurds... why do we have so many traitors and factions? (96).¹⁵⁴

In addition to betrayals that occurred in the historical past of the Kurds, *Bigrî Heval* shows a different kind of betrayal among the guerrillas in the mountains. The novel suggests that even a guerrilla who does not obey the principles of the organization can be denounced as a 'traitor' (*xayîn*) in a way that implies there should be "death to traitors" (61).¹⁵⁵ This draws attention to the possibility of internal conflicts even in the mountains, with the claim that: "The commander of the camp was abusing them for his own personal interest and for his malicious intention" (133).¹⁵⁶ Through *Mamostayê Zinaran*, Aykoç looks at more recent betrayals among Kurds by referring to imams and village headmen working as spies for the state against guerrillas. He emphasizes how, "aghas and sheikhs cooperate with the Turkish state against an independent Kurdistan" (109).¹⁵⁷

Similarly, *Gundikê Dono* reveals that Kurds, in one way or another, have been disloyal to the notion of unity, as most *aghas* of Kurdish villages have collaborated with a gendarme to deter the national struggle of the Kurds. In *Ronakbîr*, the narrator criticizes Kurds in general, sayings "Kurds are a corrupted nation. A nation surrendered to occupiers. A surrendered nation would not feel ashamed of this" (57).¹⁵⁸ Similarly, *Payiza Dereng*, with its highly critical attitudes and highly autobiographical elements,¹⁵⁹ responds to the fact that the reality of Kurdistan is reflected in the fact that one Kurd can be a guerrilla while his neighbour is a 'village guard' (*korucu*)¹⁶⁰ cooperating with the Turkish state. As Ferda, the protagonist says,

¹⁵⁴ Eşîretî dubendî ye û li ser rêz û berberî û birakujiyê jîyanê dibîne, heya ji dijmin hatiye ev şikestîk û dubendiya birakujî di navbera Kurdan da kûr kiriye, fereh kiriye... Gelo çima hewqas ças û kurkurîk zêde ne?....

¹⁵⁵ Mirin jibo xayînan.

¹⁵⁶ Fermandarê kampê ew bi berjewendiya xwe seksî û nîyetên xwe yên gemarî bikar dianî.

¹⁵⁷ Axa û şêx bi tevê dewleta Tirk bûbin yek û li dij Kurdistanek serbixwe ne.

¹⁵⁸ Kurd miletekî xerabe ye! Miletekî ku bindestî qebûl kiriye. Û miletê ku bindestiyê qebûl bike jî ji xwe fedî nake.

¹⁵⁹ Both the main character Ferda and the novelist Cewerî have lived in Stockholm since 1980. Ferda in the novel is between two different worlds (homeland and host country); Cewerî himself has expressed similar thoughts: "When I am in Sweden, I say to myself I will go to my country, when I am in my country, I say to myself I will return home." The interview is available at: http://www.nefel.com/articles/article_detail.asp?RubricNr=7&ArticleNr=2827, accessed 15 August 2012.

¹⁶⁰ These village guards (*korucu*) are mostly Kurdish paramilitaries armed and paid by the Turkish state to fight the PKK. Jongerden (2007:21) comments that "as Kurdish allies of the Turkish armed forces, the 'korucu' enjoyed virtual immunity and could use their arms for the exercise of private violence as well." A Turkish Parliamentary report in 1995 confirmed that village guards were involved in a wide range of illegal activities, including killing, extortion and drug smuggling (Yildiz 2004).

this is a true picture of the country. This is a picture of the reason and result of a long history and centuries of slavery. This is our regular internal hostility (...) this is an evil worm and this worm is eating away our hearts and brain (254).¹⁶¹

In the novel *Kewa Marî*, a similar image of Kurdistan is portrayed, becoming clear as a former guerrilla speaks:

Nobody will act with the same malignancy, as has been done by one Kurd to another Kurd. If the Kurds did not have betrayers and traitors, would they be failing in the revolts? If Sheikh Said's own brother-in-law had not been involved in informing, would Sheikh Said have been arrested? If village guards did not exist, what could governments do? And if some Kurds were not informers, would I have been convicted? (34).¹⁶²

In Laleş Qaso's trilogy, *Sê Şev û Sê Roj*, *Xezeba Azadiyê* and *Wêran*, the disloyalty of Kurds is often regarded as just as significant as the interference of external factors against national unity. In *Sê Şev û Sê Roj*, the main character states, "we are the most profane and traitorous" (202).¹⁶³ Similarly in *Wêran*, the protagonist Circîs holds Kurds directly responsible for their own failure by saying "they neither let Kurds become united, nor do Kurds themselves get united" (36),¹⁶⁴ implying that he believes that "even if they establish their own state, it will be worthless" (280).¹⁶⁵ In his novels, *Hawara Dîcleyê I* and *Hawara Dîcleyê II*, Uzun concentrates on the lives of the Bedir Khan family and also handles the issue of internal conflicts. The narrator not only criticizes the emirates that negotiate with the Ottoman Empire, but also examines how Kurds fail to achieve their own statehood because of individual self-interests and betrayals. In his earlier novel *Bîra Qederê* (1995), Uzun refers to the tribes cooperating with the state against the Sheikh Said Rebellion¹⁶⁶ and denounces them as traitors.

¹⁶¹ Ev resimekî welêt yê rastîn e. Ev resimê dîrokeke dirêj e û sebeb û encama bindestmayîna me ya sedsalan e. Ev dijminatîya me ya hundurîn û herdemî ye (...) ev kurmekî xerab e û ev kurm e ku ji dil û mêjîyê me dixwe.

¹⁶² Xirabiya Kurd bi Kurd kiriye û niha jî dike kes bi kesek nake. Heger ceş û xainên Kurdan nebana serîhaldanên netewî yên Kurdsn têk diçûn? Heger burayê Şêx Seîd, Kasim sîxurî nekirina Şêx Seîd dihat girtin? Heger cerdewan nebana, hukumat dikaribû çî bike? Û heger hinek Kurdan îxbarci nebana ez dibûm mehkûm?

¹⁶³ Kafîr û xayînên herî mezin em in.

¹⁶⁴ Ne wan Kurd kirîbûn yek û ne jî Kurd bi xwe bûbûn yek.

¹⁶⁵ Bibin dewlet jî wê qîmet neke.

¹⁶⁶ As mentioned earlier, discussion is ongoing as to whether the Sheikh Said rebellion is based on religious and tribal reactions to the modernity of Kemalists or has a national base. A number of scholars and researchers depict the rebellion as a combination of Kurdish nationalism and Islamic grievances against the new Republic (e.g., Olson 1989; Romano 2006; White 2000), but for Kurds, the rebellion has been part of their national struggle (Jongerden 2007: 25), as it is in the Kurdish novelistic discourse. For

Unlike those written in Turkish Kurdistan, in the novels written in the diaspora, village traditions are generally not praised, but are considered backward and destructive. *Labîranta Cînan*, which concentrates on the experiences in a village school of a teacher called Kevanot, paints a very negative picture of rural life. The village is depicted as a place where lots of superstitions prevail and weird incidents are occurring, since the villagers make their livings through old traditions and are resistant to any developments brought in by newcomers such as Kevanot, when he comes to the village as a teacher. Villages are not the source of a naïve, pastoral life, but are seen as the root of backwardness and a battlefield for the skirmishes of landowners and shaikhs. The same criticism is made in *Kewa Marî* by Lokman Polat, who accuses villagers of narrow-mindedness for not questioning any taboos.

In light of the above analysis, one can argue that novels deconstruct the meanings attributed to the homeland by diasporan communities, as many scholars and researchers have explained. Generally speaking, because of a geographical existence away from ‘home’, coupled with an idealized longing to return there, diasporas are frequently characterized as having an ‘imagined’ or ‘mythical’ home (Anderson, 1983; Blunt, 2003; George, 2003; Golan, 2002; Gowans, 2003; Veronis, 2007; Yeh, 2005). It is argued that homeland-oriented diasporic groups locate their homeland within a mythologized, idealized and historicized discourse. In this connection, Safran (1991) argues that diasporans articulate the original homeland, along with myth, memory and vision, as an idealized place to which they will eventually return. In other words, the idea of ‘home’ includes a return to a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination, a place of origin (Brah 1996: 4,192), and through the construction of alternative ‘homes’, the “imagined ‘home’ is a mythic place, imbued with the desire of the diasporic imagination rather than the real place” (Brah 1996: 192).¹⁶⁷

detailed research on the rebellion see Robert Olson’s *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion 1880-1925* (1989); Hakan Özoğlu’s *Nationalism and Kurdish Notables in the Late Ottoman-Early Republican Era* (2004); and Martin Van Bruinessen’s *Agha, Shaikh and State; The Social and Political Structure of Kurdistan* (1992a [1978]) and his article “Popular Islam, Kurdish Nationalism and Rural Revolt: The Rebellion of Shaikh Said in Turkey” (1925) in Bak and Benecke, eds., *Religion and Rural Revolt* (1984).

¹⁶⁷ Safran’s definition of diasporic communities (1991: 83-84) is that they “regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as a place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return.” Brubaker (2005:5) considers the real or imagined homelands of diasporas as “an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty” and confirms that earlier diaspora writings position homeland as “mythologized”, “idealized”, and “historicized”. Discussing the ‘diasporic imaginary’, Fludernik, among others, notes that this, “suggests that people who identify themselves as part of a diaspora are creating an imaginary – a landscape of dream and fantasy that answers their desires” (2003 xi). This argument claims that physical spaces are not sufficient to enable migrants to identify them with themselves and that the migrants need to creating imaginary images that represent “what [they] should like to be” (Mishra 1996: 423). Brah’s study emphasizes the imaginary aspect of the diaspora concept, and suggests that diaspora “delineates a field of identifications where ‘imagined communities’ are forged

Accordingly, diasporic literature in general is considered, in relation to certain elements, as a literary diasporic piece of work that is usually based on a painful displacement from the homeland; the cruel journeys experienced during the displacement; and stories of adaptation to, or disintegration within the new environment. Most importantly, the idea of 'home' left behind is reinvented through imaginary and mythical features within the narratives because, according to Mardorossian, exiled literature "constructs a binary logic between an alienating 'here' and a romanticized 'homeland'" (2002: 16). However, analysis of Kurdish diasporic novels shows that 'home-land' in these novels is not romanticized or idealized, a finding which challenges the fictionalized 'homes' model argued by leading theorists and scholars. It is possible to see the difference when comparisons are made with research conducted on diasporic articulations in literature. For example, with regard to the articulation of 'home' in East African Asian literature, Simatei (2011: 58) states that, "writers as diverse as Moyez Vassanji, Peter Nazareth, Jameela Siddiqi, and Neera Kapur-Dromson, profile [... diaspora's] essentialist and regressive self-portrayal as a guest community valuing myths of cultural purity, homeland and return." Tay (2011: 110) examines the writing of Rushdie for its representation of India, noting that; "India is a forsaken and idealized site of the past that he recreates textually for the global diasporic present as an imaginary homeland."

Thus, diasporic writers tend to imagine the origin of country and the concept of nation with pleasant moments, which Gayatri Gopinath confirms in relation to the South Asian Diaspora nation; it is an "imaginary homeland frozen in an idyllic moment outside history" (2005: 4). Due the strong sense of displacement, the writer needs to create an imagined and fictionalized world to ease the harsh realities of exile. In relation to the works of V.S. Naipaul who is considered to be a good example of an exile, Dascalu (2007:100) underlines the imagined life of characters and imaginary landscapes in an idealized manner meshed with imaginative aspects. Quite differently, in Kurdish

within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory" (Brah 1996: 196). In relation to her argument, displacement urges diasporic members not to limit themselves to accounts of their real world, since they are also involved in alternative versions of home through which to "express the imaginary, the dreams, the fantasies, the allegories, the desires, that usually find expression through metaphors" (Galván 2010: 6). Thus, according to Brah's argument (1996), diasporic members articulate metaphorical spaces in producing images of home instead of dealing with the delineation of real spaces. Accordingly, even for stateless diasporic groups such as Armenians (Payaslian 2010) and Basques (see Totoricagüena 2004), in the case of a geographical existence away from 'home' coupled with an idealized longing for return, diasporic groups will construct romanticized images of 'homeland'. In light of these assumptions, it is important to note that Kurdish diasporic literary writing reverses the arguments on configurations of 'imaginary homeland' by diasporas.

diasporic discourse the novelists themselves often emphasize the role of reality in their fiction. It is clear that memory is used by both Asian and Kurdish diasporic writers but from a different perspective. While Indian diasporic writings “construct imaginary happy homelands (which in reality might be the opposite) from the fragmentary odds and ends of memory” (Jha and Ravichandran 2001:196), Kurdish diasporic writing, from the tragic experiences of memory, concentrates on a fragmented homeland.

Certainly the pleasant and the imaginary construction of homeland is not limited to Asian literature. Zhang (2004: 106) confirms the fact that in Chinese diasporic poetry in Canada, “‘home’ is a ghostly negotiation between fact and fantasy.” Similarly, in his study of Koreans in Japan, John Lie focuses on the narratives of ethnic Koreans in post-war Japan, commenting that “the realm of imagination frequently reigns majestically over the impoverished land of reality” (2008: 49). Similarly, the Japanese case also shares similar features with Korean diasporic figures, about which White (2003: 319) remarks, “the ‘homeland’ perspective on the nature of its diaspora populations had generated an idealized image of a ‘true’ Japanese overseas community.” And on some occasions exiled writers, not because they imagine it in this way but on purpose, display an alternative homeland that is different from the actual one; in this regard, Dalia Kandiyoti (2009: 127) suggests in relation to Mexican diasporic literature in America that Mexican diasporic writers “offer new imaginary spatial narratives to change the way.”

These discussions are valid for the literature of Jewish and Armenian diasporas which are considered to be the most ancient diasporic groups. Franco (2012: 107) argues that ‘home’ for diasporic American Jews, is “less a real place and more a place in memory, a subject for theory, a work of art.” Similarly, Huyssen (2003: 150), confirms that there is an attempt by Jewish diasporas to “create a unified or even mythic memory of the lost homeland, of the history of displacement, and the desire to return”, which also contributes to producing a unitary national memory for the nation. The Armenian diasporic literature also conceptualizes a similar notion of ‘homeland’ that is not constructed on the existing realities but depends on an “idealized heritage” (Oshagan 1986: 224) to create imaginary meanings related to ‘home’. According to Oshagan (Ibid: 225), this imaginary approach applied in the literature of Armenian diaspora softens “the shock of brutal reality on Armenian sensibilities by presenting a picture of life cleansed of its uglier aspects.” In contrast to this view, Kurdish diasporic novels attempt to reflect reality in the way it is enmeshed with strong ideological and pessimistic perspectives, opposing the argument that “the exile is subject to bouts of

nostalgia, in which memories of the past are richer than the actual present” (Berg 1996:4).

One might expect to encounter a similar portrait in Palestinian literature since their status is the same as that of the Kurds; however, the research on Palestinian literature produced a different picture that has more similarities with the cases mentioned above. Al-Nakib explains how, as a Palestinian diasporic writer, Yasmine Zahran’s novel *A Beggar at Damascus Gate* describes “actual Palestine...under siege, enclosed by walls, divided forcibly into unliveable cantons”; however, “Zahran’s novel traces the contours of a ‘virtual’ Palestine not the ‘actual’ one” (Al-Nakib 2005: 238, 266). Imaginary homeland in Palestinian diasporic literature often allows the exiled writer to create the sense of stability and security of their dreams, in contrast to the actual occupied and conflicted conditions of Palestine.

It can be said that the portrayals of Kurdish homeland are different from the findings of ethnographic and anthropological research undertakings. According to Alinia (2004), whose PhD research was based on Kurdish migrants in Sweden, homeland meanings are multiple in a real as well as an imagined sense; and can be both idealized and/or associated with traumatic experiences due to conflicts and oppression from the sovereign state. Similarly, for the diasporans in France, homeland is associated with movements, war, persecution, political instability, states of emergency, atrocity, assimilation, national struggle, and nostalgia (Khayati 2008: 158). Both Alinia and Khayati maintain that, in contrast to diasporic fictional narrative, the traumatic experiences narrated by the respondents are mainly based on external factors such as war, state oppression, and persecution, etc. However, in diasporic novelistic discourse, there are also internal criticisms relating to the Kurds themselves.

Kurdish diasporic novels fashion a fairly negative portrayal of Kurdistan, which is based mainly on the lack of national awareness among Kurds. According to the novels, Kurdish characters ignore the significance of the national struggle and their Kurdistan is not fully politicized. Kurds either accept the superiority of the Turkish authorities or even of some of the other characters (mainly tribal leaders and landowners) negotiate with the state for their own self-interest. Many characters are criticized for speaking Turkish, which again signifies the lack of national awareness. In addition to the lack of a national struggle and the lack of support of other Kurds, accepting the existence of Turkish sovereignty, the cooperation of some Kurds with the Turkish authorities, along with social or cultural backwardness combine to construct a very negative image of Kurdistan that also involves various criticisms.

Most importantly, the analysis of novelistic narratives identifies meanings attached to the notion of 'home' in a transnational context that do not agree with discussions on the meanings of 'home' in cases of displacement. Instead of an imaginary and metaphorical world, the ancestral homeland is relocated in an actual context where facts are more significant than desires and dreams. In other words, literary 'home-land' is based not on a fantasy containing idealized features of 'home', but on factual experiences that even dismantle the idea of a unified 'home' through a constant emphasis on 'home's' negative aspects. In this connection, the assertion of Sarup (1994: 94), who associates 'home' "with pleasant memories, intimate situations, a place of warmth and protective security amongst parents, brothers and sisters, loved ones", is strongly contradicted by the meanings of homeland in the novels.

It is also important to emphasize the fact that the writers discussed above are doubly displaced, being first stateless, and secondly diasporic which leads to various complex 'home-land' configurations. In relation to the reasons for critical and negative portrayals of Kurdish 'home-land' or Kurdish identity, there are two main factors that result in such articulations: the first relates to the conditions of being exilic, the second is bound to the particular case of Kurds. Despite coming from a similar background or sharing the same national concerns, writing within or out of national boundaries affects the view of 'home-land' and identity. These writers might share the sense of statelessness with the writers within the national borders; however, the actual physical distance from national borders sharpens their understanding of how it is 'back home' and turn their nostalgic aspirations into critical approaches. Angelika Bammer (1992: vii-xi) defines the critical narratives of exilic writers as "instability of home as a referent", and that "on all levels and in all places, it seems 'home' [...] is either disintegrating or being radically redefined."

In relation to Bammer's definition, in terms of Kurdish diasporic writers, distance generates an awareness through which 'home-land' and identity are both disintegrated and radically redefined. Benefiting from the position of outsider and a sense of exclusion, the space of exile is transformed into a vantage point from they self-critically view home, from its political aspects (lack of unity, betrayal within the national struggle) to the socio-cultural realms (the oppressive influence on Kurds of landowners and shaikhs, honour killings). As Seyhan (2000:20) also notes, exile becomes "...a condition of critical reflection; its writers find the narrative and cultural coordinates to offer another version of their lands' history, a version free of official doctrine and rhetoric, a history of the actual human cost of transformation and migration."

Secondly, these novelists represent certain groups of people who share similar characteristics; e.g., they used to be involved in politics, fled to Europe mainly after the 1980 military coup and suffered many traumatic experiences. As Alinia (2004: 239) mentions in relation to Kurdish migrants in Sweden, “homeland, in the sense of the places to which they are emotionally attached, is inaccessible for many of them in different ways. It is also often associated with traumatic memories, danger, and risk.” Similarly Khayati (2008: 105), referring to the Kurdish refugees in France and Sweden as being diasporan, speaks of what is “... a traumatic experience that makes a deep mark on the memory of those Kurds who were forced to leave Kurdistan.” The arguments of Alinia and Khayati are also valid for the literary works mentioned in this thesis, which are based on traumatic experiences that caused the authors to leave their lands. The homeland constructed on traumatic and tragic experiences is, for sure, related to continuing socio-political conditions in the Kurdish homeland.

Although keeping their political ties with their political parties, the authors have been mainly involved in literary production in a such a way that novelistic discourse becomes a key site where they engage with and debate their political opinions and oppositions. Certainly there is no political and ideological unity regarding homeland that might become the focal point of their political critiques. On the whole they direct their critiques at conflicting national politics both in their homeland and their host country. As the majority of diasporic novelists are from Sweden, it is worth pointing out that there are various Kurdish organisations in Sweden, which are at odds with each other. For example, the Federation of Kurdish Associations, influenced by Massoud Barzani’s KDP, is known for their anti-PKK attitude; while the Council of Kurdish Associations in Sweden is for the most part dominated by sympathizers of the PKK. Then there is the Kurdish Union in Sweden, which consists almost entirely of members affiliated to the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDP-I) (cf. Khayati 2008).

Being already politicized migrants before their exilic life, the authors have produced their literary renderings of homeland in accordance with the organization or party to which they are affiliated, with particular emphasis on critiques, which, in turn, depict the ideological representation. In other words, due to the absence of singular national politics, they invest their literary visions of homeland in the socio-political dilemma posed by political circumstances in both the homeland that they left behind and within the Kurdish circle in their host countries. They even criticize the other diasporic writers’ political stands in their fictional and non-fictional books; this also shows that they limit themselves within developments in diaspora only. For example,

Medenî Ferho's critical book, *Rewşa Romana Kurdî* (2011) includes despite its general title only the diasporic novelists. Furthermore, in his book he either criticizes certain diasporic authors for their lack of attention to the national struggle of the PKK or accuses them of ignoring in their narratives the historical and socio-cultural aspects of the Kurds.

Therefore, the diasporic authors mentioned in this thesis are both physically distanced from the heated conflict and immediate developments in their homeland, and either cannot or have not cut their ties with transnational politics in Europe. This constantly creates in their prose narratives a pessimistic and critical perspective.

2.2. Diasporic Memory: From the Individual's Narratives to the Collective Past

The first section of this chapter mentions that there are a few novels that employ the experiences of exiles, but the majority of them are mainly concerned with Kurdistan-related issues, either as personal experiences before the exile, or the historical past of Kurds. In other words, "individually experienced activities fuse personal biography with history" (Agnew 2005: 21), and diasporic subjects explicitly invoke a 'home-land' which, according to McLeod, "becomes primarily a mental construct built from the incomplete odds and ends of memory that survive from the past" and exists as a "fractured, discontinuous relationship with the present" (2000: 211). Accordingly, in parallel with the perspectives of Agnew (2005) and McLeod (2000), the present section argues that being away from 'home-land' in diaspora, or in actual contact with 'home-land' increases the need for novelistic discourses as a substitute for memory or to transmit their messages and views. Remembering stands as a political act, since personal memories combined with history became the "will to survive as a minority by transmitting heritage" (Chaliand and Rageau 1995: xv-xvi).

This research does not argue that Kurdish novelistic discourse is the main or only field through which Kurdish writers share their messages and ideological frameworks with others. It is worth bearing in mind that diasporic writers have, on the contrary, been utilising all the available means, e.g., websites, journals and chronicles, conferences, and so on, to bring both collective and individual issues to the wider audience. For Kurdish diasporic writers, the novelistic discourse has, due to the characteristics of the genre (such as length, and content that includes both fictional and non-fictional components), become very common ground for the diasporic memory.

Thus, it can be argued that use of the elements of ‘memory’ and ‘past’ have become the main constituents of novelistic discourse produced in diaspora.

This part of the chapter aims to explore how the past is used in an exilic context to create ‘collective memory’ by the use of history and personal experiences, and how the use of ‘memory’ and ‘experiences’ have an impact on literary articulations of ‘home-land’ and ‘identity’. Two aspects will be examined, the first section focusing on the historical past, and the second on personal experiences and remembering; this section will demonstrate how the past dominates the contexts of the novels and the lives of the characters. Both sections will suggest that the use of realism and memories in the novels is the subjective production of authors. In other words, actual facts as well as what is remembered are produced according to a certain angle of vision as, undoubtedly, “collective memory is the matrix of socially situated individual memories” (Köroğlu 2009: 179). For example, while the Shaikh Said revolt is narrated in relation to national triumph in some novels, in others, the betrayal of the rebels from within caused the suppression of the revolt and execution of the leaders. Therefore, it will be argued that imaginative constructions of histories and memories are found in almost all the novels, which makes it possible to observe different perspectives, and diverse ‘home-land’ histories and circumstances.

2.2.1. The Politics of Remembering: From History to the Recent Past

The creation of a common political past and shared history in the Kurdish diasporic novels revolves around the constructing of founding myths and myths of origin, mythical figures, political success, times of prosperity and stability, defeats and crises. In other words, despite dispersals and displacements, through this diasporic collective memory, Kurdistan is reproduced and shaped by the desire for cultural reconnection, which often draws on cultural myths, stories, and symbols of ancestry.

While the past is the central backdrop in some novels, in others, past events are strongly emphasized. Historical novels such as *Serhildana Mala Eliyê Ünîs*, *Xidê Naxirwan û Tevkuştine Dêrsim*, *Dîlên li ber Pûkê*, *Marê Di Tûr De*, *Evîna Mêrxasekî*, and *Oy Dayê*, the epic novel *Ristemê Zal*, and biographical novels such as *Siya Evînê*, *Hawara Dîcleyê I*, *Hawara Dîcleyê II*, and *Bîra Qederê* all contribute a great range of information to the Kurdish collective memory. The novels *Mamostayê Zinaran*, *Şopa Rojên Buhurî*, *Gardiyan*, *Jiyanek*, *Pêlên Bêrîkirinê*, *Zenga Zêrîn* (The Rust of Gold, 2003), *Wêran*, and *Av Zelal Bû IV* are also based on real events, such as the military

coup and the harsh conditions of imprisonment during the 1980s. These novels illuminate conditions for the Kurds in both Kurdistan and Turkey following the 1980 military coup, due to which most of the novelists escaped to Western Europe to avoid persecution. Thus, diasporan novels, in general, explore various ways of thinking about Kurdish identity – as a certainty with ancient roots, an accessible Kurdistan, and a continuous relationship between past and present.

Memory is “involved in producing consciousness of the past at various social levels” (Cubitt 2007: 5), where particular memories and historical incidents in the past are selected for particular purposes. For example, *Çiroka Me*, as expressed in the title of the novel, attempts to provide a historical past of Kurds in which the narrator often refers to the rebellions of his ‘ancestors’ (*bav û kal*), stating that, “if there is no history of a person, this person is an orphan, like a child without parents” (109),¹⁶⁸ while the lack of history also creates a “lack of self-awareness” (*xwe nanasî*) (109). Therefore, Kurdish novelistic discourse becomes the literary creation of *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory) combining memory and history, which, in return, “becomes the markers of identity” (Nora 1989: 19).

Diasporic representation of ‘memory’ and ‘history’ through a blend of fact and fictions can be considered as an attempt to contribute to national identity, preserved and transmitted through novelistic discourse. Accordingly, to Arnold-De Simine (2005: 17), “the creation and dissemination of narratives about the past arise out of identity politics. Those narratives comprise foundation myths and are used to legitimate current or future aims of the group they define.” Thus, historical knowledge covering events of a particular period is formulated and articulated based on the narrators’ own experiences, perceptions, and memories.¹⁶⁹ In this sense, it can be argued that Kurdish diasporic novels, deeply embedded in past history and personal memories, can be regarded as challenging the opposition between memory and history. For example, in Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç’s *Dîlên li ber Pûkê*, through both narrative content and structure, Apê Musa’s memory narratives about the past, especially the Dersim (Tunceli) massacre and forced

¹⁶⁸ Dema dîroka mirov nebê, mirov sewî ye, wek zaroka bê dê û bav e.

¹⁶⁹ It must be noted that there is certainly a relationship between memory and history; however, contemporary theorists such as Maurice Halbwachs (*The Collective Memory*, 1950), Paul Ricoeur (*Memory, History, Forgetting*, 2000, in English 2004), and Pierre Nora (*Between Memory and History* 1984) consider that memory opposes history and vice versa. Discussing this opposition, Arnold-De Simine (2005: 8) notes that “history aims to reconstruct the past in an impartial and objective account, whereas memory rules in the past as an emotional presence.” However, in some recent literature, the opposition between history and memory has been shaken by writers such as Burke (1989), Nerone (1989) Samuel (1994), and Geary (1994) who see a parallel between ‘memory’ and ‘history’.

dispersals of Kurds, are based on his interpretation of these historical incidents, which also display the close link between individual and collective memory.

Mehdî Zana's semi-autobiographical semi-fictional novel, *Oy Dayê*, which focuses on the same period as *Dîlên li ber Pûkê*, provides a crucial link between history and memory. In *Oy Dayê*, the historical episodes form the foundation of the plot and focus on the Chaldean Şemun, a symbolic figure representing the voice of history, whom the novelist himself met in prison, as recounted in the novel's foreword. The linear development of the novel's structure is removed through Şemun's flashbacks, and the reader hears of his personal experiences during the 1915 Armenian Genocide, and the feelings of Kurds towards Ottoman decisions against non-Muslims. At the end of the novel there are also pictures of Zana in the Turkish court and in prison; these contribute not only to making the novel more like a documentary than fiction, but also intensify the link between history and personal memories. Similarly, Xurşîd Mîrzengî's *Belqîtî* takes place during the 1930s when the use of Kurdish was strictly banned and Kurds were fined for speaking their own language. This stretching back to the past confirms that the Kurdish language ban has been enforced for many years. Meanwhile the narration in Silêman Demîr's *Piştî Bîst Salan* returns to the past through the recollections of the protagonist and announces the conflicts between Kurds and non-Muslims in Kurdistan territory.

In light of the above, Mehmed Uzun can be regarded as a novelist who bases his fiction mostly on the narration of the past since 'the past' is either the central backdrop of his novels, or is addressed on numerous occasions. For example, *Bîra Qederê*, with the past as the central backdrop, concentrates on the lives of the Bedir Khan family through whom the first Kurdish journal *Kurdistan* was published, along with other titles such as *Hawar*, and *Jîn*.¹⁷⁰ Details of important literary figures such as Ehmedê Xanî and Haji Qadir Koyî are also included in relation to the Kurds' historical past. The narrator informs the reader directly about these two important literary figures. The narrator explains that:

The book is the manuscript of *Mem and Zîn* by the renowned Kurdish national poet Ehmedê Xanî. The book has remained in emir Bedir Khan's personal library. The Bedir Khan family preserves the book as if it is a holy book. The children of Emirate Bedir Khan have started their Kurdish language courses with this book as well as their feelings for Kurdistan. Haji Qadirê Koyî, a Kurdish poet and a follower of Ehmedê

¹⁷⁰ *Kurdistan*, the first Kurdish journal, was published in Cairo in 1898. Later issues were published in England, and Switzerland.

Xanî, who was teaching Emin Beg and his brothers in Istanbul between 1860-70, wrote a long poem on the first page of the *Mem and Zîn* manuscript (2002: 51).¹⁷¹

Similarly, in *Siya Evînê* (1989) the chronology is clarified by using dated sections to structure the narrative. Uzun focuses on the life of Memduh Selim Beg, another political figure who lives as an exile all his life. Through the account of his life from 1910 to 1976, and using a didactic tone, the Khoybun (*Xoybûn*)¹⁷² and Mount Ararat political organizations and the Sheikh Said rebellion are looked at in detail. Unlike these novels, Uzun's novel *Tu* (1985) is set in the early 1980s and is imbued with the brutal reality of the Kurdish issue, although in an attempt to preserve collective memory, it frequently addressed Kurdish leaders in the past such as Sheikh Said, Bavê Tûjo, Sêyîd Riza, and Qazi Muhammad, all of whom struggled for Kurdish national issues but were executed by sovereignties (150).¹⁷³ The protagonist's experiences and memories in Diyarbakir prison are interlaced with the historical memory of the Kurds through the use of past incidents and developments that are generally connected with the history of the Kurdish national struggle and movement.

It is crucial to repeat that Kurdish diasporic memory is based mainly on or about Kurdistan. As emphasized in the theoretical discussion of this research, references centred on shared history and memories prove the significance of an ancestral homeland for a nation (Williams and Smith 1983; Smith 1999). However, the Kurdish characters in the novels do not construct a fixed territory for their memory narrations because 'home-land' in the novelistic discourse "is not merely a physical structure or a

¹⁷¹ Kitab, destnivîsa Mem û Zîn a şairê navdar û milî yê kurdan Ehmedê Xanî ye. Kitab ji kitabxana Mîr Bedirxan a welêt maye. Bedirxanî wê mîna kitabeke miqedes diparêzin. Zarokên Mîr Bedirxan bi vê kitabê dest bi dersên xwe yên zimanê kurdî û hesta Kurdistanê kirine. Hecî Qadirê Koyî, şairê kurd û peretîşkarê Ehmedê Xanî ko li Stembolê di salên 1860-70-an de, mamostayê Emin Beg û birayên wî bû, li ser rûpela yekemîn a destnivîsa Mem û Zînê şîreke direj nivîsiye.

¹⁷² Khoybun (*Xoybûn*), meaning 'to be one's self', was the name of a Kurdish nationalist organization founded in 1927 in Syria. It was led by Ehsan Nûrî Paşa, Celadet Bedirxan, and some other Kurdish intellectuals; and played a major role in the subsequent Ararat uprising that took place in north-eastern Turkey in 1928-1930. Even though the revolt was violently suppressed by Turkish forces, this was a significant movement that attracted a great deal of support, especially from the Kurmanji-speaking Kurds of the region, as well as raising awareness of Kurdish national identity. According to White (2000:76), "Xoybûn affirmed its nationalism at its founding congress, asserting there that Kurdish national consciousness, waking up from its heavy sleep, has cried out loud - so high that the assimilation project cannot stand up."

¹⁷³ Sheikh Said, who led a major revolt in 1925, was hanged in Diyarbakir with his 52 followers. Discussions continue as to whether the revolt against the Turkish Republic had a religious or a national base. However, it is believed that Sheikh Said's revolt resulted in hope for liberation amongst the Kurdish masses (Chaliand 1993: 54). Bavê Tûjo was one of Shaikh Said's followers and took part in the revolt. He was also prosecuted in the Independence Court (*Istiklal Mahkemesi*), received the death penalty and was executed. Sêyîd Riza was the leader of the Dersim rebellion (1937-1938), which was savagely crushed; he too was executed in 1937 in Elazig. Qazi Muhammad, a judge and cleric from Mahabad (Iranian Kurdistan), with his supporters, founded a government named the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1946. This Kurdish entity was oppressed by Iran's central government, and he was hanged in 1947.

geographical location but always an emotional space” (Rubenstein 2001: 1). In this sense, the sense of attachment to ‘home-land’ and the meanings of ‘home-land’ in relation to memory, is not bounded by Kurdish territories. For example, although he has lived in Australia since the beginning of the 1970s, Riza Çolpan’s writings about his observations and memories are mainly linked to his experiences in Istanbul before his exile. While *Nado Kurê Xwe Firo* portrays the conditions of Kurdish migrants in Istanbul during the 1950s and 1960s, in the following novel, *Serpêhatiyên Rustem û Namerdiya Namerdan*, Çolpan covers the story of Rustem, who comes from Dersim to Istanbul and then goes to Cyprus to work during the 1960s and 1970s. Both novels include a great range of autobiographical elements, using the author’s own personal memories and experiences, since Çolpan who, like his main protagonists, is actually from Dersim, lived in Istanbul and Cyprus during the time-periods mentioned in his two novels. The portrayal of Kurdish migrants in a big city like Istanbul is important in the way it conveys the unhappy experiences of displacement from the homeland, while showing that individual acts of memory can reach out to the collective level.

In terms of reflecting personal memories, each novelist focuses on a certain period in his life that is related to the Kurdish issue and the state of Kurdistan. For Mezher Bozan, the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, rather than the current period, becomes the centre of his attention in all his novels. From the perspective of ordinary Kurds, Bozan declares the crucial developments that affect them. He does not state the time of his novels directly, but through references to social and political incidents, it is always possible to assume it. In *Zarokên Me*, he refers to the 1960 military coup and attempts to show how this affects the lives of Kurds through the perspectives of Kurdish children. Overall, it is hard to escape the notion that Bozan’s novels contain personal and direct descriptions of the novelist who, like his protagonists, lived in the same cities, and studied the same subjects during the same period.

Each novelist deals with various social, cultural and political problems that faced the Kurds during the twentieth century. From an autobiographical perspective, the novels raise a number of issues relating to the Kurds in general. For example, while Bûbê Eser’s *Jiyanek* focuses on the harsh conditions of Kurdish villagers before the arrival of a tractor in their village during the 1970s, two novels set in the 1970s, *Mamostayê Zinaran* by Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç, and *Zenga Zêrîn* by Jîr Dilovan, deal with the assimilative and oppressive Turkish education system in Kurdish villages at a time when the novelists themselves worked as teachers in public schools. Like Aykoç, Bûbê Eser describes conditions for Kurds during the 1980s in his portrayal of the Diyarbakir

prison environment following the 1980 military coup. Throughout his novel *Gardiyan*, images relating to torture in the prison intensify the visual and spatial aspects of memory formed by the experiences of the novelist himself. Again, in his trilogy, *Sê Şev û Sê Roj*, *Xezeba Azadiyê*, and *Wêran*, Laleş Qaso looks satirically at social and political conditions in Kurdish villages between the 1960s and 1980s. The reader is informed about the attitudes of Turkish soldiers towards Kurdish villagers and how Kurdish political parties failed to find a solution to the Kurdish issue.

When all the Kurdish diasporic novels examined in this research are taken into account, one can say that in the novels focusing on ‘real’ histories, e.g., biographies of certain Kurdish figures, the rewriting of particular incidents in the past is more complex when compared to the imagined legends. Along with the historical and epic novels, Kurdish mythological novels also attempt to illuminate the past of Kurds through myths and symbolic narrations. According to Sheffer, “some stateless diasporas have nurtured real histories or imagined legends about their homelands” (2003: 149). As suggested above, re-narrating myths that are particularly linked with Kurdish locations signifies the diasporic narration of history and the past.

Zeynel Abidîn’s *Peyman* is one of the novels based on an imagined legend. This mythic novel concentrates on the war between Asians and Med (or Medes), referring to Asians as the ancestors of the Turks, and the Med as the ancestors of the Kurds. The novel’s narrations and plot show that for the Kurds, social and political conditions have not changed at all. Even in mythology, other groups have invaded Kurdish places, and Kurds have been captured by dominant entities. The novel contains direct messages about not forgetting the past, since forgetting equals betrayal (116); this also reinforces the whole purpose of the novel, which is to refresh the Kurdish memory. In another mythological novel *Kassandra*, war (the Trojan War) between Trojans and Achaeans (Greeks) over the city of Troy (in north-west Turkey) is likened to the present and on-going war between Kurdish guerrillas and the Turkish state. The war, which lasts for many years, results in many losses; and due to internal betrayals, resistance failed to preserve Troy from invasion and destruction.

In sum, Kurdish diasporic novelists play an important role in the dynamic processes that are fundamental to the creation and handling of a collective memory. Through the use of ‘memory’ and ‘history’, Kurdish national identity and ‘home-land’ are constructed in the novelistic discourse. This indicates that history is not a report on the past, but rather a set of fixed memories, collected, preserved, and transmitted by people and thus constructed or even “invented” (Hobsbawm 1983: 2). In an attempt to

fulfil the deficiency in Kurdish historical writing (since there is no official written version of Kurdish history), diasporic novels also become somewhat didactic. Through the politics of remembering, the novelists underline the significance of the history of a nation, and from shared cause and cultural heritage create a collective identity and memory.

2.2.2. *Autobiographical Memory: In the Shadow of 1980's Military Coup and Diyarbakir Prison*

From examination of the relationship of diasporic memory with true experiences or real instances, it has been suggested that diasporic novels play a part in the writing of history by aiming to construct 'collective memory' and identity. The historical and recent past employed in the novels is also based on factual elements. Accordingly, analysis of Kurdish diasporic novels suggests that some particular experiences, which in fact the novelists themselves have experienced, have considerable influence on the diasporic memory and lead to certain 'home-land' images. In other words, the biographies of the novelists reveal their experiences, which are reflected in their fiction. In this sense, it is also true that different memories construct different meanings of past and present; however, there are certain particular moments and periods, including the 1980 military coup and Diyarbakir prison that may influence collective memories.

It is essential to point out that, on the issue of narrative mode and techniques, Kurdish novels in diaspora usually have a conventional linear narrative structure, the straight line and chronological order of which is also closely linked to the autobiographical or biographical aspects of the novels; these document in sequence the experiences of a particular character. For example, in the biographical novels of Uzun such as *Siya Evîne*, *Hawara Dîcleyê I-II* etc., and in the semi-autobiographical novels of Bûbe Eser, such as *Gardîyan*, and *Jiyanek*, and in Mezher Bozan's *Av Zelal Bû I-IV*, Jîr Dilovan's *Zenga Zêrîn* and Aydogan's *Pêlên Bêrîkirinê*, the plots flow through a straight story line, including the structure of cause and effect. Their involvement with social realism and their detailed depictions of socio-political conditions affecting the lives of Kurds at a concrete level, give the novels an understandable causal sequence. The novels offer a standard linear narrative form in which the story flows forward chronologically though possibly interrupted by abrupt flashbacks.

Since the use of memory and past narrations plays a significant role in the novels, the coexistence of past and present maintained by the use of flashbacks is also dominant in the novels. The structure is disrupted with a great range of flashbacks related to

subplot details, through story-telling techniques, examples being the Chaldean character Şemun in *Oy Dayê* narrating the 1915 Armenian massacre, Zeyno in *Xaltîka Zeyno* depicting the political conditions of Kurds, Apê Musa (Uncle Musa) in *Dîlên li ber Pûkê* describing the Dersim massacre, and the unnamed character in *Tu* who recounts his personal experiences before his imprisonment. Again, while there is a chronological order in *Payiza Dereng*, use of the epistolary format means the narrative mode is constantly interspersed with tales of the past through a whole sequence of letters.

It is well known that most Kurdish diasporan novelists had to leave their homeland in the early 1980s because of the unbearable impact of the Turkish military coup in 1980.¹⁷⁴ Baser (2011:9) notes that “among the measures taken [in relation to coup] Diyarbakir Prison No.5 is particularly significant. Many Kurdish and Turkish politicians, artists, journalists and academics were put on trial and sent to Diyarbakir – both during and after the coup.” The coup and the conditions in Diyarbakir prison, which became increasingly harsh and dangerous, constitute a crucial aspect of diasporic memory through personal experiences of their malign influence. In this respect, the present section argues that the prevailing conditions or the period during which the novelist leaves his lands, become the dominant vision of his homeland; i.e., Kurdistan is generally associated with the conditions witnessed by the novelist, usually during the 1980s and preceding the experience of exile.

The military coup in 1980 killed numerous people, including Kurds; however, through the narrating of memories, Kurdistan is imagined in relation to the military coup because it shattered unity in Kurdistan and fragmented lives, with many Kurds imprisoned, killed, or forced to flee into exile. The memories or narrations of this period locate Kurdistan in a negative and tragic environment. The nostalgic remembering and yearning for ‘home-land’ includes the miserable consequences experienced during the

¹⁷⁴In order to build political stability and restore law resulting from constant impotent governance and disorder, the military, promoting a Kemalist ideology, intervened in government on 12 September 1980 and remained in power for three years. General Kenan Evren, chief planner of the military coup in 1980, served as president for the next seven years. Under military rule, the unitary state with its single national identity ideology dealt a fatal blow to diversity and multiple identities, while oppressing Turkey’s democratic civil society. Undoubtedly the military coup had numerous outcomes, including termination of the legal activities of a great range of left-wing parties, media censorship, economic liberalization at the expense of labour, increased Islamic impacts, weakened relations with the EU, and the denial of Kurdish identity. Under the junta’s rule, thousands of people were arrested, including Kurdish activists, and half were severely tortured (Balci 2008: 179). Political parties were outlawed, and hundreds of writers, journalists and scholars were either arrested or deported. Most importantly, the 1982 Constitution and further legal amendments in 1983 that led to decreasing politicization of the groups and violations of human rights and freedoms came into force during this period. In particular, Article 5 on the fundamental tasks of the Turkish state and Article 26 banning the use of Kurdish language resulted in heavy-handed repression of Kurdish identity. See Hebditch and Connor (2005), Lipovsky (1992), and Eligur (2010) for further in-depth analysis and details of Turkey’s 1980 military coup.

military coup and then its damaging outcome, incarceration in Diyarbakir prison; thus 'home' does not usually evoke the sense of belonging and prosperity. Agnew (2005: 10), who also reflects on the two opposite meanings that can be conveyed through the creation of an imaginary 'home' based on memories, notes that while

memories ignite our imaginations and enable us to vividly recreate our recollections of home as a haven filled with nostalgia, longing, and desire [...sometimes...] they compel us, as witnesses and co-witnesses, to construct home as a site and space of vulnerability, danger, and violent trauma.

Accordingly, it can be argued that 'home-land' in Kurdish diasporic novels is produced in the shadow of traumatic experiences that occurred under the impact of the 1980 military coup. Of the 64 novels studied, 34 refer to the tragic experiences arising from the coup and Diyarbakir prison. Of the rest, 18 are mythological, epic and historical novels, and naturally enough do not refer to either the coup or the prison.

It was noted earlier that most of the novelists migrated to Europe during the same period and experienced similar processes. The image of Kurdistan that confronted them before they departed can be conceptualized as 'frozen' in their memory. Most had to leave their lands after the military coup had rendered social and political conditions unbearable for them; many also spent several years incarcerated in Diyarbakir prison and some, when released, had to flee to European countries as refugees. For the novelists, homeland evokes similar visions, related mostly to the coup and their incarceration. In most of the novels, the military coup is the defining moment of diasporic memory, in which the novelists display its effects on their social and political lives. The diasporic novelistic discourse shows that they have used these sorts of narration as resistance to, and reaction against what they experienced in their homeland. In this respect, more than half of the diasporic novels refer to the dark days of the 1980s shortly after the coup, when many Kurds were arrested, tortured and ill-treated. Most of Mezher Bozan's novels, for example, focus frequently on the effects of the coup on Kurdish lives.

Autobiographical elements are also predominant since the narration related to the coup includes Bozan's personal experiences. Thus *Asim* includes a detailed account of a military coup and the character's subsequent arrest and imprisonment, while in *Av Zelal Bû II* and *Av Zelal Bû III*, Bozan considers how the coup has influenced the lives of the characters. His narrator describes the gradual changes in the system that entirely altered the picture of Kurdistan. The military coup, a turning point for Kurdish identity and politics overshadowed the image of 'home-land', and increased the banning of Kurdish

language and culture. As social and political pressure on the Kurds intensified so did Kurdish resistance and struggle. In addition, Kurdish politics were channelled in different directions. Bozan's novels show that following the coup all Kurds were under suspicion. In *Av Zelal Bû III*, when the protagonist returns after the coup to his home town, Mardin, he sees that everything has changed; Turkish symbols and the influence of Turkish nationalism are disseminated all over the town, and the Kurds face greater pressure for speaking in Kurdish. This is very much an autobiographical account of the novelist's experiences. Before exile Bozan (1957), like the protagonist in *Av Zelal Bû*, was a schoolteacher, and was transferred from one city to another because of his political views. He was prosecuted several times after the coup, and had to flee to Sweden in 1986.¹⁷⁵

The same post-coup changes can be seen in Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç's *Mamostayê Zinaran*. Here the Kurdish city in which the novel is set is now completely under military control, and due to more efficient integration policies and military investigations, Kurdish villagers face more pressure than ever to assimilate. Through the narrations of the character Apê Riza (Uncle Riza), conditions in Diyarbakir prison, including torture and other mistreatments, are emphasized, and people become more stressed and frightened by the details. Certainly the tales spreading throughout the 'home-land' about the goings-on in Diyarbakir prison are more than enough to scare people, particularly villagers. Similarly, in Jîr Dilavon's *Zenga Zêrîn*, the narrator, as a teacher, witnesses and narrates the effects of a military coup, and as a result is also detained and subjected to torture. Both *Mamostayê Zinaran* and *Zenga Zêrîn* make complex use of the personal experiences of Aykoç (1951) and Dilovan (1956).¹⁷⁶

In the novels, as noted, the military coup and the prison are intertwined; it is well known that the coup was largely responsible for the worsening situation in Diyarbakir prison that frightened all Kurds. Thus characters who suffer from the outcomes of the coup also suffer from the conditions in Diyarbakir prison. Zeynel Abidîn refers in both *Binefşên Tariyê* and *Bigrî Heval* to Diyarbakir prisoners who are tortured. In the novel *Binefşên Tariyê*, the protagonist, Bawer, cannot recover from his experiences in Diyarbakir prison and frequently refers in detail to the suffering caused by his

¹⁷⁵ At the time of writing this thesis, with a few exceptions, there were no reliable or adequate resources or research concerning the bibliographies of the novelists mentioned in this study. Bibliographical information related to the novelists is based on direct/personal communications with the novelists themselves or with their publishers. Out of 47 authors analysed in this thesis, biographies of 46 authors are provided in Appendix A. I could not get hold of the biography of Ali Husein Kerim.

¹⁷⁶ Because of his political activities Dilovan, a teacher, was arrested in 1980, imprisoned for a couple of years and subjected to severe torture, before he was able to move to Germany.

imprisonment:

When I was in prison I was subjected to all sorts of techniques to make me confess and eventually I let my eyes escape from the light, which was filling them with tears. A vicious fear had already settled down in my heart and was torturing my soul. In order to be able to change the world one needed a great faith, however the gods of my emotions had already taken this sacred divinity away from me. For two years these inglorious [types] have trampled on me and taken my desire for life away (40-41).¹⁷⁷

Abidîn's next novel, *Bigrî Heval*, refers to an incident in which four people set themselves alight in protest against Diyarbakir prison conditions. Although not a recurrent theme, this incident becomes a symbol of resistance and struggle against authority and the system. Literary evidence directly or indirectly reflects the personal account of Abidîn (1961), who resembles Bawer, the main character in *Binefşên Tariyê*, having once been a philosophy teacher who was imprisoned many times after the 1980 military coup.

Like Abidîn, Laleş Qaso, in almost all his novels, also captures critical elements of Diyarbakir prison and its socio-political impact on the characters. For example, in *Wêran*, the experiences in Diyarbakir are described as days that are impossible to forget. There is detailed information in *Xezeba Azadiyê* about conditions in Diyarbakir prison, while in *Ronakbîr*, the protagonist, as an exile in Sweden, cannot integrate with the new culture of his host country. Prevented from settling into his new environment by recalling his prison experiences, he positions himself instead between two cultures, in this way becoming, an 'in-between'. Affected by the tragic experiences caused by the coup and by incarceration in Diyarbakir prison, Ronakbîr finds himself in a situation of transition, unable finally to abandon the past. This is consistent with Bhabha's concept of 'beyond', which he describes as being

neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past (...)
We find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and
time cross to produce complex figures of difference and
identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and
exclusion (Bhabha 1994:1).

¹⁷⁷ Di zindanê de hemû îcadên pejirandinê liser min hatin ceribandin û min di dawiyê de çawên xwe, ji roniya ku hêsir ji laşê mirov diqetîne, vekişand. Tirsê, di dilê min de konên xwe yên gemar çêkir û giyana min herimand. Jibo guhertina cîhanê xwebaweriyeke bêqisûr diviya, lê xwedayên hestên min vê mizginiya pîroz ji laşê min kişandin û birin. Du sal, li binê lingên hovên qijikbav de daxweza jiyana min hate xesandin.

Ronakbîr's fear of the detention, authority, and police officials that he had left behind in the 'home-land' also pursues him wherever he goes, making it impossible for him to adapt to the new culture. Quite interestingly, the personal accounts of Qaso, who was in prison for ten years and tortured during that time, endorse the narrations in his novels.

A similar example of the state of 'in-betweenness' found in *Ronakbîr* is seen in Mustafa Aydogan's *Pêlên Bêrikirinê*, which also informs its readers of the names and techniques of various methods of tortures by listing them in a realist manner. Like Aydogan (1957) himself, who has been exiled in Sweden since 1985, the protagonist remembers his prison experiences and narrates the recurring memories of torture and fear that affect his new life in his new environment. He is torn by his painful past, and subconsciously fears the Swedish police, whom he always tries to avoid whenever he encounters any of them, underlining the fact that up till this time "he has not got rid of the effects of incarceration and torture in prison. This impact still carries on (...) Even after he had his passport, he was arrested in his city by the police many times in his dreams" (122).¹⁷⁸ As in *Pêlên Bêrikirinê*, the protagonist in Bozan's novel *Asim* not only lists methods of torture but also illustrates clearly the constant impact of those days on his current life. Supporting this, the novel ends on such a note: "he did not forget the torture, *falaka*,¹⁷⁹ Palestinian hanging, the electric shock and the groaning of the prisoners. They clattered in his mind all the time. It did not get worse. However, it was such a saw that it could never become blunt" (107).¹⁸⁰

In considering the literary representation of imprisonment and military coup, Bûbe Eser's novel *Gardiyan* concerns itself largely with the issue of Diyarbakir prison through the narrations of a guard who worked there in the early 1980s. The guard confesses to a journalist, telling him explicitly about torture techniques and methods. In an attempt to replace real documents or official records the novels even include drawings of some of the techniques so readers can visualise them more clearly. In his novel *Jiyanek*, Eser also shows that 'home-land' is associated with or remembered in relation to the experiences of imprisonment. Arrested following the 1980 military coup, the protagonist was imprisoned for three years, and this experience has influenced all phases of his life. Explaining the lasting nature of such awful conditions the narrator

¹⁷⁸ Wê gave hîn tesîra girtin û lêdanên li girtîgehê, ji ser xwe neavêtibû. Ev tesir hîn jî dom dike (...) Piştî ku pasaport wergirtibû jî di xewna xwe de, li bajarê xwe, ji aliyê polîsan ve çend caran hatibû girtin.

¹⁷⁹ Foot whipping, also known *inter alia* as bastinado is a form of corporal punishment in which the soles of the feet are beaten. Though dreadfully painful it leaves few physical traces; thus it is a useful method of torture.

¹⁸⁰ Ew êşkence, feleqe, asqîyên Filîstînê, şoka elektrîkê û zare zara girtîyan jibîr nekîr. Ew her tim di sere wî de zîngîrîn. Tûjtir nebû. Lê ji ber çî birekê jî ew kor nebû.

comments that

imprisonment and torture will continue until the freedom of the homeland of the ancestors. As long as the nation is not free, the sons of the nation will suffer from the same torture and persecution. Serdar knew this very well. He knew that he was neither the first one nor the last (2004: 237).¹⁸¹

These novels can be seen as the literary expression of the novelist's experiences, which are similar to the protagonist's. Eser (1955) was arrested too, during the 1980 coup, and subjected to torture while imprisoned in Diyarbakir. Interestingly even the dates of imprisonment mentioned in the novel match those of the author. In *Ez ê Yekî Bikujim* by Firat Cewerî, the same impact of prison experiences is presented through Temo, the central character. A protagonist who lacks heroic qualities, he has difficulty adapting to his hometown after his 15 years incarcerated in Diyarbakir. The sense of isolation and disaffection he experiences following his release and return to his hometown, is the novel's principal theme. When he looks at Diyarbakir he thinks,

it is true that I have been living in this city, but except for the four walls [prison], I did not see any places in the city. I did not see the young people of this city growing up, I did not see the development of this city; for fifteen years I was deprived of the rising and the setting of the sun of this city (20).¹⁸²

Many years of imprisonment have erected an unapproachable barrier between him and his hometown, to such an extent that he feels himself as a total stranger. Like his character Temo, the novelist Cewerî (1959), who has lived in Sweden since 1980, was also imprisoned and tortured as he has disclosed in an interview.¹⁸³

In addition to the novels and novelists mentioned above, Medenî Ferho, another exiled writer who fled to Europe after the 1980 military coup, like other diasporic novelists employs a narrative style driven mainly by autobiographical elements. *Xaltîka Zeyno* focuses on a typical patriotic heroine who, shut up in Diyarbakir prison, reviews her life in a series of flashbacks. Through her reminiscences, readers are taken to different places, and 'home-land' is depicted through her experiences in prison, which also reflect the novelist's own experiences; after the 1980 coup Ferho (1947) was

¹⁸¹ Girtin û lêdan wê heta ku azadiya welatê bav û kalan bê bidome. Heta ku gel azad nebe, kurên gel jî wê tadeyê û şikenceyê bikişînin. Serdar ev yek pak dizanibû. Dizanibû ku ew ne yê ewil û ne yê taliyê ye jî.

¹⁸² Rast e ku ez jî li vî bajarî dijiyam, lê ji çar dîwaran pê ve çavên min bi bajêr neketine. Ez nebûme şahidê bejinavêtina ciwanên vî bajarî, min mezinbûna bajêr nedît, ez panzdeh salan ji avaçûn û hilatina roja vî bajarî bêpar mam.

¹⁸³ The text of an interview with Cewerî (in 2008) is available at:

http://www.nefel.com/articles/article_detail.asp?RubricNr=7&ArticleNr=2827, accessed 15 August 2012.

imprisoned for more than six years. Similarly, in Uzun's *Tu* (You, 1985) the protagonist, like Zeyno, narrates his story from Diyarbakir prison, having been arrested when a Kurdish poem is found in his house during a raid. Half the novel contains his flashbacks to the past; the other half concerns his feelings and experiences during his time in prison. By the end of the novel, the reader realizes clearly that such experiences will have turned this individual into a different person. Diyarbakir is in fact associated not only with its firm resistance in the past, as well as with the infamous prison, in which many Kurds have been confined, tortured and killed. The main character says, "this Diyarbekir (...) is the pain of our heart. Hopes of our life, the sorrow of our mind" (98).¹⁸⁴

In addition to the novels mentioned above, Sevdîn, the protagonist in *Çirîskên Rizgariyê*, who fled to England after the coup, returns to Kurdistan and becomes involved in political organizations, mainly as a way of taking revenge for the dark days that followed the coup. Through ideological and sociological criticisms that dominate his view of 'home-land', the protagonist often refers to imprisonment and the coup. Dehsiwar (1959), like other diasporic Kurdish writers, fled Sweden just after the military coup in order to avoid political persecution. Experiences that preceded his exile tend to dominate the central themes of his novel.

There is indeed an implication that life in Kurdistan has not yet returned to normal since 1980, and the narrator in Xurşîd Mîrzengî's *Sînor* defines the post-coup situation very accurately, "before 12 September, it [life] was not like that" (50),¹⁸⁵ which means now that there are too many restrictions on crossing borders. The narrator recounts the prison experiences of Rizgo, the central character:

When one falls into the hands of Turks what happens to him.
He was arrested after the 12th of September [military coup].
He was tortured for a fortnight. The fascist Turks tried all
sorts of torture on him. But it was certain that at the end they
would be killed, executed and hanged (160).¹⁸⁶

Based on the information above, it is worth mentioning that the novelistic discourse in diaspora somehow creates a link to the personal past of the novelists; through this they try to emphasize how the life of every Kurd has been affected by the military coup and conditions of imprisonment. Therefore it is difficult to escape from

¹⁸⁴ Ev Diyarbekir (...) Jana dilê me ye. Hêviya jiyana me, êşa mêjiyê me ye.

¹⁸⁵ Berya 12 yê îlonê wilo ne bû.

¹⁸⁶ Meriv bikeve destê tirkan, çi tê sere meriv. Piştî 12 yê îlonê hatibû girtin. Pazdeh roj di îşkencê de mabû. Hemi tewir îşkencê faşîstên tirko tehim kiribû. Qabil e pawan hatibin kuştin, dardakirin û xeniqandin qethî bû.

the conclusion that the notion of 'home-land' is filtered through the views and experiences of novelists before their exile. The way Kurdistan is reflected changed completely after the 1980 military coup and the systems applied in Diyarbakir prison. Many of the authors had to leave their lands, and the coup led to an intensifying of struggle and resistance in Kurdistan. These two elements, through which they define their 'home-land' and construct an attachment to it, represent a crucial point and a driving force in their writings. Remembering and narrating the details of those days is significant, since memorizing tragic experiences and writing about them is a way for the characters to confront the inevitable effects on their present lives. Agnew links memories of 'homeland' with the present, noting, "memories can be nostalgically evocative of imaginary homeland and places of birth and origins, as well as an antidote to the struggles of the present" (2005: 10). It can therefore be argued that memories darkened by the 1980 military coup and Diyarbakir prison constitute a traumatic sense of 'home-land' that sets Kurdistan as a place that is neither secure nor prosperous.

2.3. Concluding Remarks

Having analysed 64 diasporic novels of Turkish Kurdistan, I suggest that Kurdish authors clearly present the significance of 'homeland' for their Kurdish identity, which undoubtedly makes the novelistic discourse one of these private enterprises. When all 64 novels are taken into account, it can easily be seen that many are either set in Kurdistan or rely on Kurdistan-related content. The authors generally place their subject matter within a historical context, or base it on the current political and socio-cultural environment in Kurdistan, while their ethnic identity, country of origin, and history are regarded as more significant than concern for the identity and history of the host nation and the authors' experiences within that context. Few authors mention how their experiences in exile are infused with a sense of non-belonging, isolation and alienation. Failure to adapt, cultural differences, and the uncertain state of the homeland urges the novelists to concentrate on the country of origin they have left behind, rather than on their countries of settlement.

In order to reveal the distorted sense of Kurdish diasporic identity we are required, in the novelistic discourse, to explore the authors' attitudes towards the host country in the context of their own experiences. Although the Kurds are deprived of sovereignty, David Turton's 'dilemma experience' of refugees in diaspora is also applicable to instances of Kurds within the Kurdish novelistic discourse, since all the novelists are

political refugees. Turton (2002: 25) notes that refugees occupy the ambivalent space between belonging and non-belonging, since there is a period during which they have no protection from their original countries, nor from their countries of refuge. In parallel with Turton's argument, the disrupted Kurdish homeland is described as unsafe and unstable, nor can the current space of settlement be referred to as peaceful and secure.

Because this study argues that identity is influenced by their sense of 'home' or vice versa, the relation of migrants to the notion of 'home-land' could reveal a great deal about the process of imagining their identity. As analytical tools, novels offer important insights into an individual's identification, while revealing the connections between imaging place and defining the self. In so doing, Kurdish novelists mainly use their real life experiences and ideologies to illuminate their critiques. Autobiographical items, in relation to the factual and documentary aspects of Kurdish identity and Kurdistan, become the main components of diasporic memories. The lived experiences of the novelists are either slightly or significantly altered, in an attempt to preserve the past. Their preoccupation with 'identity' and 'homeland' is mostly influenced by their traumatic experiences prior to their lives in exile.

Kurdish towns or cities used as the settings for the novels are mainly based in the novelists' hometowns or villages, while stories narrated in the novels are imagined on the memories of their experiences before they left their homes. In this case, memories before exile (mainly experiences in Diyarbakir prison and the impacts of the 1980 military coup) seem to be more crucial rather than memories after exile. However, it is also true that the illusory plays a prominent part in the diasporic construction of homeland because, as time passes, the place of origin remains stagnant in the memory of the migrant while in reality it has evolved.

This chapter has also challenged the general argument of diasporic literature, which locates the origin of the country through a nostalgic idealism for an imaginary homeland, by arguing that Kurdish diasporic novelists offer a reflection of actual Kurdistan intertwined with historical facts and internal critiques; these contribute to producing a negative portrayal rather than one that is 'mythic' and 'idealized' as argued by diasporic literature in general. The effects of diaspora, the traumatic experiences in the Kurdish homeland, and diverse and conflicting political agendas are combined, which results in these critical homeland portraits. The representation of 'home-land' in the diasporic novels is fundamental to the authors' political critiques and ideological views which fail to confirm Kurdistan as an ideal 'home' conveying safety, solidarity and socio-political freedom.

Finally, in answer to Clifford's question, "is it possible to create a home away from home" (1999:302), I would also suggest that for Kurdish literary characters, it is not possible. Although a 'homing desire' is recognized, they do not give up the continuous search for the lost home, nor do they manage to accept the host country as the new one, since being displaced from the homeland and failing to find a place within the new environment appears to remind them constantly of Kurdistan. In addition, they cannot avoid the gap between the ideological rhetoric of longing for Kurdistan, and the daily struggle over collective and personal existence in the diaspora.

CHAPTER THREE

The Kurdish Novelistic Discourse in Turkish Kurdistan: Constructing 'Homeland' and 'Identity'

Chapter Three analyses the construction of 'home-land' and 'identity' in 36 novels produced in Turkish Kurdistan, first by examining the territorialisation of Kurdistan, a process that reveals the idea of 'Greater Kurdistan' within the novels. Producing the dichotomy of 'we' against 'the other', and drawing on regional mapping and the prominence of Kurdish landscapes, confirms the arguments of Williams and Smith (1983) and Portugali (1993) that the territory is a crucial element for a nation that is constructing the national homeland. Nor does this argument contradict Benedict Anderson's theory (1983) of "Imagined Communities", which pays less attention to territorial or ethnic aspects of national identity. In fact, this chapter argues that 'topophilia' of Kurdistan, as suggested by O'Shea (2004), becomes the focal aspect of Kurdish identity in novels through promoting the idea of a united community within a bounded territory.

Having emphasized the territorial aspect of 'home-land', the chapter is then divided into three time zones in which Kurdistan, as 'home-land', is differently formed. In the narration of the past, an unabashedly patriotic attitude intentionally selects certain memories to construct a specific national consciousness in the present portrayal of 'home-land'; at the same time this completes the tragedy of the Kurds as a nation. Current portrayal of 'home-land' reveals how Kurdistan falls apart, being altogether altered and torn to pieces by the impact of Turkey's provoking interventions. However, the pessimistic views expressed in the present version are projected to the future as optimistic ones, which produce imaginary images with no concrete or realistic prospects. The novelists convey how the absence of a physical land due to movement or to circumstances of actual destruction becomes the essential backdrop of the novels set in Turkish Kurdistan. In the third part of the chapter which concerns the meanings of 'unattainable Kurdistan', I argue that the nostalgic and sentimental portrait of Kurdistan does not change its significance, whether it is articulated from a distant location or from within the territory itself. It appears either as the loss of a once beloved woman, or is associated with a deep longing and yearning.

3.1. The Territorialisation of Kurdistan: Imagined ‘Greater Kurdistan’

Although there is no geographic definition of Kurdistan, the territoriality of Kurdistan remains central to the lives of all Kurds and on the basis of different contexts is also very changeable, because “territories (not like states) are not things natural or fixed; rather they are created by people and subject to variations in space and time” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 97). Thus, different arguments regarding the geographical territory of Kurdistan reflect different expressions of Kurdish identity. By tracing the fictional and literary articulations of Kurdistan territory in the novelistic discourse, this section tries to show how the Kurds’ ancestral homeland of Kurdistan is territorialised, and questions the contribution of this territorial construction to the construction of nationalist myth, ethnic solidarity, as well as to the changing formation of Kurdish identity.

When all the novels (up to March 2010) from Turkish Kurdistan examined in this thesis are taken into account, it appears that the territorial elements (both implicit and explicit) within them, through which the vision of ‘Greater Kurdistan’ is created, idealized and rooted in history, become a construction that elucidates the actual processes of political and cultural development of the Kurds as a nation. In other words, detailed mapping of the boundaries of Kurdistan or dividing it from other non-Kurdish places constitutes the central construction of Kurdistan as the homeland of Kurds. More simply, according to the Kurdish novelistic discourse, Kurdistan refers not only to Kurdish regions within the territory of Turkey; but includes other Kurdish regions in Syria, Iraq and Iran in parallel with the idea of ‘Greater Kurdistan’. Thus, as O’Shea (2004: 2) explains, “despite its divisions, despite its inadequacies, Kurdistan, and the concept of Greater Kurdistan survives the reality as a powerful amalgam of myths, fact, and ambitions.” Therefore, drawing the territory of ‘Greater Kurdistan’ in the novelistic discourse helps to emphasize the idea that ‘Greater Kurdistan’ exists, even if in an imagined form, and that Kurds are the community of this territory, despite the existence of four other sovereign countries.

In this case, territoriality in the Kurdish novels becomes a way to create the organic link between Kurds as a nation and Kurdistan as their homeland. Territoriality, which refers to the “the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area” (Sack 1986: 19), can be “a political manifestation linked to the geographical expression of social power” (Ibid: 5). Hence, it can be argued that a

mental map of Kurdistan is constructed through spatial elements, and that a unified ‘homeland’ incorporating all Kurds (even those in the territory of sovereign states apart from Turkey, i.e., Syria, Iraq and Iran) becomes the geographical expression of the novelists.

This argument is apparent, implicitly or explicitly, in 30 of the 36 novels. Mîr Qasîmlo’s two novels *Wêneyên Keserê* (The Pictures of Gloom, 2005) and *Giyanên Bahozi* (The Stormy Souls, 2009) are fundamental examples of novels in which there is territorial recognition of an imaginary ‘Greater Kurdistan’ uniting all four Kurdish regions. *Wêneyên Keserê* focuses on Kurdish migrants and refugees living in Germany and contains diverse characters from different Kurdish regions. The geography from which the characters are fleeing for political reasons recurs many times as ‘Başûr’ (South) referring to Iraqi Kurdistan, and ‘Bakur’ (North)¹⁸⁷ referring to Turkish Kurdistan. Throughout the novel, the reader is reminded that Moyad, one of the minor characters, is from ‘Başûr’ (139) and Narîn, one of the main protagonists, comes from ‘Northern Kurdistan’ (*Bakurê Kurdistan*) (12-13).

Throughout the novel, issues of homeland become central topics and the characters reveal clearly that until independence and freedom are gained for all four parts of Kurdistan, their lives will not return into normal. Mîrza, the central character, who for political reasons is living in Germany, says, “I will always be here, for as long as our mother [motherland] remains under the domination of four stepfathers, and there is no fairness, justice and mutual understanding among her wounded children” (408).¹⁸⁸ Although he is from Turkish Kurdistan, Mîrza does not differentiate among the four Kurdish regions in his discussions. For example, when someone asks the name of the place he is from, he answers, “I am a Kurd. Have you ever heard of Kurdistan? It is the playground over which four dogs are fighting. That is where I come from” (313).¹⁸⁹

Similarly, Qasîmlo’s second novel *Giyanên Bahozi* contains territorial details concerning “*Başûrê Kurdistan*” (129-188) that also contribute to the portrayal of ‘Greater Kurdistan’. As in his previous work, most of the novel takes place abroad, thereby further elaborating the experiences of Kurdish migrants who have been forced for political reasons to leave their homeland. The narrator frequently addresses socio-

¹⁸⁷ ‘Başûr’ is the Kurdish equivalent of ‘South’ in English; ‘Bakur’ means ‘North’, ‘Rojava’ means ‘West’, and ‘Rojhilat’ refers to ‘East’. These terms are used to address the four regions of Kurdistan. Accordingly, ‘Başûr’ is Iraqi Kurdistan, ‘Bakur’ is Turkish Kurdistan, ‘Rojava’ is Syrian Kurdistan, and ‘Rojhilat’ is Iranian Kurdistan.

¹⁸⁸ Heta dayika me di bin destê her çar zirbavan de be û heta dadî, adalet û jihevîfêmkirin, di nav zarokên birînê de pêk neyê ez ê her û her li vir bim.

¹⁸⁹ Ez kurd im. We qet Kurdistan bihîstîye? Ka ew cihê ku bûye meydana pêşbirka çar kûçkan heye ya, aha ez ji wê derê me.

political conditions in other parts of Kurdistan, but particularly Turkish Kurdistan, through Artîn and Zerî who are the leading characters. The desperate love between them is so deeply interwoven in political matters that issues of homeland become their main priority in life. Such references to other parts of Kurdistan not only contribute to the construction of imaginary ‘Greater Kurdistan’ but also reflect Kurdistan territories as separate entities.

In this respect, Adîl Zozanî’s *Mişextî* (Exile, 2009) not only distinguishes Kurdistan as a separate entity, with the concepts of ‘*Başûrê Kurdistan*’ (94), and ‘*Bakurê Kurdistan*’ (156) being used by Kurdish characters, but also confirms this territorial recognition through the character named Aykut, a former Turkish commander who regrets the cruel operations undertaken against guerrillas during his service in the Turkish army. While leading one of these operations Aykut, with other soldiers, is captured by guerrillas but eventually released. While in captivity, he listens to the story of Kato, whose sister and brother-in-law die because of the forced migration arranged by the Turkish army. Aykut is affected by this account and as soon as he is released, he gives up his job and distressed and remorseful, begins work as a layer. To escape from his guilt, he takes the case of Kato who has been arrested. When Aykut arrives in Amed for Kato’s case, he feels that he is a foreigner; even writing in his notebook “this city is not my city” (227).¹⁹⁰ This phrase contributes to the notion that Amed is the city of Kurds. In addition, Aykut uses expressions that acknowledge the existence of Kurdistan as a separate entity. He often remembers his past in the army and defines the geography of his past service as Kurdistan (235-237). This confirmation and recognition of territory by another nation, exclusively by the Turks, strengthens the sense of Kurdish territory, which is also used to emphasize the distinct Kurdish identity.

In terms of creating unification within the Kurdistan territories, Zozanî refers in his other novel *Kejê* (Keje, 2001) to the Kurds from ‘*Başûr*’, who migrated to the USSR due to oppression by the Arabs. Koçero, the protagonist, gradually gains national awareness and feels sympathy towards the Kurds from South Kurdistan, while trying to help them to improve their lives and living conditions.

As in *Kejê*, the idea of ‘Greater Kurdistan’ is to the fore in Denîz’s novel *Hêvî Her Dem Heye* (There is Always Hope, 2008) which narrates the struggle for survival of an unnamed guerrilla. The guerrilla has been injured and throughout the novel is waiting to be saved by his friends. Whilst he waits he remembers his past, his political views and his actions before he came to the mountains to fight. The novel is very

¹⁹⁰ Ew bajar ne bajarê min e.

ideology-oriented, and also strongly promotes the idea of ‘Greater Kurdistan’ through the thoughts of the central character, who at one point says, “our graves remain half-complete anyway; until we add the South and East to the North, we will not rest in our graves in peace” (107).¹⁹¹ The novel contains a great range of geographical descriptions and terms related to the territory in which the armed struggle takes place. Through the narrator’s didactic descriptions of the environment, the physical features of ‘Greater Kurdistan’ are emphasized, thus, “Kêla Memê [Meme Castle or Meme Tombstone] was a lonely mountain. One side of it faced Bestan [Besta Valley], the other side faced Qilaban [Uludere]. The Bestan side was North and West; the Qilaban side was South and East” (204).¹⁹² This detailed geographical information links the Kurdish regions with each other, just as the narrator links the Botan region with Serhad; “some behind the Zagros Mountains, some behind Mount Ararat were hoping that the world would turn round and it would rise; and through the mountains extend its sunshine to Kurdistan” (48).¹⁹³ Throughout the novel geographical elements are presented that contribute to identifying Kurdistan within territorial boundaries.

In addition to these direct references to the territories of ‘Greater Kurdistan’, some novels also engage in more symbolic language for the construction of the mental map of Kurdistan. This symbolic narration of locations can be considered in relation to literary attempts to create imaginative fictional places; arguably, however, some of them have to be restricted for fear of the bans imposed by Turkish state policies. With regard to symbolic imaginative place descriptions, geographical terms can also be interpreted as building a picture of an imaginary ‘Greater Kurdistan’. For example, Yunus Eroğlu’s second novel *Otobês* (The Bus, 2010), which is set on a bus loaded with passengers, contains a symbolic narration throughout the novel. Each passenger’s personal life is narrated through monologues, some referring ironically and satirically to the Kurdish issue that engage with an implicit language that differs from other more explicit novels. In the story told by one of the passengers, an imaginary island is described that contributes to the constructing of an imaginary independent Kurdistan. On this island there are two conflicting groups; the oppressed group has the right to sue the oppressors. An imaginary free place refers implicitly to a utopian Kurdistan in which

¹⁹¹ Ji xwe hîn tirba me nîvçe maye; heta em Başûr û Rojhilat jî bi ser Bakur venekin, em di gorê de rehet nakin.

¹⁹² Kêla Memê çiyayekî bi tena xwe bû. Mîlekî wê li aliyê Bestan dinêrî, mîlek li aliyê Qilaban dinêrî. Mîlê Bestan, mîlê Bakur û Rojava, mîlê Qilaban jî mîlê Başûr û Rojhilat bû. This extract basically maps the geographical location of Meme Castle or Meme Tombstone in Şırnak province; it is bounded by the Besta Valley, which lies between Şırnak and Siirt, and by Uludere, a district in Şırnak.

¹⁹³ Hîn li pişt çiyayên Zagros, li pişt çiyayê Agirî li hêviyê bû ku cîhan fitlonekekê bide xwe û ew jî bejnê bilind bibe; di navsera Zagrosan re tîrejên xwe dirêjî Kurdistanê bike.

Kurds have gained their legal rights. The island is drawn physically with the geographical terms South, North, West and East (91).

Mîran Janbar's short novel *Ardûda* (Arduda, 2004) can be classified as science fiction. It creates a completely imaginary and utopian setting that implies a future expectation of Kurdistan. It describes the experiments made by Ardûda, a professor who clones human beings. Set in the distant future of a galactic world, the story takes place in a galaxy that is united and free but has suffered greatly in the past through oppression and hunger. The same symbolic narration without detailed geographical descriptions is used in Îbrahîm Seydo Aydogan's second novel *Leyla Fîgaro* (Leyla Figaro, 2003). Here the city in which the novel takes place is described, as in *Otobês*, through the geographical directions of South, North and so on. Likewise, a symbolic narration related to a geographical description of Kurdistan is used in both of Şener Özmen's novels, *Rojnivîska Spinoza* (The Diary of Spinoza, 2008) and *Pêşbazîya Çîrokên Neqediyayî* (The Contest of Unfinished Story, 2010). Despite Özmen's highly symbolic narration, both can be seen as political novels in which the socio-political conditions of Kurds and Kurdistan are addressed in a satirical manner. In *Rojnivîska Spinoza*, Özmen focuses on the fragmented lives of a group of youths through the central character Yasîn, who abandons his university studies and returns to his home town of Zexê, an entirely imagined place which possibly refers to Hezex (a district in Şîrnak called in Turkish Idil), which is also the home town of the novelist himself. Instead of Kurdistan, the term "Kordoxiyan" is used and the distinctions between "Başûre Kordoxiyan" and "Bakurê Kardoxîyan" are emphasized. Similarly, Kurds are described as "Kardoxî".¹⁹⁴

As mentioned earlier, the reason for these symbolic and implicit descriptions or narrations can be based on the literary concerns of the novels as much as on the restrictions imposed against writers by state policies. Another novel that involves an imaginary setting is Kemal Orgun's mythical *Li Qerexa Şevê Hîvron* (At the Edge of Night Moonlight, 2002). Through the mythical character Roberşîn, an old dervish living in the mountains there is a constant swinging between fantasy/dream and reality. The novel addresses the issue of mother tongue, the beauty of places in Kurdistan, and the loyalty of Kurds to their traditions. The narrator states that the lands of Kurds are burnt

¹⁹⁴ There are various discussions regarding the origins and emergence of 'Kardoxî'. It is commonly believed that it refers to the first term conveying the notion of 'Kurd'. It may have Assyrian origins and have come from 'qardu' meaning 'strong' and 'hero'. There is no certainty that the terms 'Kardoukhoi' or 'Kardu' refer to Semites or to an ancient indigenous people, though they certainly inhabited the same areas where Kurds live today (Jwaideh 2006:12). *Kardoxî* in the novel might also refer to the Kadukhî people in Xenophon's work entitled as *Anabasis* in which the Spartan general Chirisophus and Xenophon took command of the retreat of the Ten Thousand soldiers.

down but after he has climbed over the mountains Roberşîn manages to see a different world. This very dreamlike place is described with positive images that imply a free and united Kurdistan in the future.

In light of the above analysis, Kurdish novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan shows that that national attachment to ‘Greater Kurdistan’ does not require political control of neighbouring territories. As an ancestral ‘homeland’, Kurdistan can be constructed as an ‘emotional space’ that is not bound by the exclusive control of any specific territory since political control and the state need not be involved. A Kurdistan of free and united lands can be imaginative and mythic but the physical territories of this fictional Kurdistan are also drawn through diverse literary and geographical elements. In other words, the link with the land in a literal rather than an abstract sense of ‘homeland’ is a fundamental motif through which Kurdish novelists define their national identity.

Furthermore, the conception of Kurdistan’s physical geography by emphasising the significance of ‘homeland’ and its territory is also very evident in the novels based on the past history of Kurds during the Ottoman period (for example, *Feqiyê Teyran* [Faqi Tayran, 2009] *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî* [Cembeli the Son of the Mir of Hakkari, 1995] and *Pilingên Serhedê* [The Tigers of Serhad, 2005]), and in the contemporary period (in particular *Giyanên Bahozi*, *Wênayên Keserê*, *Gava Heyatê* [The Step of Life, 2007] *Kejê, Mişextî, Hêviyên Birîndar* [Wounded Hopes, 2003] *Mandalîn* [Mandarin, 2005], *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, *Bêhna Axê* [The Scent of Soil, 2005] and *Xezal* [Xezal, 2007]), all of which have become an integral source of national identity for Kurds.¹⁹⁵ Territorialisation of Kurdistan, in the past as well in the present, that involves all its four regions as “a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and

¹⁹⁵ These novels deal with homeland territories through conceptions and geographical terms that are more factual. However, there are also some novels that evoke the same meanings as the factual novels emphasized above but through imaginary or fictional conceptions related to Kurdistan. For example, in Şener Özmen’s first novel *Rojnivîska Spinoza* and in his second novel *Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî*, territory and ‘homeland’ appear more metaphorical and symbolic than real. In *Rojnivîska Spinoza*, Özmen uses ‘*Başûre Kardoxîyan*’ to refer to South Kurdistan (37) and ‘*Bakurê Kardoxîyan*’ to refer to North Kurdistan, and also creates fictionalized names for places, such as “*Zanîngeha Dayê in Bajara Mezin*.” ‘*Başûr*’, which can be taken as Iraqi Kurdistan, is regarded as a free and independent country (57). The existence of a division between ‘*Başûr*’ and ‘*Bakur*’ is also underlined (135), with a claim that trespassing across the border is very hard, like a victory. Through the protagonist, Sertac, in *Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî*, the narrator voices the Turkish point of view about Kurds’ geographical terminology and territorialisation. A Turkish character comments that “you say Kurdistan for South East of Turkey” (19); however, while Sertac who is Kurdish says he was born in Amed in Kurdistan and emphasizes Amed as a city in Kurdistan (111), he also questions the lack of a city named as Amed (113). This indicates a criticism of the Turkish authorities for having banned Amed as a city name. Although the narrator includes official discourse on the territory of Kurdish places, he also calls attention to the imagined territory of Kurdish regions through imagined names. It can be argued that in Özmen’s novels the fact of official territory is fictionalized with sarcasm, and the map of Kurdistan is established through invented terms and concepts.

bounded territory” (Smith 1991: 9) can be considered as a claim for a particular territory that also challenges the official territories of sovereign states. To put it simply, the narratives reject the official territory of the Turkish state. It is important to emphasize that the imagined and fictional renditions of the Kurds as a nation in Kurdish novelistic discourse is constructed not only in relation to the imagined territorialised Kurdistan but also through constructing the dichotomy of ‘we’ and ‘the other’, as is elaborated in the next section.

3.1.1. ‘Us’ versus ‘Other’: The Power of Regional Mapping and Naming

Section 3.1 underlined how literary mapping of the other regions of Kurdistan, apart from Turkish Kurdistan, contributes to creating the idea of ‘Greater Kurdistan’, which not only invokes a utopian and mythical united national homeland but also imposes a bounded territory through some particular spatial elements. In relation to this argument, this section will explore some other ways of mapping Kurdistan through the dichotomy of ‘us’ (Kurds) against ‘the other’ (foreigners who are mainly Turks) that is formed by excluding ‘others’ from the Kurdish national territory, by using the Kurdish names of places, and by drawing the regional territories of Kurdistan.

Lynch (1960: 6) sees “the identity of a place basically as that which provides its individuality or distinction from other places and serves as the basis for its recognition as a separable entity.” Similarly, the emphasis on ‘home-land’ through geographical and territorial concepts contributes to the formation of the identity of Kurdistan. A sense of Kurdistan in the novels is precisely maintained and strengthened through drawing the boundaries that differentiate between ‘us’ and ‘the other’. In other words, the act of differentiating between ‘us’ and ‘other’ is conceptualized according to the distinction between what is included and what is excluded.

The idea of difference becomes the core element of the distinguishable boundaries of the Kurdish regions. As Grossberg (2003 [1996]: 93) also points out, “the modern constitutes its own identity by differentiating itself from an-other [...] identity is always constituted out of difference.” Said (2003) also refers to the process of designating ‘them’ as opposed to ‘us’, ‘theirs’ as opposed to ‘ours’. In the case of novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan, the concept of ‘us’ and ‘the other’ is usually constructed spatially in order to map the territory of national homeland in the novels.

In this account, as noted above, ‘home-land’ in most of the novels is a bounded territory using geographical meanings to distinguish itself from other emerging nations

and territories. For example, in *Giyânê Bahozî*, the narrator firmly distinguishes Kurds from other nations (72) on the basis of territorial differences. Similarly, in *Kejê*, a group of Kurdish students go to Adana to study and as soon as they leave their hometown of Colemêrg, they feel that they are migrants and foreigners, since Adana is seen as a city of Turkey, whereas Hakkari, with its Kurdish name Colemêrg, is regarded as a city of Kurdistan. Koçero, the main character in *Kejê* says that Colemêrg belongs to them, using the expression “the country of Kurds” (*Welatê Kurdan*) (196). The negative portrayal in the novel of Adana (a city in southern Turkey) also strengthens the feeling of isolation and underlines the city as the setting of ‘others’. Adana is described, as “the place of cruelty and of the ruthless”; it is “a traitorous and merciless city” (187)¹⁹⁶ to such an extent that the negative aspects of a non-Kurdish city serve to increase the value of the Kurdish cities left behind.

In his novel *Xezal*, Nesip Tarim also constructs the concept of ‘us’ spatially. In *Xezal*, the main character, who shares her name with the novel’s title, claims that the lands that they are on belong to them, that for thousand years other nations have invaded their lands, and wishes for the day that the cruelty of the Turks on their lands will end. Throughout the novel *Xezal*, a mother who has suffered from the loss of her children one by one through continuous conflicts in the region, nevertheless defends the national struggle to maintain the Kurdish boundaries, taking the same views as her son who goes to the mountains to join the Kurdish armed struggle.

A crucial key idea that may arise in association with the concept of our ‘home-land’ and ‘othering’ is a sense of geographical segregation and separation. As Lindholm Schulz and Hammer (2003:15) point out, “space is [...] a crucial component in the creation of nationalism and nationalist identities, given its potential narrative power in concretizing relations between ‘us’ and ‘them.’” An important aspect of making and sustaining ‘home’ places is the ability to exclude other people from that place. Thus, the existence of Kurdistan territory in the novels refers to identifying who is included or excluded. Thus, not only do Kurdish novels draw the territory of Kurdistan by the inclusion of Kurdish places and cities, but they also determine the borders of ‘others’ by exclusion. In this respect, ‘us’ embraces the nation and the national territory; whereas ‘the other’ refers to other nations who live ‘there’ and not ‘here’. Accordingly, in *Neynika Dilî* (The Mirror of Heart, 2009), Mustafa, the protagonist, considers Turkey and Kurdistan as two separate countries. By using expressions such as “a western city in Turkey” (*bajarakê rojavayê Tirkiyeyê*) (26), “Istanbul of Turkey” (*Stenbola Tirkiyê*),

¹⁹⁶ Edene warê zulm û zodarane. Edene, bajarek xayîn û bêbexte.

and “ruinous Istanbul is in the country of Turkey” (144),¹⁹⁷ he categorizes these two entities, Turkey and the Kurdish region, as separate borders. In doing so, he even compares his village and Istanbul; he thinks people living in Istanbul are very lonely; “city of the West, that deserves to be destroyed in the country of Turkey, if kept, my troubles, worries, and my soul’s pain should recover [...] Land of the homesick and land of the exile...” (181).¹⁹⁸ Being in Istanbul makes him experience the feeling of being in a separate country.

Turkey is also regarded as a separate country in *Xezal* (232), and even the Turkish soldiers are defined as “soldiers of Turkey” thus emphasizing this sense of separateness. Similarly, Özgür Kıyak’s *Rêwiyên bê Welat* (Travellers without a Country, 2009) tells the story of Kanî who escapes from his hometown to Europe through illegal channels; he too distinguishes between his ‘homeland’ and Turkey as separate countries. Ankara is described as the capital of Turkey but he excludes his hometown whose name is never mentioned although clearly it is engaged in an ongoing war. Another character called Şiyar tells Kanî how he too escaped, “I came from the capital of the Turks. Originally I am from Dersim” (53).¹⁹⁹ This clearly underlines the fact that Dersim (its Turkish name being Tunceli) is a city in the Kurdish region and is not considered part of Turkey. Throughout the novel, a sense of solidarity and attachment to a particular territory generates a common Kurdish identity among all the Kurdish escapees and refugees, even though they come from different Kurdish cities.

‘Exclusion’ is another tool for exploring how the identity of inhabitants as Kurds is constructed. As Schröder (2006: 8) also states, “exclusion of the other in geographic terms can be interpreted as an externalized version of the desire to maintain a stable sense of self.” In this respect, Atilla Barışer’s novel *Mandalîn* exemplifies the portrayal of Kurdistan territory (us) against the portrayal of outside Kurdish territory (them) with the use of ‘othering’. The novel concentrates on two teenagers who escape from their Kurdish hometown Agirî to Izmir, in the West of Turkey. While Izmir is defined as a Turkish city, the narrator also draws the geographical borders of ‘Serhat’ (*Serhed*),²⁰⁰ distinguishing it from Turkish borders. In other words, while Izmir is in the territory of Turkey, ‘*Serhed*’ is included in the territory of Kurdistan. Here, the difference between ‘theirs’ and ‘ours’ forms the foundation for defining ‘ours’. As emphasized earlier, in

¹⁹⁷ Stenbola xopan li welatê Tirkiyeyê.

¹⁹⁸ [...] Bajarê mexrîbê, Stenbola xopan li welatê Tirkiyeyê bigirta da ku kulên min ji bîra min biçin û êşên dilê min bikewin... [...] welatê xerîb û xerîbistanê...

¹⁹⁹ Ez ji paytexta Tirkan hatim. Bi eslê xwe ez Dêrsimî me.

²⁰⁰ Serhat is a name of a region in Turkish Kurdistan covering provinces Iğdir, Kars, Erzurum, Bitlis, Mus and Agri.

terms of identifying the borders of a particular place, “territoriality is undeniably an important aspect of home, implying a sense of control and belonging, which relies on the ability to exclude others from that place” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 96). The territoriality of Kurdish places strengthens the sense of Kurdishness and Kurdistan as the homeland of the Kurds. In this respect, ‘we’ belong to a particular Kurdish place and this Kurdish place forms a larger entity.

Differentiating Kurds from other nations occurs not only territorially but also through the distinctive features of the Kurds as a separate nation. In Qasîmlo’s two novels *Wêneyên Keserê* and *Gîyanên Bahozi* praise for the characteristic appearance of Kurdish women is evident. In *Wêneyên Keserê* Narîn, one of the main characters, tells a group of people that, “the promises of our Kurdish girls are big promises” (125),²⁰¹ implying that Kurdish women are drawn differently from women of other nations. Similarly in *Gîyanên Bahozi*, the physical features of Zerî, the main female character, are described in an attempt to generalize the appearance or attitudes of other Kurdish women. For example, the narrator says of Zerî, “like all the other Kurdish girls, her hair was tied up so that locks fell round her forehead and she was wearing a colourful headscarf on her head” (56).²⁰² Zerî’s being Kurdish becomes her key feature, and influences the way others think about her. There is too an explicit meaning that had she not been a Kurd, Artîn would not have fallen in love with her, as he explains:

I just wanted a Kurdish-speaking woman who would welcome me in Kurdish with a smiling face when I come back [home], and whom I could beguile, by making her soul fly with Kurdish words, embracing her, and kissing her on the forehead with my Kurdish lips (365).²⁰³

In addition to the points mentioned above, the setting in some novels is not mentioned but Kurdish places and cities are delineated through specific descriptions. Again, it is particularly notable in Nesîp Tarim’s *Xezal* that the setting of the novel is an unnamed Kurdish village; however, ‘Amed’ (Diyarbakir), ‘Wan’ (Van), ‘Sêrt’ (Siirt), and ‘Colemerg’ (Hakkari) are clearly portrayed as Kurdish cities by referring them as “cities of Kurdistan” (*bajaran Kurdistanê*) (227). Similarly, in the novel *Otobês*, Yunus Eroğlu focuses on the journey of a bus with its passengers without revealing the place

²⁰¹ [...] Soza me keçên kurdan sozên mezin in.

²⁰² Mîna hemû keçên kurdan, pore wê li tûncika serî girêdayî ye, dolbendekî rengînî avetiyê ser serê xwe.

²⁰³ Min tenê jineke kurdîzan dixwest, min dixwest ku dema ji dûrahiyan vegeyriyam, bi rûyekî ken bi kurdî werim pêşwazîkirin û ez jî bi peyvikên kurdî dilê wê bifirînim, mest û xweş bikim, bigirim hembêza xwe û bi lêvên kurdî eniya wê maç bikim.

of departure; during the journey, however, the narrator names certain passing landscapes and places, such as “*Medreseya Sor*” (the Red Madrasa) (90),²⁰⁴ “*Cudî*” (Mount Judi) (91), “*Dicle*” (Tigris River) (92), and “*Bismil*” (Bismil) (112).

Like *Otobês*, Abdusamet Yiğit’s *Feqiyê Teyran* is another novel about journeying. Against the backdrop of the Ottoman Empire, it focuses on the life of Feqiyê Teyran, the Kurdish classical poet. The reader follows Feqiyê Teyran’s journey from Colemêrg, his hometown, to Cizîra Botan, the city of his dreams, to meet other poets and see *medresehs*. On his way to Botan, not only are the Kurdish cities such as ‘*Mêrdîn*’, (Mardin) ‘*Nisêbîn*’ (Nusaybin), and ‘*Hezex*’ (Idil) mentioned one by one by the narrator, but other Kurdish cities are also included, such as ‘*Agirî*’ (Agri), ‘*Wan*’, ‘*Dêrsim*’ and ‘*Amed*’ to identify Kurdistan territory. This regional naming of Kurdish cities throughout the narrative, undeniably produces a geographical mapping of Kurdistan. Likewise, the author of *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere* (Good Bye Ankara, 2010), reflecting on a Kurdish student in Ankara who for political reasons cannot complete his studies, also refers to a great range of Kurdish cities. The Kurdish student, the protagonist of the novel, decides to join the guerrillas and while leaving Ankara for the mountains, reveals the Kurdish names of the Kurdish cities through which he passes, such as ‘*Amed*’, ‘*Mêrdîn*’, ‘*Sêrt*’, ‘*Qulp*’, ‘*Licê*’, and ‘*Solxan*’ (118).

It is important to mention that in some novels there is also an exclusive reference to ‘*Amed*’, mainly as the capital of Kurdistan. For example, in Lokman Ayebe’s, *Gava Heyatê* (The Step of Life, 2007), there is an image of ‘Greater Kurdistan’ and ‘*Amed*’ is portrayed as its capital as well.

Information related to the Kurdish regions included in the national territory is usually marked by cultural features. According to O’Shea (2004: 161) “boundaries of the national territory [of Kurds] are staked out with cultural markers.” Thus, the literary spatial exploration of Kurdish regional territory is constructed through descriptions of specific features of the Kurds, the customs of the region, and articulations of Kurdish landscapes, i.e., mountains and rural places, discourses on the tradition of *dengbêj*,²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ ‘*Medrasa Sor*’ (the Red Madrasa) was constructed in Cizre by Han Seref Beg II, during the period of the Botan principality. It is believed that Melayê Cizirî who taught his students at this madrasa was also buried in its crypt (Abu-Rabi 2008: 314).

²⁰⁵ *Dengbêj*’ (bards) is formed of two words – *deng* (voice) and *bêj* (the one who tells, from *gotin* –to tell), and refers to the “expert on voice and word” (Mutlu 1996: 55). More precisely, it is defined as “a person who has a pleasant voice and who sings *stran* about people and events” (Allison 2001: 68) or “Kurdish musician with a memory for folkloristic stories and regional myths” (Eccarius-Kelly 2011: 179) and “reciter of Kurdish romances (tragic love stories)” (Chyet 1995: 230). A similar performer like ‘*dengbêj*’ is also named with different names such as ‘*stranbêj*’, ‘*shair*’, and ‘*aşık*’ in different regions, ‘*dengbêj*’ is usually used in Turkish Kurdistan and Bahdinan region. Bahdinan is the name of the former semi-independent Kurdish emirate and the capital of the Kurdish principality was called Amadiya, which is

references to the Kurdish epics and to literary and historical figures, extracts from traditional *stran* and *klam*, the honouring of Kurdish women and shepherds, emphasis on the purity of villagers and on the generosity of Kurds, and so on. Thus, the sense of ‘home-land’ in general is strengthened by local symbols such as traditions, myths, and rituals (Relph 1976; Peterson and Saarinen 1986). In other words, apart from the distinguishing concepts of ‘*Başûr*’ and ‘*Bakur*’ in terms of drawing the mental map of ‘Greater Kurdistan’, descriptions of particular regional geographical elements play a crucial role in prompting clearer definitions of national boundaries.

In this account, according to Tuan (1974: 101), ‘topophilia’ does not necessarily refer to a large territory since “a compact size scaled down to man’s biologic needs and sense-bounded capacities seems necessary”; he argues that “people can more readily identify with an area if it appears to be a natural unit” (Ibid). In this respect, in his two novels *Wêneyên Keserê* and *Giyanên Bahozî*, Mîr Qasîmlo focuses mainly on ‘*Serhed*’, which is considered as a Kurdish region and includes provinces such as ‘Bitlis’, ‘Agri’ and ‘Muş’. The inseparability of the ‘real’ material attributes of a place and its ‘imagined’ idealized attributes is also underlined by Ley (1981: 221). Thus, Qasîmlo, in both his novels, highlights the distinctive features of ‘*Serhed*’ in an idealizing and laudatory manner that combines its real and imagined aspects.

Eyüp Kıran’s novel *Pilingên Serhedê*, which deals with the Kurds’ struggle during the Ottoman Empire through the character Zeynel, likewise covers a great deal of geography, mostly in ‘*Serhed*’ as in Qasîmlo’s works. The novel offers geographical details about the places that Zeynel visits while escaping from Ottoman soldiers. Such information, based on *Serhed* contributes to depicting the region; thus “*Serhed* is a region of the country, more than half of which is temperate and sunny. The mountainous area includes Ararat, Tendurek and Suphan and among the mountains there are some small uplands like heaven, they are like heaven indeed” (48).²⁰⁶ Throughout the novel Zeynel, an educated rebel who represents the whole Kurdish struggle, emphasizes the geographical boundary of each place, mentioning valleys, rivers and mountains by their Kurdish names (6-11). In his second novel *Bêhna Axê*, Omer Dilsoz deals with the estrangement and self-guilt of two former guerrillas, Dilgeş and Sozda, who use regional terms such as ‘*Botan*’ and ‘*Serhed*’ (78) in an attempt to

Dohuk in Iraqî Kurdistan at present. The term is still used to refer to the region. The repertoires of *dengbêj* include songs, legends and poems as most of them are illiterate and a great proportion of Kurdish folk literature is still unwritten (Jwaideh 2006: 24). For more, see also M. Uzun (2008); Scalbert-Yücel (2009).

²⁰⁶ Serhed heremej welat e, lê nivê pirr havîngeh e. Xilbeyê wê çiya ye, mîna Mûnzûr, Agirî, Tendurek û Sîpan. Nava çiyên de hinek deştên pîçuk mîna bihûştê hene, bi rastî mîna bihûştê rastî ne.

highlight the Kurdish places for which they once fought. These become the territories that guerrillas are fighting for in the mountains.

In relation to regional territory, the novels often categorize people and places as well, using terms such as ‘*Botanîyan*’, ‘*Amedî*’, ‘*Serhedîyan*’ and ‘*Cizîriyan*’,²⁰⁷ and ‘*Weletê Botî*’ (The lands of Botan Emirate) in order to underline the desire for one unified collective Kurdish ethnic identity that unites all regions. The separation of regions does not lead to a division of Kurdish entities but instead creates a broad image of Kurdistan with detailed information about each Kurdish region. In Abdusamet Yiğit’s *Feqiyê Teyran* (2009) the characters introduce themselves according to the place they come from, which underlines the significance of territorial identity and rootedness within that territory. In *Hêviyên Birîndar* some characters call each other by their place of origin, such as ‘*birayê Farqînî*’ (brother from Farqîn [Silvan, a province of Diyarbakir]), ‘*lawikê Serhedî*’ (a boy from Serhat); thus a person comes to represent a place. In such expressions, ‘places’ that are exclusively Kurdish in effect portray an integral part of the character’s identity. With detailed information about places in the novels, the protagonists’ association of these places with sacredness and natural beauty, their descriptions of rebelliousness and their political and national assignments “[have] an association with a specific territory, a sense of solidarity” (Smith 1986: 32) that forms a sense of the “same community” (Smith 1991: 33).

Not only are Kurdish places referred as geographically and socially separate from other non-Kurdish places, but using them with their Kurdish names rather than their official Turkish names strengthens the place-attachment that is the link between ‘person’ and ‘place’. Altman and Low (1992) describe six different processes²⁰⁸ that can symbolically link people with place, including ‘Narrative linkage through storytelling and place naming’. It can be argued that ‘narrative linkage through naming places’ is a common phenomenon in the Kurdish novelistic discourse. The Kurdish names of the places in the novels (in other words their unofficial names) not only generate resistance against the official re-naming by the Turkish state but also underline the fact that each place is separated from Turkey as an independent entity. In other words, Kurds’ linkages with their national places are constructed according to their

²⁰⁷ The suffix at the end of Botan, Amed, Serhad, and Cizîr signify the person who originates from these places.

²⁰⁸ The other five processes propose by Altman and Low (1992) are genealogical linkage to the land; linkage through loss of land or destruction of community; economic linkage to land through ownership, inheritance and politics; cosmological linkage through religious, spiritual, or mythological relationship; and linkage through both religious and secular pilgrimage and celebratory cultural events.

national and ancient names, not to the non-Kurdish names imposed and forced on them by the Turkish authorities.

This applies particularly in Denîz's novel *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, in which Kurdish places play a more crucial role than the fictional characters. In the novel, the unnamed guerrilla protagonist, struggling to survive with an injured colleague and awaiting rescue, geographically delineates each place with its local Kurdish name; thus, "*Dola Şumûmî*" (the Şumum mountain pass), "*Nuqta Şiyar*" (Şiyar locality), "*Kêlbiçûk*" (small Stela), "*Newala Sêlê*" (The Sel Gorge), and "*Kaniya Bîrikan*" (Birik Springs) (61).²⁰⁹ Eyup Guven's *Kulmek Morikên Şînbirik* (A Handful of Talismans, 2010), which is based on the experiences of some villagers and is narrated from a child's perspective, contains a great range of local Kurdish place names such as "*Çiyayê Sêran*" (Mount Ceylanpinar), "*Gundê Simokê*" (Simok village) (21), and "*Girê Miradan*" (Murat Hill town) (31). Similarly, *Kitim* (The Reckless, 2005) uses the Kurdish names of the villages, e.g., "*Gundê Bihika*" (Karasöğüt village [in Mardin]) and "*Gundê Tixûbê*" (Sancar village [in Mardin]) (162).²¹⁰ This emphasis on Kurdish names suggests and promotes their use. Similarly, in the novel *Kejê* the narrator initially uses both Turkish and Kurdish placenames, e.g., "I am from Amed (Diyarbakir)" (119)²¹¹ to inform and instruct the readers, but after that uses only the Kurdish names.

In sum, although the narrations in the novels are based more on emphasizing 'us', the relation with 'other' is also used so as to illustrate 'us' more clearly. In other words, the idea of a fictional geographical Kurdistan is also based on the existence of 'other'. Taking the line of argument that national identity is formed out of construction of difference, distinctiveness and uniqueness (Hall 2003 [1996]; Martin 1995), the construction of 'us' against 'other' proves the existence of both Kurdish homeland and identity. The narrators often refer to non-Kurdish cities as the land of 'others' and through spatial details and Kurdish naming, emphasize the fact that Kurdish cities belong to Kurds.

3.1.2. The Construction of 'Kurdishness' as a Unified Entity

National identity as a form of social identity is "*discursively*, by means of language and other semiotic systems, *produced, reproduced, transformed and destructed*" (De Cillia,

²⁰⁹ My translations are direct translations from Kurdish into English. This novel shows that they are the local names for landscapes in Kurdistan that are mainly used in the terminology of PKK.

²¹⁰ The names in brackets are official names of the places in Turkish.

²¹¹ Ez xelkê Amedê (Diyarbakir) me.

Reisigl and Wodak 1999: 153 [italics in original]). In this regard, the production of Kurdish national identity in the novels is presented as a type of commonality not linked to any particular region or dialect, but one that invokes national affection by insisting on the kinship of all Kurds from all other regions. Kurdistan, portrayed with diversity as a prominent attitude, appears in almost all the novels. Accordingly, this section will argue that the common point leading to the visualization of literary characters from a single community is their ethnic identity, in which regional differences – i.e., diverse dialects, religions, and cultures – are appreciated. There are references to various Kurdish figures, each from a different Kurdish region but contributing overall to a sense of unity.

In addition to direct or indirect references to Kurds from different regions or social-cultural backgrounds, the narrators or the protagonists of the novels often imply the significance of solidarity and unity among Kurds from other regions, cultures and beliefs. In *Wêneyên Keserê*, for example, when Narîn and Mirza meet for the first time in Germany and ask each other where they are from, Narîn says, “there is no difference; it does not matter where one has to be from. Everywhere is Kurdistan” (154). Similarly, Şener Özmen, the protagonist in *Rojnivîska Spinoza*, mentions openly that, “for me all Kurds are the same [...] I am no different from them” (140).²¹² Through the use of characters from different parts of Kurdistan, the novel *Kulmek Morîkên Şînbirik* suggests the sense of unification among Kurds from different regions:

There are some writings that are like the spirit of a kind man, that circulate like the blood through veins, moan like the wild goat who became the symbol of Siyabend and Khaje’s love at Mount Sliva, and are like a little child at Halabja who looks at its mother’s breasts and expects a drop of milk. In other words, it becomes like the rope at the neck of the immortal Ghazi Muhammad in Mahabad, like the waves of the Tigris and Euphrates in the poetry of Cegerxwin. Like the great anger of the Gabar and Judi mountains (5).²¹³

Here the narrator has combined specific figures and landscapes associated with Kurdish regions in the form of an integral narrative.

²¹² Kardoxî li ba min yek in [...] ez ci cudatî nakim di navbera wan de.

²¹³ Nivîsîn jî hene wek ruhê laşê meredî nazik, wek xwîna di damarên mirov de diherike, wek li ser Çiyayê Slîva pezkoviya ku bûye qesasê evîna Siyabend û Xecê ku dinihure bi şewat û wek zaroka Helepçeyê li pêşîra dayika xwe dinihêre û li benda niqutek ava spî ye. Bi awayekî din, li Mehabadê dibe kindira stûyê Qazî Mihemedê nemir, di dîwana Seydayê Cegerxwîn de dibe wek pêlên Ferat û Dîcleyê. Bi hêrseke mezin dibe wek Çiyayê Gebar û Cûdî.

Most novels also address crucial developments and incidents in other Kurdish regions, which maintains the sense of nationhood and the promotion of a unified Kurdish identity. In this respect, *Giyanên Bahozî*, which focuses on the migration of a Kurdish woman and her national consciousness in exile, can be regarded as a significant novel in terms of evoking one unified and collective Kurdish identity. Zerî, the female protagonist, attempts to conceal her hopes for her homeland through political activities aimed at creating solidarity among migrant Kurds. During a speech at a conference, she raises her concerns and her sorrow for the Halabja massacre in Iraqi Kurdistan as a way of calling attention to the suffering of Kurds in other Kurdish regions. In her speech, she proposes Mustafa Barzani as a crucial political figure for Kurds: "...with this in mind, I commemorate the immortal leader, hero Molla Mustafa Barzani and salute his very valuable and noble Kurdish feelings" (129).²¹⁴

In a similar way, Adîl Zozanî's *Mişextî* also includes Kurds from Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkish Kurdistan in a way that ignores territorial divisions. The mother of one of the main characters, Sacoya Mitirb, who is originally from Turkish Kurdistan, is killed during the Halabja massacre; this is a nuanced attempt to show that every Kurd can be influenced by any incident in any Kurdish region. Similarly, in Zozanî's *Kejê*, a great range of dialogues and discourses can be regarded as implying unification for all Kurds. The novel focuses on the experiences of a group of Kurdish students in the 1980s, often referring to political figures from other regions as a significant symbol of the endurance of Kurdish identity. Again the narrator promotes the unity of all Kurds by including symbols and elements specific to Iraqi Kurdistan throughout the novel. Mustafa Barzani becomes a symbol of the survival of the Kurdish nation, and the Kurdish struggle is promoted through him by one of the characters saying, "we will struggle for the liberation of the Kurds, like Molla Mustafa Barzani" (67).²¹⁵

This point is strikingly similar to that of *Hêviyên Birîndar* in which the Kurdish national movement in Iraqi Kurdistan unites with the movement in Turkish Kurdistan. Hejar, the protagonist, locates himself very close to the national struggles in both regions. The novel focuses how, on the one hand, Hejar takes an active role in the Kurdish national struggle as a guerrilla in the mountains; on the other hand, he does not hesitate to expose his connection with the Peshmergas. He reminisces continually about his childhood, is proud that his parents took his name from a peshmerga hero, and mentions how his parents used to bring peshmerga clothing from Dohuk (18). He listens

²¹⁴ Bi vê minasebetê, ez serokê nemr, xweşmêr Mele Mistefa Barzanî bi bîr tînim û bejna xwe lê hemberî hîlmetbilindî û hestên wî yên resen kurdî direwînim.

²¹⁵ Em dê li ber rizgarbûna kurdan bigerin. Wekî Mella Mistefa Barzanî.

to singers from Iraqi Kurdistan such as Mohammed Arif Cizrawî and Isa Bêwarî, and tunes in to the peshmergas' radio for news of their resistance for Kurdistan. After the Anfal operations and the Halabja massacre (64), Kurdish refugees who are mainly peshmerga families, come to the border of Turkish Kurdistan. Hejar and his two friends visit and talk to them sympathetically in an attempt to encourage support and assistance for them (63-64).

The same approach to establishing understanding among Kurds in other regions can be directly observed in the novel *Mandalîn*, which narrates the adventurous experiences of two teenagers who have run away from home. When, due to a misunderstanding Adar and Çeto, the two main characters, are put in prison they meet a Kurdish man from Dohuk in Iraqi Kurdistan. When they tell him they are from Agirî, the man instantly remembers Îhsan Nurî Paşa, Ferzende Beg and Besê Xanim. Neither Adar nor Çeto are aware of the significance of these names in Kurdish history and think that the man knows members of their family, all of whom carry these names. This shows not only that the names of historical figures are used by Kurds as a sign of value and respect, but that a Kurd from another part of Kurdistan is aware of the nationalist movements in Turkish Kurdistan. During their conversation with the man, Azad and Çeto begin to recall the Halabja massacre and become extremely upset. These mutual memorizations of agonies and movements in different regions provide a common history and suffering that is shared by all Kurdish characters. The narrator explicitly points out that all these characters are from different Kurdish geographies, but they have managed to meet at the same point and share the same fate and hope: "They were all far away from each other; their cities, roads, lives [...]. Even so, their destiny was the same. And above all their hopes were the same"(188).²¹⁶

Similarly, at the end of *Wêneyên Keserê*, Narîn arranges for her children to learn both Sorani and Kurmanji, thereby supporting the idea that all Kurds should know both Kurdish dialects. In the same novel, the main character lists all the crucial names for himself, including political and cultural figures from the four parts of Kurdistan as:

I am myself the sonnnnnn of mother Gutî, Lolo, Horo, Mîtan,
Med, Mahabat, Hewlêr, Amed and Amûdê / I am myself the
sonnnnnn of mother Cizîrî, Xanî, Cegerxwîn, Mem, Zîn, Xec,
Sîyabend / I am myself the sonnnnnn of mother Qasimlo,
Molla Mustafa, Xelîl begê Cibîrî, Nûrî Pasayê Milî, Seyîd
Rizo, Sheikh Said, Nêrî Dêrsimî, Selahaddin Eyyubi, Ghazi

²¹⁶ Ji hev dîr bûn, bajarên wan, rêyên wan, emrê wan, serhetiya wan. Lê dîsa jî qedera wan yek bû. Ya en girîng jî ew bû ku hêviya wan jî yek bû.

Muhammad, Leyla Qasim, god and goddess Zîlan, Sema, Bêrîvan, Vîyan, Egît....I am myself the son of [...] wise Ocalan” (188).²¹⁷

The repeated use of these names from different fields and regions shows Mîrza as someone who is not only familiar with Kurdish history and literature, but is also in favour of the unification of all Kurds, regardless of different regions, dialects and beliefs.

It is important to note not only that Kurds from different region are unified but also that different religious beliefs among Kurds, which led to conflict and disunity, are emphasized in the shape of warnings and guidance for avoiding them in the future. Religious diversity is defined as prosperity. The diversity of Kurdistan is emphasized not only in the novels set at the beginning of the twentieth century, but in novels from more recent times. One of these is *Qerebafon* (Gramophone, 2009), which takes place during the 1990s and through Ronahî, the protagonist, exemplifies the desire for integration among Kurds. This novel portrays a Kurdish city under the influence of war and socio-political tension, and also speaks critically of discord between Muslim Kurds and Yazidi Kurds.²¹⁸ The text shows that Yazidi Kurds are especially included in the territorial concept of Kurdistan and nationalist discourses. It can also be argued that this approach promotes the culture of the Yazidis and by introducing them to readers, tries to reduce intolerance towards them. Highlighting the Kurdish identity of Yazidis conveys the view that there are not many differences between a Yazidi Kurd and a Sunni Kurd. Thus religious and cultural differences become nothing more than the diversity and richness of the structure of the Kurdish nation, which deserves respect and value.

Îhsan Colemergî's *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî*, an adaptation of the epic of Cembelî, is an example of a leading novel fictionalized in a way that by praising the characteristic features of Yazidis, will encourage readers to become unified and united

²¹⁷ Ez kurê dayika Gutî, Lolo, horo, Mîtan, Med, Mahabat, Hewlêr, Amed û Amûdê bi xwe meee/Ez dayika Cizîrî, Xanî, Cegerxwîn, Mem, Zîn, Xec, Sîyabend bi xwe meeee/Ez kurê dayika Qasimlo, Mela Mistefa Mustafa, Xelîl begê Cîbrî, Nûrî Paşayê Milî, Seyîd Rizo, Şêx Seîd, Nêrî Dêrsimî, Selahetîne Eyûbi, Qazî Mihemeh, Leyla Qasim, xweda û Xwedawend Zîlan, Sema, Bêrîvan, Vîyan, Egît....Ez kurê îlim [...]Ocalan bi xwe meee.

²¹⁸ The Yazidis are Kurmanji-speaking people with their own heterodox religion, Yazidism. They live mainly in the surroundings of the Mosul region in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and until very recently in the Mardin-Midyat area of Turkish Kurdistan. Yazidis have had to migrate several times to escape from religious and ethnic intolerance; to Russia at the end of the 19th century because of rising pan-Islamic movements, and from Turkish Kurdistan to Germany during the past 30 years because of increasing oppression. As Christine Allison notes, “their religion contains elements originating in various majority religions, but cannot be defined as purely, or even principally, Christian, Islamic or Zoroastrian; it appears to be truly syncretistic” (2001:26).

(33). When Cembelî's father does not permit him to marry a Yazidi girl, he responds to his father's rejection by asking, "aren't they Kurds too? Aren't they our brothers, from the same blood?" (55),²¹⁹ Indeed, he says, "they are the original Kurds and became Muslim later" (33).²²⁰ In an implicit attempt to promote unity among Kurds, he points out that, "in fact they are the original and ancient Kurds. The pressure on them from the Arabs, Persians and Turks has not been strong enough to disperse and assimilate them" (33).²²¹ This positive and encouraging discourse on Yazidis is a response to on-going conflicts among Kurds caused by differing values and beliefs. Cembelî defends Yazidis with the claim that Kurdistan is also their country, convincing his father by his arguments. He also stresses the significance of proving a Kurd is above religious prejudice and the necessity of incorporating all Kurds regardless of different religious beliefs. This meets with the father's approval and agreement. Cembelî has not only responded to the claim that Yazidis are not Kurds, but has also evoked the necessity of supporting them since they are patriotic Kurds by origin.

In the novel *Kejê*, brotherhood between Yazidi and Sunni Kurds is also promoted. As the narrator explains: "Yazidis are Kurds. The whole community was aware of it. The only difference between them was the religion. If it was not for the religion, relations between them would have been much better and they would be like brothers again" (62).²²² As with the Yazidis, the same novel also promotes 'Romani people' (*mitirb*)²²³ in relation to their Kurdish identity, which is described as more important than cultural differences. The same novelist's second work, *Mişextî*, which focuses mainly on the lifestyle of the '*mitirb*', can also be interpreted as a response to ongoing prejudices against them. Kato, the son of a tribal leader, and Bozo, a '*mitirb*' in origin, support each other throughout the novel, confirming that any cultural differences are disregarded by these two characters.

Like the '*mitirb*' and 'Yazidis', Alevi Kurds are also employed in the narratives for the same purposes. For example, the protagonist in *Gitarê bê Tel* (Guitar without String, 2009), Sadî, refers to the ongoing clashes between Alevi and Sunni Kurds and argues explicitly that the Ottomans created this discord to prevent the Kurds uniting for an independent Kurdistan (46). Similarly, *Pilingên Serhedê*, which is based on the life

²¹⁹ Ma ne kurd in? Ma ne birayên me, xwîna me nin.

²²⁰ Kurdên qedîm in û pişt re musulman bûne.

²²¹ Ma jixwe ew in kurdên xasiyet û kevnare. Ji aliyê ereb, fars û roman ve jî qewî nehatine helandin û bişavtin.

²²² Ezidî Kurdin. Civat tev li ser vê yekê bi meqeyet bû. Tiştekin din jî heye ku olê wan û Ezidîyan neyek e. Eger ev jî nebe, bawerin ku navbera wan dê hêsta xweştir, dîsa birayên hev bin.

²²³ *Mitirb* is considered as a group who sing with accompaniment (Allison 2001).

of a nineteenth century Kurdish intellectual called Zeynel, also refers to conflicts between Alevi Kurds and Sunni Kurds. Zeynel is portrayed as favouring the unification of different Kurdish tribes when he says, “we don’t have any differences; Milî or Dumilî we are all the same and united” (231).²²⁴ In response to the conflicts between Kurdish tribes, Zeynel proposes negotiation as a way of abolishing differences, and calls them to meet around the same rallying point, that of Kurdish identity, because “we are Kurds, and they are Kurds too” (239).²²⁵ Throughout the novel, it is shown that the conflicts, believed to have been provoked by the Ottomans, should be ended since these internal fights and conflicts have hindered Kurdish independence and unification.

Based on the above discussion, it can be argued that Kurdish novels written in Turkish Kurdistan aim to unite all Kurds, and that they encourage a certain sense of responsibility towards the collective, to past tragedy, and to the future. Territorial division does not affect the sense of unity and solidarity. It is proposed that Kurdish fictional characters from different regions and beliefs can be unified in the absence of an acknowledged territorial Kurdistan.

3.2. Fictionalising Kurdistan in Different Time Zones

The thesis argues that a fictional narrative is inextricably bound to the social, historical and cultural context in which it is created, because the writer belongs to a social group and shares memories through “place-memory” in his/her narrations. By “place-memory”, Casey (1987:87) refers to the ability of place to make the past come to life in the present and thereby to contribute to the production and reproduction of social memory. In this account, the Kurdish novelistic discourse constitutes a vital attempt to reflect the “place-memory” of Kurds in relation to the spatial, territorial, and local

²²⁴[...] Ferqa me nîne, ha Milî, ha Dumilî em yekin [...]. ‘Milî’, also known as Milan, refers to a historical Kurdish tribe, which dissolved and re-established itself in various configurations over time. The Milan tribe is considered to live in the southwest of Turkish Kurdistan (Jongerden 2007: 26), although after the death of the leader Milli Ibrahim (Ibrahim pasha), the confederation fell apart (ibid: 27). It is also considered that Zilan is another branch of the Milan tribe. See M. Sykes (1915) and Van Bruinessen (1992[1978]). The term ‘Dumilî’ (Dimili) is historically considered to refer to a large tribe dispersed around in the Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish regions of Kurdistan. However, in its current meaning, it refers to Zaza (Van Bruinessen 1992b). Alevi speakers of Dimili are divided into two parts, speaking sub-dialects of Kurdish: Zaza and Kirmanci or Kirmancki (spoken by Kizilbash Alevi from Dersim), which is different from Kurmanji, one of the main dialects. According to Malmîsanij’s research called *Kird, Kirmanc, Dimili veya Zaza Kürtleri* (Kird, Kirmanc, Dimili or Zaza Kurds), Kurds live mainly in cities such as 1) Semsûr (Adıyaman); 2) Çewlig (Bingöl); 3) Bedlis (Bitlis); 4) Diyarbakır (Diyarbakır); 5) Xarpêt (Elazığ); 6) Erzîrgan (Erzincan); 7) Erzîrom (Erzurum); 8) Mûş (Muş); 9) Sêwas (Sivas); 10) Sêrt (Siirt); 11) Dêrsim (Tunceli); and 12) Ruha (Urfa). Further details can be found at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/44991767/Kird-Kirmanc-Dimili-veya-Zaza-Kurtleri-Malmisanij>, accessed 14 September 2012. See also P. White (2000); Romano (2006).

²²⁵ [...] Em jî kurd in û ew jî kurd in.

dimensions of Kurdish national identity. In relation to the argument of ‘home’ as a dynamic place, construction, and living process (Giuliani *et al.* 1988; May 2000; Horwitz and Tognoli 1982), it can be argued that there are three versions of Kurdistan in three time zones: Kurdistan in the past, Kurdistan in the present and Kurdistan in the future.

The following three sections will focus on the three versions of Kurdistan as reflected in different time zones, and will argue that Kurdistan in the past is visualized and remembered with the nostalgic sense of a rural and idealized pastoral idyll evoking primordial Kurdishness. However, the vision of Kurdistan in the present is not different from a battle arena; it is a land of violation and destruction. On the other hand, Kurdistan in the future contributes to the development of an idealized and highly symbolic image of Kurdistan as it was in the past. For the future of Kurdistan, there is a hope that the current tragic image of a destroyed Kurdistan will be replaced by a romantic image of Kurdistan enjoying independence and freedom.

3.2.1. ‘Home-land’ in the Past: An Idealized Vision with Nostalgia

Memories, images and historical issues are re-created and transmitted based not on an individualistic but on a communal perspective because “social groups construct their own images of the world by establishing an agreed version of the past, [which] emphasize that these versions are established by communication, not by private remembrance” (Fentress and Wickham 1992: x). Accordingly, the subjective experiences of memory or personal memories are not the type of memory employed by the novels in Turkish Kurdistan; instead the narration of this agreed version of memory is used as a tool to construct a common image of Kurdistan and Kurdish identity. In this sense, analyses of the novels reveal that the construction of the historical past in relation to a sense of national identity contributes to creating the myth of an ancestral and sacred ‘homeland’.

The historical stories about Kurdistan and national identity help in understanding the roots of homeland and identity and where they come from. In this respect, the historical past of Kurds, as employed in novels in Turkish Kurdistan, is mostly narrated in an elevated tone which transmits the message that Kurdistan was fragmented by the actions of external forces, such as neighbouring countries and empires like the Ottoman Empire but that the Kurds had been exhorted to struggle and to defend their territory.

Recalling the significance of the lands and linking this with the ancestors has also served to create the social memory of the Kurds. As Fentress and Wickham (1992: 25) argue, “social memory is an expression of collective experience: social memory identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future. In doing so, social memory often makes factual claims about past events.” In this respect, throughout the novels the employing of historical events and figures for national struggle is used to make factual claims about the past. For example, Yaqob Tilermenî’s first novel *Kitim* is based on the life of Seydo, who had been an Imam before becoming a guerrilla and going to the mountains to fight. Seydo often gives his religious speeches combined with stories from the *Şerefname* (Sharafname) as a way of advising his audiences about supporting each other and protecting their lands. He explains that “Sharaf Khan ruled Kurdistan for decades in the mid-sixteenth century; in his Sharafname he tells the stories of the Emirs of Kurdistan based on his own knowledge and experiences” (49).²²⁶ Seydo tells his listeners that:

Here [in the *Şerefname*] it says that the name of Kurd is appearing in the extreme courage of this nation. Mewlana Taceddin Kurdi who was known as Hayrettin Pasha, and the grand vizier of the Sultan of Ottoman, Sultan Orhan, were of Kurdish origin (Ibid.).²²⁷

This reference to the history of Kurds is intended to promote the strength of the Kurds as a nation and to develop solidarity through praising Kurds as a people. Similarly, the narrator in *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî* praises Kurds during the nineteenth century as a nation with the capacity for autonomy, implying that Kurds already possess everything that a nation needs. Meanwhile Şener Özmen’s *Rojnivîska Spinoza* not only quotes from the Kurdish intellectual Jaladet Ali Bedir Khan (who attempted to develop the Kurdish language at the beginning of the nineteenth century), but also extols such significant historical figures as Evdî Rehmanê Rewandayî and Sheikh Ubeydullahê Nehri (73) for their patriotism and sacrifice in maintaining their lands. In Aydogan’s novel *Reş û Spî* references are also made to the historical past of the Kurds as a nation through the stories of Robîn’s family, mainly his two grandfathers. One of his grandfathers, Silhedîn Mîrxo had been a friend of Sheikh Said and they had fought together; the other grandfather, Elîxan Beg, had studied at a madrasah for many years.

²²⁶ Şerefnameya ku di navbera sedesela şazdemîn de bi dehan sal rêveberiya Kurdistanê kiriye, bi Şerefnameya xwe, çîroka mîrên Kurdistanê li gora bîr û boçûnên xwe vegotîye.

²²⁷ Di wir [Şerefname] de tê gotin, navê ‘kurd’ ji cesareta zêde ya wî miletî tê. Sedrazamê Osmanî yê Siltan Orhan, ku bi navê Xeyreddîn Paşa deng dabû, Mewlana Taceddînî Kurdî bi eslê xwe kurd bû.

The narrator also mentions that like his grandfathers Robîn's own father, Resûl, also struggled for the sake of Kurdistan and their identity.

Apart from contributing to social memory, narration of the past in the novelistic discourse also engenders a process of constructing a collective memory on which to build a collective identity. Thus, historical novels, such as *Feqiyê Teyran* and *Pilingên Serhedê*, refer to Kurdish struggles during the Ottoman era, and grapple with the suffering and sorrow of Kurds through the narration of destroyed and invaded lands and departed people. In *Pilingên Serhedê*, Zeynel as a historical figure, brings to light other significant sheikhs, emirs, and tribal leaders who struggle against the Ottomans to defend their country: thus struggle for the sake of one's nation is promoted. The novel *Mişextî*, which deals with the cultural and political aspects of 'mitirb' and families subjected to forced migration, emphasizes the significance of the history of the ancestors. Before his son Kato leaves for the mountains where the national struggle is happening as it happened in the past, his father Emir Qasîm Beg says to him, "Oh my son, look at yourself, you are guarding the lands of *Avatezî* in *Girê Kejo* like all the brave heroes. These are the lands of your ancestors. The history of bravery has been written here many times" (86).²²⁸ Similarly, in *Kulmek Morikên Şînbirik*, the character named Xeftano speaks glowingly of the rebellion by Sheikh Said who struggled and was executed for the sake of the Kurds.

These sorts of descriptive narrations enable the historical past of the Kurdish national struggle to be reconstructed, which suggests that the Kurds have been involved in that struggle for years. The central character in *Toqa Naletê* (The Strap of Curse, 2007) praises her village where many of the villagers joined the rebellion of Sheikh Said; "in the history of this village, only one graceful thing has been done. During the Sheikh Said uprising, seventeen men of this village struggled against the state of Rome [Turkey] and were killed." (41).²²⁹ In the novel *Kitim*, in parallel with the narrator's statement in *Toqa Lanatê*, the protagonist, in an attempt both to be informative and encouraging, often refers to the Kurdish historical past and praises certain crucial names, saying, "Ahmad Khani [...] has written in the language of his nation and in terms of Kurdish narration he became the pioneer of the Kurdish [people]" (68).²³⁰

²²⁸Kurê min, berê xwe bidê tu îro wekî egîdekî li serê Girê Kejo notirvaniya wargehê Avatezî dikî. Ev der wargehê bav û kalên te ye. Li vir gelek caran dîroka mêrxasiyê hatiye nivîsîn.

²²⁹Di tarîxa vî gundî da tenê tiştêkî bi şeref hatiye kirin. Di terqa Şêx Sêid Efendî da hijdeh mêrên vî gundî li hember dewleta Romê ketine şer û hatine kuştin.

²³⁰Ehmedê Xanî [...] bi zimanê gelê xwe nivîsandiye û di hêla vegotina kurmancî de jî bûye pêşrewê wêjeya kurdî.

It can also be said that certain historical references in the novels are formed in the shape of advice and suggestions about errors made by Kurds in the past when they were manipulated and provoked by their enemies to turn against each other. These particular narrations about the past also include warnings for their future, in terms of learning from such earlier mistakes. For example, in Zozanî's novel *Kejê*, the central character dreams of an old man holding a boy by the hand; through this the narrator creates a link with the Kurds' historical past. The old man in *Koçero*, represents the voice of history, telling tales from centuries past, and speaking of the forest. In ancient times all was green and full of trees, but now the ground is spattered all over with blood. He explains the internal and external factors behind the invasion and fragmentation of the Kurds, talks of the Lausanne Agreement and the official divisions of territory, and accuses the traitors of being responsible for the division of Kurdistan, finally speaking triumphantly of the uprisings among Kurdish heroes such as Sheikh Said. Similarly, the old man in the novel *Bêhna Axê* tries to advise his readers always to be aware of their history by reminding them of their values and of the tragic experiences of Kurds in the past. Further, there is a teacher figure in *Mandalîn*, who presents information about Kurdish history; he also mentions the debates about the origin of the Kurds, which is very interesting but somewhat didactic since, as he does tend to lecture the readers.

The images of the 'home-land' in the novels set in Kurdistan are recalled nostalgically as fleeting sensations or are preoccupied with memories of unfilled political desire. The term 'nostalgia' evokes a sense of homesickness in its linguistic origins, and it can be argued that nostalgia in the Kurdish novelistic discourse is employed as signifying a yearning for the 'home-land' in the past. In other words, the novelists' depictions of Kurdistan are not simply reminiscences of a lost childhood but are attempts to reveal the current fragmented vision of that place which is no longer rural, beautiful or pure but is filled with political and social tensions. Under such circumstances, nostalgic visions of the past are no longer protected. As Swedenburg (1991:172) notes, recasting the past as wonderful is not simply an elective process of remembering, but includes a comparison with the present, with life as it has evolved now, i.e., now life is unbearable. Accordingly, in Îbrahîm Seydo Aydoğan's first novel *Reş û Spî*, the current 'home-land' has been subjected to destructions and intrusions. In Robîn's memory the image of Kurdistan is always the one left from his childhood. It is no longer the one that he has been dreaming during the detachment, since

his childhood remained in an old photo of this city. At that time, the number of high buildings was not so big [...] Maybe

the city [that] came to his mind remained from the photos of his childhood. Both of them, along with many other photos, were put onto the shelf in a plastic bag (141).²³¹

Here, the narrator exalts Robîn's past, which conveys a meaning that it is no longer obtainable.

Similarly, the main character in *Gava Heyatê*, who appears as a village boy, a guerrilla, an informer and a desperate lover throughout the novel, draws two different portraits of 'home-land'. The first is from his childhood, which is portrayed as an idealized and romanticized rural life, full of fruits, green leaves, happiness, innocence and joy. However, the image of his mature life contrasts with the image of his childhood and past. Memories of his village can evoke powerful feelings and exert great influence over his identity. He tends to reflect on his memories of childhood places rather than engaging with his immediate surroundings.

What is remembered is not just 'place' itself, but the whole life that the place represents. In *Giyanên Bahozî*, the central character, Artîn, who has lived away from his 'home' for many years, remembers his lands filled with the 'songs' (*stran*) and 'ballads' (*klam*) that he heard in his childhood (359). He relates the 'home' image in his mind to memories from his childhood, which is very pure and innocent. By presenting these sorts of nostalgia, Artîn obviously reveals how its innocence, purity, and beauty can be attributed to the sense of longing for it. Thus, 'home' in the past usually employs similar markers of beauty, peace, and rootedness. In Eroğlu's *Nameyek Ji Xwedê Re* (A Letter to the God, 2007), the unnamed protagonist keeps an image of 'home' as it was in the past fixed in his mind while he is away from it. The picture he remembers of his 'home' is the one from his childhood, which is very pure and uncorrupted.

It is worth mentioning that Kurdish novelists have different ways of referring to these idealized versions of Kurdistan in the past. However, these memories generally produce concrete examples of how Kurdish identity is essentially constructed through the past. As with the diasporic communities, the fictional characters "regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home" (Safran 1991: 83-84). The meaning of 'home-land' in a 'past' constructed on the basis of a sentimental idealization, is not a simple longing for 'place' in the past, but reinforces the struggle to regain it. In the novels the overall spirit of their themes is connected with nostalgia, which is often identified with an apparently pure, rural lifestyle that prevailed in the past just before

²³¹ Zaroktiya wî weneyekî vî bajarî yî kevin de mabû. Wê gavê, hejmara avahiyên bilind ne ew qasî zêde bû ...belkî ew bajarê ku dihat bîra wî, jî êdî di wênayên zarokatiya wî de mabû. Herdu bi hev re, di nav gelek wênayên din de, di torbeyekî naylon de, li refika pirtûkxaneya wî mabûn.

the war. This nostalgia, in fact, remains one of the most dominant features of desire for a free and independent country. In this respect, nostalgia in the Kurdish novels reinforces the sense that the past was better, simpler, and purer than our present. In his novel *Rojnivîska Spinoza* Özmen quotes from the well-known poet Qedrî Can; “when someone is not happy with his current situation, he looks back to his earlier days” (23).²³² The concerns can be considered as the recognition of an idealized Kurdistan in the past, which necessitates an urgent attention to the current Kurdistan.

3.2.2. ‘Home-land’ Now: *The Land of Destruction and Struggle*

When analysing the novels closely, it becomes clear that the present meanings of ‘home-land’ images are very different from the versions in the past. From a social constructivist orientation, with regard to emotions and affection in human-place bonding, there is also “cognition (thought, knowledge and belief) and practice (action and behaviour)” (Altman and Low 1992: 4-5) in place meanings; these are also embedded within the place’s socio-political context. In other words, the understanding of a place is influenced not only by “collective values, beliefs, and behaviors” (Najafi and Bin Mohd Shariff 2011: 189), but also by physical attributes, meanings and activities (Proshansky *et.al.* 1983). Accordingly, in simple terms, and very much influenced by socio-political conditions in the Kurdish regions, ‘home-land’ is depicted in the present time as the land of war and conflicts which been violated and invaded by others so that it has lost its purity and beauty.

To start with, in *Gava Heyatê*, for example, the ‘home-land’ described for the present time is represented through evacuated, invaded and destroyed villages. The loss of land, the oppression of the state and the tragic consequences of the war become the dominant themes very soon after the protagonist’s childhood. Throughout the novel, the main character witnesses Kurds migrating from their lands and villages to foreign places. Many people are executed and tortured and the entire city is pervaded by a disgusting smell (121), which is metaphorical while serving also to strengthen the character’s feelings of hopelessness.

Kyle and Chick (2007: 212) note that “places are symbolic contexts imbued with meaning(s) [...] which emerge and evolve through ongoing interaction with others and the environment.” In this account, the meanings of Kurdish places described through expressive symbols in the novels lead to bigger emotional and personal sentiments. In

²³²Gava meriv ji hale xwe ne razî be û ji pêşiya xwe biguman, dizivire li rojên xwe yê derbasbûyî dinêre.

Qerebafon, or example, the adverse political conditions are associated with the smell of dirt. Returning to his hometown, Ronahî, the main character, comments that, “my homeland was drowning in dirt and mess, according to the members of my nation” (21),²³³ and despairingly observes the changes that have occurred since he left his home. The same desperate feeling is also dominant in the novel *Neynika Dilî* by Dilsoz. It begins with Mustafa, the main character, who has nightmares that the village, Xanê, has been invaded and destroyed:

In my dream I saw that Xanê was in ruins [...] I was walking around and could see neither acquaintances nor households, there was nothing remaining of Xanê. If there had been no mountains or other familiar surroundings, I would not even have said [recognized] that this was Xanê (18).²³⁴

Religious figures in the village take his dream seriously and begin to think that Xanê will fall into ‘ruins’ (*wêran*) (20) in the near future. As the inhabitants are forced to leave their village it gradually becomes a place of destruction, like the one in Mustafa’s dream. After returning from Istanbul to his lands, he recounts his observations about another Kurdish village ‘*Gundê Mizgeft*’ (Mosque Village):

Gundê Mizgef looks like a sunshade for scorpions (lizard) and snakes were swarming there. The heat of fear was intensified there and the fear of death was rising from there. With this condition it was painful, like the suppurating wound of an injured person. I sat by the edge of a pool, my knees went weak, my breath was expelled from my body, my throat dried up from the sense of crying (167).²³⁵

Another character in the same novel, named Feqî Huseyîn (Molla Huseyin), narrates an account similar to Mustafa’s, when he says: “they destroyed our village, killed our relatives, and now like bandits, they plunder some poor soul every day” (172).²³⁶ Throughout the novel, Mustafa, as the narrator, recalls depressing ‘home-land’ visions that are rooted in communal and ethnic consciousness, while exploring the geographical and natural features of an invaded and tormented land.

²³³ Welatê min ji hêla hemwelatîyên min ve, di nava pîsî û gemarê de difetisî.

²³⁴ Di xewna xwe de min dîtibû ku Xanê kavi bûbû [...] Ez li der û doran digeriyam, ne min nasek didît, ne maleke ava, ne jî tiştek ji Xanê, heke ji çiya û semtên wê nebûya min ê bigota qey ev der ne Xanê ye.

²³⁵ *Gundê Mizgeft* bi wî halê dişibiya berojê kimkiman (gumgumok), kêlûle û beqmaran dîlan lê digerand. Têhna tirsê lê hêwirîbû, bêhna mirinê jê difiriya. Bi wî halê xwe wekî birîna birîndarekî kêmgirtî jan vedida. Ez li ser teniştê birkê rûniştim, qidûm li min şikestibûn, bêhna min çikiyabû, qiriktaliya giriyê gewriya min ziwa kiribû.

²³⁶ *Gundê me da xirabkirin, mirovên me dane kuştin û niha jî wekî nijdevanan her roj talana xwêfserokî radikin.*

Along with images of destroyed and evacuated villages, fear and anxiety permeate the ‘home-land’. For example, the novel *Gitarê bê Tel* is set in the towns of Kiziltepe and Nusaybin, which are not only places of war but also places where people are scared to wander around (116). Terror and chaos have spread everywhere and according to Sadî, the main character, even the birds are frightened to live there (128). Apart from the fear and panic among the population, the war negatively affects people’s relationships with each other. Now, they yearn for the stable and peaceful life that they enjoyed in the past. The narrator in *Xezal* also makes comparisons with the past, insisting that Kurds are not as they were in the days of their ancestors (46). They longer trust each other as much (93) and self-interest has become their priority. Before the war, they would gather at night and sing ‘*klam*’ and ‘*stran*’, but now they only talk about war and politics. War has become the only concern and the stench of bombs and bullets replaces the fresh scents of nature, mountains and snow. There is no longer any sign of goodness left from the past.

Along with the depressing ‘home-land’ images, there is also a move away from the mythical imaginings of the ‘home-land’ to the tragic reality found in Zozanî’s *Mişextî*. Before the war ‘home-land’ is described with evocative words; “flowers in the uplands raised their heads through the snow and the beautiful face of spring ornamented the slopes and valleys” (108);²³⁷ “for them, the coolness of the uplands is both an opportunity and reason for new hopes” (153);²³⁸ and “...the rains of spring were charged with life. The clouds loaded with rain were changing the appearance of nature” (154).²³⁹ Here, the idealistic view of Kurdistan is revealed; however, with the raids and the interference of soldiers and state, villages are burned down and ruined (105). Addressing the beauty of the past simply makes the ugliness of today more obvious. In *Reş û Spî*, ‘home-land’ is identified with war and conflicts, as Robîn explicitly reveals when questioning the connection between conflict and homeland: “Homeland? ...war?...Diyarbakir?” (152).²⁴⁰ There is also an implication that the natural beauty of ‘home-land’ is destroyed by conflicts, when Serhat in *Kejê* points out the difference over time. According to the narrator, “Serhat is talking about the scent of irises and daisies. Yet there are no longer any irises or daisies in the country today” (220)²⁴¹ because wars and conflicts have destroyed them all.

²³⁷ Li zozanan gul û kulîlkên biharê serê xwe di nav keviyên berfê de hilatîne û teşeyê biharê yê xweşik dol û nevalên zozanan xemilandi ye.

²³⁸ Hûnikatiya zozanan ji bo wan hem fersendeke hem jî derîveyê hin hêviyên nû ye.

²³⁹ Baranên biharê jiyân diherikand. ewrên baran barkirî xemla xwezayê diguherand.

²⁴⁰ Welat?...Şer?...Diyarbakîr?

²⁴¹ Serhat behs ji bêhna Sosin û Beybûnan dike. Lê belê îro li welêt Sosin û Beybîn tunin.

In *Kulmek Morîkên Şînbirik*, ‘home-land’ for the central character of the child also evokes violation, migration and destruction. During her childhood, she has seen their village invaded by soldiers and the inhabitants beaten. The soldiers offer the villagers two options: They must either take up guns to fight against the guerrillas or abandon their lands. They resist co-operation with the soldiers; they are forced to leave their village. In this case ‘home-land’ is also associated with migration and evacuation. In another account in the novel *Otobês*, the narrator, a passenger in the bus, looks through the window and describes what he sees:

In my country, where sometimes everything turns upside down and a dreadful fear dominates our lives and sometimes a meaningless relief makes our lives boring, where all of a sudden natural disasters and strong storms empty the villages of people and dry up the land, the rivers that rise in neighbouring countries where we have never been, flow towards us and help me to go on breathing (39).²⁴²

With regard to the metaphors related to nature and to the ruined lives of the characters in the novels, the use of negative terms in the descriptions of the physical settings also confirms the constant conditions of war in the ‘home-land’ through the numbers of those killed and injured because of the conflicts. In *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, ‘home-land’ is described with an assortment of dreadful images. As the protagonist states, “we have suffered silence, embarrassment, betrayals, prisons, denial, exile, distance, foreignness, hunger, disease, agony, and death” (97).²⁴³ In this way the ‘homeland’ is depicted as victimized by the cruel hands of the state; it becomes “a lake of blood” (*Keje*, 213) and “divided” (*ibid.* 202). In *Hêviyên Birîndar*, too, following invasion and evacuation, ‘home-land’ also becomes ‘the land of death’ (124) and the beauty of the land fades away, while in *Wênayên Keserê*, there is “blood scattered” (348) all over Kurdistan. Safety, innocence, peace, order and stability are permeated by the dirt of war. In other words, ‘home-land’ is nice in its own way; yet with the intervention of others, it is destroyed and its beauty evaporates.

²⁴²Li welatê min ê ku carê diqulibe ser û binê hev û bi lezeke sawnak digindire ser jîyanên me gişan, carê jî di rihetiyeke bêwate de hewîna wî nayê, di binê pêla qewamên xwezaya xezebdar, bagerên bixişm, şewatên tenûrekî, ku carê gundan dide valakirin û erdê direpisîne û deng jê nabir re, ava ku li keviyên welatên cîranên me yên ku em hîç neçûnê dize û her nêzikî me, bi ser me de tê, ev yek bêhna min derdixe.

²⁴³Me bêdengîyan, rûşeyîyan, durûtîyan, xayîntîyan, girtîgehan, tenêbûnan, tunebûnan, sirgûniyan, dûriyan, xerîbiyan, birçîbûyan, nexweşîyan, janan, mirinan tevli dîtiye.

Moving away from a mythical picturing of the ‘home-land’ draws attention to the current circumstances of ‘home-land’. Mîrza’s narration in the novel *Wêneyên Keserê* portrays the destructive changes that have happened:

I am the son of the nation itseeelf which lost its country, heaven, and lands of its ancestors in international agreements [...] They [people of this nation] are looking at the cemeteries which are daily expanding and they leave their hope next to these cemeteries and in groups they leave for the big mountains to seek shelter and I am the migrant himseeelf who endlessly migrates from one country to another (187).²⁴⁴

In this extract, the emphasis on international agreements, and the lack of a state, independence and freedom are mentioned in relation to other European countries whose intervention has effectively deprived the Kurds of the freedom to live in their lands. Thus, present-day Kurdistan is portrayed as an oppressed country that has been violated and destroyed by others. In the setting of *Rojnivîska Spinoza, Kardoxî* (a symbolic expression for the term ‘Kurdistan’) is controlled by others and is no longer a free country. In this account, on most occasions, war and conflicts become the constant backdrop of the novels, even those set in the past, since political intervention and destruction constitute the tragic reality of ‘home-land’. In *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî* Kurdistan is attacked and controlled by Iran and the Ottomans (71), and also becomes the land of wars and invasions (71-78); Kurds are suffering because of these conflicts.

However, the current narration of the violated and destroyed ‘home-land’ also promotes a struggle to defend ‘homeland’ against the occupiers and destroyers. The narrator in *Kejê* states that Kurdistan is occupied; however, there is also a struggle:

They are the children of an oppressed nation. Their ancestors bequeathed this to them as a present. In other words they suffer oppression, helplessness, misery [...] Exploiters occupied the country. They suck the blood of people [...] There is a struggle in the country (202).²⁴⁵

In this context, the characters try to identify or create recent socio-political developments and incidents that are usually related to the emergence of the PKK and conflicts in the mountains. Being based on the conflict between the state and the PKK

²⁴⁴ Ez kurê netewa di peymanên nevwelatan de welatê xwe bihûşt a xwe, xaka xwe, war û wargehên kal û bavên xwe windakirî, bi xwe meeee [...] li goristanen her ku diçû zêde dibûn dinerîn û hêvîyên xwe li nik goristanan dihîstin û kom bi kom xwe dispartin çîyayên mezin û ji welatekî koçî welatekî din dikir, bi xwe meee.

²⁴⁵ Zarokên gelekî bindestin. Bav û kalê van ev ji wan re diyarî kirî ye. Anku bindestî, jarî, perîşanî [...] Kedxwaran welêt dagirtîye. Xwîna mirovên wan dimêje. Zarokan di zikê dayîkan de dikuje. Têkoşîn li welêt tê kirin.

goes back to the 1980s, they involve the similar and static construction in which guerrillas are considered as the saviours of Kurdistan. The PKK, a national movement, is usually presented through various depictions rather than named directly. In *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, *Kitim*, *Bêhna Axê*, *Mişextî*, and *Gava Heyatê*, for example, the protagonists are guerrillas; and in *Neynika Dili*, *Kejê*, *Qerebafon*, *Bavfileh* (Proselyte, 2009) *Xezal*, *Rêwiyên bê Welat*, *Kulmek Morikên Şînbirik*, and *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, the secondary characters who join other guerrillas are highly praised for their moral traits. *Wêneyên Keserê*, *Giyanên Bahozi*, *Li Qerexa Şevê Hivron*, *Rojnivîska Spinoza*, *Hêvîyên Brîndar*, and *Reş û Spî* refer directly to a Kurdish party and promote the national struggle in which this party is involved. However, in *Oto bê*, *Nameyek ji Xwedê re*, *Gitarê bê Tel*, *Pêşbaziya Çirokên Neqediyayî*, and *Toqa Lanatê*, references to socio-political conditions and the national struggle are less direct though they are supportive in tone and underline the necessity of fighting for national liberation. Accordingly, in *Kejê* and *Xezal* villagers in Turkish Kurdistan are impelled by the frequent raids, interrogations and arrests by the Turkish military to act to save their lands from invaders and foreigners.

Although the novels do not mention its name, sympathy towards the armed party and its rebels increases daily when the villagers see how their lands are controlled by others. In *Kejê*, encouragement to struggle to save Kurdistan becomes explicit mainly because they raise their voices as Kurds: “I am telling you, we are Kurds. We are oppressed in our own country. We need to struggle and liberate ourselves from the oppressors. At least we should learn our language in our country” (27).²⁴⁶ The novel also refers to a political party that is regarded as a means towards implementing defence and liberation: “all these parties are patriotic, country-loving parties [...] while the nation is not united, there will be no liberation. The unity of the nation depends on this. If the leaders do not believe in marching together, than the people will have no faith in leaders” (26).²⁴⁷ The novel also refers to the first attack by this party on 15 August.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Bêjim te, em Kurdin. Em li welatê xwe bindest dijîn. Pêwiste ku em xebatê bikin da ku i bindestê dijmin derkevin. Bi kêmasî li welatê xwe bi zimanê xwe hevisîn bikin. There is an ambiguity in the word ‘hevisîn’ in this sentence, which appears have been misspelled. *Hewisîn*’ refers to “to learn” and ‘hêvişîn’ means, “to preserve”. The author could have intended to use either of them, as both would make sense. Either way, the author implies the significance of the Kurdish language for the national struggle.

²⁴⁷ Ev partîye tev welatparêz in, niştiman perwer in [...] heya netew nebe yek, rizgarî jî nabe. Yekbûna netewê niha girêdayî vê yekê ye. Eger rêber bi hev re bawerî nebe ku bi hev re bimesin gelê jî bawerî bi wan rêbera nabe.

²⁴⁸ The date referred suggests that the party referred to is in all probability the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). The PKK launched its first attack on 15 August 1984.

Our country has been waiting for this day for a thousand years. Today is 15 August. Today the mother of Kurds gave birth to twins. One boy, one girl. Revolution has reached another stage. From now on, we will fight back until the occupants leave our country. The enemies will no longer be able to hurt our honour. Freedom is closer now (100).²⁴⁹

It is possible in some of the novels to trace certain details about the PKK, either directly or indirectly. For example, *Wêneyên Keserê* refers explicitly to the names of the guerrillas as a symbol of respect, e.g., “Zilan, Sema, Bêrîvan, Vîyan, Egît, Mazlûm û Engîn” – who die for the sake of Kurdistan (188), while Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK, is referred as “the scientist and intellectual Öcalan” (*Îlim û îldar Öcalan*) (188). Sometimes, the narratives can become very didactic regarding the conflicts between PKK guerrillas and the Turkish state. In *Qerebafon*, for instance, the readers learn every detail of the conflict between soldiers and guerrillas from a journal left by a guerrilla called Nabî. Through his descriptions, readers are taken back to the 1980s and the tortures, ill treatment and hunger strikes in Diyarbakir prison. Again, the unnamed injured guerrilla in *Hêvî Her Dem Heye* refers not only to the political struggle of the Kurds in their country over many centuries, but also remembers the emergence of the political party in which he has become involved after his release from prison. He never names the political party but the details suggest the PKK. His monologues stand as a historical documenting of the Kurdish nationalist movement and organizations during the 1980s and his own active involvement in the armed struggle. The narratives are presented as firsthand sources involving memoirs and experiences.

The three novels of Omer Dilsoz: *Hêviyên Birîndar*, *Neynika Dilî*, and *Bêhna Axê* also include similar references to an armed party struggling in the mountains. The primary ambition of this party is presented as being to set Kurdistan free and to gain independence.

In addition, through either major or minor characters, the struggle for the preservation of the lands is encouraged: “Lions are fighting for the sake of their land” (42).²⁵⁰ In *Bêhna Axê*, the narrator speaks about the former guerrilla Sozda, and explains her reason for going to the mountains: “Why did Sozda run away; in order not to live out the unhappy fate of her mother. In order not to be the slave or servant of the dominant party [...] in order to live in the free and independent lands as she wishes”

²⁴⁹ Welatê me ji hezar salan û vir de li hêviya vê roje bû. Iroke 15 ê tebaxê ye. Dayîka me Kurdan îroke cêmîkek anî dinê. Yek kur, yek keçê. Şoreş ket tayek û bayek din, ji îro û paşve emê hêriş bikîn dagirkeran heya welatê me berdidin. Edî desrê dijimin nagehê namûsa me. Ne dûre nêzîke azadî.

²⁵⁰ Şêr ji bo warê xwe têdikoşin.

(128).²⁵¹ In *Qerebafon*, the central characters express their views about defending their ‘home-land’ through solidarity; “we need to support them. We should preserve them as the treasure of our homeland” (59).²⁵² Here the sense of ‘we’ or ‘us’ in the narrations of the struggle is very dominant since each character speaks out in the name of the whole nation. The unnamed guerrilla in *Hêvî Her Dem Heye* says, “as long as we don’t slow down before we reach the 2000s we will have wedding ceremonies in a free and independent Kurdistan”(107).²⁵³ And the protagonist in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere* emphasizes the reasons for struggling and uniting by saying “you also know that we were defeated in the first half of this century. All the Kurdish rebellions failed. Each defeat brings either vanishing or silence with it” (63),²⁵⁴ which implies that differently from the past Kurds need now to stand more strongly. He lists all the reasons why all Kurds should be involved in the national struggle;

at the beginning of everything, there is the issue of the ban on Kurdish children learning their mother tongue. Then there are issues of poverty, deprivation, disease, injustice, lack of identity; however, there is also betrayal and timeless deaths. That is why we need to liberate ourselves first, then our nation. For an oppressed person, marriage is a loss (96).²⁵⁵

Struggling against the effects of displacement and oppression becomes the ideological and routine meaning of ‘home-land’. It is the lack of territory that defines the characters in these novels, and the presentation of their patriotism as the most crucial trait that they can possess. In doing this, the Kurdish novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan suggests that patriotic (*welatparêz*) characters as national signifiers become the most trustworthy and beloved figures in the novels, a fact that is often explicitly emphasized in the narrations and descriptions. For example, in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, Selîm who is respected by others for his patriotic attitudes, often talks about the significance of being patriotic, saying, “I am also a Kurd, a revolutionary and a patriot. Kurdishness is tough. Patriotism is about sacrificing. Revolutionary means going

²⁵¹Ma Sozda ji ber çî reviyabû; da ku qedera reş a dayika xwe dubare nake. Da ku nebe kole û xidama serdestan...Da ku bikaribe bi dilê xwe, li ser axa xwe azad û serbixwe bijiyê.

²⁵² Û divê em xwedîtiyê li wan bikin. Em, wan weke gencîneya welatê xwe biparêzin.

²⁵³ Ger em xwe sist nekin, hîn em negihîştine salên du hezaran emê di Kurdistaneke serbixwe û azad de, dawetan li dar bixin.

²⁵⁴ Tu jî dizanî ku em di herdu caryekên serê vê sedsalê de di bin ketin. Hemû berxwedanên Kurdan têk çûn. Her têkcûnek bi xwe re yan tunebûnê yan jî bedengiyê tine.

²⁵⁵ Ji zarokên Kurd re berî her tiştî qedexekirina zimanê zikmakî heye. Piştê jî feqîrî, nexweşî, tunebûn, bêdadî, bêparî, bênasnametî, li ser vana jî zêde zêde vir, xapandin û di dawiyê de ji mirinên bêzeman hene. Ji bo vê jî dibê em berê xwe, paşê gelê xwe û welatê xwe rizgar bikin [...] ji mirovê bindest re zevac zewal a.

against the benefit of discontent”(19).²⁵⁶ He believes that the defence of ‘homeland’ can only be possible through being patriotic:

Every day in this country many people were detained, injured and went missing. Every day, girls and boys were losing their lives in the country’s mountains [...] There was a dirty war going on in the country. It was not just a matter of patriots or revolutionaries – anyone who is principled and honest could not just ignore this and pursue other things (90).²⁵⁷

Characters like Selîm that are found in other novels are highly celebrated and respected. In *Qerebafon*, one of the characters stresses that being a patriot is something to admire; “in a short time, through Cengiz, I became acquainted with all patriots. I began to admire him” (146-147).²⁵⁸ In other words, patriotic characters are suggested as the ideal, and their principles and attitudes should be taken into account. In *Wêneyên Keserê*, the narrator praises Moyad, as he is a true patriot who works for Kurdish organizations in Germany. When Moyad first meets Narîn, he likes her very much; but when he learns that she is a Kurd, he starts to regard her as his sister. It is implied that no harm can come from a ‘welatparêz’; rather, it comes from others such as foreigners or people deprived of the love of ‘homeland’, i.e., village guards, traitors and informers. This idea is strengthened by Narîn’s experiences during her stay in Germany. She has been raped by a German man and this has caused her to lead an immoral life. But Narîn’s immoral life at the beginning of the novel does not affect the way she is praised throughout the narrative. Regardless of the mistakes she may have made, this has not prevented her from being a protector of her nation and homeland. Her meeting with other Kurdish patriots makes her change her ways completely and she begins to have a decent life. This indicates that patriotic Kurds like Moyad and Mîrza not only advocate the national struggle but also save the women around them from inappropriate or troubled behaviour. As Ivekovic and Mostov (2002: 10) argue, “as the markers and as property, mothers, daughters, and wives require the defense and protection of patriotic sons.” Accordingly, the protagonist in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, saves Evîn from a man who abuses her; in *Wêneyên Keserê*, Mîrza saves Narîn from an immoral life. They struggle against corruption, injustice and discrimination.

²⁵⁶ Ez jî Kurd im, welatparêz û şoreşger im. Kurdbûn serêşî ye. Welatparêzî fedakarî ye. Şoreşgerî jî li dijî sûdê nerazîbûn e.

²⁵⁷ Her roj li welat gelek mirov dihatin girtin, birîndakirin û wendakirin. Her roj keç û xortan li çiyayên welat jiyana xwe ji dest didaz. Li welat şerekî qirêj dewam dikir. Di vê rewşê de ne welatparêzek yan şoreşgerêk, mirovek bi wijdan û durust jî nikarîbû vana tevli bavêta piştê gohê xwe û bi dû yekî/ê biketa.

²⁵⁸ Ez di wextekî kin de bi xêra Cengiz bûbûm nasyarê hemû welatparêzan. Ez bûbûm heyranê Cengiz.

In this respect, it is clear that protagonists who are all ‘*welatparêz*’, as a metonym for the nation, are also drawn with perfect features. They are also reminiscent of epic heroes. For example, there is not much difference between Cembelî, the character in the epic novel *Cembeli Kurê Mîrê Hekarî*, and Robîn in the novel *Reş û Spî* that is set in the 1990s. Both characters have experienced the same processes, they participate in journeys, face many obstacles and defeat them, and either way, whether they return home or not, they are transformed into different people, becoming for example, stronger and more patient. Both characters illustrate certain moral precepts that are valued by Kurdish people, and they embody the cultural and political beliefs of the nation. Hesên, the character in *Xezal*, who is described throughout the novel as ‘*welatparêz*’, has had no formal education; however, he is a very rational and knowledgeable individual and everyone takes him very seriously (26). Sadî, the central character in *Gitarê bê Tel*, is depicted as both a decent lover and a loyal ‘*welatparêz*’ who graduates as a doctor and returns to his ‘home-land’ to benefit his own community.

Tilermenî’s *Kitim* also portrays an idealized main character. Seyda had been an Imam, but goes to the mountains to be a guerrilla. Not only does he successfully combine the religious and political aspects of his personality, but he is also very open-minded to progress and the modern world. Throughout the novel Seyda is suggested as a perfect figure. Similarly, in *Neynika Dilî*, the protagonist’s brother Ehmed, a guerrilla fighting for independence, is described like an epic hero who is intelligent, educated, respectful and loving. His wife Dilşa praises his features as flawless, both physically and morally: “He was a really trustworthy man, wise, loyal, protective, smart, mature, knew how to invade the heart, easy-going, sympathetic, knew how to love” (129).²⁵⁹ The protagonist states that his mother is fond of Ehmed: “Our mother loved Ahmet more than all of us. She was always saying that he would be a hardworking man and a leader of the Kurds”(16).²⁶⁰ Accordingly, in a letter written before he goes to the mountains to fight, he says: “I will fight for my country and my mother, to live in a brighter future (...) I am leaving for the sake of your freedom, for the free life of your children in these lands in the future, and for them to hold their heads up in front of

²⁵⁹ Ew mêrekî bi rastî jî camêr bû, zana bû, dilsoz bû, dizanî lê xwedî derkeve, bîaqil bû, serwest bû, dizanî, dilan fetih bike, cirxweş bû, xwîngerm bû, dizani hez bike.

²⁶⁰ Dayika min, ji me hemûyan bêhtir jî Ehmed hez dikir, her digot ew ê bibe mirovekî jêhatî û dê bibe serkêşekî kurdan.

history” (41).²⁶¹ His departure to struggle for his ‘homeland’ confirms the admiration others have given him since, by sacrificing his life, he achieves heroic status.

In the same author’s second novel, *Bêhna Axê*, the protagonist’s boss Salîh straightforwardly portrays the differences between a ‘*welatparêz*’ and one who is not a ‘*welatparêz*’, in terms of their characteristic features and moral manners. Salîh has two sons, one of whom, a former guerrilla, died in the mountains during a conflict (and was named a martyr) and is always praised in conversations; the other has no interest in any national issues and is described as a carefree drifter. For Salîh, the protagonist Dilgeş is a person worthy of respect (151), even though he fails to come to work for several days and does not bother informing his father. And although he knows Dilgeş is having an affair with a married woman Salîh does not change his favourable opinion of him. His disreputable behaviour does not affect the positive image of him in Salîh’s mind, as he is a former guerrilla who has struggled for the sake of Kurdistan.

In sum, Kurdish characters, mainly protagonists who are presented as “national characters” (Bourdieu 1994) are highly celebrated for their decent and trustworthy behaviours; nor is it a coincidence that they also reinforce the national ideals. They speak Kurdish all the time and with the ideals of struggle and sacrifice they often explicitly encourage others to support the defence of Kurdistan. Again, in relation to Kurdistan’s two ‘time zones’ (past and present), it can be argued that Kurdistan has a double face, reflecting the ambiguity of the conflict. On the one hand it used to be the peaceful ‘home-land’ of the Kurds by emphasizing elements of its mythological history; on the other hand, it is a place in which fear and insecurity are dominant in a such a way that the characters are condemned to mediate between the glorified ‘home-land’ that has remained in the past and is destroyed, and a ‘home-land’ that in present times has been turned into a battlefield. There are no diverse interpretations of ideologies and politics produced in the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan, but while the political and national struggle with the state is reconstructed in the form of mourning, it also reveals a glimpse of hope, which creates a linkage with dreams for the future.

3.2.3. Imagining the Future of ‘Home-land’: ‘Newroz’²⁶² and Heaven

²⁶¹ Ez ê her dem ji bo ku dayika min, welatê min di siberojên geştir de bijîn têbikoşim (...) Ez ji bo azadiya we, ji bo ku siberojê zarokên we li ser vê axê azad bin, ji bo ku li hemberî dîrokê serbilind bin diçim.

²⁶² Newroz refers to the traditional celebration by the Kurdish community of the Iranian New Year according to the Iranian calendar. Held around the spring equinox, 21 March, Newroz occupies a much more important place among the Kurds in terms of Kurdish identity than a mere spring festival. According to Kurdish myth, Newroz is associated with the legend of Kawa, a blacksmith who defeated the evil ruler Zuhak (also known as Dehak). Under Zuhak’s rule, Kurdish people had every day to

The previous section on the portrayal of ‘home-land’ showed that in the present, ‘home-land’ is visualized as a land of destruction and violation. Accordingly, the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan shows that being deprived of recognition in official territorial terms, along with unsatisfying and disturbing conditions in the present, means that ‘home-land’ has been transformed into a symbolic dream place in which to imagine its future. As Harvey (1996: 306) states, “the preservation or construction of a sense of place is then an active moment, the passage from memory to hope, from past to future. And the construction of places can reveal hidden memories that hold out the prospects for different futures.” It can be argued in this study that Kurdish novelistic discourse contributes to the development of an idealized and highly symbolic image of Kurdistan attributed to the future. The real impact of their texts lies in their concerted effort to recreate a mythology of national consciousness, a collective memory of an idealized Kurdistan for the future.

The meanings of ‘home-land’ employ similar markers of beauty, peace, and rootedness as they were in the past, in contrast to the present portrayal of ‘home-land’ as not much more than a battlefield. This can be seen, for example, in *Neynika Dilî*, *Gitarê bê Tel*, *Kitim*, *Qerebafon*, *Bavfileh*, *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, *Xezal*, *Kejê*, *Mişextî*, *Reş û Spî*, *Gava Heyatê*, *Hêviyên Birîndar*, *Rêwiyan bê Welat*, *Giyânên Bahozî*, *Wênayan Keserê*, and *Kulmek Morikên Şînbirik*. However, the ‘home-land’ in its future projection is explicitly imagined through familiar metaphors, such as a utopian vision of heaven, a celebration of Newroz, or an idealised village panorama. The scent of flowers and the fragrance of blossom are frequently-used metaphors in the constructed image of Kurdistan in the future.

In *Li Qerexa Şevê Hivron*, for instance, when Derdocan follows the ants that are carrying fire and water with them, he comes across some charred forests, which allude to the burnt forests of Kurdistan. However, there are new shoots appearing beneath the scorched trees and vegetation. This implies the rebirth of life in Kurdistan – in other

sacrifice two young men and serve their brains to Zuhak’s serpents. Zuhak’s vile reign also kept the spring away from Kurdistan. Traditionally 20 March is marked as the day that Kawa defeated Zuhak; the next day spring returned to Kurdistan. From the 1980s, because of its association with freedom Newroz became the single most important symbol of the Kurdish uprising, and the Newroz celebrations were constantly suppressed by the Turkish authorities have. During the 1992 Newroz celebrations, the Turkish state killed over 50 Kurdish participants, and two were also killed in 2008. Similarly three Kurds were shot dead by Syrian state forces in Syria. In a desperate effort to preempt this Kurdish national festival, the Turkish government tried to reclaim and reinvent the event by announcing that Newroz (which is called Nevruz in Turkish) was in fact a Turkish holiday and commemorated the first day that Turks left their Central Asian homeland. In 2000 it became legal to celebrate this day with the name Nevruz, although its Kurdish name, Newroz, is still forbidden.

words, Kurdistan reproduces itself like nature. After the burnt forest, Derdocan sees a barren mountain; when he climbs it he sees that its other side is green and full of flowers and plants, like an idea of heaven. Thus there are two sides of this mountain: one is the side ravaged by invaders and represents the present Kurdistan; the other side is like heaven and represents Kurdistan's future. Similarly, in *Wêneyên Keserê*, Narîn wishes to be buried in her forgotten country because she wants people to plough her soil and cultivate it (163). She wants the children to eat its fruits and her grave to be covered with flowers and greenery, like heaven's image of Kurdistan.

Similarly, in *Bêhna Axê*, Sozda and Dilgeş decide to return their lands, in a future that is projected with hope and optimism. As they march along they sing about their love of 'homeland': "Move forward, move on, it is our time and age/the homeland is longing and waiting for us" (206).²⁶³ Joyfully, Dilgeş calls to others to join them; "Dear brothers, come along, you Kurds! You are brave men, let's go forward with the love of the homeland in our hearts" (Ibid.).²⁶⁴ He also tells Sozda to get ready "...so that we can go to the land, so that the land can embrace us and we will build our home [nest] there. Yes, let's go and build our home in the shadow of the mountains, around crystal springs and rivers" (205).²⁶⁵ They are very hopeful as Dilgeş muses about their future: "We will spend a happy life together, a life that smells of soil, a life that good-hearted people deserve and enjoy after all the difficulties they have been through. Let's go to our village, colourful Gûzereş is waiting for us, Sozda, it's waiting for us" (207).²⁶⁶ Their suffering and loneliness are over as soon as they step into their land of origin. For the first time they feel happy and peaceful. Their lives have a new beginning, like spring:

Now the rain had stopped as well. A warming sun was shining on the earth. It was as if the rainbow was welcoming them, like a colourful belt wrapped around the body of the foggy mountain. The surface was tidy and fertile. Everywhere was wet, everywhere was blue, and everywhere was full of life. The smell of earth was bursting through the black rocks; an earth on to which the strong rain fell (...) The sun shone and spring smiled with all its beauty. Everything was behind them now, all the pain and grief were behind them... now they were smiling (...) it was the spring of their

²⁶³ Herne pêş, werne pêş; dewr û dem ya me.

²⁶⁴ Birayên delal hûn werin kurdino! bi eşqa welat em herin merdino!

²⁶⁵ [...] De xwe hazir bike da ku em ber bi axê ve biçin. Da ku xwe bavêjin hembêza xakê û li wir hêlîna xwe bikolin. Erê, em biçin bin sîbera çiyayên bilind û li dor kanî û rûbarên zelal hêlîna xwe deynin.

²⁶⁶ Emê pêkve jiyaneke bextewer derbas bikin. Jiyaneke ku bêhna axê jê difûre. Erê, jiyaneke ku di dawîya her zehmetkêşiyê de mirovên dilçak bidest dixin û pê şadibin. De were, em biçin gundê xwe; Gûzereşa rengîn li benda me ye Sozê, li benda me!...

life ... the new spring was smiling with all its beauty...”
(207).²⁶⁷

The narrator creates an image of a ‘home-land’ that has been waiting for them all the time and is ready to welcome them. Similarly, *Hêvî Her Dem Heye* ends with a happy ending, thus preserving the optimistic view of the future of ‘home-land’: “There was always a hope in his heart and because of that hopeful heart, he survived on this earth [...] He had a hope for a new life [...] Freedom would be created from this life. [...] It was a life full of difficulties, but a satisfying one” (223).²⁶⁸ The narratives reveal that the happiness of the injured guerrilla is very much related to the conditions of Kurdistan, and his belief in its independent and free future. While he waits on the mountain to be saved by his friends, he often dreams about his future, in which the place refers to a mythical imagining of a homeland. As he is distant from ‘home-land’, reminiscence and longing imply a fixing of the land in his mind as a symbolic portrait of uncorrupted and peaceful Kurdistan, set in the form of a colourful garden.

When Cembelî and Narîn marry at the end of the novel *Cembelî Kurê Mirê Hekarî*, the close connection between ‘place’ and ‘person’ not only shows how a happy ending influences the natural beauty of Kurdistan but also allows glimpses of a positive perspective on the future:

The mountains and uplands of Hakkari embraced the lovers as if they were two sweet-smelling flowers. Hakkari castle nursed and embraced them like the cradle of a cosseted immortal. *Xenas* became the bride in the lap of the groom, Black Mountain. *Merzan* was beautified with leaves and flowers. *Gubsî* was applauding happily. *Tirmil* (?) was dancing separately. The *Kilils* (?) who were like cheering daisies were fluttering their scarves. *Simbî* (?) was weeping for joy and her tears flowed over the stones and rocks and eventually reached the River Zap (195).²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Êdî baran jî wewesiyabû. Êdî hetaveke tînde li ser jîngehê dibişirî. Bûka baranê heçko pêşwaziya wan dîkir, wisa wekî kembereke rengîn xwe bi gerdena çiyayê Rêjgareyî pêçabû. Rûbar şêlû û boş bû. Her dever şîl bû, her dever şîn bû, her dever tijî jîn bû. Bêhna axê ji Gûzereşê difûriya; axa ku baraneke xurt lê bariya (...) Hetav geş bû û bihar bi hemû spehîtiya xwe dibişirî. Êdî her tişt li pey mabû, êdî hemû xem û keserên wan li dûv wan mabûn...Rûyê wan êdî dikeniya (...) Bihara umrê wan bû...Bihara nû bi hemû xweşikiya xwe dibişirî...

²⁶⁸ Di dilê wî de hêvî herdem hebû û bi saya vî dilê xwe yê hêvîdar li ser ruyê erdê, di jiyane de mabû [...] hêvîya wî bi jiyana nû hebû...ji vê jiyane wê azadî hatiba afirandin [...] Ev jiyaneke têr zor û zahmetî bû; lê jiyaneke têr bû.

²⁶⁹ Çiya û zozanên Hekarya ev herdu evîndar wekî du gulên bêhnxeş dane ber singê xwe. Kela Colemêrgê ya mîna dergoşê nazdarên nemir nava dilê xwe de mêjandin û hejandin. Ji keyfan de Xenanis bû bûk ber hembêza Çiyayê Reş yê zava. Merzan xemilbû belga kulîlka. Gubsî ji şahiyê ra çepik lêdixistin. Tirmilên Cete cuda ketibîne geriya govendê. Kilîlan wekî beybûkekî dilgeş destmala xwe li şahiyê tejan. Keyfa de rûndikên Simbî bibûn rêzik, zinar û latên bilind de dihatin nav rûbarê Zê.

In Arîn Zîn's novel *Ez Stêrka Sîpan im* (I am Star of Suphan, 2007), the description of the natural beauty of Mount Suphan is associated with the features of heaven and gives glimpses of a hopeful and optimistic future. Though identified with the epic tales of Siyabend and Khaje and Mem and Zin, in which they meet an unfortunate fate, the love between Dewran and Nergîz results in a story with a happy ending, unlike the epics. At the end of the novel, the narrator describes the happiness of Dewran and Nergîz as “the smell of grass and flowers flying from all sides. Green and red flowers are dancing for them. Dewran and Nergiz are together from now on. (Mount) Suphan is watching over them” (335).²⁷⁰ The natural beauty of Kurdistan becomes part of the couple's happiness.

The beauty and purity associated with nature (usually in rural areas) often evokes the idea of ‘heaven’, and this is explicit in *Neynika Dilî*, in which the central character Mustafa associates the rural area around his village with “heaven” (*bihûşt*). He describes what he sees: “Clover leaves on top of the rocks were swinging with the wind [...] Sunshine was gleaming on springs and waterfalls that were gushing from everywhere [...] An exceptional beauty. It might even be here itself which they call ‘eternal heaven’”(168).²⁷¹ Filled with emotion and sentimental thoughts, he recites poems related to the natural beauty of his village: “In the valley nature descends to the *Xanê* river below /no one knows whether the scent of roses or narcissus or iris or jasmine is better than tulips and daisies / or than the breast and body of my beloved” (170).²⁷² In the novel, the narrator also describes the beautiful *Geraşîn* upland [in Hakkari] in a mythicized mode that evokes the environment of ‘heaven’, which also appears as a fixed typology of the ideal Kurdistan or Kurdistan in the future:

Geraşîn was a beautiful highland where one could experience four seasons; the *Geraşîn* summer camp was set up around the green lake. There were ducks and geese swimming in the lake; on the shores jasmine, irises, narcissus, violets, and tulips were all flowering together. There were natural springs everywhere, and the meadows absorbed and wiped away thousands of pains from human beings; the cool breeze would make anyone fly there (20).²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Bêhna giya û kulîlka li her hêlên wan difîriya. Kulîlkên kesk û sor dilana wan digirt. Dewran û Nêrgiz êdî li cem hev bûn. Sîpanê Xelatê jî li wan temaşê dikir.

²⁷¹ Dav û ûşiyên nefelê li sere zinaran dihejiya bi bayê re [...] Tîrêjên hetavê li ser Ava Spî û kanî û sûlavên ku ji her derê hilvatên leylan didan [...] bedewiyeke nedîtî. Dibe ku ya digotinê ‘bihûştba baqî’ ev der bû.

²⁷² Li geliyê xwarê rûbarê Xanê xwerik dikevinê/kes nizane ka bêhna/gul û nêrgizan/sosîn û asmînan/ alal û beybûnan xweştir e/ an sing û ber û bedenên şengedosta minê.

²⁷³ Geraşîn zozanekî gelekî xweş bû, mirovî li wir, çar demsal bi hev re dijiyan. Zozanê Geraşînê li dora gola şîn hatibû danîn. Li ser golê werdek û qaz hebûn; li rexûrûyên wê asmîn û beybûn, nêrgiz û binevş,

Thus, it can be argued that Kurdistan in its future perspective is represented as a place of blossoms, fragrance, and colour. It is experienced in highly aesthetic terms and the landscape is encountered joyfully and with passion and love; it is also reminiscent of a peaceful picnic scene. For example, in *Giyanên Bahozi*, Artîn dreams about a place like a “*Seyrangeh*” (garden, picnic place) full of flowers and greenery. He wants to go there with his mother, to whom he describes it: “It was a vast picnic place. You couldn’t even see where it finished. It seemed to be endless. There were hundreds of kinds of flowers and trees on it” (427).²⁷⁴ This can be interpreted as a desire to link the land of his birth with his mother who gave birth to him. Similarly, in his first novel *Wêneyên Keserê*, Qasîmlo also creates a similar image of Kurdistan in the minds of readers that is visualized and associated with the notion of a fragrant heaven.

In light of the foregoing, it should be noted that dreaming about ‘home-land’ of origin evokes the sense of a pure and natural life. Accordingly, in *Wêneyên Keserê*, when Cemşîd is put into prison, he expresses his longing towards his land, emphasizing the natural landscape of Kurdistan, which is also transformed into an ideal ‘home-land’:

There was only one way to escape, and it was to be a bird, a falcon, an eagle or a pigeon so that one could fly through the window and soar towards freedom... Yes, at the time I wished to be a bird, a falcon, an eagle or a pigeon so that I would fly through the window and pay a visit to the homeland of our ancestors. It’s known that there are no cells or solitary confinement in the homeland of our ancestors. In the homeland of our ancestors there are uplands and mountains welcoming everyone with all their prosperity and beauty, and drawing everyone towards them with the warmest of hearts. The roses in the homeland of our ancestors shine on everyone’s cheeks like happy and blissful smiles, and people are always lively (314-315).²⁷⁵

For Cemşîd, Kurdistan as the ‘home-land’ of his ancestors evidently refers to the lands of freedom and joy. Apart from its natural beauty, even the smell of Kurdistan is

alal û sosîn, nesrîn û gulgever bi hev re şîn dibûn. Ji her derê wê kaniyek hiltavêt, mêrgên wê bi hezaran êş di giyanê mirovî de dikuştin; hûnebayê wê mirov wekî pîlîtê li balan difirand.

²⁷⁴ Seyrangeheke bêber û bêser bû. Dawiya wê nedixuya. Bêdawî [...] bûn [...] bi sedan gulên cur bi cur û darên terikî lê hebûn.

²⁷⁵ Tenê rîyek revê hebû û ew jî diviyabû ku mirov biba cûkek, bazek, teyrek an jî kevokek ku kariba di ber wê pencerê re bi fire biketa û ber bi azadîyê ve bifirîya... Erê min wê gavê xwest ku ez bibim çûkek, teyrek an jî kevokek ku kariba di ber wê pencerê re, bifirim û serîlêdanakê li ware kal û bavan bidim. Weke tê zanîn, li welatê kal û bavan ne hucre û ne jî tenêbûm heye. Li welatê kal û bavan deşt, zozan û çîya bi hemû dewlemendî û xweşikbûna xwe pêşwazî li mirovan dike û bi dilekî herî germ, merivan di singe xwe de, diezimîne. Gulên li welatê kal û bavan weke kenên şadî û bextewarîyê, li ser hinarekên miroven leyilan didin û her û her jîndar in.

identified with pleasant scents; as the narrator says, “the smell was nice, like the smell of Kurdistan” (333).²⁷⁶ In the same way, in Zozanî’s earlier novel, *Kejê*, the beauty of the landscape is associated with the arrival of spring and love; however, despite the uniqueness of this beauty, the love of ‘home-land’ takes priority:

Many things have been said about springtime in the country. For some, it has been the time for love and affection. But none of them can replace love for the homeland. That is why the vanguards of springs in the country cannot be explained with words or talked about. A springtime of patriots would make love stronger once again (31-32).²⁷⁷

With regard to the physical description of a fictional ‘home-land’, the future prospects for a ‘home-land’ evoking positive aspects can also be narrated through a more symbolic description. For example, in *Otobês*, Eroğlu creates a completely fictive world that includes some factual elements but ultimately imagines Kurdistan in a fictitious context. In the novel, Kurdistan is likened to an island whose disconnectedness can be interpreted as an independent Kurdistan. According to the narratives, the people of the island can sue the oppressive group for its violent and repressive actions, which also implies that Kurds have gained their rights. The fictive Kurdistan projected in the future complies with the dreams of Kurds in relation to their ‘home-land’.

Likewise, *Ardûda* by Mîran Janbar, like *Otobês*, contains completely fictional settings and times. All the names, characters, places and even the era in which the story takes place are entirely imaginary. In *Ardûda*²⁷⁸ Janbar creates a complete utopia in some distant future, which has conflicts similar to those of our world and our present.

²⁷⁶Bêhneke xweş a Kurdistanî bû.

²⁷⁷Gelek tişt li ser biharên elat hatîne gotin. Ji hinan re bûye demê eşq û evînê. Lê belê tu ji can cîhê evîna welat bixwe nagre. Lewra pêşdariyên biharên welatî bi gotin nayê ziman, naye gotin. Biharî welatparêzan cardin girêdidin evînê.

²⁷⁸ *Ardûda* is a professor who experiments on cloning human beings. He has been successful and during his career has cloned several of them. Finally, he clones himself with the same physical features. However, He cannot control his clone, who takes his place and starts to kill people. In the novel, place names like ‘*Axsor*’ (Redsoil), ‘*Zorder*’ (Craggy Place), ‘*Cotsterk*’ (Wooden Plow Star), and ‘*Ser*’ (Top) are completely fictionalized names but they are in Kurdish. Another professor named Saxî remembers his poverty-stricken childhood, without family, friends, or toys. He witnessed the war between galaxies and speaks about a kind of people who lacked the facilities of technology while the dominant galaxy possessed high technology. These people had been struggling in a united uprising but were isolated by the system and deprived of development. He saw many deaths among his people. Saxî compares his city’s present with its past. Before it was magnificent but now, after the invasion, it is no different from a battlefield (38-39). Sarba is another professor who talks about the city, which is now controlled by a half-live galaxy called Warderan. *Ardûda* and Sarba were childhood friends. No name for the city is given but as if they are invaded by another planet. In their city, dozens of people were killed daily (65). In one of her interior monologues, Sarba tells how she and *Ardûda* stole food to give to children, who were deprived of everything and outside the system (Ibid).

There are wars between galaxies and the weak are dominated and ruled by the powerful. Although it can be classified as science fiction, this novel also contains implications and references to factual elements. The group of people defined in the novel resembles the Kurds. The novelist creates an imaginary city in the distant future in which people have suffered greatly from hunger and deprivation. However, they rebel against the system in their galaxy (which in effect is a country) and manage to live independently under a federal system (50), which can also be interpreted as an aspiration for the future of Kurdistan.

Almost all the novels reinforce the idea that ‘home-land’ can be placed in interpersonal relations with regard to certain houses/places/geography, and can be positioned in habits, traditions, memories and rituals. In this respect, the narrators in some novels delineate the Newroz celebration, not only as a traditional Kurdish ritual but also as a perfect vision of Kurdistan. Newroz becomes a symbol of unification and the dream of all Kurds expressed with joy and solidarity. Interfering in Newroz celebrations is like interfering with Kurdish independence and unity. Newroz, without interference, is presented as the portrait of imagined Kurdistan. For example, in *Cembelî Kurê Mirê Hekarî*, the narrator likens the joyful wedding of Binevş and Cembelî, to *Newroz*: “You would say that it was the 21st of March, the day of *Newroz*” (194).²⁷⁹

Newroz is presented in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere* as the ideal atmosphere in Kurdistan, where the ideal is associated with independence and freedom. The narrator says, “spring was the season of equality, freedom, peace, happiness and love [...] and today was *Newroz*, the most beautiful day of spring”(124).²⁸⁰ According to the novel, the celebration of *Newroz* is a reminder of ‘rebellion’ (*Serhildan*) for the Kurdish identity and Kurdistan (131). The unnamed character portrays Kurdistan as a dreamlike place in the aura of Newroz; “there’s a country before us in which nobody has ever set foot. Nobody has yet passed its borders. It is far away from all the dreams and full of beautiful, weird, mysterious, frightening and spiritual things” (165).²⁸¹ Throughout the novels the narrators emphasize the characters’ imaginative construction of a largely metaphorical ‘home-land’, established mainly in a peaceful environment. Thus, in the same novel, when the protagonist leaves Ankara for his lands, his lengthy interior monologues with his beloved can be linked to the future dreams concerning his country:

²⁷⁹ Te dê bigota 21 Adar roja Newrozê ye.

²⁸⁰ Bihar, demsala wekhevîyê, azadiyê, aştîyê, dilşadiyê û evîniyê bû [...] û îro roja biharê ya herî xweş Newroz bû.

²⁸¹ Li pêşîya me welatek ku hê pê û pêgav lê nehatiye avêtin heye. Hê kes neketiye sînorên wî. Ji hemû xeyalan dûrtir dibin. Rind, zerîb, bi raz, bi tirs û bi tiştên xwedayî tijî.

All the criteria and borders of our brains must be destroyed. We must get out of our own prisons. We must also follow the bright and correct road, and we must also be free. We must stop all the conflicts inside ourselves. Stars in the sky of our souls must not fall any more. All the forests of our hearts must wake up. Black clouds must be cleared away from the mountains of our heart. For the sake of our happiness and humankind's happiness, we must have clear rivers and tall mountains in our pockets (200-201).²⁸²

The narrative above shows that in projecting its future, 'home-land' proves to be more metaphorical than real. A vision of Kurdistan taps into a yearning for a comforting image of the country by extending the imaginary 'home' into the realm of the fantastic. Strong collective images of the homeland linked to hopes and memories are waiting to be constructed.

In sum, Kurdistan in the novelistic discourse turns into a desired homeland, and Kurds rely upon the idea of a 'home-land' as a dream and imaginary rather than on being grounded in an actual territory. This mentally-reconstructed Kurdistan is an aesthetic creation incorporating memories and ideals that can survive in peace in the imagination of Kurds in general. Kurdish identity is therefore described as not yet really accomplished. Identity can only be fully expressed in the future, when the terrible present has been changed, and when the Kurdish people have achieved what others already have, i.e., when waiting will have delivered a state and a passport.

3.3. The Meanings of Unattainable 'Home-land'

The agonizing and ceaseless longing for Kurdistan is constant, in any place and in any condition, in the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan. It is related as much to the condition of statelessness as it is to the sense of migration and displacement, which creates the sense of unattainable 'home-land' intertwined with strong longing and yearning. In this regard, this thesis argues that the image of 'home-land' in Kurdistan resembles the image in the diasporic configuration, in which there is an "imaginary recreation of the unattainable home" (Rushdie 1991: 10). To put it simply, Kurdish novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan is similar to other diasporic texts. In South Asian diasporic texts, as Mishra (2007: 9, 210) argues, the trauma, mourning, and loss

²⁸² Dîbê hemû pîvan û sînorên mejiyên me bihilşên. Em ji zîndanên xwe derkevin. Dîbê em jî bikevin rêya ronahî û rastiyê û em jî êdî azad bibin. Dîbê em hemû şerên di hundirê xwe de rawestînin. Dîbê êdî stêrkên esmanên ruhê me neşemitin. Hemû daristanên dilê me hişyar bibin. Ewrên reşên xemgîniyê ji çiyayên dilê me dûr herin. Ji bo dilşadiya xwe û ya mirovatiyê dîbê di bêrikên me de çemê zelal û çiyayên bilind hebin.

of a homeland remain defining psychological modes in which melancholia persists. Due to the lack of a state and to constant political conflicts, and despite being produced within the territory of Kurdistan, the Kurdish novelistic discourse has the same sense of “trauma”, “mourning” and “loss of homeland” that Mishra identifies in the South Asian texts, but in such a way that the sense of ‘unattainable home-land’ is even stronger in the novelistic discourse within Turkish Kurdistan than it is in its diaspora. This is mainly because the sense of territorial uncertainty and statelessness in the everyday lives of Kurds increases the sense of the unattainability of ‘home-land’. This aspect will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Based on the above information, this part of Chapter Three argues that the love of ‘home-land’ is shaped in a female form, and that its constant loss also shows the impossibility of rejoining it. In other words, Kurdistan appears as a beloved woman, not only unattained but also unforgettable; this creates a deep sorrow in the characters, mainly among the protagonists. It also argues that the frequently-emphasized sense of longing and yearning for the ‘home-land’ in fact contributes to the perception of the ‘unattainable home-land’. In this respect, because of the interrelatedness of the ‘home-land’ and the identity of an individual or of a community, Kurdish literary characters are usually composed of migrants, travellers, refugees and/or the homeless.

3.3.1. ‘Home-land’ as a Beloved Woman

Apart from the quest for a homeland and the struggle for constructing national identity, another frequent theme in Kurdish novels is love. The complicated nature of the experience of Kurds with their ‘home-land’ makes it an effective tool for identifying it with certain concepts and images in relation to the love theme. ‘Home’ signifies not only physical place but also memoirs, states of being, and activities (Fox 2002; Moore 2000). In this account, it is clear that the ‘home-land’ is associated with a woman who is exclusively the first and former beloved. Both the beloved woman and ‘homeland’ are regarded as subjects of protection by the main protagonists.²⁸³ As noted by Ivekovic and Mostov (2002: 10), “practices of nation-building employ social constructions of masculinity and femininity that support a division of labour in which women reproduce the nation physically and symbolically and men protect, defend, and avenge the nation.” Accordingly, in the novelistic discourse the beloved woman is considered as “a body to

²⁸³ Similarly, Kennedy in a doctoral thesis on re-imagining Armenian, Kurdish, and Palestinian national identity in film, argues that in the context of films, “‘homeland’ is routinely gendered and love of land is displaced onto the female body – something that is to be protected against violation” (2007: 35-36).

love and be devoted to, to possess and protect, to kill and die for” (Najmabadi 1997: 445), similarly, Kurdistan is also considered as a land to save, struggle and die for.

Regarding the role of women in Kurdish nationalist rhetoric in the novels, women as the symbol of the nation (Lutz, Phoenix and Yuval-Davis 1995) and as the symbol of the “spatial boundaries of the nation” (Ivekovic and Mostov 2002; 10) are always protected and loved by male characters. Thus most of the central male characters (who are mostly either guerrillas or involved in politics for the sake of their country) are usually portrayed as true lovers and very loyal to both ‘home-land’ and the beloved woman. For example, in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, love for a woman is equated with love of country, and the love of Kurdistan begins with the protagonist’s love for the girl called Evîn. Evîn is portrayed as someone who has had bad affairs with older men and is following a wrong path in life until the protagonist becomes her saviour. In *Feqiyê Teyran*, Cizîra Botan is described as feelings towards a beloved are described. Reaching Cizîra Botan is associated with re-joining a beloved, which produces the same excitement and joy. As the narrator explains: “Whoever reaches Cizre feels as if they have re-joined their beloved one [...] they are talking about Cizre with warm feelings and wisdom as if they are referring to love and the beloved” (55).²⁸⁴ Similarly, in the epic novel *Saturn* (Saturn, 2002), the protagonist tries to reach a city where he hopes to find his beloved. What is ironic is that the city is called ‘*Nînşar*’ which means “non-existing city” in Kurdish. Throughout the novel, he tries to locate this city about which no one has ever heard. This implies the unapproachable side of the city and the beloved, both of which simply exist in the protagonist’s imagination.

According to Najmabadi (1997: 442), “in nationalist discourse representing the homeland ... a woman’s body has been used to construct a national identity based on male bonding among a nation of brothers.” In Turkish Kurdistan the significance in Kurdish novels of ‘home-land’ is expressed through the significant meanings and values attributed to the former, mainly first beloved in the lives of the characters. Thus, in *Wêneyên Keserê*, while Narîn speaks of the significance of Mîrza in her life, she identifies him as a father, friend, land, and country (137). Again, in *Reş û Spî*, Robîn writes poetry about the natural beauty of Kurdistan and his former beloved. The narrator refers to “a poem about a former beloved from Diyarbakir, the ten-arched bridge, Tigris

²⁸⁴ Mirov ku xwe gihandibihêne Cizîra Botan weke ku xwe higandibihêne evîndariyekê [...] Cizîra Botan dikirin weke ku behsa evînê, evîndarekî bikin ku wilo xweş bi dil, hest û zane behs dikirin.

and Robîn” (280)²⁸⁵ in which an unforgettable former love and the protagonist’s hometown are associated.

Analyses of the novelistic discourse show that although the characters have other affairs later in their lives, they never forget their first love. Whereas the first love is identified with ‘home-land’, any love that follows is associated with the foreign country to which the character migrates or flees as an exile. And just as the character feels estranged and alienated on returning to his lands, he feels equally detached on meeting the first love again. In *Reş û Spî*, Robîn never forgets his beloved Nûşin in Amed. He knows that his new beloved in the lands to which he migrated with his family could never take Nûşin’s place, but when he returns to Diyarbakir to see his lands, not only does he feel isolated in Diyarbakir, but he also feels distanced when he happens to see Nûşin in the street. A sense of belatedness prevails over all other sentiments. Robîn thinks of “wounded loves, two loves from the fire on the shores of the Tigris are reaching my lips” (282).²⁸⁶ By ‘two loves’, he refers implicitly to both Diyarbakir and his former love. When he looks at Diyarbakir, he feels it is “just like looking at the eyes of a former beloved” (284).²⁸⁷ Likewise, in *Neynika Dîlî*, although Mustafa marries someone else in the new place he and his family arrive at, he never forgets Bişeng, his first love. This similarly conflicting relationship with ‘home-land’ and ‘beloved’ can also be seen in *Bêhna Axê*, in which Dilgeş considers that love, like his homeland, is banned. Dilgeş and Sozda are separated by the Turkish state; this is likened to the figure of Bekoyê Awan²⁸⁸ in the Kurdish epic *Mem û Zîn* (Mem and Zin).

It is important to note that these beloved women are necessarily Kurdish or else remind the character of his own roots and traditions. In *Giyânên Bahozî*, Artîn is desperately in love with Zerî who is viewed as a patriotic and intelligent Kurdish woman (31). Her Kurdish and patriotic side is frequently emphasised in such a way that had she been neither, Artîn clearly would not have loved her so much (365). She knows Kurdish songs and poetry, which influences him a lot. He equates his love for Zerî with his love of ‘home-land’ because her authentic and loyal attitudes towards her traditions

²⁸⁵ [...] Helbesteke li ser hezkiriyê kevin a Diyarbekirî, pireya deherî, Dicle û Robîn.

²⁸⁶ Li qiraxa Dicleyê du evînen kêkirî, du evînen ji êgir, û xwe digihînin lêvên min.

²⁸⁷ Mîna ko mirov li çavên hezkiriyê xwe ya kevin binere.

²⁸⁸ Bekoyê Awan is the sinister character in Ehmedê Xanî’s well-known and lengthy seventeenth century epic, *Mem û Zîn* (Mem and Zin). It is a masterpiece of Kurdish literature, and is also considered a symbol of the Kurdish nation because of its widespread absorption by the Kurds over the centuries. The protagonists Mem and Zin fall in love with each other, but they can never be together due to a conspiracy carried out by the villain Beko (shortened form of Bekir). In fact the epic is a metaphor for the division of Kurdistan; Mem and Zin, pure and noble hearted lovers, are separated by the evil Beko just as the Kurdish nation has been victimized and divided by its neighbours. The influence of *Mem û Zîn* is so strong among the Kurds that the term Beko is still used to describe a vicious person.

remind him profoundly of his lands. In exile Artîn feels warmer and less lonely knowing she exists, telling her, “in this cold country I would like to warm your delicate fingers with my breath” (157).²⁸⁹ In a letter to her he says “that’s right, because the smell of your breast is pure Kurdish” (225).²⁹⁰ He tells her that she makes him recall his homeland: “I know very well that your breast is full of the smell of my homeland” (157).²⁹¹ Thus, he explicitly combines love for Zerî with love of ‘home-land’:

As well as being a graveyard for freedom fighters and brave men, the land of the Kurds has also been a graveyard for lovers. The greatest lovers were born in that land, but regrettably died before they grew up... Love... Love for homeland, love of people and love of being alive (134).²⁹²

Suffering from this desperate love, Artîn goes to Paris to forget her, becomes ill due to their separation and dies soon after. The doctor diagnoses his illness as ‘longing’, thus one can say that longing for ‘home-land’ is represented by longing for the first beloved woman. The desperate conditions of ‘home-land’ are also identified with the desperate love towards the former beloved. For example, in *Bêhna Axê*, Dilgeş describes his love for Roza, his former beloved: “In my loneliness you have always been my hope and desire. In freer times, I have sheltered under the threshing floor of your eyes with the shadow of sorrow and the pain of being orphaned” (161).²⁹³

In *Hêviyên Birîndar*, the protagonist, Hejar, explores his Kurdish identity and simultaneously falls in love. Later, having been released from prison, he suffers from the double loss of ‘home-land’ and his beloved. Not only has his village been evacuated and burnt down, but his beloved has also married someone else. Again, the narrator in *Rêviyên bê Welat* associates the feelings of alienation and bitterness of Kanî, the central character, with his sense of ‘home-land’, as personified in his first love. Named as Zozan, she the beloved is expressed through remembrance of scents and images of Colemêrg (Hakkari), his hometown. Leaving his lands refers to leaving her love too. Both Kurdistan and his beloved sadden him to an extent that he can find no other solution but escape.

²⁸⁹ [...] Dixwazim bi hilma devê wan tiliyên te yên ziravîn ên qelemî li wî welatê sar germ bikim.

²⁹⁰ Erê lê, çimkî bêhna singûberên te, xwerû kurdî ye.

²⁹¹ [...] Ez pak dizanim ku paxila te bi bêhna welatê min ve tijî ye.

²⁹² Xaka Kurd, çawa ku bûye goristana azadîxwaz û mêrxasan, her wisa jî, bûye goristana evîndaran. Evînen herî mezin li wê xakê zan, lê cihê mixabiniyê te ku bêyî ku mezin bibin, mirin... Evîn... Evîna welat, evîna gel û evîna giyandaran.

²⁹³ Tu her dîsa hêvî û xweziya bêkesiya min î. Min, di wextên xwe yên şikestî de, di nava sîpelên kul û kovanên êtîmî û bêkesiyê de xwe spartibû bendera çavên te.

Through the imagining of ‘home-land’ as the first beloved woman, there is also nostalgic reference to memories of the past. The scripting of ‘home-land’ as an unattainable beloved woman reinforces the discourse of separation from, or longing for, the ‘home-land’. The novel *Hêvî Her Dem Heye* describes how the injured guerrilla, while waiting for other guerrillas to save his life, journeys back through memories of the past to his first love which is entangled with his political actions towards freeing ‘homeland’. In a sense ‘home-land’, in terms of its metaphorical meanings, has been lost, just as he has lost his first beloved because he has preferred to focus on the national struggle rather than following her. Thus, national issues and love are considered as two different paths. Since love of Kurdistan is always conceived of as more crucial than love for the beloved woman, the character is expected to indicate his preference, and always chooses his country rather than his love.

There are also two different sorts of love in *Gava Heyatê*, one for a beloved woman and the other one for ‘home-land’. The protagonist decides to join the guerrillas to fight in the mountains instead of marrying his beloved. Similarly, in *Neynika Dili*, the protagonist’s brother, Ehmed, marries the woman he loves but after a few months of marriage, prefers to fight for the independence of Kurdistan (42) and goes off to the mountains. In the novel *Xezal*, Hesên has postponed marriage with his beloved for many years. Finally, he decides to struggle for independence and goes to the mountains, determined not to return until Kurdistan has been freed (208).

In *Kejê*, the heart of the protagonist, Koçero, is occupied by these two different loves. His love for his cousin, Kejê, is idealized and praised throughout the novel. As his relative and a Kurd she symbolizes his lands and his identity, but he regards his love as eternal but impossible and leaves his lands for a foreign city. However, he never forgets her, and from time to time, with hope, he remembers her the way he remembers and longs for his homeland, involving all sorts of love:

The smell of spring flowers and roses stimulates love. Many things have been said about the spring of homeland. For some people, it is the time for love and compassion. But none of these can replace the love of homeland [...] springs of the patriots connects love once more (32).²⁹⁴

No one can take the place of the former beloved but still the love of ‘home-land’ prevails: “On the one hand is love, and on the other hand again love... beloved Kejê...

²⁹⁴ Bêhna gul û kulîlken biharê gîyan dide evînê. Gelek tişt li ser biharên welat hatîne gotin. Ji hinan re bûye demê eşq û evînê. Lê belê tu ji van cîhe evîna welat bixwe nagre [...] biharan welatparêzan cardin girêdidin evînê.

cousin Kejê... the greatest of all, is the love for homeland” (155).²⁹⁵ And in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, the protagonist, despite his great love for Evîn, joins the guerrilla groups, musing to himself that “there was only one love which was the love of homeland” (89).²⁹⁶ Thus, the love of ‘home-land’ is always the priority.

In short, Kurdistan is usually equalled to a beloved woman who is viewed as impossible and distanced but beautiful. The novelistic discourse powerfully employs the story that the protagonist is somehow forced to stay away from both the country and the beloved. The protagonists are faced with two strong strands of love, where love of ‘home-land’ is always prioritized in relation to love for the beloved. Even so, they remember Kurdistan and the beloved, both of which are unattainable, in the same nostalgic manner, full of a sense of longing and yearning.

3.3.2. ‘Home-land’: A Land of Longing and Yearning

‘Home-land’ in Kurdish novelistic discourse refers to a ‘place’ of displacement and migration rather than invoking the sense of a secure and safe ‘place’. This leads to a constant sense of longing and yearning, which can be discussed in relation to Relph’s notion of “existential outsidersness”. According to Relph (1976: 49),

to be inside a place is to belong to it and identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place. [However] at the opposite extreme, existential outsidersness involves the alienation from place, which is the antithesis of an unreflective sense of belonging that comes from being an existential insider.

In relation to Relph’s conceptualisation of “existential outsidersness”, this section of the chapter argues that even though the novelists live in Turkey or Turkish Kurdistan, their characters experience a sense of exile when abroad that evokes loss of ‘home’ and loneliness. Migration, journeying, homelessness and the idea of return form the main backdrop of the novels, as if a sense of “outsidersness” is born out of the reality of evacuation, destruction and persecution. Further, the sense of being at ‘home’, according to Moore, “has more to do with a state of mind and emotional engagement than it has to do with a fixed place” (Moore 2007: 150). Thus, it is possible to feel ‘homeless’ even at ‘home’.

²⁹⁵ Li alîyekî evîndarî, li alîyek din dîsan evîndarî...Evîndarî Kejê...dodman Kejê...herî meşin evîna welêt.

²⁹⁶ Tenê yek evînek hebû ew jî evîna welat bû.

The literary characters distanced from their ‘home-land’ usually dream about it during any phase of their life. Imagination becomes the primary location of ‘home-land’ involving both the re-remembering and the re-covering of the past. For example, in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, the unnamed protagonist who comes to Ankara to study at the university is desperately longing for his hometown. Even the mountains in Ankara remind him of the mountains in his country (176). In addition, he feels the heavy sense of homelessness even before he has left his home. In *Rêwiyên bê Welat*, Kanî has already begun to mourn for his lands before going away: “Without a leader and without a homeland, without soil [...] our deaths are being buried without praying. This is why our graves get mixed up and lost and we are drowning in this city” (26).²⁹⁷ When he goes further afield, his feelings become more intimate and dense. The narrator describes his homelessness: “Like swallows, he also does not have a home” (29).²⁹⁸ After a while, he is enveloped by the fear of not returning one day: “In fact, he was afraid of his heart being changed. He was afraid of forgetting, not returning” (57),²⁹⁹ and with his strong sense of yearning, even the sea in Istanbul reminds him of the mountains and uplands of Kurdistan.

In *Mandalîn*, two friends escaping from their hometown long for their ‘home-land’. Even the stars in a foreign city, Izmir, make them sentimental and remember their lands. In *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî*, when Cembelî leaves his lands, he says longingly that the smell of homeland comes to his nose (188).³⁰⁰ In the novels of Qasîmlo, the migrant characters (Zerî and Artîn in *Giyanên Bahozi*, and Mîrza and Narîn in *Wênayên Keserê*) who reside in Germany long for their homeland and live with the hope of returning. Similarly, in *Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî*, Sertac flees to Europe; but yearning for his lands, he dreams constantly about returning. Not necessarily Europe – even being in the vicinity of Turkish cities such as Istanbul can also evoke similar sentiments for the ‘home-land’ left behind. In the novels, Istanbul in *Bavfileh*, *Neynika Dilî*, *Reş û Spî*, and partly in *Rêwiyên bê Welat*, Ankara in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, Adana in *Kejê*, Mersin in *Toqa Lanatê*, Izmir in *Mandalîn*, and unnamed Turkish cities in *Gava Heyatê* and *Bêhna Axê* make their appearance as cities that cause the leading characters to long for their lands of origin. During their stay in these cities, they live with the hope of return and are attached in their imagination to their original place rather than to their new environment.

²⁹⁷ Bê serî û bê welat, bê ax [...] Miriyen me bê dia tên veşartin. Gorên me ji ber vê, her diçe rast dibin û wenda dibin û em li van bajaran difetisin.

²⁹⁸ Mîna hehecikan, mala wî jî tunebû.

²⁹⁹ Ya rastî guherandina dilê xwe ditirsiya. Ji jibîrkinê, ji venegerê ditirsiya.

³⁰⁰ Bêhna welat dihête kepê min.

It can be argued that Kurdish novelistic discourse emphasizes the way migration becomes an inseparable part of the lives of the Kurds. Certainly, displacement and mass migration are often addressed in the narrations. In *Reş û Spî*, the storyline is often interrupted by the main character's flashbacks and memories as he recalls his days in his hometown while leading a migrant life in Istanbul. In the novel there is also a great range of references to their migration; one of the sub-sections in the text is even labelled "sometimes a person also abandons his homeland" (7),³⁰¹ while the epigraph of the same section is "yes, I saw them. They were going" (Ibid.).³⁰² Later in the novel, the narrator explains that "when their villages were completely destroyed, their lands and properties were ruined; it was unbearable for them, and they, like many others, left their lands, which had not been ploughed for years due to the cruelty, they loaded their belongings, migrated, and placed their stuff in another house" (64).³⁰³ This shows that each character has certainly experienced migration or displacement during their lifetime as if this is an inevitable result of being a Kurd.

As the title of Zozanî's novel *Mişextî* (Exile) suggests, it is also based on migration of Kurds, in two ways: One as *mitirb*, or nomads, the other as exiles who were initially forced to leave their lands during the Ottoman period,³⁰⁴ and again forced to leave their current lands because of conflict between the Turkish state and Kurdish guerrillas. The Emirate represents the old conditions of Kurds who were made to leave their lands collectively, while Kato represents the new generation of Kurds who can find no other way except by being guerrillas in the mountains. In both cases their identity as political migrants is regarded as the natural result of the policies of a sovereign state, and both are experiencing a condition of 'non-home'. It can be argued that in this account Kurds occupy a complex position, with the novel demonstrating the inevitability of displacement in the lives of all Kurds, regardless of different eras and authorities.

The predicament of alienation from land, territory and place defines the tragic lives even of minor characters. For example, in *Mandalîn*, while focusing on the escape story of two Kurdish boys, the position of Kurdish migrant families in Izmir whose villages have been evacuated by the Turkish state is also addressed. One of them even claims to have lost his honour and standing, due to the migration:

³⁰¹ Carinan mirov welatê xwe jî terk dike.

³⁰² Bele, min ew dîtin; diçûn.

³⁰³ Lê gava gundê wan bi temamî hat hilweşandin, cih û war li ber wan hat xerakirin û bi vî awayî kêr gihîşt hestî, wan jî wek gelek kesan, erdên xwe yên ji ber zilmê, bi salan nehatibûn çandin, li dû xwe hiştin û mala xwe ya mayî jî bi temamî bar kir û anî dani ser mala din.

³⁰⁴ Referred to in the original text as the Alî Osman State.

I had a village, I had a house, I had a hundred sheep, I had cattle, I was a master in my village, I was a ruler, I was a landlord, I had a reputation and honour. But the flood raged on us, we were ignorant, we were not able to protect ourselves, under duress we left our parents' possessions behind, became migrants and came to this deceitful country, lost our possessions and properties as well as our sons and daughters. Now I have nothing left. Neither dignity nor honour (105).³⁰⁵

The sense of displacement and alienation is depicted as the general condition for Kurds generally, rather than for individuals. In recounting details of the migration of Narîn and her family to Germany, the narrator in *Wêneyên Keserê* comments that, “like millions of Kurds, they too turned their faces towards luck for a better life and turned their backs on cruel fate” (13).³⁰⁶ In *Toqa Lanatê* the protagonist also comments on the mass migrations of Kurds from their lands: “Today there are still millions of Kurds away from their homeland” (134).³⁰⁷ In this regard, the characters in the novels have similar experiences of feeling rootless and displaced, which leads to a nostalgic view of ‘home-land’ in the past and accompanies the search for identity and ‘home-land’ in different forms in the present.

The sense of hopelessness towards reconnecting to territorial and cultural origins becomes apparent in the narratives. For example, in *Reş û Spî*, the narrator tells how Robîn’s father, migrating to Istanbul, loses any hope of returning “...to the [traditional] songs that he listened to, his ruined country, the lands he cannot go back to with his family where he could sing them”(67).³⁰⁸ The constant despair of the characters is largely due to the prevailing conditions of Kurdistan, which is under attack and occupation. Cemşîd in *Wêneyên Keserê* expresses his feelings towards the loss of ‘home-land’ due to migration: “I am a foreigner and a migrant. I was happy in my country (...) I am a stranger in this foreign country, I don’t have either an identity or a home that I can live inside as a free person with my own colour” (187).³⁰⁹ This because

³⁰⁵ Gundê min hebû, xaniyê min hebû, sed serî pezê min hebû, dewarê min hebû, ez li gundê xwe axa bûm, beg bûm, xwedî erezî, mal û milk bûm, şan û şerefa min hebû. Lê tofan li me rabû, em jî nezan bûn, me nikaribû xwe biparasta, ji mecbûriyeta dinyayê me mal û milkê dê û bavan hişt em koçber bûn hatin vî welatê bênamûs, me mal jî winda kir, milk jî, kur jî, qiz jî. Niha qet tiştek min nema. Ne şerefa me ma, ne jî heysiyeta me.

³⁰⁶ Wan jî mina bi milyonan kurdan, ji bo jîyanek xweştirîn berê xwe dabûn oxirê û piştta xwe dabûn felekê.

³⁰⁷ Û îro jî, bi milyonan kurd ji cîh û warê xwe, ji axa xwe dûr ketine.

³⁰⁸ Ew kilam û stranên ko wî lê guhdarî dikir, welatê wî yê jihevbelavbûyî, warê wî yê ko niha nikare tevî zarokên xwe vegeerê û tê de bistire [...]

³⁰⁹ Ez xerîb û penaber im. Li welatê xwe ez serxweş û meş bûm (...) Li vî welatê bîyanî ez xerîbim, ne xwediyê nasnameyekê û ne jî hêlineke min heye ku tê de weke mirovekî azad û bi rengê xwe bijim.

“he lost his ancestor’s homeland and residence” (Ibid.).³¹⁰ Similarly, in *Bêhna Axê*, Sozda tells Dilgeş on one occasion that:

I am looking at the homeland [...] I see its mountains and hills that have surrendered their spirits. I am looking at its villages I see the dust and ember that burned my heart. I am looking at its prisons where they broke my honour. I am looking at its cities; I see the love that I watered with my heart [...] I am looking at you Dilgeş; this time I see my disappointments in you. I see my injured hopes. And I see my lost love (199).³¹¹

Sozda feels desperate and dispossessed because of the conditions of Kurdistan:

So, us; me and you, he, she... All of us, the pain of the lives of the forgotten ones [...] Faded wishes [...] Pain, our unresolved story in the system on the account [...] The song telling with the wind of moaning and grief [...] Our injured Kurdistan; our situation and reality bloomed in the heart of unwilling history (92).³¹²

The condition of ‘home-land’ influences the individual’s condition directly or *vice versa*. Thus, loss of ‘home-land’ through migrations or political conflicts mostly brings a despairing pain for the characters. In the novel *Neynika Dilî*, for example, when their village is burnt down Mustafa’s mother mourns and laments: “Oh my heart! Homeland is good, why can you not stay away from it?” (82).³¹³ This is a very desperate expression, which contains an intense longing and yearning even though she is within the borders of the homeland. Before leaving her lands, she begins to experience a desperate nostalgia. Mustafa and his family are forced to leave their village and move to Istanbul, yet even the winter conditions of their ‘home-land’ have become appealing to them. Again, in *Bêhna Axê*, the main character’s thoughts about separation from ‘home-land’ clearly reveal the agony of longing and yearning:

At that time, feelings fly away and my reality migrates from its land [...] I go out barefoot and walk in the streets. My love becomes an isolated place and trudges through the desert

³¹⁰ War û wargehên kal û bavên xwe windakirî.

³¹¹ Ez dinêrim li welat...Li çiya û baniyên wê yên ku min ruhê xwe lê ji dest daye, dibînim. Li gundên wê dinêrim; xwelî û bizota ku dilê xwe min lê dax daye, dibînim. Li zindanên wê; cihê ku min rûmeta xwe lê pêpes kiriye, dibînim. Li bajarên wê dinêrim; evîna ku min dilê xwe pê avdaye, dibînim...Li te dinêrim Dilgeş; hingê jî xeyalên xwe yên şikestî dibînim. Hêviyên xwe yên birîndar dibînim. Û evîna xwe ya wînda dibînim...

³¹² Yanî em; ez, tu û ew...Em hemû, janên jiyana me jibîrbûyîyan. Jivanên me yên bêmirazmayî [...] Xweziyên me yên çilmisîyayî [...] Jan, navê tevnê me yê vereşiyayî, çîroka me ya bêencammayî...Strana bi bayê axîn û kovanan çerxvedayî [...] Kurdîstana me ya birîndar; doz û rastiya me ya pîroz a di dilê dîroka bédil de zîldayî.

³¹³ Welat şîrîn e dilo, tu bo çî neşê jê dûr bibî.

of my heart. She goes and I remain behind with sorrow, agony, and the pain of longing. I wail and scream with this anguish! (72).³¹⁴

Accordingly, for the characters in the novels, as “existential outsiders”, there is certainly a strong sense of actually living outside or without a place because “for existential outsiders the identity of places represents a lost and now attainable involvement” (Relph 1976: 62). In this sense, in *Reş û Spî*, when Robîn goes back to Diyarbakir from Istanbul, the narrator wonders, “how many of those who came with him stayed so long away from this town? How many of them missed this city as much as he (Robîn) did?” (209).³¹⁵ The same desire for ‘homeland’ is intensified in *Pilingên Serhedê* in which Kurdistan takes the form of a highly valuable symbolic attachment. The main character, Zeynel, a member of the group struggling against the Ottoman Empire, yearns for the uplands, mountains, and villages of his homeland when he is away (25), and believes that no one can understand the suffering and agony caused by separation from their ‘homeland’ (71).

In some novels, the sense of eternal longing, i.e., the sense of “existential outsidersness” refers to the difficulty or sometimes the impossibility of ending the desperate longing and yearning for the ‘home-land’. For example, in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, the main character describes his ‘home-land’: “there is a country before us that no one has ever set foot upon. Nobody has yet passed through its borders. It is far beyond all the dreams. Full of beautiful, desperate, mysterious, frightening and spiritual things”(165).³¹⁶ ‘Home-land’ is described as very distant and dreamlike. Its complicated nature – it is mysterious and spiritual, as well as frightening – makes it more difficult to get grasp.

When away from ‘home’ and in the mode of ‘non-home’, the sentiment surrounding this sense of migration and displacement always evokes the desire to return. In this case, throughout the novels, ‘return’ (*veger*) becomes a central concept in relation to detachment, migration and loss of lands. The intensity of the longing for return appears in most of the novels, mainly in *Wênayên Keserê*, *Bêhna Axê*, *Qerebafon*, *Gava Heyatê*, *Hêviyên Birîndar*, *Neynika Dilî*, *Rêwiyan bê Welat*, *Giyanên Bahozi*, *Reş*

³¹⁴ Hingê, hest difûrin û rastiya min koç dike ji warê xwe [...] Ez pêxwas dibim û dikevîm kolanan. Evîndara min dibe biyabaneke dêmî û li çolistana dilê min digevize. Ew diçe û ez li şûnê wê, bi dax û kovana wê ve, di nava janên hesretê de diêşim. Bi wan êşan ve dinalim û dikim hawar û fixan!

³¹⁵ Gelo çend kes ji van mirovên ku bi wî re hatibûn, bi qasî wî ji vî bajarî bi dûr mabûn? Çend kesan bi qasî wî bêriya vî bajarî kiribû?

³¹⁶ Li pêşiya me welatek ku hê pê û pêgav lê nehatiye avêtin heye. Hê kes neketiye sînorên wî. Ji hemû xeyalan dûrtir. Rind, xerîb, bi raz, bi tirs û bi tiştên xwedayî tijî.

û Spî, Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî, Bi Xatirê Te Enqere, and Pilingên Serhedê. But what exactly is the nature and identity of the homeland to which the characters are returning? Definitely there is longing for return but it must be to an uncorrupted Kurdistan. The emphasis on actual return is related to an aspiration and a myth of return to a free country.

In *Gava Heyatê*, the protagonist has been dreaming of returning to his ‘home-land’ and imagines it as free, safe and peaceful lands, in contrast to exile, which to him means estrangement, isolation and loneliness. Similarly, in *Bêhna Axê*, both former guerrillas wish to return to their ‘home-land’, which they dream of as green, peaceful and free lands. In fact, actual physical return in the novels can also be replete with disappointment and frustration when it becomes clear that the dreams about ‘home-land’ have ultimately changed. Characters can also feel like strangers when they return, and are isolated and disappointed. As Chambers (1994:74) comments, it is impossible to go home again because neither the migrant nor the home is the same. The dream of return represents a search for identity as much as for a place. However, Kurdish novelistic discourse demonstrates that it results in total estrangement and distortion because ‘home-land’ has been polluted by destruction and corruption, mainly during their absence. Therefore, ‘homecoming’ describes the challenge of confronting the changed ‘home-land’, not the one that was left behind.

In *Bêhna Axê*, when Sozda leaves prison and returns to her hometown what she sees reflected everywhere is her own alienation and estrangement. She feels distanced from her land of birth and thinks that nothing is the way it was before she left to go to the mountains and then to prison. People are not the same (12) and such changes affect her deeply (35). Her narrations show different visions of the homeland and her changing relations with ‘home-land’. These include the changing conceptions and symbolization over time of a ‘home-land’, of life under the rule of the Turkish state, dispersal, forced migration, and the struggle to adapt to these changes. Disappointment and estrangement become inevitable, even in the case of a return. Thus, ‘home-land’ in the narratives can be depicted as a place to escape to, and a place to escape from.

Qerebafon too, effectively captures the narrator’s alienation and resignation as he struggles to endure despite being severely wounded by conflicts. The novel opens with Ronahî’s return to his homeland after fifteen years’ absence. While looking at its streets, and remembering his childhood, he thinks that the city is now dirty and in ruins: “My homeland was drowning in dirt and disorder by the hands of my own fellow citizens”

(21).³¹⁷ He expresses his disappointment forthrightly: “I did not return to the land of the ancestors in order to subject it to pessimistic criticism. I returned to feel the deep happiness, and the contradictions and reasonings of the society. Otherwise my criticism would not have reached its target anyway” (22).³¹⁸ But there is no longer peace anywhere. Police officers are constantly checking their identity cards and asking questions. Similarly, in *Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî*, when Sertac returns to his hometown Diyarbakir, he observes that banning has become the main symbol of his city, which shocks and disappoints him (147).

Therefore, returning to ‘home-land’ does not eliminate a sense of longing and yearning. Surprisingly, even if the characters return to their country, the sense of longing and yearning becomes more concrete. ‘Home-land’ can be depicted as the desired place that is fought for and established as the exclusive aim of the characters; but its purity and beauty do not remain while they are absent. In *Neynika Dilî*, Mustafa describes Colemêrg admiringly when he is away from it. However, when he comes back to his village, he finds it has changed and become ruined. He cries and mourns for his land that has been invaded and destroyed (167). Apart from the physical changes in his village, he also feels like a total stranger: “Although I was going back to the homeland, each time more sorrows would be added to my existing sadness. However, the homeland was such a place that its pain was much better than any happiness in exile” (200).³¹⁹

Similarly, in *Hêviyên Birîndar*, after the main character, Hejar, is released from prison, he experiences many severe changes. His village is completely evacuated and burnt down, his grandfather, who is his only close relative, dies and his beloved Rojda has married someone else. There is an implication that through their absence they have failed to prevent many changes. The protagonist Robîn in *Reş û Spî* experiences the same regret for leaving the lands behind, although he was forced to do so. When he returns to his hometown, he realizes that it is not the place he has left behind. As an elderly minor character tells him, “nothing has remained of the country’s beauty” (198).³²⁰ Robîn feels isolated and lonely on his lands because of these changes during the years of his absence:

³¹⁷ Welatê min ji hêla hemwelatîyên min ve, di nava pîsî û gemañ de difetisî.

³¹⁸ Ez ne ji bona ku rexnekariyeke reşbîn li welêt bibarînim, vegeyabûm ser axa bav û kalan; min dixwest êşên civakê kêfxweşiyên wê, gengeşî û nakokiyên wê heta kejiyên xwe hîs bikim. Naxwe, wê rexnekariya min negihîştâ armanca xwe.

³¹⁹ Ligel ku her cara ez li welêt vegeyabûm êşeke dîtir li êşên min zêde bûbûn jî, welat wisa bû êşên wê jî ji bextewariya xerîbiyê xweştir bûn.

³²⁰ Ji wê bedewiya welatê we tişteke nemabû.

When their village was completely destroyed, their lands and properties were ruined; and life became unbearable for them, they, like many others, left their lands, which had not even been ploughed for years because of the cruelty, and took shelter with others (64).³²¹

This extract shows that the actual existence of ‘home-land’ is not the antithesis of exile or migration. Furthermore, return to ‘home-land’ may also result in an impulse to escape and create the sense of homelessness. When Rey Chow (1993:197) asserts that “homelessness” is becoming “the only home state” she implies the condition of being exiled or in diaspora in a general sense; however her assertion unequivocally describes the characters’ sense of ‘home-land’ as expressed in the novels. In this sense, Kurdish identity and belonging are constituted in a deterritorialised, stateless ground, which influences the characters’ way of defining and describing themselves. This “place-identity” reflects on the identity of the characters, while Kurdistan is personalized and delineated with the same terms that are used for the delineation of the characters.

In a broader sense, the concept of ‘sense of place’, as discussed in the theoretical framework of this research, suggests that during individual and collective experiences of ‘place’, deep attachment to these particular places becomes inevitable. Through the connection between individuals and their social, and cultural contexts (Canter 1977; Gifford 2002), characters and places intermingle with one another in such a way that the characters take over the conditions of the places. In the case of Kurdish novelistic discourse, the state of Kurdistan constitutes the identity of the characters. In this respect, in *Li Qerexa Şevê Hîvron*, the main character Roberşîn defines himself as a “migrant and refugee” (*koçberî û penaberî*) (40), and in *Pilingên Serhedê*, Zeynel defines himself as a “traveller” (*rêwî*) (226). Similarly, the narrator in *Mişextî*, describes the condition of migration being identified with lost life: “The life of exile in the foreign country [...] was a lost life” (27).³²²

Lack of official recognition is the main reason for feeling homeless. In the descriptions of the ‘*mitirb*’ in *Mişextî*, there is a generalization relating to the official status of Kurds who do not have their own national identity cards or documents. Being without an identity card is mentioned as significant (76). Because of the legal position of Kurds and the war in Kurdistan, both before and after the period of imprisonment,

³²¹ Lê gava gundê wan bi temamî hat hilweşandin, cih û war li ber wan hat xerakirin û bi vî awayî kêr gihîşt hestî, wan jî wek gelek kesan, erdên xwe yên ji ber zilmê, bi salan nehatibûn çandin, li dû xwe hiştin û mala xwe ya mayî jî bi temamî bar kir û anî danî ser mala din.

³²² Li welatê xeribiyê, jiyana mişextiyê [...] jiyaneke windabûyî bû.

the characters always feel themselves as if they are foreigners and homeless, to such an extent that they even become suspicious about their own existence. Again in *Ez Stêrka Sîpan im*, Apê Hecî, referring to Kurds in general, says, “we are the people of exile, without place and without lands” (97).³²³ The characters’ emotional relationships to Kurdistan also involve contextualized and politicized relationships. Throughout the novels, and due to the social, historical and political milieu of Kurdistan, the characters never cease to feel that they are migrants, refugees, travellers and homeless; this is related to a larger context rather than to individual issues.

In light of the above, the novel *Rêwiyên bê Welat*, whose title also includes the term ‘traveller’ in a plural form, reveals throughout the narration the agony of leaving the lands of birth. The novel, which is based entirely on experiences of migration, strongly associates the lives of the characters with persistent dispersal, persecution and related controversies. The hotel where the protagonist, Kanî, waits to hear from the smugglers is full of migrant Kurds whose voices can also be heard, such as Şîyar who recounts his painful experience of leaving his lands of origin. Kurds at the hotel have the frame of mind of refugees, and are suffering from despair due to the lack of ‘home-land’. Kanî’s departure from his hometown, his fear of the Turkish police and the border checkpoints, desperation, and suspense become the dominant motifs of the novel. Additionally, the general description of the railway station remains a metaphor that emphasizes the sense of detachment and ‘placelessness’.

Similarly, *Wêneyên Keserê* implies that all Kurdish migrants in Germany share the same fate because they have had similar experiences and they are from the same geography – which is mainly described as “forgotten land”, “non-existent”, and “forlorn” (135).³²⁴ One of the refugees says that all of them left their destroyed and ruined homes (274-75), while another defines himself as a “traveller” (*rêwî*). Again, Mîrza, the protagonist, considers himself as “without country” (*bêwelat*) (382); he is constantly lonely and longs for life in his country where everyone lived in groups (158).

Similar descriptions and feelings are clearly seen in *Bêhna Axê*. Sozda and Dilgeş, the former guerrillas, define themselves as “travellers” in more pessimistic tones. Sozda sees herself as a “defeated revolutionary” and a “failed fighter”(117),³²⁵ while Dilgeş speaks gloomily and miserably about his feelings to Sozda: “Prison! Weakness!.. Broken!...and injured...our destiny. You know. My pencil got exhausted. My papers turned into the cube of moan and grief. My heart is desiccated. I am broken. My hopes

³²³ Em mirovne mişextin. Bê cî û bê war in.

³²⁴ Ez keça welatê jibîrbûbîyan Narîn im. Narîna navê welatê wê qedexê û tune û bêkes lê danîne.

³²⁵ Ez şoreşgereke têkçûyî me. Ez şervaneke serneketî me.

are injured by the hands of time. Desires have abandoned me” (24).³²⁶ The sense of alienation even in their own community is very dominant. They feel like outsiders and are isolated, even from their own community (34).

In *Mandalîn*, for example, ‘*welat*’ (home-land) is defined as “forlorn” (*bêkes*) and “forgotten” (*jibîrkirî*) (36-37) like its characters. Similarly, in both *Hêviyên Birîndar* and *Gava Heyatê* the protagonists are orphans, which also indicates through grandfather image in the novel that the characters have ancestors but not parents. The boundaries and meanings inscribed on Kurdistan create an image of a settled Kurdistan in the past, which, compared to the present, was better understood and preserved. This implicitly explains the way the young generation is described. In *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, Kurdish children are defined by “injustice, deprivation, and no identity” (96).³²⁷ It is that the younger generation that is associated with homelessness and landlessness, not the older generation. As noted in the section on the portrayal of Kurdistan in the past, the memories related to the historical past of the Kurds suggest a more glorious Kurdish history than Kurdistan has had in the recent period. The ancestors are depicted as more bound to the land than the younger generations. In Aram Gernas’s *Toqa Lanatê*, Gulizar describes herself as a traveller who has lost her way in a desert (83).³²⁸ She says:

I was asking myself who I was. In my search for the answer the question exhausted me. Where would I be able to recollect my pieces and fragments? Where would I pitch my tent and settle down? I was in the darkness and blindness of exile. I had become unaware, and a wanderer. Though I was looking for it there was no place or shelter for me (140).³²⁹

In the case of displacement and movement, ‘home-land’ in this account loses its boundaries and no longer represents a fixed, rooted and stable space. Conversely, it is during the process of displacement, disruption and migration that identity is shaped, or reshaped; but that process requires a sense of a place left behind. Likewise, the characters mostly detect the significance of their ‘home-land’ either in losing it or during migration. The characters who abandon their place of origin either dream about it constantly or impatiently wish to go back. However, disappointment and resentment do not vanish in either circumstance, as ‘home-land’ itself can evoke the sense of

³²⁶ Zindan!...Lawazî!...Şikeste!...Û birîndarî!...Çarenûsa me. Tu dizanî. Pênûsa min westiyaye. Kaxezên min bûne kupên keser û kovanan. Dilistana min behî ye. Ez şikestî me. Hêviyên min di destê demê de birîndar ketine. Xweziyan ez terikandime.

³²⁷ Bêdadî, bêparî, bênasnametî.

³²⁸ Wek rêwiyeke ku li çolê rîya xwe winda bike.

³²⁹ Min ji xwe pirs dikir, gelo kî me ez? Li xwe digerîyam, pirs ez qedandibûm. Ka min ê li ku derê berhev bikira pirtî û parîyên xwe? Min ê li ku derê vegirta cîh û konê xwe? Li xerîbîya kor û reş bûm. Bûbûm bêhiş û eware. Li xwe digerîyam, min nemabû text û stare.

‘homelessness; not necessarily in the case of migration or exile only. The chronic and deplorable sense of being homeless, orphaned, and landless as the essential attributes of the characters anticipates not only the loss of ‘identity’, but also loss as a ‘home’.

3.4. Concluding Remarks

The first part of the chapter showed how Kurdistan is mapped through all the information about the borders and particularities of the places. Mapping each national place and Kurdish city is important, since “mapping is very powerful way of taking control of territory; by drawing boundaries on a map, for example, something is brought into existence, and an impression is given of fixity and permanence” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 174). The construction of an imaginary ‘Greater Kurdistan’ through regenerative participation in the valuing of symbolic Kurdish regions is emphasized with regional territory. The narrators of most of the novels delineate Kurdish identity largely through the strong attachment of the characters to the ‘homeland’ that is also defined in territorial terms. Thus, territorial information, along with the regional and Kurdish naming in the novels, is a motivation for preserving the memory of the homeland and for retaining the emotional attachments of solidarity and kinship.

It is particularly noteworthy that the dynamic nature and process of ‘home-land’ develops variable meanings “in accordance with changes in the people, activities or processes, and places involved” (Brown and Perkins 1992: 282). Accordingly, the second part of this chapter proposed that the image of Kurdistan has differed over time. Along with different socio-political contexts, the past vision of ‘home-land’ is set against the vision of the ‘home-land’ of the present. In this sense, ‘home-land’ is acting as a memory of a shared past that is already lost, but it also has the immediacy of the future, characterized by the desire to have it, to embrace it, and to live through it again. Therefore, the construction of Kurdish national identity and homeland revolves around the three sequential axes of past, present, and future.

Significantly, the meanings of a single place can shift or change over the course of one’s lifetime. Similarly, in Kurdish novels, the vision of Kurdistan as ‘home-land’ in the past is glorified, in the present is destroyed, and then in the future is free, acknowledged, independent, and as peaceful as any heaven. It is important to mention that the positive and idealized motifs related to the images of Kurdistan in the past and in the future are different from each other. In the future, Kurdistan is constructed with motifs that are more mythic and unrealistic, with the emphasis on the beauty of nature;

however in the image of the past, the rule of Kurdish emirates, rebellions and struggles are glorified. In its bounded relation with Kurdistan, the glorified past merges with a promising future. Connecting the past and present of Kurds with the future also results in a broader communal and national identity, in an attempt to promote the sense of a unified Kurdistan as the official version to which all Kurds should contribute.

The third part of the chapter also looked at how Kurdish interpretation shares certain aspects of this view, particularly with regard to the links between land, territorial possession, and nationhood, but reflected also in the deep yearning of persecuted and alienated Kurds for a secure homeland. Therefore, it can be argued that Kurdish identity is constituted in a stateless ground created out of displacement and placelessness. Accordingly, Kurdish identity has been formed out of loss, yearning and the joint cause of waiting. The loss, dispersal and perils related to the detachment of territory and homeland have given a particular meaning to being Kurdish, to feeling oneself victimized, and to promoting a collective identity that centres around suffering and agony. Subscribing to the idea of the 'home-land' as haven actually contributes to the creation of 'homelessness'; this is because the absence of 'home-land', along with the negativity of socio-political conditions in the territory of 'homeland', creates that sense of 'homelessness'. This is why there is a desperate and hopeful clinging to the past and the homeland. It is precisely this loss that has required resistance, struggle, and assertion to recapture the lost homeland.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Comparative Analysis of the Novels: From Turkish Kurdistan to its Diaspora

The portrayal of ‘home-land’ in Kurdish novels, as significant sites to convey the novelists’ socio-political intentions, can be considered in parallel with the argument of Gurney (1997) who regards ‘home’ as an ideological construct that emerges through and is created from people’s lived experience. In this case, the construction of ‘home-land’ can go beyond the lived experiences and can be mingled with the political views of the novelists, since an author perceives the environment through his/her own cultural, social and political filter. Like Gurney (1997), Somerville considers ‘home’ an ideological structure, noting that “home is not just a matter of feelings and lived experience but also of cognition and intellectual construction” (1992: 530) that can be placed for particular purposes. Broadly speaking, Kurdish novelistic discourse is formed within the particular purposes of the novelists. Despite similarities between novels in diaspora and Turkish Kurdistan with regard to the emphasis on socio-political conditions in a factual setting vis-à-vis the typified characters, Chapter Four suggests there is also a great range of differences.

The chapter has three parts. The first discusses whether construction of the intended novelistic discourse is factual or symbolic. While diasporic novelistic discourse is engaged with more factual constructions because of the strong presence of the ‘implied author’, novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan tends, on the other hand, to create a more symbolic world within the narrations.

In relation to the constructing of ‘home-land’, it is argued that this is organised particularly for the novelists’ different ideological sentiments and purposes. Thus the second part, by identifying varied political motivations within the novels, attempts to analyse assorted Kurdistan images that provide crucial sites for examining opposing ideologies. This section also argues that the nationalization of Kurdistan’s landscapes and nature is usually associated with romanticized and idealized notions in Turkish Kurdistan and in some diaspora novels where Kurdish landscapes might become the centre of focus in relation to the novels’ national purposes. However, most of the novels in diaspora are not overly involved in the celebration and idealization of Kurdistan; instead, because of their intensely critical and realist perspectives, Kurdish national landscapes and places appear simply as backgrounds.

The chapter also contends that, although most of the novels examined here suggest confused and damaged identities, the sense of loss, despair, alienation and homelessness in both individual and national contexts is more dominant in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan than in its diaspora. Thus the third part argues that although they live in their home territories, the literary characters in the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan still experience a sense of migration and detachment from home that is infused with alienation and loneliness, as if they are physically absent from their homeland. This conveys the idea that loss and dispersal are not necessarily related to detachment from a particular territory. Sometimes being in the territory of 'home' or 'not-at-home' does not change the mood of the literary character in the novels; in contrast, the narrations from Turkish Kurdistan show that the consequences of being a stateless nation within the national territory are embedded with stronger feelings of loss and homelessness compared to the diaspora.

4.1. The Intended Construction of Novelistic Discourse: Factual or Symbolic?

This thesis argues that in general, Kurdish novelistic discourse creates very subjective ideological texts. To be more precise, there are only four (out of 64) diasporic novels that do not refer to socio-political conditions in Kurdistan; these are Hesênê Metê's *Gotinên Gunehkar* and *Labîranta Cînan*,³³⁰ Silêman Demîr's *Kassandra* and Diyar Bohtî's *Soryaz*. None of these four novels addresses any factual settings or events. Instead, with their mystic language, the novelists reject actual settings and time from their narrations. All other diasporic novels are based on Kurdish historical writing, autobiographies, biographies and Kurdish folkloric elements, shaped in relation to the particular ideology and purpose of the novelists.³³¹ Settings in the other 60 novels are also realistic and on the whole are explicitly named with their real names and geographical features.

³³⁰ However, there are also some exceptions. Metê's two novels *Labîranta Cînan* and *Gotinên Gunehkar*, which involve spiritual and visionary plotting, take place in imagined settings such as D city, E city, or Argon village. In his novel *Ronî Mîna Evîne Tarî Mîna Mirinê* Uzun too uses symbolic names for the setting, such as Mountain Country, Big Country etc. All the details in the novel signify the fact that Mountain Country refers to Kurdistan. However, Metê avoids any sort of indications that might enable readers to discover the locations of his symbolic settings.

³³¹ At the time of writing this thesis, with a few exceptions, there were no comprehensive or reliable resources or research related to the biographies of the novelists mentioned in this study. Details related to individual authors were based on communications with the novelists themselves or their publishers although I managed to get hold of limited information on a couple of the novelists, the publishing houses of their books were closed or not accessible.

Similarly, among the 36 novels in Kurdistan, three attempt to go beyond actual settings; *Jar lê Sermest* (Miserable but Drunk, 2004) written in post-modernist form, *Ardûda* written as science-fiction, and *Saturn*, based on the epic, ‘Memê Alan’. Apart from *Jar lê Sermest*, their social environments appear to be fantastic, and in general, the geographical locations in these novels do not affect the characters and plot to any extent. The rest of the novels in Turkish Kurdistan offer a clear insight to the settings, albeit through more literary language and symbolizations.

The characters in the novels are generally typified characters, dominated by their one specific trait that usually relates to the socio-political conditions of Kurds and Kurdistan. They either suffer from oppression by the Turkish government or the Ottoman Empire, or they fight for the national struggle. Within the methods of presentation of the characters, the technique of ‘telling’ is used, rather than ‘showing’ where the character is explicitly described by the narrator instead of being depicted through actions. More precisely, the novels written mainly in diaspora usually offer flat characterization in which the same personal features and actions are shared from the beginning of the novel to the end. Although flat characters, i.e., that are relatively fixed and static, are not as imaginatively creative as rounded characters, Forster (2005 [1927]) shows the advantageous aspect of flat characterization; flat characters are easily controlled by the writer and readers remember them afterwards. In Kurdish novels flat characterization is more suitable for the intense “authorial intent” and “implied author” aspects of the novels mentioned in earlier chapters, since this type of characterization allows the author to guide the characters as he wishes. This point places the narrator in the foreground, which suggests the narrator is a prominent mediator between the reader and the action. Again, there is no dramatic method i.e., monologue; instead narration is very much in the foreground. This also explains the novelists’ extreme use in the novels of the ‘omniscient third-person narrator’, whose insights into the thoughts and feelings of the characters ensures that the reader manages to penetrate the minds of the characters.

However, in contrast to diasporic novels, some novels in Turkish Kurdistan attempt to challenge the traditional narrative mode and conventional realist fiction. Non-linear, fragmented narratives, and plot fragmentation in the novels of Özmen and Eroğlu, which are also close to the post-modern form, reflect the shattered lives of the characters. Lacking plots in the traditional sense, the main characters in Sener Özmen’s *Rojnivîska Spinoza* and *Pêşbazîya Çîrokên Neqedîyayî*, respectively Yasin and Sertac; and the unnamed protagonist in Eroğlu’s epistolary novel *Nameyek Ji Xwedê Re* are all

individualized and rounded characters with a high use of stream-of-consciousness and interior monologue techniques. Eroğlu's *Otobês* has no main character but the thoughts of each passenger in a bus are framed during a brief period of time. Through multiple narrations, this novel challenges the conventional time and setting of novelistic discourse. Again, the protagonist Serмест in *Jar lê Serмест* is a rounded character, and *Leyla Fîgaro* with its modernist stream-of-consciousness techniques³³² and interior monologues can be regarded as producing more multi-layered critical reading. Mîran Janbar's *Ardûda*³³³ as the only science fiction novel and Kemal Orgun's *Li Qerexa Şevê Hîvron* with its mythical narration both construct completely imaginary settings and periods that challenge the conventional concepts of location and time. The use of temporal disruptions as a feature of post-modern fiction can also be seen in the novels mentioned above.

Using real settings can be considered one of the common features of novelistic discourse in both Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora. Again, however, novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan has an intense symbolic language through which imaginative characters and events are mostly fictionalized. Against this piece of information, I argue that compared to novels in Turkish Kurdistan, the diasporic novelistic discourse has been created out of pieces of literary writing based solely on the novelists' views and ideologies, and their lived experiences. Diasporic novels also tend to deal more with Kurds' and Kurdistan's past than do the novels in Turkish Kurdistan. The large number of epic, historical and biographical novels in the diaspora also signifies the authors' preference for historical, cultural and political elements rather than imaginary ones. Thus *Serhildana Mala Eliyê Ênis*, *Xidê Naxirwan û Tevkuştine Dêrsim*, *Dîlên li ber Pûkê*, *Marê Di Tûr De*, *Hawara Dîcleyê I*, *Hawara Dîcleyê II*, *Evîna Mêrxasekî*, and *Oy Dayê* are historical novels based on crucial historical incidents and narrated from a particular viewpoint.

Broadly speaking, these Kurdish historical novels set in the distant past of the Kurds are an attempt to depict potent historical characters and influential events. As discussed in Chapter Two, the diasporic novelists regard the novelistic discourse as continuums for recording Kurdish history and culture. As the novelist Ferho (2010:50) comments, "when the alphabets of nations are denied, the lives of nations are also locked (...) In such conditions the liability and responsibility of the Kurdish novel and

³³² A literary device, which refers to the random flow of thoughts in the mind of a character.

³³³ *Ardûda* is the name of the protagonist. It is not a proper name but is a compound word that conveys the sense of 'giving fuel'. It would appear that the meaning of his name symbolizes his character traits since he takes his place in the story as a professor who is cloning humans. It may be that *Ardûda* is a scientist who, through his experiments, mobilizes inanimate entities.

short story is very important”.³³⁴ In this case, even adapting Kurdish epics into novel form is seen as a way of transforming Kurdish oral literature into a written one. By contributing a new account of Kurdish history, diasporic novels also attempt to challenge the historiography of the Turkish state. They tend towards ‘classical’ (realist) form and content in their portrayal of history, much in the style of the realist mode of writing that dominates Kurdish fiction in general, by offering the historiography of Kurdish rebellions, massacres and the division of Kurdistan.³³⁵ Most of the diasporic novels, as noted above, mainly use the historical backdrop of the early and mid-twentieth century as a setting to elucidate the quest for Kurdish national identity and the tragic experiences and struggles of the Kurds.

Apart from the historical novels in diaspora mentioned above, *Siya Evînê* and *Bîra Qederê* are biographical novels based on significant figures in Kurdish history, *Peyman* and *Kassandra* are mythological novels that involve symbolic narrations related to Kurdish history, while *Ristemê Zal* is based on the Kurdish epic of the same name. It is also possible to see the combination of history and epic tales in diasporic novelistic discourse. For example, in *Rojek ji Rojên Evdalê Zeynikê*, the literary struggle of Kamuran and the Jaladet Bedir Khan brothers during the 1930s is combined with the story of the *dengbêj* Evdalê Zeynikê,³³⁶ in which the epic tale of Siyabend and Xecê is also narrated in the novel. Apart from these, there are references in almost all diaspora novels to the historical past of Kurds through didactic attitudes.

The decade of the 1980s, which is observed to be a vital period for diasporic novelists, also become the main focus in these modern period novels. Most of the novels that take place in the modern period deal exclusively and in detail with the military coup and its harsh influence on people. In this way, the novelists in diaspora become the voice of the Kurds’ history and socio-political reality, shaping their novelistic discourse by articulating more realistically the 1980 military coup and the conditions of Diyarbakir prison. Some diasporic novelists explicitly state the influence

³³⁴ Dema ku alfabeya gelan were înkâr kirin, jiyana gelan jî tê kilîtkirin (...) Di rewşeke wiha de, binbarî û berpirsiyariya roman û çîrok nivîsên kurd, helbet [...] girîng e.

³³⁵ The Kurds’ homeland has faced two main divisions in its history. First, following a treaty between the Ottomans and Safavids in 1639, the first official border line was drawn between the two empires, with parts of Kurdistan remaining on the Persian side and the rest on the Ottoman side in lands currently within Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Secondly, after World War 1, the Ottoman Empire had to negotiate with the Europeans, and in 1923 the Ottoman part of Kurdistan was divided by the Treaty of Lausanne between four countries as the Republic of Turkey, Iraq and Syria, and the Soviet Union. Divided in this way between several states, Kurds were dominated by different socio-political and cultural systems, and all were culturally, politically and linguistically fragmented.

³³⁶ Evdalê Zeynikê was a renowned nineteenth century Kurdish *dengbêj* or cantor who lived in Turkish Kurdistan. For more information, see Ahmet Aras’s *Evdalê Zeynikê* (in Kurdish) (1996) and in Turkish, *Efsanevi Kürt Şairi Evdalê Zeynikê* (2004) translated by Fehim Işık.

of Diyarbakir prison on their fiction. Uzun (2008: 340), referring to his autobiographical novel *Tu*, mentions how conditions in Diyarbakir influenced his writing since prison was a place where “there was no freedom, law and human rights” (Ibid; 330),³³⁷ while Medenî Ferho (2010: 56) states that his prison experiences continue to fill his dreams, which he cannot get rid of despite his new life in exile.

As argued in the theoretical part of this research, language is considered one of the main components of Kurdish national identity. Accordingly, Kurdish language has been regarded in the diasporic novels as an essential component of identity that needs to be developed, as well as a medium through which to transmit the oral literature, values and culture of the Kurds. Diasporic novelists try to protect the language by expressing these explicit concerns in their novels; as Kreyenbroek (1992: 3) comments, “when the identity of a people is in question [...] Language can become a focus for nationalist sentiments.” Thus, even writing in Kurdish can, in many cases, be regarded as a political act aimed at maintaining Kurdish identity in Kurdish diasporic writing. Accordingly, as noted above, through various organizations and publications the diaspora (exclusively Sweden) has, since the 1980s, become the cornerstone of developments in the Kurdish language field. Along with the formation of the collective memory, Kurdish history, culture, folklore, and oral literature are being revived through the use of Kurdish as the language of literary works. As Eriksen (2006:5) remarks,

lacking a Kurdish-language communications infrastructure in their areas of origin, Kurds in exile have developed a variety of media – magazines, satellite TV channels and Internet resources – to build a shared identity and make them known as a nation without a country to the outside world.

As in the case of broadcasting and internet use in the Kurdish diaspora, Kurdish literature has also enabled the Kurdish intelligentsia to disseminate a shared Kurdish identity and history. Publication of increasing numbers of Kurdish novels also indicates that the meanings and roles attributed to the novelistic discourse affirm its functions and achievements. Indeed, the diasporic novelists’ concern for Kurdish is also explicitly reflected in their texts. Compared to the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan, diasporic novelistic discourse has a greater tendency to offer sites for transmitting

³³⁷ For more about the Diyarbakir prison see: M. Zana (1997) *Prison No. 5: Eleven Years in Turkish Jails*; B. Bozyel, (2007) *Diyarbakır 5 Nolu*; and H. Kutlu (1989) *12 Eylül Cezaevleri: Olaylar, Sorunlar, Çözüm Yolları*. Zeydanlıoğlu’s article “Torture and Turkification in the Diyarbakir Military Prison” (2009) is also relevant.

messages or to express the novelists' concerns, especially about maintaining the Kurdish language.

While the significance of Kurdish is expressed symbolically or implicitly in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan, in diasporic novelistic discourse, either the narrators or the characters explicitly promote the use of Kurdish. Within the diasporic novels, *Rojnamevan*, *Pêlên Bêrîkirinê*, *Serhildana Mala Eliyê Ênis*, *Bigrî Heval*, and *Siya Dema Bori* mention openly that the reason for writing novels is to preserve the language. Again, apart from political concerns, diasporic writer Laleş Qaso defends mother tongue usage, believing that the translating of Kurdish into Turkish prevents Kurds from reading Kurdish novels in their original language. In both his novels *Firat Cewerî* is also highly critical of the use of Turkish instead of Kurdish in Diyarbakir. The novelists carry the same notion in their daily lives such a way that Ferho (2010: 55) in the Kurdish journal *W* explicitly criticizes Kurdish authors for writing in Turkish, which is defined as “the language of invaders” (*zimanê dagirkeran*).

However, in contrast to the diasporic novelistic discourse, there are a few novels in Turkish Kurdistan in which the significance of Kurdish is narrated indirectly or implicitly. There is no direct interference by the authors concerning the use or the development of Kurdish. For example, in *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, the unnamed guerrilla feels upset when he dreams in Turkish rather than Kurdish. In *Nameyek ji Xwedê Re*, the protagonist, a university student, describes himself as “a broken-hearted linguist” (93)³³⁸ since he knows very little about his mother tongue. In Tilermenî's novels *Kitim* and *Qerebafon*, some characters attempt to produce their literary works in Kurdish. In *Reş û Spî*, Robin teaches Kurdish to his brother, and in *Keje*, Koçero helps Songul to improve her Kurdish. What I argue here is that while diasporic novelists explicitly interfere in the texts with their own views and perspectives, novelists in Turkish Kurdistan intersperse their thoughts through suppressive expressions with the use of literary imagination. The novelists in Turkish Kurdistan are more concerned with the subject matter or form of the novel; in other words, writing in Kurdish does not seem to be the main motivation behind their creative writings, whereas in the majority of diasporic novels, the text is interfered with by the voice of the novelist who considers literature as a vehicle to improve or protect the language.

In addition to their linguistic concerns, the novelists in the diaspora are direct and explicit in explaining why they write their novels – usually their intention is to portray

³³⁸ Zimanzanekî dilşikestî.

the national struggle and the harsh political and socio-cultural conditions imposed by the sovereign state and hegemonic powers. Their intervention in the text should be taken into consideration, since it creates certain 'intended' meanings through the 'implied author'. It is very common to hear the author's voice within the diasporic texts, at the centre of which he asserts his own reality and perspective. As Howe (1992: 21) comments, novels of this kind "make ideas or ideologies come to life [...] endow them with the capacity for stirring characters into passionate gestures and sacrifices." They are concerned with the impact of ideological movements on characters and events. Through them, the novelists tend to be didactic and demonstrate the changing conditions with regard to their own political orientations and personal experiences. As discussed in a section of Chapter Two entitled *Between 'Implied Author' and 'Overt Narrator': Purposeful Narratives*, diasporic novelists often utilise a foreword to outline a framework of their ideologies or provide a background as to why they have written that particular novel. In Turkish Kurdistan it is unusual to encounter forewords in which the novelists explain the reasons for writing their novels. However, compared with the diaspora, the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan reveals its ideology more imaginatively and symbolically. For example, both *Hêvî Her Dem Heye* (Turkish Kurdistan) and *Veşer* (Diaspora) promote the ideology of the PKK but through different approaches. While the first never explicitly names the party but reveals it through certain references infused with creative and imaginary elements, the second, written more as a documentary than fiction, addresses the party directly, naming the commander, war tactics, and locations etc.

Against the comparative arguments emphasized above, there may also be a few reasons for the explicit language and approach of the diasporic novelists. The majority of the novelists embraced the freedom to write in their mother tongue in their host countries after having been banned from writing in their own language all their lives in the homeland. Also, being away from the homeland and facing a new culture, language and policies increased the value to them of their ethnic identity, which in turn encouraged them to write about their individual experiences and collective memories as a way of countering loss and forgetting in exile. They used the opportunity of being in free countries in Europe to write, using their mother tongue, about national/cultural issues, which Kurdish writers were unable to do in Turkey/Turkish Kurdistan. Exile is seen as an opportunity to write in the mother tongue about personal/collective experiences in the homeland and Turkey. Uzun, for example, is clear that life in exile enabled him to develop Kurdish literature and language, and even the modern novel

(2008: 21, 145). Thus, writing became not only the tool for resistance against on-going assimilation and oppression in their now-abandoned country but also the arena in which to debate different views and ideologies, as is examined in the following sections.

It is also worth mentioning the generational difference between the novelists, as another aspect of the reasons behind the very different novelistic discourses in Turkish Kurdistan and diaspora. The novelists in Turkish Kurdistan are mostly young (most were born in the 1970s and 1980s) whereas those in diaspora are older (being born mainly during the 1950s).³³⁹ After the ban on Kurdish publications was lifted in 2002, writing fiction in Kurdish became very common among the young generation of Kurds in Turkey and Turkish Kurdistan, who are mostly involved in some sort of literary occupation;³⁴⁰ i.e., some studied literature as undergraduates, others are editors at publishing houses, which makes them aware of changes in the contemporary literary scene. They seek imaginative devices through which to narrate their stories, such as completely fictional settings and characters, or use of journals and letters throughout the narration, etc. Political conditions in Turkish Kurdistan intruding on publications in Kurdish or about Kurds also compel the novelists to form their discourse in indirect and symbolic styles to combat censorship and prohibition.

Despite the different approaches by the novelists in Turkish Kurdistan and diaspora, it does not change the fact that novelistic discourses in both contexts confirm the observation of Lennard Davis (1987: 25) that “novels make sense because of ideology; they embody ideologies.” Almost all Kurdish novels deal with political actions, events, or ideologies in their narratives; however, some need to be labelled as political novels due to their intense political narrations. Political novels and their thematic preoccupation with “...political actors and political regimes [...] privilege a politics of hope and struggle” (Scheingold 2010: 2). Due to their politicized form they deal with ideas rather than emotions. Irving Howe, the genre’s most outstanding critic,

³³⁹ The novelists from Kurdistan include: Ömer Dilsoz (1978), Mîr Qasimlo (1980), Yaqop Tilermenî (1972), Şener Özmen (1971), Eyup Guven (1963), Sabri Akbel (1950), Ihsan Colemergî (1944), Yunus Eroglu (1984), Adil Zozanî (1970), Özgür Kiyak, Kemal Orgun (1970), Lokman Ayebe (1981), Ibrahim Seydo Aydogan (1976), Naci Kutlay (1931), Hesên Huseyin Deniz (1960), Cihan Roj (1965), Nesip Tarim (1977), Remezan Alan (1968), Abdusamet Yiğit (1978), Mîran Janbar (1974), Atilla Barışer (1974), Eyüp Kiran (1945), Aram Gernas (previously an exile, ?), Torî (original name Mehmet Kemal Isik, previously an exile, 1931). Wheares Kurdish novelists from diaspora: Mehmed Uzun (1953), Mahmut Baksî (1944), Silêman Demir (1956), Fergin Melik Aykoç (1951), Lokman Polat (1956), Mihemed Dehsiwar (1959), Medeni Ferho (1947), Zeynel Abidin (1961), Xursid Mîrzengî (1950), Mustafa Aydogan (1957), Firat Cewerî (1959), Bûbe Eser (1955), Mehdî Zana (1940), Hesênê Mete (1957), Mezher Bozan (1957), Riza Çolpan (1936), Diyar Bohtî (1958), Ibrahim Osman (1963), Ali Husein Kerim (?), Jîr Dilovan (1956), and Reşad Akgul (1968).

³⁴⁰ Mîran Janbar, Yunus Eroglu, Yaqop Tilermenî, Lokman Ayebe, and Remezan Alan have been involved in editing and other editorial occupations in publishing houses. Hesên Huseyin Deniz, Adil Zozanî and Omer Dilsoz work or have worked for Kurdish newspaper and other publications.

defines the political novel as a type “in which political ideals play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting” (1992 [1957]: 17). Kurdish political novels such as *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, *Çirîskên Rizgariyê*, *Kewa Marî*, *Bigrî Heval*, *Binefşên Tariyê*, *Fîlozof*, *Robîn*, and *Kodnav Viyan* are interwoven with the political milieu and the characters are either actively involved in political acts or their lives have been affected by political acts. Throughout the novels, the narrators either diverge from or support various political actions by Kurdish parties or the Turkish government, and Kurdish or Turkish political occurrences are explicitly described, analysed and interpreted. From this perspective, novelistic discourse becomes the arena in which the novelists express their arguments and views concerning politics, culture and socio-cultural matters, both past and present. This brings us to the fact that the literary output of these novelists that represents real life is neither neutral nor independent from the reality of the environments in which they develop their literary discourse.

4.2. Kurdistan and the Impact of Diverse Political Ideologies

Kurdistan, as a land of enduring struggle in the novels of Turkish Kurdistan and of its diaspora, reveals the ideological and political struggles engaged in by Kurds in their quest for a nation-state and for worldwide recognition as a nation. The theoretical discussion of novelistic discourse in this thesis has shown how diverse ideologies can be represented through such discourses (Davis 1987). Therefore it is argued that, in the Kurdish novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora, politics are generally centred on a desire for an independent homeland or sovereignty but through different ideological pursuits in which the sense of Kurdistan is also constructed accordingly. Not only is the political concern with ‘home-land’ not revealed in the diaspora in the way novels in Turkish Kurdistan deal with it; but there are also multiple political constructions within the diasporic novels.

In the case of the Kurds, as well as the impact of the host country on the constructing of their identity, the changing dynamic of political views within the diasporic Kurdish community is also effective in terms of producing different narratives, since the various Kurdish diasporic organizations have differing strategies in relation to the Kurdish cause (Natali 2007: 202-210). This constitutes one of the study’s main arguments, since ideas of ‘home-land’ and the construction of ‘identity’ are usually based on these different ideological manifestations and articulations. While diasporic novelistic discourse evokes multiple homeland politics, the novelistic

discourse in Turkish Kurdistan is involved in a more unified sense of national politics. Therefore this section analyses the multiple ways of expressing homeland politics in order to reveal the multiplicity of Kurdish politics articulated in the novels.

The difference between the novels in Turkish Kurdistan and in its diaspora can be seen repeatedly in the sense of the kinds of politics in which the novels might be involved. I argue that in both contexts the different approaches of the novelists are also related to their own backgrounds. In relation to the discussion on political diversities in the novels, analysis of the novelistic discourses indicates that national struggle and political ideology appear to be more homogeneous in Turkish Kurdistan. As noted, most of the novelists in Turkish Kurdistan were born during the 1970s or 1980s and were raised in parallel with the activism of the PKK which, following the 1980 military coup and subsequent severe repression, became the most influential resistance organization to engage with the Kurdish national struggle.³⁴¹ On the other hand, before their exile life all the novelists in diaspora were involved in politics in Turkey and Turkish Kurdistan, where they were either prosecuted or imprisoned for their political activism before fleeing to Europe (mainly Sweden). Most of them continued to be involved in national politics, motivated by different ideologies, or were in dispute with their former ideologies in their host countries. As Van Bruinessen (2000) notes, “a whole generation of young Kurdish intellectuals and politicians – most of the people of whom I am speaking were born between 1945 and 1960 and most [...] had had leading roles in political organisations in Turkey in the 1970s – was transplanted to Europe.”³⁴²

Accordingly, novelists as diasporic intellectuals act out their relationships with multiple notions of politics and national struggle, with literature as the main field for these political migrants to discuss or share their views. In this respect, the Europe-based novelists had already been politicized before arriving in Europe through various other left-wing Kurdish parties founded during the 1970s, like the DDKO (Eastern Revolutionary Culture Centres, 1969), the DDKD (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Dernekleri;

³⁴¹ It is a fact that, apart from the suppression of other Kurdish organizations and parties, there were certain other organizational and methodological factors that led to the PKK being the only power in the Kurdish national struggle in Turkey. There are various arguments about the PKK's success between the 1980s and 1990s. Some researchers consider the brutal 1980 coup as the primary dynamic clarifying popular support for the PKK (Tan 2009; Romano 2006); for others the suitability of Kurdistan's geography for guerrilla warfare (Gocek 2011) is also regarded as a factor behind its achievements. To some, the support received by the PKK from other states, e.g., Iran and Iraq (who, if they had issues with Turkey could punish the Turks by helping the Kurds), was another reason for its political success (Barkey and Fuller 1998). Accordingly, after the military coup and the suppression of other Kurdish organizations and parties, there was no alternative political vehicle for the Kurds in Turkey other than the PKK (Robins 1996), which made it the most influential organization of the Kurds in Turkey and Turkish Kurdistan.

³⁴² Available at: www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/transnational_Kurds.htm

Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East), the TKSP (Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party, 1975), Rizgarî (Liberation, 1977), KAWA (1976), Tekoşin (1978), Yekbûn (1979), the TSK (Kurdistan Socialist Movement, 1980) and others.³⁴³ The political programmes of these parties were influenced by Mustafa Barzani's KDP and various Turkish socialist fractions. Those who were forced to leave Turkey and Kurdistan for Europe mostly developed protests against the PKK's ideology and strategies, even in exile. Certainly, the majority of diasporic novelists (again, mainly in Sweden) originated from anti-PKK fractions.

This emphasis on the political affiliation of the novelists is crucial here, since their different political affiliations and ideologies reveal their different perceptions of the territory of 'homeland'. The territorial myth of homeland certainly strengthens the national consciousness; importantly, however, the approach to the territory of Kurdistan is ambiguous and diverse in the novelistic discourse because of the lack of a state and the unbounded territorial realities of Kurdish identities. As the theoretical framework of the research suggests, 'territory' is not static either, but is changeable according to different social-political and cultural contexts. In this case, the territorial aspect of a nation is not necessarily united and harmonious but can be contested and fragmented. In relation to this, Özoğlu (1997: 41) also argues that "the boundaries of Kurdistan are in flux; hence, it is problematic to assume that Kurds refer to a fixed group of people and

³⁴³ Founded in 1965, the TKDP (i.e., Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi; Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey), is one of the oldest Kurdish political parties in Turkey. TKDP was inspired by Iraq's KDP, led by the Barzani family. KIP (Kurdistan İşçi Partisi) and KUK (Kurdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçuları, Kurdistan National Liberationists) both emerged later from the TKDP. Some other left-wing organizations like Kawa, Rizgari and Ala Rizgari were also sympathetic to TKDP but were also inspired by the biggest Turkish left-wing political party of the time, TIP (Türkiye İşçi Partisi; Workers Party of Turkey). The TKSP (Türkiye Kürdistan Sosyalist Partisi, Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan) was also inspired by TIP; in fact TKSP's leader Kemal Burkay was previously a central executive committee member of TIP as well. Meanwhile the PKK, Tekoşin and Sterka Sor were on the more revolutionary left-wing side of Kurdish movements. It is also important to note that all of those Kurdish parties were illegal. The legal front in Kurdish politics was usually dominated by the cultural associations, such as DDKO (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları; Eastern Revolutionary Culture Centres) which was outlawed during the military coup of 1971; its successor, DDKD (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Dernekleri; Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East), which was founded by people on the left-wing side of the TKPD; the DHKD which was the legal side of TKSP; and many other smaller associations. Importantly, the PKK had no direct links with, nor did it emerge from, any of those major Kurdish political parties of the 1960s and 1970s. The PKK had its own unique ideology with inspiration from revolutionary leftist organisations of the time, namely the THKO (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu; the People's Liberation Army of Turkey) and the THKP-C (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Parti-Cephesi, the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey). As noted by Akkaya and Jongerden (2011:125-135) the PKK learned a lot from the armed struggle experiences of those two parties. Ideological differences and personal rivalries led to many divisions and conflicts among these organizations (Meho 1997: 11), to such an extent that they spent as much time in clashes with each other as they did in the struggle against the Turkish state and Turkish security forces. The PKK is considered to have had clashes with some of these organisations and eliminated its political rivals (White 2000:148). With the military coup in 1980 and the massive operations to crush Kurdish organizations, party members were, as a result, either imprisoned or forced to escape to Europe. Despite the dispersal of other Kurdish parties and organisations, the PKK with its guerrilla war had, by the mid-1980s, managed to become central to the national struggle.

the boundaries of Kurdistan to an unchanging entity.” The blurring territorialisation of Kurdistan is not only caused by the absence of sovereignty and the lack of recognition of the territories internationally; it is also a matter that should be seen as an aspect of different ideological pursuits.

It is also the case that in general most novels refer, somehow, to other parts of Kurdistan in addition to Turkish Kurdistan; significantly, however, reference to other regions does not have the same meanings or implications. In some novels, the aim is to create the idea of a ‘Greater Kurdistan’ and implement brotherhood among Kurds from all the different regions. This view, which is entrenched within the political ideology of the PKK,³⁴⁴ aims to construct a sense of Kurdish unity and solidarity. Nevertheless, one can argue that in some novels the author does not aim to unite all parts of Kurdistan in terms of an imaginary ‘Greater Kurdistan’, but is simply trying to express the harsh conditions in other regions where Kurds are living, or else is emphasizing the significance of certain political figures in Kurdish history. In other words, this view does not perceive ‘Greater Kurdistan’ as a national homeland project.

Returning to earlier discussion of the PKK’s ideological influence on the novels, the movement tends to promote the belief in Kurdish brotherhood in all regions by considering the idea of ‘Greater Kurdistan’ as a possible project. Therefore, some novels have an added purpose when addressing other Kurdish regions or crucial names from these regions. Kurdish literary characters in the pro-PKK novels identify themselves with a broader geographical space that surpasses the borders of Turkish Kurdistan. Not only there are references to the division of Kurdistan into four parts, but there is also an attempt to encourage the Kurds to reunite around the same ideal and purpose. In other words, the emphasis on the territorial Kurdistan contains political purposes rather than geographical terms. In doing so, the novels that lean towards the PKK’s national struggle also demonstrate very strong sentimental ties with Kurdish places and landscapes, while personification and praise of nature also become more prevalent, compared with novels with no involvement in this particular sort of PKK affiliation.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ The PKK abandoned this political ideal and demands for federalism and autonomy from its agenda. The myth and dream of a Greater Kurdistan is still in place.

³⁴⁵ As mentioned earlier, Uzun’s historical and biographical novels can be considered as exceptional. Although Uzun is known for his detached attitude to the PKK’s ideology, when he says, in his autobiographical book *Rojên Afîrîna Romanê* (The Diary of a Novel) (2007: 129) that, “I experienced my life between the two totalitarianisms, the state on the one hand and the Kurds on the other”, he is referring to the people from the PKK fraction, since his novel *Ronî Mîna Evîne Tari Mîna Mirinê* which focuses on a love affair between a woman guerrilla and Turkish commander has been much criticised by PKK sympathizers. However, it can still be argued that instead of censuring the PKK in his writings as other

For example, in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan, despite the divisions, unification is also strongly encouraged, and although territorial bases are absent, there are more details of Kurdistan's geographical and physical features, which contribute towards producing its territorial unity. Among the novels in Turkish Kurdistan, *Giyanên Bahozî*, *Wênayên Keserê*, *Keje* and *Mişextî*, *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, *Kitim*, *Qerebafon*, and *Bavfileh*, *Neynika Dilî*, *Xezal*, *Rêwiyên bê Welat*, *Gava Heyatê*, *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere Bêhna Axê*, *Hêviyên Birîndar*, and *Gitarê bê Tel* approach Kurdistan as a country separate from Turkey and draw a broad map of 'Greater Kurdistan' by the use of directions, e.g., South Kurdistan, North Kurdistan, in a political context. Regional terms such as 'Serhat' (*Serhed*) and 'Botan' also assist in constructing the idea of 'Greater Kurdistan'. Most of these novels refer to other Kurds in other parts of Kurdistan in a unified manner. Although *Rojnivîska Spinoza* and *Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî*, *Leyla Figaro Otobês*, *Li Qerexa Şevê Hivron*, and *Mandalîn* have more symbolic language, they also address Kurdistan as a unified entity and as a political project.

Similarly, the diasporic novels affiliated to the politics of PKK draw a similar unified depiction as those in Turkish Kurdistan. For example, novels such as *Veger*, *Şopa Rojên Buhurî*, *Zenga Zêrîn*, *Bigrî Heval* and *Binefşên Tariyê*, which explicitly state affinity for the PKK, often presents a message of solidarity among Kurds. Medenî Ferho tends towards the PKK's ideology in most of his novels; thus *Xaltîka Zeyno*, *Xewnên Pînekirî*, and *Çiroka Me*, express the need for unity that includes all parts of Kurdistan. The novels emphasize the positions of leaders from other Kurdish regions, such as Qazi Muhammad (1893-1947, founder of Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran) and Mustafa Barzani (1903-1979, leader of a political party and military leader against the Iraqi regime), but they do not distinguish the politics of these leaders from those of the on-going struggle in Turkish Kurdistan, since they support a united national struggle.

novelists do, he attempts to portray crucial historical figures and incidents rather than modern ones. Even in his novel *Tu*, which concerns Diyarbakir in the 1980s, he avoids any references to the PKK's ideology and actions, instead narrating political conditions in Diyarbakir from an individual perspective stripped of any organizational ideology. Similarly, in *Ronî Mîna Evinê Tari Mîna Mirinê* in which the narrator recounts the relationship between the Kurdish guerrilla Kevok and the Turkish commander Baz, the conflicts between PKK and Turkish state are looked at from an emotional and individual perspective that emphasizes the centrality of individuals, something that is less common in other diasporic novels. With the conflicts as a background but without promoting any ideology, the novelist focuses on the tragic life of these two characters. In other words, identity in the novel is constructed as personal rather than collective. With symbolic names for the places (as well as for the characters: thus *Jîr* = hard-working and *Kevok* = Pigeon), there is a profound description of the geographical features of Kurdistan (called in the novel 'Mountain Country'). The intensely organic link between the characters and nature in Kurdistan is also very obvious through the names of the characters (*Çiya* = mountain).

However, diasporic novelistic discourse not affiliated to the PKK's politics expresses a view of Kurdistan that does not allow for a fixed and definite mapping. The spatial representations and constructions imply that Kurdistan is divided and that the hope of uniting under one state is no more than a vague possibility. These novels refer to the territories in geographical terms only, so that in Mezher Bozan's novel *Asim*, for example, Asim the protagonist describes Kurdish cities in the 1970s and 1980s with reference to Syrian Kurdistan, in order to emphasize how the Kurds are Arabized in Syria, just as Kurds in Turkey are Turkified because of the social and political system. This point does not imply any other notion; it simply depicts the conditions of Kurds in other regions with the aim of portraying them realistically. Thus, in *Filozof*, Lokman Polat chooses heaven as the setting of the novel; he presents the thoughts of dead literary and political figures in Kurdish history through which the narrator stresses the significance of certain Kurdish political leaders from other regions, such as Simko³⁴⁶ (from Iranian Kurdistan), Mustafa Barzani (from Iraqi Kurdistan), and Ghassemblou (from Iranian Kurdistan).³⁴⁷ These individuals are made to comment on the historical Kurdish past in order to reveal the failure of Kurds in creating unity and constructing a unified Kurdistan, while sharing their opinions about previous mistakes.

In other words, Polat's novel does not try to encourage the Kurds for the future but aims merely to articulate the failures of the past. In some novels, there is also a complete imaginary political organisation whose aim is to liberate Kurdistan, as in two of Polat's novels, *Robîn* and *Kodnav Vîyan*, and in Dehsiwar's *Çirîskên Rizgariyê*, created in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, to resist the oppression of the Turkish state. However, the national struggle of this new party embraces neither a united and unified Kurdish struggle, nor the idea of 'Greater Kurdistan', being instead even highly affiliated to Iraqi Kurdistan as homeland. The organization's activities embrace each Kurdish region under the existing sovereign state, concentrating on the regions separately, not on a uniform level. In other words, in contrast to the demands during the 1990s of the PKK, which had tended to cover all Kurdish regions, this imaginary organization pursued only self-rule.

The novels that do not support the PKK nevertheless do not avoid mentioning the internal factors that have obstructed national liberation. For example, the historical novel *Serhildane Mala Eliyê Ênis* by the diasporic writer Baksî is set towards the end of

³⁴⁶ Ismail Agha Simko (1887-1930) led a revolt in Iran from around the end of 1910 to the beginning of the 1920s, but was suppressed and then executed by the government in 1930.

³⁴⁷ Abdul Rahman Ghassemblou (1930-1989), who was the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), was assassinated by agents of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Vienna.

the Ottoman Empire and the early days of the Turkish Republic. Not only does Baksî give information about the Kurdish struggle and rebellions in this novel, but crucially, he also exposes negotiations between certain Kurdish tribes and Atatürk. *Xidê Naxirwan û Tevkuştine Dêrsim* by Çolpan, another diasporic writer, focuses on the Dersim area during the 1930s, referring to Kochkiri, Sheikh Said, and the Ararat Revolts as a way of clarifying these events from the Kurdish perspective, thereby demonstrating that not all tribes supported the struggle; indeed many, out of self-interest, collaborated with the Turkish state.

However, novels sympathetic to the PKK's ideology are bound to glorify the historical past more than those in which internal conflicts are referred to extensively. In pro-PKK novels, depiction of the past lacks any critical scrutiny and discourse on Kurdistan's past existence evokes the need to struggle to regain it and preserve its national values. For example, in Ferho's *Xaltîka Zeyno*, the old woman Zeyno represents the voice of history, since she can recall her experiences and describe conditions when the Empire ended and the Republic was founded; her narrative depicts the governing systems of the two regimes as she saw them. The novel recounts the ill-treatment of Kurds, the village evacuations, forced migration, arrests and killings (there was no difference between the two historic periods since Kurds suffered for the entire century).

Thus, the novels in both locations demonstrate that the territorial boundaries of Kurdistan are very ambiguous and are interpreted according to the ideology or views of the novelists. While some novels emphasize the borders of all Kurdish regions in relation to the project of 'Greater Kurdistan', others perceive the four parts of Kurdistan in their existing sovereignties, and recognize their official boundaries. Such controversies and ambiguities occur not only as an aspect of displacement from the homeland but also because of multiple political and ideological motivations. In this sense, it can also be argued that most of the novelists in diaspora who are from the same generation (born in the 1950s) are already politicized figures, due to nature of their background before their experiences in exile. Some were actively involved in politics, which was why exile was seen as the only rescue, and "the associations of Turkish Kurds [in Europe] essentially stood alongside the political parties in their country of origin" (Schmidinger 2010).³⁴⁸ Kurdish literary narratives in particular have become the sites where diasporic novelists contest and reinforce their claims, seeking various types

³⁴⁸ Available at : http://blog.lib.umn.edu/gpa/globalnotes/The%20Kurdish%20Diaspora%20in%20Austria%20T_Schmidinger.pdf, accessed 22 August 2012.

of political activities that they have experienced themselves or are still facing in various political and social contexts.

The novels in Turkish Kurdistan do not refer to internal factors leading to the destruction of Kurdistan but only to external ones. This point differentiates them from pro-PKK novels in diaspora since the pro-PKK diasporic novels have no hesitation in criticising Kurds although their negative criticism is less severe than from those not affiliated with PKK ideology. In other words, the novels that regard the political movement of the PKK as liberating for the national struggle retain a more optimistic outlook for Kurdistan. Despite the number of betrayals and internal conflicts, hopes for independence and belief in the national movement still exist. Therefore, narration of the story and depictions of Kurdish places do not correspond to the Kurdistan created in the novels affiliated with the ideology of the PKK. It can even be argued that in the majority of the diasporic novels, the image of Kurdistan associated with idealized rural areas produced in relation to the PKK's ideology, is challenged through descriptions, selected themes and stories in their narratives.

In other words, the construction of Kurdish identity as patriotic and loyal produced in parallel with PKK-affiliated novels is also overturned in the majority of diasporic novels in which politics in, or related to Iraqi Kurdistan is much favoured. In such novels, Kurds are not always brave and loyal towards their national struggle, as has been illustrated by examples of betrayal and deceit in the history of the Kurds. Kurdish nationalist rebellions are suppressed by the help of traitorous Kurds, or Kurdish shaikhs and landowners constantly negotiate with the Turkish state to diminish Kurdish solidarity. More specifically, villagers are necessarily as pure and uncorrupted as they are seen mainly in the novels of Qaso, Metê, Eser, and Mirzengî, in contrast to certain works that refer to them as the real owners of Kurdistan and that are found among novels from both Turkish Kurdistan and PKK-affiliated diasporic novels.

4.2.1. The Overview of Kurds: Are They 'Welatparêz' or 'Caş'?³⁴⁹

When places are engaged in an evolving process, identity is also detected as fluid and changeable. This argument leads to the notion that the question of “who we are” is often

³⁴⁹ 'Caş' meaning 'donkey-foal' in English is an expression used by Kurds to refer someone who betrays, mainly with regard to national issues.

intimately related to that of “where we are” (Dixon and Durrheim 2000: 27), since places are involved in personal, communal, social, national, and cultural meanings that are “both socially constituted and constitutive of social” (ibid.). In other words, places eventually create, sustain and transform identity embodying social symbols, and are invested with social meanings and significance (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). In this sense, the meanings ascribed to a place reveal significant information about a person attached to that place, which displays the significant role of ‘place’ in understanding an identity. Using the conception of “place-identity” with regard to the significance of place for the construction of self as a theoretical resource, the present study argues that the relationship between a Kurd and his ‘home-land’ is a dynamic process in a changing socio-political environment since “there is *no such thing as the one and only national identity* in an essentializing sense, but rather that different identities are discursively constructed according to context” (De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak 1999: 154; italics in original). Thus, for example, negative feelings and values attributed to a ‘home-land’ serve to produce negative individual images and vice versa, because identity is constructed within the circumstances of that particular environment in parallel with the ideological perspective of the author.

As discussed earlier, the diasporic novelistic discourse, mainly from those not affiliated to PKK, draws a very pessimistic picture of Kurdistan, in which negative aspects of Kurdistan are often employed. However, in Turkish Kurdistan the novelistic discourse and the diasporic novels affiliated to the PKK ideology attempt to imagine Kurdistan from a more optimistic and positive perspective, as a part of nation-building process. Accordingly, in this section, mainly in relation to the ideological structuring place-identity, the negative or positive features attributed to the Kurdish characters concerning their approach to ‘home-land’ politics will be discussed, since this attribution is also closely interlinked with a pessimistic or an optimistic vision of Kurdistan.

Broadly speaking, the socio-political and cultural environment of the novelists forms a central part of the characters they create in their fiction. As Mullan (2006:101) also states, a literary character “is likely to take on an independent, surprising life if only as a vehicle for the author’s views.” Accordingly, the characterization of Kurds in the novels depends mainly on their attitudes and beliefs about national issues, as shaped by the novelists’ views. In this respect, the issue of loyalty towards maintaining the homeland becomes the central characteristic feature, since there might also be a symbolic interpretation of the characters. Although the novels take on various

ideologies and homeland politics, they almost all emphasize the requirement for '*welatparêz*', which can be translated as 'patriotism' and 'love of the homeland'; sentiments that are regarded as natural and essential features of Kurdish identity. Tuan (2001:100) defines patriotism as "love of one's terra patria or natal land." Thus, love of 'homeland' refers to feelings of loyalty, sacrifice and struggle towards 'homeland'. Regarding Tuan's definition of patriotism, and regardless of conflicting political deeds, the love of 'home-land' is depicted in the narrations as the central feature of Kurdish identity, which is also embodied in the construction of Kurdish identity through resistance in order to retain national consciousness and the safety of the homeland. Thus, when considering Dixon and Durrheim's notion (2000) quoted above, the link between questions of "who we are" and "where we are", helps in understanding the construction of Kurdish identity within the construction of Kurdistan in which, while loyalty is stressed in one place, disloyalty can become the main focus in the other place. Pursuing the reasons for this difference will certainly enable a better awareness of the 'home-land' constructions in the novels.

Within the Kurdish novelistic discourse, loyalty and disloyalty to 'home-land' are identified in relation to negative and positive heroes; thus, "whereas the positive heroes are the embodiment of virtue and are highly recommended models of political behavior, the negative heroes have opposite personalities, possessing traits, political beliefs, and values which must be rejected" (Malik 1975: 26). This being the case, it can be argued that the analysis shows how, through negative characterization, most of the diasporic novels address the issue of disloyalty against 'home-land' exclusively, since it is regarded as the most deplorable act in any circumstances or period. On the other hand, the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan and a few in diaspora either make no reference at all to disloyalty, or else stress the issue of loyalty rather than disloyalty. It is also important to repeat that in the diasporic novelistic discourse, Kurdish history and the achievements or features of Kurds are analysed from harshly critical perspectives based on betrayals, trickeries, deceits, and obduracy towards the total absence of skills needed for unification and solidarity (as emphasised earlier in Chapter Two, subsection 2.1.5). Criticisms related to the Kurds in terms of internal conflicts within different political parties and tribes are based on the idea that either they are not fully aware of the national struggle, or they betray the struggle by complying with the Turkish state. In a few instances, disunity among the Kurdish intellectuals in diaspora is also addressed; this, again, links to national issues and homeland politics. This being so, one can argue that hope for solidarity and unity is a very weak possibility in most diasporic novels.

Sheffer (2006: 139) argues that “most stateless diaspora find themselves in an even more delicate and problematic situation with respect to the loyalty issue: they must decide to what extent they support the struggle of their brethren for independence and sovereignty in the homeland.” In relation to Sheffer’s comment, the issue of loyalty towards the national struggle is raised with great frequency in the Kurdish novels in diaspora, which criticize Kurds to such a degree that lack of sufficient support and awareness are regarded as one of the reasons for failing to acquire the features of a nation-state. These deficiencies of character are prevalent in nearly all diasporic novels, and in general terms, disunity exists everywhere. This lack of unity and solidarity even among Kurds individually is stressed, either explicitly or implicitly. There is also a prevailing emphasis in the novels written in diaspora, on the conflicts within Kurdish tribes, which becomes another of the main criticisms relating to national issues. The novels that focus in particular on the Ottoman period and the foundation process of the Turkish Republic, touch upon internal problems in detail. For example, in Mehmed Uzun’s *Rojek ji Rojên Evdalê Zeynikê*, which is set during the period of the Ottoman Empire, Kurds suffer from their internal conflicts as well as from the conduct of the Ottomans. Here betrayals and hatred within extended Kurdish families, and Ottoman incitement to attack non-Muslim Kurds are considered the main factors behind the failure to unify and achieve solidarity.

Mutual dissent is as harmful as betrayal, and disloyalty to national concerns is a wickedness; accordingly, most diasporic novels show how disloyalty and betrayal have prevailed in the history of the Kurds. In many novels, Kurds are accused of compliance with the hegemonic powers, or of being provoked to fight among themselves by the hateful politics of either the Ottomans or the Turkish Republic. Both of these actions, having caused irretrievable outcomes, are considered as a betrayal of the national struggle, and according to the novels, actions like these in the past overshadow the Kurds in the future. In this respect, novels such as *Xaltîka Zeyno*, *Nado Kurê Xwe Firof*, *Xidê Naxirwan û Tevkuştine Dêrsim*, *Serhildana Mala Eliyê Ênis*, *Xewnên Pînekirî*, *Gul Bişkivîn* and *Dora Bacinê Bi Dar e* address more or less exclusively the betrayal of the national struggle by certain figures and tribes, either through collaborating with the government in suppressing rebellions, or becoming involved in mass killings of Yazidis and Alevis. In such cases, terms such as ‘caş’ (donkey-foal) and ‘xayîn’ (traitor) are used extensively to emphasize the betrayal of national issues. In all the novels that deal with the Kurds’ historical or more current past, the issue of betrayal becomes the cornerstone of themes in the diasporic novels. In other words, when compared with

novels published in Turkish Kurdistan, the traitor in diasporic novels becomes more of a focal point than the condition of *'welatparêz'*.

Apart from the words *'xayîn'*³⁵⁰ and *'caş'*, other words like *'kew'* (partridge) and *'mar'* (snake), characterized by their evocation of concrete qualities, are also used as metaphors to imply unauthorised actions conducted against the national struggle. The *'kew'* is believed to be disloyal towards its own species, while *'mar'* is commonly used to refer to someone who acts surreptitiously against friends or relatives. The important point about the *'snake'* metaphor is that a disloyal action is implemented secretly and on the sly. The novels narrate the betrayal of some Kurds, likening it to the disloyal actions of *'kew'* and *'mar'* that include undermining the lives of close people, or taking action against familiar ones behind their backs.

For their self-interest, safety and welfare, some Kurdish tribes, shaikhs, landowners, village guards, informers, and anyone who negotiates with the main hegemonic powers, i.e., the government and military, are described through the metaphors of *'kew'* and *'mar'* because they undermine the Kurdish national struggle and thereby endanger all Kurds. Compared to the novels written in Turkish Kurdistan, the novels in diaspora use these metaphors more often to imply any sorts of actions that can be defined as betrayal. The title of the novel *Kewa Marî* refers directly to disloyalty and betrayal, while the title *Marê Di Tûr De* (Snake in the Sack) also suggests disloyalty through the *'snake'* metaphor. The novel focuses mainly on the *'mar'* as a metaphor addressed to the people who have been against the Kurdish national struggle. It refers to Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic, and his betrayal of Kurdish elite groups by not keeping his promise of an autonomous Kurdistan, and also addresses Kurdish tribes that were complicit with the Atatürk government against the Kurdish national struggle.³⁵¹ The novels *Serpêhatiyên Rustem û Namerdiya Namerdan*, *Peyman*, *Xaltîka Zeyno* and *Çiroka Me* also include *'mar'* and *'kew'* metaphors to imply how Kurds betrayed each other and caused fragmentation and failure.

In relation to the ideological groups categorized as PKK-affiliated novels and novels opposed to the PKK, it is essential to note that both groups portray the state of *'welatparêz'* differently. Pro-PKK diasporic novels, also stressing the prevalence of betrayal among Kurds, consider *'welatparêz'* as the one who struggles for the national unity of Kurdistan namely in relation to the politics of PKK; whereas those that do not

³⁵⁰ Some writers spell it as *"xaîn"*.

³⁵¹ Here the narrator refers to the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920) between the Allied powers of the First World War and the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty promised an autonomous Kurdistan, but was rejected in Ankara by the government of Kemal Atatürk. It was replaced by Turkish nationalists with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

pursue PKK's ideology understand '*welatparêz*' as a respected virtue that does not necessarily serve a particular political purpose. In this latter category of novels, the concept of '*welatparêz*' is used mainly to describe a historical figure with heroic qualities; however the term also contains a sense of disappointment and loss, since it is apparently difficult nowadays to observe genuine '*welatparêz*'. In other words, the state of '*welatparêz*' is linked with the past, not the present.

Almost all the novels in diaspora of Lokman Polat and Laleş Qaso support the notion that there have been some crucial '*welatparêz*' in Kurdish history, including literary and political figures who died for the sake of Kurdish identity and Kurdistan; however, sacrifices of this sort occurred in the past. These novels emphasize the fact that Kurdistan is divided physically by the borders of four sovereign states, and stress that the absence of '*welatparêz*' leads to the disruption of Kurdish identity. Undoubtedly, this sort of view also contains pessimistic prospects for the future. Nevertheless, diasporic novels supporting the ideology of PKK, mainly those such as *Dîlên li ber Pûkê*, *Dora Bacinê Bi Dar e*, *Siya Dema Borî*, *Veger*, *Şopa Rojên Buhurî*, *Gul bişkivîn*, and *Zenga Zêrîn* suggest that being '*welatparêz*' is not peculiar to the Kurdish past, and that this indicates an optimistic future for solidarity. Emphasizing the concept of '*welatparêz*' in relation to the present and future in these novels is instrumental in creating a vision of a unified Kurdish nation and a territorial union, and it enables the construction of an imagined Kurdish homogeneity over reality. These novels try to demonstrate the resurgence of 'Greater Kurdistan' through the realm of imagination, and the links to national history through the need for patriotic figures. In pro-PKK diasporic novels the protagonists are always portrayed as '*welatparêz*' who are conscious of, and defiant about their national identity. But it must be noted that these novels also contain critical narrations of Kurds; these, in fact, convey a nationalist purpose through which a call is made to Kurdish readers not to repeat the mistakes that diminish the national struggle.

One can argue that these sorts of calls represent acts of resistance and a heightened sense of attachment to Kurdistan. Thus, it can be argued that on the one hand, diasporic pro-PKK novels often refer to the betrayals, deceits and disunities related to the historical past, but in the form of a call for unity. On the other hand, the anti-PKK novels in diaspora, through their narration of these issues, simply try to draw attention to the internal factors that caused national failure but refuse to become involved in any ideological purposes aimed at promoting the national struggle. This is confirmed by the fact that anti-PKK novels do not necessarily select their protagonist as

‘welatparêz’; however, pro-PKK novels depict the central characters in relation to their loyalty and struggle, in an attempt to promote these aspects of conduct.

On the other hand, in the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan, being patriotic is regarded as the basic and essential part of being a Kurd. In other words, novels expose that being ‘welatparêz’ is a compulsory and inevitable state that all Kurds will experience during one phase or another in their lifetime. Being ‘welatparêz’, or the necessity of struggling for Kurdistan, is considered as a customary deed, the lack of which is disapproved by others. For example, in *Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî*, Sertac describes himself as being ‘welatparêz’ like any Kurds (207), which indicates that the love of ‘homeland’ is supposed to be a natural feature. Similarly, in *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, the love of ‘homeland’ is suggested as a very important feature for an individual to have, since “there was one love which was the love of *homeland* [...] in the city, village or on the mountains [...] There is no difference” (89).³⁵² Thus, it can be argued that a true protagonist’s most important characteristic is his patriotic side. In addition, however, there is also the idealization of the protagonist who reveals the perfect features and flawless personality that connote an epic hero. The epic hero with specified national characteristics refers to “a model, a kind of ideal to be striven for or imitated to be best of one’s abilities” (Miller 2000:15). Protagonists with such striking characteristics and who are always ‘welatparêz’, are also very open-minded, intellectual, and well-read, as well as considerate and supportive about the problems of their surroundings. The central characters are not only viewed as saviours of the ‘homeland’ but are also very understanding towards people needing help. Interestingly, the novels in Turkish Kurdistan do not refer to any symbolic interpretation of ‘traitor’ such as ‘kew’ or ‘mar’, being instead infused with more hopeful discourse.

Despite sharing the same ideologies, pro-PKK diaspora novels and novels in Kurdistan sometimes differ from each other on the basis of territorial dynamics. Naturally, a pro-PKK subject in Kurdistan and a pro-PKK subject in diaspora will also be influenced by their different contexts, which explains why, in relation to loyalty towards Kurdistan, the characterization is more homogeneous in the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan when compared to diaspora. In almost all the novels in Turkish Kurdistan, ‘homeland’ is presented as a main symbol of Kurdish identity, requiring security, resistance, and struggle. Similarly, most of these novels ponder on the conflict between the Turkish state and the guerrillas, where the guerrilla is treasured as a symbol of rebellion and struggle for the sake of Kurdistan. The highly-praised character in the

³⁵² Tenê yek evînek hebû ew jî evîna welat bû [...] li bajaran, li gundan, yan jî li çîyan... qet ferq nedikir.

novels is either a guerrilla or a true and loyal ‘*welatparêz*’ who struggles for territorial unity and independence of the ‘homeland.’ However, pro-PKK diasporic novels also contain critical perspectives of Kurds and Kurdistan.

In sum, in both the Turkish Kurdistan and diaspora novels, love of Kurdistan is highlighted in relation to identity and homeland politics. However, while its significance is underlined through positive characterizations (all the protagonists are patriotic and decent people) in the first set of novels, in diaspora novels its lack is emphasized mainly through historical events, using particular terms like ‘*kew*’, ‘*mar*’, and ‘*caş*’ to define the betrayals. Another classification can also be seen within diasporic novels, in which pro-PKK novels focus on betrayals to maintain unity in the future. While deceits and betrayals among the Kurds are narrated, the loyal deeds of positive protagonists are also addressed. However, in diasporic anti-PKK novels, the narrations of betrayals and deceits serve only to reflect the reasons behind the failure of Kurds and to express disappointment. The protagonists in these novels are not necessarily ‘*welatparêz*’, nor are they actively involved in any political movement.

4.2.2. The Relationship with Kurdish Lands: Destroyed Urban Kurdistan versus Idealised Rural Kurdistan

In terms of its expression of national authenticities, human geographers have emphasized the significance of landscape in the construction of national identity (Moranda 2000; Storey 2001; Etherington 2010) since, in many ways, “landscape is considered to play a crucial role in national imagination” (Jones, Jones and Woods 2004: 92). Accordingly, Kaufmann and Zimmer (1998), underlining the significance of natural environment in defining national identity, emphasize that for symbolic analogies between ‘landscape’ and ‘nation’, the term employed is ‘nationalization of nature’, in which “popular historical myths, memories and supposed national virtues are projected onto a significant landscape in an attempt to lend more continuity and distinctiveness to it” (1998: 486).³⁵³

In other words, by attributing a nation’s distinctiveness to particular landscapes, national authenticity is developed and is further transformed into a homeland. Thus, landscapes help to symbolize and sometimes inspire the nation, and representative landscapes constitute visual encapsulations of a shared past. In this respect, nations tend

³⁵³ For more on a similar subject, see Zimmer’s contribution on Alpine landscape and the reconstruction of the Swiss nation, Chapter 8 in Squatriti, ed., *Natures Past: The Environment and Human History* (2007).

to view particular types of landscape as ones that represent the values or the essence of the nation. Human geography also identifies the social forces behind the constructions of particular places differently, since one might have different social relations, meanings and collective memory, and place interactions.

In light of the above, in relation to the significance of novels as geographical inquiry for a nation, or in Brosseau's term (1994) "geography of the text", it can be said that analyses of the novels show that there is a nationalization of nature in both Kurdistan and diaspora; however, not only are different places emphasized, but in terms of perceiving them, different approaches and language are also used. Themes/subjects and settings are inextricably intertwined in the novels. For example, there are differences in how rural and urban settings are depicted in novels produced in Turkish Kurdistan and diaspora. This section argues that the novels in Turkish Kurdistan and certain diaspora novels affiliated to the PKK ideology imagine a Kurdistan of rural and pastoral areas, where nature is either idealized with rustic images of its picturesque landscape, or where the destruction of these areas is based on external factors. On the other hand, in the majority of diasporic novels Kurdistan is usually associated with urban areas, which have been destroyed due to both internal and external factors.

More precisely, in Turkish Kurdistan, except for *Bavfileh* by Tilermenî, *Reş û Spî* by Aydogan, Barîşer's *Mandalîn* and the novels located in imaginary settings such as *Leyla Figaro* by Aydogan, *Jar lê Sermest* by Ayebe, *Nameyek Ji Xwedê Re* by Eroğlu, *Saturn* by Alan, and *Ardûda* by Janbar, the rest of the novels are set either in pastoral areas of Kurdistan or involve a strong desire for Kurdish rural areas. Even *Reş û Spî* which takes place partly in Istanbul, is based entirely on longing for the home town that the protagonist and his family are forced to leave. Again, in *Mandalîn* which focuses on the adventures of two escapee friends, they spend all their time dreaming of their village. It can be argued that the novels from Turkish Kurdistan ponder more about rural and pastoral settings than about urban areas in which the natural features of rural places are celebrated and idealized.

The intense descriptions of the natural environment in Turkish Kurdistan suggest that, without interference from such factors as war, raids, and evacuation, Kurdistan is associated with peaceful village life and beautiful landscapes. Villages or rural areas become the places to which a Kurd aspires, taking on an inexplicable and essential significance in the Kurds' sense of place. This idea can be related to some of the arguments raised by Williams and Smith (1983) concerning classification of the various dimensions of state territory. They emphasize the importance of rural landscapes in the

nation, and draw attention to the stress placed by nations on the belief that members come closer to that nationalist ideal if they live on that ground, suggesting that individuals possibly rely more on nationalist principles if they live in rural rather than urban areas. In this respect, Kurdish novelistic discourse in Kurdistan illustrates the topographical features of Kurdistan with regard to the idealization of agrarian life and rural culture. Almost all novels in Turkish Kurdistan are either set in pastoral areas or are heavily bound with references to rural idylls in a celebrated and idealized tone. In this sense, *Xezal*, *Neynika Dilî*, *Giyanên Bahozî*, *Keje*, *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, *Gava Heyatê*, *Zeviyên Soro*, *Kitim*, *Evîna Pînhan*, *Kulmek Morîkên Şînbirik*, *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî*, *Pilingên Serhedê*, *Feqiyê Teyran*, *Li Qerexa Şevê Hîvron*, *Ez Stêrka Sîpan im*, and *Mişextî* take place mostly in an idealized rural area. Likewise, *Reş û Spî*, *Bavfileh*, *Qerebafon*, *Gitarê bê Tel*, *Saturn*, *Rêwiyên bê Welat*, *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, *Toqa Lanatê*, and *Otobês* profoundly capture a similar idealized village and its natural beauty as representative of the entire ‘homeland.’

Apart from the village, rural areas too, untarnished and replete with purity, form the major settings of the novels in Turkish Kurdistan. Praise for the natural features of ‘homeland’ is a very common phenomenon in almost all of the novels. Kurdistan is represented through natural beauty and purity, characterized by the repeated use of flowers and herbs. The narrators touch upon each landscape separately but through similar descriptions and expressions, intertwined with praise and celebration. That raises the idea of ‘Topophilia’ (love of place), which is not only a response to place, but actively produces places for people. According to Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), in the case of attachment to a certain place or landscape, ‘topophilia’ often takes the form of an aestheticizing of that place or landscape. Tuan suggests that such an attachment can be based upon memories, or pride of ownership or creation. In this case, the idealized and celebrated descriptions imply that these pastoral areas, intertwined with nostalgia and romantic notions, appear the ideal ‘home’ for the literary characters. Tuan’s concept of ‘Topophilia’ (1974) also conveys a strong emotional relationship between a particular place and an individual or a group.

In relation to this notion, it can be said that the close relationship between ‘homeland’ and the characters is constructed through certain metaphors that stress the link between them. The way identity is constructed in relation to the topographical features of Kurdistan also serves to support the nationalist agenda. Through detailed emphasis on the natural environment and landscapes, there is a case of nationalizing nature so that Kurdish national identity is associated with that idealized and celebrated rural area. It

can be argued that the textual analyses of the novels indicate how, as the rooted quality of Kurdistan, Kurdish places and landscapes carry as much importance as the literary characters do in almost every novel. Spatial structures in the novels have an organic role, which are mainly described through the use of personification metaphors. Characteristic features of living organisms are attributed to the landscapes, which in turn contribute to constructing both national and personal identities (Muir 1999), meaning that landscapes play an active role in the narrations similar to characters, thereby increasing the significance of their meaning and values in the text.

It is clearly true that to most Kurds, Kurdistan is historicized and its features celebrated through association with its mountainous topography. In the novels in Turkish Kurdistan even an ordinary upland can contribute to developing a sense of the landscape in the narratives, in such a way that it is crucial to underline the role of 'upland' ('*zozan*') and 'mountain' ('*çiya*') when identifying the distinguishing features of Kurdistan's topography. As Allison (2001: 182) states in relation to the significance of these natural landscapes for Kurds, "the concept of '*zozan*' [upland] is still powerful for a Kurdistan where the overwhelming majority are sedentary [...] Rural life is felt to be the authentic Kurdish life, and its details, both of landscape and of style have romantic associations." Similarly, it is possible to see the image of mountains in almost all life stages of Kurds, and in many novels, the emotional and physical attachment of Kurdish characters to the mountains of Kurdistan is very obvious. The meanings of mountains are multi-layered, both symbolically and literally, and their significance in the lives of Kurds is underlined through the rural idyll, and the images and meanings attributed to them.

However, mountains appear not only as landscapes that show the relationship between Kurds and nature; the use of the mountain image in the novels is also the result of certain specific social and political contexts. The political and historical meanings attributed to it are the products of the political discourse based on the struggle for national identity and the quest for a homeland. This confirms that, as Holloway and Hubbard (2001:114) also state, "certain landscapes may come to symbolize the struggle between different groups, or a struggle to construct national identity." The argument of Holloway and Hubbard validates the emergence of mountains in terms of being a symbol of Kurdish national identity in the Kurdish novelistic discourse. In Kurdish nationalist discourse, the mountain is particularly meaningful, symbolizing both 'roots' and 'identity' by serving the core function of the defence of the land, itself a living

symbol of struggle, and almost all the novels praise the height, greenness, and scent of the mountains that offer freedom and independence.

In novels that narrate the struggle of guerrillas, such as *Gava Heyatê*, *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, *Bêhna Axê*, *Kitim*, *Xezal*, *Rêwiyên bê Welat*, *Ez Stêrka Sîpan im* and *Mişextî*, mountains are the main setting and become as prevalent as any other literary character. The mountain is the substitute for Kurdistan and the producer of authentic Kurdishness. In other novels, such as *Neynika Dilî*, *Kulmek Morikên Şînbirik*, and *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî*, there are also intense references to the significance of mountains in the lives of Kurds, and this emphasis on the mountainous topography of Kurdistan reinforces the distinguishing features of the national homeland. In the majority of the novels the mountain also appears as a national symbol, evolving as a central feature in the collective Kurdish memory of an idealized past and future. The distinctive features of mountains are used to construct a distinctive Kurdish identity that distinguishes them from other communities. As Romano (2002:129) notes, "...shared memory of a mountain pastoral nomadic past, awareness of the homeland *Kurdistan* and distinct social practices [...] form a Kurdish culture and ethnicity."

The role of the mountains, mainly Mount Judi (*Cudî*) and Mount Suphan (*Sîpan*), in the discourses of national identity and its divine meanings for the Kurds, often appears explicitly in the narrations to the extent that the image of a mountain in Kurdish novels is not an inanimate object or substance but represents active nature because it is humanized with human traits. In addition to the link with ancestral history and national struggle, mountains in the novelistic discourse refer, as noted, to independence and freedom for the characters. For example, the unnamed protagonist in *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, who has been imprisoned for many years because of political acts and involvements, embraces his freedom on the mountains following his release, as if the mountain stands opposed to the prison. In other words, being away from the 'mountain' is equal to finding oneself in prison.

It is important to note that people's attitudes towards nature and landscape change over time since for Kurds the meaning of the mountains changes too. According to Mesopotamian myth, the mountain symbolizes the centre of the world. It was the earthly throne of the gods, a ladder to heaven, and a monumental sacrificial altar, and it was the mountain of the lands that united earth with heaven (Tuan 2001: 91). Kurds consider mountains as shelters from political conditions and hardship; thus Kurds endangered by Saddam's military units in Iraqi Kurdistan escaped to the mountains to save their lives. The PKK still carries on its armed struggle in the mountains of

Kurdistan. Regarding the topography of Kurdistan, Tuan (1974, 1977)³⁵⁴ adopts a humanistic approach to the issue, while O'Shea (2004: 162) who regards the physical structures as a psychological and experimental construct within the framework of 'topophilia', states that "a common theme in Kurdish culture is the mountains as allies in the many Kurdish military struggles." In this respect, mountains become a context for the formation of political identities and the identification of political acts. Most of the novels also ponder on the significance of mountains in the structure of Kurdish identity and how that identity is blended with the natural features of the mountains. In this way characters in the novels become interconnected with the mountains.

The 'nationalization' of the Tigris River especially, should be taken into account since it has witnessed all the tragedies and glories in Kurdish history and is therefore regarded as the national river of the Kurds. The characterization of the Tigris suggests how closely landscapes and characters are interrelated within a social role that reveals the tremendous beauty of Kurdistan. In relation to the social role of landscapes Lynch argues (1960: 126) "the landscape serves as a vast mnemonic system for the retention of group history and ideals." In this way, a relationship is established between the characters and their natural environment. Repeated reference to environmental images with their names and significant details enables them to be distinguished from other non-Kurdish landscapes and non-Kurdish cities.³⁵⁵

In light of the above analyses, it should also be noted that with regard to the pure and idealized natural landscapes of Kurdistan, the villagers (particularly shepherds) are identified with the pure and idealized life-style. They become the potent symbol of national purity. It can be argued that there is an association between pure and virtuous villagers and the uncorrupted and unmolested land that become an emblem of Kurdish national consciousness in the novels written in Kurdistan. The narrators praise villagers and shepherds for their naivety and the uncorrupted values they hold. According to the narrations, being a villager or describing an individual as being from a village identifies

³⁵⁴ See also *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (1999) and *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (2007) by J. E. Malpas, who interprets the concept of 'place' from a contemporary philosophical perspective. Edward S. Casey (1997) and Robert Mugerauer (1994), like Malpas, also regard the topographical structure of 'place' as a subjective construct through which human identity, thoughts and experience are shaped.

³⁵⁵ In terms of written literature, as in the Kurdish case there is also great significance attached to Palestinian folklore for reconstructing and preserving Palestine before the Occupation (Parmenter 1994: 22). In Palestinian literary works, especially those written since the establishment of the Israeli state, Palestinian places are depicted as national landscapes holding symbolic meanings (Ibid: 24). Of course the interpretation of landscapes and symbolization of homelands are different in the two cases. For example, while Kurdish places are quite secularized and empty of any religious interpretations, the myth of Jerusalem is more religious than political (Elad 1999: 2-3).

him with purity and nationalist notions. Apart from the guerrillas, villagers are also praised mainly for being more patriotic rather than city dwellers. As O'Shea (2004: 162) notes:

Despite the urban origins of the modern nationalism movement, the mountain village Kurds are often idealized as the true supporters of the nationalist struggle, whereas the city and plains dwellers are co-opted by the host regimes and corrupted by opportunities, bribery, and easy living.

Accordingly, in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan, the villagers, mostly shepherds, appear as a potent Kurdish nationalist symbol, since they signify both the struggle and the deep historical attachment to Kurdish lands.

Apart from the novels in Turkish Kurdistan mentioned above, it is also possible in some diasporic novels to see similar rural areas as the construction of Kurdistan, since, like the novels in Turkish Kurdistan, the diasporic novels too, tend to perceive Kurdistan in a pastoral context. But as emphasized earlier, these novels are usually constrained by their tendentious approach toward the PKK and its agenda. For example, the obvious affinity and sympathy of novelist in exile, Zeynel Abidîn towards the ideology of the PKK, is seen in his two novels *Bineşên Tariyê* and *Bigrî Heval*. The later novel *Bigrî Heval* which focuses on two guerrillas who escape from the PKK, takes place in the rural areas and mountains of Kurdistan, whereas most of *Bineşên Tariyê* is set in in Ankara and focuses on the personal and political crisis of the main character Bawer; however, after he has joined the guerrillas, Kurdish mountains become the setting of the novel but with few physical details.

Although novels that are interwoven with the PKK's politics are set in rural and idyllic areas, i.e., mountains, villages, and pastoral and rural lives, these places are neither idealized nor celebrated like those written in Turkish Kurdistan. Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç's *Rondikên Hêviyên Wenda* and *Mamostayê Zinaran* are set in Kurdish villages where the harsh lives of Kurds are described in relation to the national struggle of a Kurdish party. To a greater or lesser extent Medenî Ferho's novels *Xaltîka Zeyno*, *Xewnên Pînekirî*, and *Çiroka Me*, Ali Husein Kerim's *Şopa Rojên Buhurî*, and Reşat Akgul's *Veger* (entirely) and *Dora Bacinê Bi Dar e* (partly), take place in Kurdish rustic areas. These novels all refer explicitly to the PKK's guerrilla war in the mountains. Diyar Bohtî's novels *Mexmûr* and *Gul Bişkiyîn* also take place in rural areas of Kurdistan. Even in the latter, in which the protagonist joins other guerrillas to fight against the Turkish state, the mountainous features of Kurdistan are often emphasized.

It can be said that these novels convey the idea that the national struggle has been represented in Kurdish pastoral areas rather than in the cities, as part of a guerrilla war conducted by the PKK in the mountains or rural areas of Kurdistan. Akgul's novel *Veger* focuses on the memoirs of a group of PKK guerrillas, and though the novels take place in rural areas or villages that are praised at various times, they are not as idealised as villages in novels from Turkish Kurdistan. A point to note is that descriptions of rural areas or villages are imbued with a strong sense of nostalgia and yearning. What I argue here is that physical presence in stateless homeland territory increases the level of idealization of the landscapes and takes on a more nostalgic and yearning form that will be elaborated on in the following section.

Broadly speaking, the comparative analysis element of this study argues that 'topophilia', which is based on the positive aspects of place, is more prevalent in the novels of Turkish Kurdistan and in pro-PKK novels than in those diasporic novels that are against or not affiliated to the PKK. There is a stronger bond with the lands of Kurdistan. Accordingly, the landscapes of Kurdistan abound in images of fertility and prosperity; they appear more than their literal terms. They are filled with familiar natural beauty and the freshness of spring, and the symbolic meanings of the topographical features of Kurdistan are strengthened with the use of spring and the greenness of the environment. In this sense, *Xezal*, *Neynika Dilî*, *Giyanên Bahozî*, *Keje*, *Hêvî Her Dem Heye*, *Gava Heyatê*, *Zeviyên Soro*, *Kitim*, *Evîna Pînhan*, *Kulmek Morîkên Şînbirik*, *Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî*, *Pilingên Serhedê*, *Feqiyê Teyran*, *Li Qerexa Şevê Hivron*, *Ez Stêrka Sîpan im* and *Mîşextî* take place mostly in an idealized rural area. The novels *Reş û Spî*, *Bavfileh*, *Qerebafon*, *Gitarê bê Tel*, *Saturn*, *Rêwiyên bê Welat*, *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, *Toqa Lanatê*, and *Otobês* capture a similar idealized village and its natural beauty as a representation of Kurdistan made whole. Again the novels that tend to embrace the PKK's ideology in diaspora, such as *Mamostayê Zinaran*, *Marê Di Tur De*, *Xaltîka Zeyno*, *Binefşên Tariyê*, *Dora Bacine bi Dar e*, *Rondikên Hêviyên Wenda*, *Dîlên li ber Pûkê*, *Zenga Zêrîn*, *Şopa Rojên Buhurî*, *Veger*, and *Çiroka Me* employ a similar tone for the praise and celebration of rural Kurdistan, as in the novels produced in Turkish Kurdistan. These novels also include, in an exalted tone, a great range of folkloric narrations and stories as cultural heritage.

On the other hand, the portrayal of Kurdistan in the majority of the novels in diaspora (which can be categorised as anti-PKK novels) is different from the novels in Turkish Kurdistan. Even if some diasporic novels are set in Kurdish villages, there is less emphasis on the mountainous features of Kurdistan compared to the novels

produced in Turkish Kurdistan or in some of the diasporic novels mentioned above. For example, in the first batch of diaspora novels in the 1980s, rural areas become the main settings of Baksî's novelistic discourse. While political conflicts constitute the main backdrop of his first novel *Hêlîn*, conflicts between villagers and the agha become the main focus in *Gundikê Dono*. It is worth noting that in both novels, descriptions of village and villagers do not involve any celebrations or idealizations. Instead they are strongly critical of the selfishness of the villagers who negotiate either with the Turkish state or the landowners.

When looking at the novels from the end of 1990s and the early 2000s, it is possible to find a few written by diaspora novelists that focus on life in Kurdish villages. Laleş Qaso's trilogy, *Sê Şev û Sê Roj*, *Xezeba Azadiyê*, and *Wêran*, and Hesenê Metê's *Labîranta Cînan* and *Gotinên Guneşkar* are set in villages; however, in contrast to an idealizing approach by the novelistic discourse in Kurdistan towards the villages, the narrators of these novels stress in their descriptions the villagers' ignorant attitudes. In Qaso's novels, the villagers' lack of interest in politics is criticized with humour; in Metê's novels, villagers are described with regard to their superstitious beliefs, their contentious relations with each other; and their unpredictable tendency towards betrayal. In Qaso's novels, the organization of Kurdish political parties is heavily satirized; in Metê's novels, villagers are deprived of any political motives. Broadly speaking, there is no romantic image of 'home' in these diasporic novels. Love of land/landscapes is not expressed through an idyllic way of life, and the pastoral areas in fact do not evoke purity at all. Again, there is no image of 'the shepherd', who in diaspora novels represents the pure national symbol.

In most of the novels, even urban areas of Kurdistan (mainly Diyarbakir) become the focal point for criticism. Both of Firat Cewerî's novels *Payiza Dereng* and *Ez ê Yekî Bikujim* take place in Diyarbakir, where the assimilated attitudes of local people about Kurds become a constant backdrop of the novels. In a different period, similar meanings for Diyarbakir can be derived from Xurşîd Mîrzengî's novel *Belqitî*, in which people steal, then sell the stolen goods, to survive, while Mîrzengî's *Sînor*, *Jiyanek* by Bûbê Eser, and Uzun's *Tu* take place in Diyarbakir, which conveys no sort of idealisations or praise but only total destruction.

Some diasporic novels not affiliated with the PKK often cross Kurdistan's territorial boundaries. For example, Mezher Bozan's quartet of novels, *Av Zelal Bû I-II-III-IV*, which focus on Davud's life from childhood to maturity, portray different cities of Turkey as Davud, sometimes by force, sometimes voluntarily, moves from one city

to another, mainly Turkish-populated cities such as Zonguldak, Konya, Bolu, etc. The narrator deals mainly with the harsh conditions of migrant Kurds in Istanbul and in other cities where they are subjected to discrimination and poverty. Kurds are clearly not welcome in any cities populated by Turks, and the constant tension between them become the backdrop of the novels, which attempt to demonstrate the urbanized aspects of constant conflicts in Kurdistan. Bozan's other novel *Asim* also explores the hardship of migration to Istanbul and attempts to reflect on the Kurdish issue from a social rather than a political stance. The conflicts and tensions experienced by a Kurdish migrant become the novel's central issue, revealing the tragic experiences of a Kurdish character as an individual in a non-Kurdish city. Through their main characters, Riza Çolpan's novels *Nado Kurê Xwe Firo*t and *Serpêhatiyên Rustem û Namerdiya Namerdan* are also based entirely on the harsh living conditions of Kurdish migrants in Istanbul, though from more socio-cultural perspective. Mehmed Uzun's biographical novel *Siya Evîne*, narrated in an imaginary form, concerns the life of a Kurdish intellectual, Memduh Selim Beg, and takes place in Istanbul, Beirut, Damascus, Antakya, and Aleppo, since the protagonist is forced to migrate from one place to another. Uzun's *Hawara Dîcleyê* I-II (2002-2003) largely based on the forced migrations of Kurds under Ottoman Empire is mostly set in Damascus, as Biro, the Yazidi protagonist, flees his hometown to save his life from massacres against non-Muslims. In *Bîra Qedere*, Uzun focuses on the Bedir Khan family and their contribution to Kurdish literature and journalism; the novel generally takes place in Istanbul.

It is clear that in the majority of the novels in both Kurdistan and diaspora, the natural landscapes of Kurdistan are stressed; however, in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan and the pro-PKK novels in diaspora, landscapes are infused with sacred and holy meanings and appear mainly, and symbolically, as the most distinctive geographical and environmental features of Kurdistan. The natural landscapes of Kurdistan, both mountains, and uplands are used in a symbolic context. In doing so, even cultural traditions are praised since the bonds with lands are strong. In such novels, literary characters appear to be influenced by the socio-political conditions of Kurdistan, and, in parallel with the theoretical term discussed in this research, 'place-identity' is stronger in these novels. It should be noted that most of Uzun's novels are excluded from this argument, since most are based on revealing Kurdish cultural and historical heritage through biographies and memoirs.

The influential element behind the different depictions of settings is not only territorial but also ideological. In the novels in Kurdistan and pro-PKK novels in

diaspora, rural areas, villages, and natural landscapes evoke positive connotations, because they are associated with uncorrupted Kurdistan and the central location of national struggle. In the diaspora novels, by contrast, either resisting or ignoring the ideology of the PKK in urban areas suggests a corrupted Kurdistan and rustic areas where villages contain no praiseworthy elements that will distinguish them from the cities. The harsh criticisms of the Kurds also contribute to creating a negative view of Kurdistan. In Chapter Two above, section 2.1.5 on re-visioning Kurdistan employed an analysis of diasporic novels in which negative motifs are repeatedly used in depictions of Kurdistan. The idea is discussed that Kurds failed to achieve statehood not only because of external factors but also due to the internal conflicts among themselves, i.e., tribal self-interest. Internal critiques exclusively on Kurds overshadow the view of Kurdistan.

Thus, it can be argued that the political ideologies of the novels not affiliated with the PKK, which bases its actions and party programmes on the rural and ideal image of Kurdistan, create an antagonistic portrayal of the Kurdistan proposed by the PKK. Nor do they visualize Kurdistan in a romanticized nostalgic structure coloured with fantasy and dreams. Instead, they involve more real experiences and facts from both internal and external critiques. In addition, it can be argued that these novels construct a multi-local, diverse and urbanized Kurdistan whose settings are deprived of idealization and romanticisation.

4.3. The Perception of ‘Home-land’: the Constant Sense of ‘Outsideness’

Mass migrations, forced departures from lands, exclusion, and the sense of exile are very common phenomena in the general Kurdish novelistic discourse. This addresses the fact that in this discourse, ‘home-land’ is attributed to a certain territorialised location; however, it has been dislocated by division and fragmentation that has threatened the sense of Kurdistan as a fixed, pure, and certain structure for Kurdish literary characters. Interestingly, comparative analyses suggest that voluntary or forced migration due to lack of sovereignty or socio-political conditions in Kurdistan, appear as more dominant experiences in forming the basis of a shared Kurdish identity in the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan compared with what occurs in the diaspora. In other words, Kurds in Kurdistan territory are influenced more than diaspora members by the statelessness of their nation. Thus, the link that Kurdish characters in Kurdistan construct with their lands is more sentimental and spiritual, and this is usually expressed

either through a widespread emphasis, infused with praise and celebration, on the topographical features of Kurdistan, or through a strong sense of the absence of ‘home-land’ strengthened by migrations and detachments. In addition, ‘home-land’ usually provokes a particular meaning to ‘being Kurdish’, i.e., to feeling oneself as migrant, refugee, traveller, escapee and orphan and, as a refugee, both migrant and homeless.

Broadly speaking, most of the novels, both in Turkish Kurdistan and diaspora, refer to internal and external displacements in which ‘home-land’ is not composed of bounded and fixed spaces. The image of ‘home-land’ and loss of ‘home-land’ are juxtaposed in most of the novels. However, what I argue is that the longing for ‘home-land’ is even more dominant in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan than it is in the diaspora novels. In other words, Kurdish characters in Kurdistan feel the sense of fragmentation and alienation in ‘homeland territory’ (insideness) sometimes more than the Kurdish characters in ‘diaspora’ (outsideness).

In his book *Place and Placelessness* Relph (1976) stresses the significance of different level of connections with ‘place’. He coins four concepts to explain the intensity of the connection within the person and place: “insideness”, “outsideness”, “existential insideness”, and “existential outsideness.” Through “insideness”, Relph suggests that if one feels himself to be inside a place, he feels safe and distant from threats. The stronger sense of “insideness” refers to a stronger identity of the individual with that particular place. On the other hand, the sense of “outsideness” conveys completely the opposite meaning, where the mode of alienation and separation is very dominant in the case of physical detachment from a place. “Existential insideness” refers to a very strong mode of place experience when the individual is in his home, community or region. To a great extent this is the highest degree to which one can experience a place positively. In contrast, “existential outsideness” addresses the sense of strangeness and alienation when one is away from ‘home’ – his original place. Thus the “existential outsider” is the one who is away from his home and feels disappointed after coming back to his home because of unexpected changes.

The terms above will help in understanding how the sense of ‘home-land’ in the literary characters is due to the political conditions of Kurdistan and the very ambiguous sense of ‘home-land’ among Kurds. In this respect, Kurdish novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan supposes that lack of statelessness and political ambiguity cause Kurds who are ‘inside’ (in Kurdistan territory), like those who are ‘outside’ (diaspora), to perceive their territory in the same manner. Often, the sense of “outsideness” is more

dominated by those who are actually outside as migrant or refugees because ‘home-land’, in its current conditions, is perceived as more fragmented and distant. This argument poses challenges to the differentiation of “insiderness” and “outsiderness” developed by Edward Relph. This study argues that Relph’s classification can be valid for nations or peoples who achieve the formation of a state within a certain territory, since the case of the Kurds in novelistic discourse, despite the physical “insiderness”, evokes strong sense of “outsiderness”.

Thus, compared to the diaspora novels, in the novels in Kurdistan there is, thematically, more stress on loss of home, migration, evacuations and journeys, which strengthens the sense of “outsiderness”. Several reasons can be listed for the excessive sense of “outsiderness” compared to diasporic individuals who are actually outside the homeland. In the Kurdish novelistic discourse in Kurdistan, the sense of ‘outsiderness’ created by lost ‘home-land’ is often depicted as the condition of travel, migration and mobility. The sense of ‘homelessness’, ‘placelessness’ and enduring longing for ‘home’ emerges as mobility which is coded in symbols and images of journeys i.e., roads, buses, etc.

In 26 of the 64 novels of diaspora that were examined in this thesis, either the protagonist departs voluntarily or is forced to leave his lands or there are some narrations about the migrations. Thus, there are 38 diasporic novels that do not deal with any sort of migration or the absence of ‘home-land’. On the other hand, in Kurdistan novels, out of 36 novels, 29 of them focus on migration and journeys as the main issues. Significantly, engaging with the issue of migration and absence of ‘home’ is also different in both locations. In some of the novels in diaspora, mass migrations and displacements are narrated as a way to inform of the facts rather than to express sentimental bonds between narrators and their lands of origin. For example, twelve novels in diaspora refer to internal migrations, mostly for economic reasons, as in *Sorê Gulê*, *Nado Kurê Xwe Firo*t, *Serpêhatiyên Rustem û Namerdiya Namerdan*, *Gul Bişkivîn*, and *Av Zelal Bû I-II-III-IV*, where the characters move to Turkish cities to work.

In other novels such as *Dîlên li Ber Pûkê*, *Marê Di Tûr de*, *Mexmûr* and *Asim*, internal migrations due to political reasons are narrated but, as noted earlier, the characters’ sentimental bonds with the land are not emphasized as they are in the novels in Kurdistan. Through use of realistic language, migrations and the absence of home are narrated as part of Kurdish history. Fourteen novels in diaspora elaborate on diasporic experiences or address the issue of exile, although not in any detail. Also, in most of

these novels, it is difficult to observe the desperate sense of a lost ‘home’; exile only stands as a motif in novels such as *Pêlên Bêrîkirinê*, *Ronakbîr*, *Ez ê Yekî Bikujim*, *Siya Dema Borî*, *Piştî Bist Salan*, and *Çirîskên Rizgariyê*. The characters who either live in exile or return from exile express neither nostalgia nor hope for their lost ‘home-land’.

Importantly within the diaspora novels, some of Uzun’s novels (*Hawara Dîcleyê I-II*, *Bîra Qedere*, *Mirina Kalekî Rind*, and *Siya Evînê*) focus on Kurdish folkloric culture and biographies of various Kurdish figures, e.g., the Bedir Khan family, Memduh Selim Beg, a *dengbêj*, etc., and are exceptional in this, since Uzun elaborates on the sense of exile felt by individuals who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century. His central characters, who construct a nostalgic link with the lands that they are forced to leave, live with the aspiration of home while the absence of that home becomes the dominant element in their lives. However, in his novel *Ronî Mîna Evîne Tarî Mîna Mirinê*, which is set in a more modern period, the sense of yearning for the lost lands cannot be felt. In a way the sense of longing is peculiar to the earlier period that he elaborates on in his other novels, and not the modern era.³⁵⁶

In light of the above, it can be argued that, in the Kurds’ case, the dichotomy of being ‘at home’ and ‘not at home’ do not exclude each other as is assumed. In contrast, it is believed that the meanings of ‘home-land’ are created from the experience of lack of ‘home’. In this respect, Dovey (1985: 46) mentions that the sense of ‘home’ is created through journeying or moving from “being at home” to “yearning for home”. Accordingly, Kurdish characters in the Kurdish novelistic discourse create their ‘home-land’ meanings when they are not at ‘homeland’, and one can easily detect the emphasis

³⁵⁶ The sense of loss and defeat attached to the ‘home’ in the novelistic account above appears to be related to Uzun’s choice of stories on historic personalities in Kurdish history or his emphasis on the historical past of Kurds in which the prevailing themes include the burden of being a migrant and hopes for a homeland. Most of the characters in Uzun’s novels suffer from displacement and a longing for their abandoned lands, and in his novels, which are usually based on biographies of significant figures in Kurdish history, he emphasizes how exile and displacement have always been part of Kurdish lives. In *Bîra Qederê* (The Shaft of Fate, 2005), members of the Bedir Khan family who have been subjected to forced migrations for years, are all described as “travellers without land and country” (146), since they spend their lives travelling from one city to another. They gradually lose any hope of reuniting with their ancestral lands, and by the end of the novel, the constant struggle has been replaced by a strong sense of disappointment. The tone of the narration becomes increasingly pessimistic as the characters experience the deaths of their loved ones and receive news of their continuing life in exile. They become like foreigners to everything in foreign lands as Celadet Beg says “I am a foreigner of a foreign land, have become a foreigner to everything” (ez, xerîbê welatên xerîb, bûbûm xerîbê her tiştî) (269). Similarly, in *Siya Evînê*, the central character Mehduh Selim Beg dreams about his ‘home’ as “he wants to set up a nice small house with a garden by Lake Van” (malraxistin û li qerexa gola Wanê xaniyekî spehî, biçûk û xwedî bexçe divê” (31); later images of ‘home’ are usually associated with “The Cemetery of Van” (*goristana Wan*) and with “sighs” (*axîn*). ‘Home’ for the protagonist conveys the war, which doubles his despair because of exile. Similarly, in *Hawara Dîcleyê II* Biro describes himself as “injured Biro” (*biroyê birîndar*) (8) due to ‘homeland’ being “destitute” (*stûxwar*) and “dependent” (*bindest*) (319). In *Mirina Kalekî Rind*, the main character, Serdar, is an exile who starts to visit his lands but is unable to get rid of feelings of disappointment and loneliness. He is described as a ‘foreigner’ (*biyanî*) (41), and Stockholm is described as “the land of exile” (*warê min ê sirgûniyê*) (42).

on the yearning over its loss. Most of the characters experience the lack of ‘home-land’ for various social, cultural and political reasons that are mainly related to socio-political conditions.

Being transformed from villager to migrant also implies a sense of a shattered identity because while being a villager refers to attachment to the land, being a migrant is breaking off at the roots, which brings total destruction of the family. Indeed, in *Reş û Spî*, *Xezal*, *Hêviyên Birîndar*, *Mişextî* and *Rêwiyan bê Welat*, the reader sees how migration destroys whole families and how the trauma of being deprived of their lands not only evokes a sense of ‘placelessness’, but even if they return home they are unable to get rid of the mood of migrants; in other words, the sense of ‘homelessness’ remains under any conditions, the sense of which can be defined as “existential outsidership” as Relph suggests. The destruction of the village through invasions and raids becomes the destruction of the natural and essential basis of identity. The treatment of destroyed and violated images of Kurdistan in the novels is coupled with destroyed and corrupted characters. Even if the characters are not actively involved in politics, their lives are constantly being changed due to the changing conditions in Kurdistan. The effects of these changes emerge in the form of a journey and escape. They can neither stay at home, nor can they stay away from it. Indeed, belonging neither to their own ‘homeland’ nor to foreign lands is a common phenomenon in these novels. Kurdish characters are truly marginal and live in a ‘homeless’ and ‘placeless’ context, creating a strong sense of ‘outsidership’.³⁵⁷

It can be argued that Kurdish characters in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan are always in a mental or physical state of “not being at home” that urges them to move constantly from one place to another. Most of the characters’ stories are framed by journeys from one place to another, which strengthens the condition of ‘outsidership’

In this respect, *Bêhna Axê*, *Neynika Dilî*, *Giyanên Bahozi*, *Mişextî*, *Rêwiyan bê Welat*, *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere*, *Reş û Spî*, *Wênayên Keserê*, *Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî*, *Rojnivîska Spinoza*, *Mişextî*, *Qerebafon*, *Toqa Lanatê*, *Otobês*, *Feqiyê Teyran*, *Li Qerexa Şevê Hîvron*, *Kulmek Morikên Şînbirik*, and *Mandalîn* are strongly involved with a sense of journeying and movement. For example, *Rêwiyan bê Welat* opens with Kanî’s decision to leave his village due to pressure from Turkish security, and

³⁵⁷ The characters’ sense of ‘homelessness’ in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan is similar to the feeling within some Anglo-Irish and Irish characters in Irish literature. Brian Friel’s play *The Home Place* as argued by Alison O’Malley-Younger in her article *There’s No ‘Race’ Like Home: Race, Place and Nation in Brian Friel’s The Home Place* (2006) argues that “rootlessness and impermanence” is “the inheritance of being a member of the Northern minority” as all sorts of education and socio-political elements are English rather than Irish.

throughout the novel, Kanî struggles to escape from Turkey to Europe. Similarly, *Otobês*, *Feqiyê Teyran*, *Saturn* and *Li Qerexa Şevê Hîvron* begin with a journey, and when the journey is ended, the novels end as well. *Li Qerexa Şevê Hîvron*, which refers to interminable migration and journeys, even starts by saying, “the roads were exhausted but not the traveller” (5).³⁵⁸ On the other hand, *Kulmek Morîkên Şînbirik* ends with a journey, due to the pressure of the Turkish military on the villagers who are forced to leave their lands. Nobody knows where they are going since here it is not the destination but the act of migration that matters. For them, as travellers on their way, territory and land may be more metaphorical and symbolic than real. The predicament of alienation from land, territory, and ‘home’ defines the lives of the characters who suffer from the mood of refugee, migrant and traveller all the same time.

Thus, the characters are usually forced to leave their villages, either for other Turkish cities or for Europe. What remains is the strong desire one day to return. In this case, even in some novels produced in Turkish Kurdistan, the characters migrate to Europe as exiles. The novel *Rêwiyên Bê Welat* is based on the story of Kanî’s escape to Europe for political reasons. Both Qasimlo’s novels, *Wênayên Keserê* and *Gîyanên Bahozî* narrate the experiences of Kurdish refugees in Germany. In *Bavfileh*, one of the characters cannot stand the political conditions in Kurdistan and escapes to Europe. But even if the notion of return to ‘home-land’ becomes a reality, it still does not change the condition of loss; instead it simply doubles grief. In the case of a return, feelings of disappointment are added to those of loss and defeat. Almost all novels in Turkish Kurdistan employ and intimate multiple meanings of longing; i.e., as mythical, lost and existential outsiders. The continual instability, collectively as well as on an individual basis, has led to shattered families and communities. In general, forced separation from the homeland, the evolution of national sentiments evoked by state oppression, the constant idea of return, and concerns about the homeland’s future begin to cloud the lives of them all.

The sense of ‘outsideness’ and ‘homelessness’ might also appear in some novels in diaspora; though on the one hand the disappointment and estrangement usually takes place as a result of the assimilative and repressive politics of Turkish state/military in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan, while on the other hand, these notions occur in the diasporic novels due to internal factors such as the betrayal of the Kurds and the religious/political conflicts among them. For example, in both Firat Cewerî’s novels, *Payiza Dereng* and *Ez ê Yekî Bikujim* (I will Kill Someone, 2008), the sense of

³⁵⁸ Rê westiya, rêwî ranewestiya.

“outsideness” occurs along with feelings of disappointment that are very dominant in the lives of the novels’ main characters. This sense of exile and loss of place does not vanish when both Ferda and Temo in Cewerî’s novel return to their original homes; instead they experience different feelings of displacement in their homelands as their people were assimilated. Similarly, in Silêman Demîr’s *Piştî Bîst Salan* the protagonist also experiences similar disillusion when he returns to his lands to see his first sweetheart, and finds nothing but disenchantment. He returns to his lonely life in Europe leaving behind both lands and beloved. Abidîn’s novel *Bigrî Heval* (Cry Friend, 2007) focuses on the struggle of two guerrillas in the mountains attempting to escape execution by the party they are fighting for. They define themselves not only as ‘*bêkes*’ (lonely) (19) but also “*sêvî*” (26) and ‘*bêhêvî*’ (hopeless), a condition in which they are forced to live by the party that they have been fighting for. They can no longer maintain the same belief and hope for the future of their ‘home-land’, due mainly to the internal conflicts within themselves. Throughout the novel, there is an on-going theme – the fact that other Kurds constantly destroy their hopes.

Broadly speaking, in the majority of the diasporic novels, the internal conflicts and betrayals among Kurds cause them to lose their lands and become hopeless, as is emphasized in Chapter Two. In addition to feelings of loss, defeat and disappointment, a sense of regret can also be regarded as one of the prevalent feelings among characters in the novels. While expressing their grief for being absent from their lands, they also regret the sacrifice of years for their ‘home-land’ and community. As an example, the beginning of Lokman Polat’s *Fîlozof*, which takes place in heaven, focuses on various Kurdish political and literary figures after their death. The narrator shares the regret and grief of each individual who begins to think that his community does not deserve what they have done during their lifetime. Similarly in *Ronakbîr* by Qaso (2003), the protagonist Ronakbîr regrets having been involved in all the political actions that have forced him to migrate to Stockholm. He loses all his hopes for the future and distrusts other Kurdish migrants around him in Sweden, which seems to be the main reason behind his lack of integration and adaptation to the host country.

In sum, “the question of home is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under the given circumstances” (Brah 1996: 192). In this respect, the conditions of both Kurds and Kurdistan robustly affect the way the characters formulate their ideas of home, in whatever scenario; there is an intense exclusion both from their own community and from other foreign communities in diaspora. Still, thematic analyses of diasporic novels

also show that the novelists tend to focus on their lives before exile or else stretch back to the historical past of Kurds. Accordingly, in terms of the intensity of migration and displacement as the subject matter of the novels, the narrations on the absence of 'home-land' are a more common phenomenon in the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan compared to diaspora. It is true that the Kurds in Turkish Kurdistan, mainly since the early 1990s, have been subjected to forced migration from their villages to the big cities due to conflicts between the PKK and Turkish military; however, a question still arises: how is it that Kurds in Turkish Kurdistan suffer from the absence of 'home' more than diasporans who have also been physically detached from 'home' for years? This view confirms the fact that on some occasions, being at 'home-land' might also refer to being exiled. Direct confrontation with the lack of a state, censorship of the Kurdish language and culture, and evacuations of villages, all lead to a strong sense of 'outsideness' and an imaginary home that can be conquered through memory and postponed desire for the future. 'Home-land' is accessible through a nostalgic version of the past and an idealized future, which for now is beyond reach. Therefore, the novels from Turkish Kurdistan can be considered as the exile at 'home' and the longing to be at 'home', as the current case of the Kurds shows, confirms that "being home involves the condition of being away from home" (Stanford-Friedman 2004: 195).

4.4. Concluding Remarks

In terms of similarities, it can be said that according to the Kurdish novelistic discourse in general, Kurdistan in its simplest territorial meaning refers not only to one's birthplace and hometown but takes on an essential significance for all Kurds as an entity. They do not have just an imaginary vision of Kurdistan since by involving boundaries and distinctive features of landscapes and regions, a literal territory of Kurdistan can also be drawn: "the homeland in this case is a lived experience of a territorial place, not a mythical land" (Alinia 2004: 212). Thus, the analyses of the novels confirm that Kurdistan, both metaphorically and physically, constitutes a central position in Kurdish national identity. In other words, the Kurds, as stateless and mostly displaced people, are constantly in movement and lack a real territorial homeland; however they are at the same time part of the Kurdish community as an entity, and base their national identity on the idea of Kurdistan as their mythical homeland.

Broadly speaking, the Kurdish novelistic discourse constitutes various kinds of

novels including epic, historical, social, and political novels. The Kurdish novelistic discourse in diaspora is based on facts and real events and is set at certain particular periods of time, as compared to the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan. In other words, while the novels in Turkish Kurdistan refer frequently to the present conditions of Kurdistan, the diasporic novels usually refer to the past, which is why the number of autobiographical, historical and epic novels is very high in diaspora. However, it can be argued that regardless of the kind of novel, a novelistic discourse is an ideological construct that serves particular ideological purposes. In this sense, in terms of similarities, examination of novelistic discourse also indicates that definitions of Kurdish identity and ‘home-land’ are relative and that meanings shift over time, depending on whose ideology and personal experiences are being scrutinised. Diverse political ideologies are reflected in the diverse portrayals of Kurdistan, as Alinia states in her doctoral thesis based on Kurdish migrants in Sweden: “...homeland is not concrete; it is mostly about subjective feeling and individual and political constructions based on lived experiences and political discourses” (2004: 232). Accordingly, transferring the ideology, mainly for diasporan novelists, becomes the intention of the novelists, which is very subjective. As Harker (1988:7) also states, “through the conscious intent of its author the literary text defines its own reality and creates its own subject.” Through the narrator, characters, or descriptions of events, Kurdish novelists in one way or another, expose their ideologies regarding Kurdish national movements in the past and at present.

The novelists’ political ideology, in prose or in metaphor, contributes directly or indirectly to creating a feeling that the text is under the hegemony of the novelist. On the one hand, almost all novels in Turkish Kurdistan and some diasporic novels express explicitly or implicitly their ideological affiliation towards the PKK: Kurdistan and Kurdish identity are also constructed according to the ideological discourse of the PKK. On the other hand most of the diasporic novels, which appear to oppose PKK ideologies, attempt to demolish the picture of Kurdistan constructed by that ideology. For example, the majority of diasporan novelists, who are strongly against the PKK’s ideologies and achievements (such Lokman Polat, Firat Cewerî, Laleş Qaso, and Mihemed Dehsiwar) fictionalize a negative Kurdistan in which failures and disloyalties are more central rather than expressing hopes for the future. Those who favour the PKK (almost all the novelists from Turkish Kurdistan, and some diasporan novelists, including to some extent Zeynel Abidîn, Medenî Ferho, and Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç) visualize a more positive picture of Kurdistan in which the struggle for freedom and

independence is encouraged and those who are patriotic are highly celebrated.

Furthermore, the topographical features of Kurdistan are emphasized in the pro-PKK novels, where rural life is idealized and associated with the national struggle, and the characters are more connected to the land through sentimental and spiritual bonds. Inspired by real socio-political events, they are idealistic in their attempt to promote the national struggle of the PKK. However, novels in diaspora in which characters are shown as opponents of the PKK or not emphasizing its politics, usually deal with either their personal or the Kurdish historical past in a semi-journalistic form. Also, most diasporic novels not affiliated to the PKK's ideology do not demonstrate any idea of an independent, united Kurdistan including all Kurdish regions. They approach the territory of Kurdistan realistically, recognizing the territory of sovereign countries. Certainly a critical perspective on Kurds and Kurdistan does not allow many diasporic novelists to construct an optimistic picture of Kurdistan as the ideal 'home-land'. A strong sense of rupture, disappointment, angst and regret overwhelm any optimistic prospects for the future.

Again, in the novels opposed to the PKK, the concept of '*welatparêz*' is used to draw attention to the failure to preserve Kurdistan by emphasizing its lack; at the same time, for the diasporic novels that embark on the politics of the PKK the concept become the central component of national identity, which is promoted for the success of the national struggle. This different approach to the concept of '*welatparêz*' also contributes to portraying two different views of 'home'. Narration of failure in relation to the lack of '*welatparêz*' in the anti-PKK novelistic discourse gives a pessimistic view of Kurdistan. On the other hand, promoting the national struggle through stress on the concept of '*welatparêz*' in pro-PKK novels pledges an optimistic view of Kurdistan for the future.

It can also be argued that while the anti-PKK novels usually elaborate mainly on Kurdistan's past, pro-PKK novels, apart from the past and present, look at the future as well. This can also be seen through the time frame in which the anti-PKK novelists elaborate their narratives. There are some historical novels that stretch back to the Ottoman period, but most deal with the period before their exile, mainly the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s. They construct Kurdistan in the exact context that they left behind because of exile, referring mainly to the effects of the 1980 military coup.

In this sense, some might say that the autobiographical elements are more dominant in the novels written by diasporan novelists when compared to the novels written in Turkish Kurdistan. In fact, it is noted that migrant literatures in general are

usually based on the largely autobiographical works of migrants themselves, with their direct, personal accounts. As White (1995: 9) comments, “a very high proportion of creative writing relating to migration [...] is strongly autobiographical. [The literary works are] in many cases, strongly personal motivations drawn from a possible need for catharsis.” Similarly, the novelists living in the diaspora have a strong tendency to include data from their autobiographies, based on Kurdistan and the Kurdish question rather than on their exilic experiences. Compared to novels in Kurdistan, diaspora novelists set out more consciously to show how, through the agency of social information, the past is re-used as shared experiences and memories, and historical knowledge is constructed, shaped and transmitted as part of Kurdish diaspora awareness. Thus, these autobiographical elements contain their tragic experiences, i.e., imprisonment, torture, military coup, before they left their lands of origin.

The anti-PKK diasporic novels also contain more autobiographical elements compared to the pro-PKK novels. For example, pro-PKK novels in diaspora set their narration to the period of intense war, mainly in the 1990s, through which they often narrate the conflicts and national struggle of the PKK quite explicitly. Similarly, the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan, which is infused with more imaginary and fictionalized content, refers directly or indirectly to the conflicts. Unlike the diasporic novels opposing the PKK, the novelists’ fiction here is not necessarily formed through their lived experiences.

One can argue that the intensive employment in both plot and characterization of autobiographical elements within the generic identity of the diasporic novels strengthens the credibility of the social and historical data within the text. However, the novelists’ intervention through references to political and historical issues creates a subjective and ideological text that is affected by the novelists’ generation, while fiction written by Kurdish novelists also shows that the construction of identity and ‘homeland’ varies according to generation. Generational differences should be taken into consideration since the age differences between diasporic novelists and Kurdistan is very sharp. All of the novelists in diaspora who were born in the 1950s and 1960s represent the same generation. They are influenced by their political affiliations before they left their countries and by the diasporic context of the host country in which they found themselves. In some cases, they continued to pursue the political fractions of the organizations that they had formerly been involved in, even in their exilic period. Their socio-political notions impacted their literary products, and their literary identity remained rooted in their political beliefs. The novelists in Kurdistan, however, represent

the younger generation, as most were born in the 1970s and 1980s. These generational differences and the conditions prevailing at different periods have undoubtedly had an important influence on their writings. The most beneficial basis for comparing generations of individual novelists is to establish which socio-political and literary environment influenced them, by developing a wider contextual understanding of textual analysis.

Lastly, it can be argued that, for the migrants' link with their 'home' country, Kurdish novelistic discourse produced in Turkish Kurdistan territory is more compatible with the general diasporic discourses. This challenges the general literature on the diaspora, which argues that nostalgia of 'home' and longing for 'home' is a very frequent condition in diasporic writings. In this respect, being in the territory of a stateless 'homeland', directly facing oppression and assimilation, and being more involved in the national struggle, suggests the sense of 'home-land' in a more mythical, distanced, and nostalgic perspective, similar to diasporic experiences. The descriptions of 'home-land' include idealization, an intense nostalgia for the past of 'home-land', and a strong sense of loss and return. The literary characters experience a sense of migration and detachment from 'home-land' that is infused with alienation and loneliness, as if they are physically away from their 'home' country. The celebration of physical geographical features is enforced by the sense of lost 'home-land' and nostalgia for the past. In other words, 'home-land' might be considered somewhere that is lost; however, the characters also maintain their hope of regaining it in the future through constant struggle and resistance, mainly in parallel with the ideology of the PKK.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Situating the research in relation to integrated methodological and theoretical tools from ‘diaspora’, ‘identity’, ‘place’, ‘home-land’, and by way of the link between geography and literature (Said 1994; Moretti; 1998; Brosseau 1994, 1996; Porteous 1985; Bordessa 1988; Beebee 2008), this thesis has attempted, through an analysis of all the novels published between 1984 and March 2010, to examine the depictions of ‘home-land’ and ‘identity’ in Kurdish novelistic discourse in both Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora. The study has mainly shown that constructive imagining of ‘home-land’ also occurs in fictional texts. As Angelika Bammer (1992: vii-xi), in relation to Benedict Anderson’s theory of “Imagined Community”, points out, like the nation, ‘home’ is also a fictional construct.

It has been argued that ‘home-land’ is a multi-dimensional and symbolic concept, which does not refer wholly to physicality, being also linked directly with the political, social, and cultural aspects of personal or group identity. It is not a static concept preserving its features in time, but is exposed to changes that result from both individual and collective developments and regressions. People’s actions and experiences influence the description and the idea of ‘home-land’ in their minds, which results in different delineations and connotations of ‘home-land’ for each person and nation. Accordingly, it is important to note that not only should Kurdistan be conceived in its geographical context with specific physical and textual features; it should instead be considered as fluid, dynamic, and changeable, containing multiple meanings. It is also an integral part of the Kurdish identity process. The central point of the identity of the characters and their accomplishments depend on the ‘home-land’ which is either distant or under the control of others.

Despite some similarities with issues on ‘home-land’ and common thematic configurations, I argue that the novelists from both locations do not generate the same configuration of ‘home-land’ and representation of Kurdish identity, as a result of different ideological and contextual differences. Therefore, it is true that Kurdistan, which is considered as the ‘home-land’ of Kurds in novelistic discourses in both Turkish Kurdistan and its diaspora, appears as mobile and changing according to different contexts, and this is expressed in relation to Kurdish identity. One of the main

arguments of this thesis precisely identifies the use of Kurdish literature as the tool for the majority of the novelists (mainly those in diaspora) to express their political views and ideologies. It can be argued that each Kurdish novel constructs Kurdistan and Kurdish national identity in particular ways because they see the aims and methods of nationalism and national struggle in widely different ways.

Generally speaking, the Kurdish novels achieve the means of engaging the reader at multiple levels, while simultaneously presenting the full range of Kurdish experiences, from the physical and emotional to the political and social. This research shows how Kurdistan, which necessarily becomes part of the political argument, also becomes the main subject of Kurdish novelistic discourse through the emotional attachment or specific disposition of belonging to Kurds as a nation, and the significance of Kurdistan as the national homeland to mobilize the national community (Conversi 2004). The socio-political conditions of the Kurds and their lack of a state force Kurdish novelists to reshape their emotional and spiritual attachments to their homeland. Accordingly, the complications and ambivalence caused by internal and external forces demonstrate a complex and multi-layered discussion of representations of 'home-land' in Kurdish novelistic discourse.

In terms of the similarities between novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan and in its diaspora, it can be argued that Kurdistan, as the ancestral of homeland of Kurds, becomes one of the unifying elements uniting the Kurdish imagined community. However, Kurdistan is usually associated with oppression and insecurity, which invokes the sense of wars and conflicts in all the characters' life stages and in all periods in which the novels take place. The most crucial feature, which most of the novels have in common, is the use of memory as a source of themes and information. Thus, in relation to Anthony Smith's "ethno-symbolism" (2009), Kurdish novels can be considered as part of the symbolic vehicle through which collective identity, symbolic representation of the ethnic / historic territory, and the shared memories of Kurds are transferred through literary works. Hence, the memory of 'home-land' is verified by the continuous relationship between past and present in most of the novels published in Turkish Kurdistan and diaspora. The link between memory and Kurdish identity is constructed differently, varying according to different time and place. Agnew, similarly, comments that, "the relationship between the past and present is complex and dynamic, with meanings and interpretations that shift with time, place, and social context" (2005: 3). In this respect, interpretations of the past differ from one novelist to another, depending

on the date of the novel's publication, since levels of attachment to the home or meanings of 'home-land' are not constructed in the same way.

The analysis of novelistic discourse also established that the role of politics in relation to Kurdistan and Kurdish identity is very important, since not only do the 'home-land' and 'identity' meanings shift according to locations but so also do the political ideologies. In this respect, the novels demonstrate that Kurdish novelistic discourse is mainly shaped by the political views of the novelists in which 'home-land' becomes an ideological construct. Therefore, through telling techniques and explicit ideological statements, Kurdish novels in general contain a central and essential political and ideological intent. In this case, the ideological differences become the main influencing factor in terms of determining the articulation of 'home-land' and 'identity' in the novelistic discourse. Put in another way, the different political views, ideologies, inclinations and deeds not only affect the themes and characterization of the novels, but they also have an impact on the way Kurdistan and Kurdish identity is constructed.

In fact, this research argued that, compared to Turkish Kurdistan, novelistic discourse is more ideological in intent in diaspora where exiled novelists explicitly state their own suggestions for resolution, or their personal views concerning resistance, in the past as well as in existing conditions. Although the quest for the freedom of Kurdistan and narrations on the unhappy socio-political conditions in Turkish Kurdistan have become the common ambition of expression in diasporic novelistic discourse, compared to the discourse in Turkish Kurdistan the diasporic discourse contains more diverse ideologies and politics on the imagining of 'home-land'. Through their literary works, exiled novelists demonstrate that, in terms of literary construction identities and politics, their own political and identity implications are often at odds, because of a diversity of views and ideologies. In this respect, after analysing all the novels written in diaspora until 2010, it can be argued that Kurdish novelistic discourse in diaspora confirms the position of Safran (1991), who emphasizes that diasporas are more strongly affiliated with homeland than with the host country and agrees with Werbner's statement about diasporas as "highly politicized social formations" (2005: 544), since the literary expression of homeland politics in Kurdish diasporic novels shows how historical and current political activities are centralized in the construction of Kurdish identity and Kurdistan.

These notions are presented through diverse perspectives and views by the novelists, who openly state their conflicting claims and ideologies. This is mainly related to the fact that diasporic novelists had already been strongly politicized in

Turkey before they arrived in Europe. The interests of Western powers are also functional in shaping heterogeneous and shifting ideologies within diasporic subjects. However, in contrast with what Safran suggests, it is difficult to mention that this affiliation with homeland in the Kurdish diasporic novelistic discourse also contains ideas of return, loss and nostalgia. Hence, in the majority of the novels, affiliation with homeland appears in a more critical tone rather than as romantic nostalgic manners. The sense of estrangement and alienation is infused with a sense of disappointment and failure. The global conditions of diaspora, personal issues of the novelists with national movements, and the physical separation from the homeland for a certain period of time can be suggested as the reasons for the expression of Kurdistan in this manner.

Therefore, I suggest in this research that mobility and displacement usually lead to a diverse imagining of homeland politics that is expressed in literary narratives as a form of political act rather than a literary performance. My line of argument here has been drawn from the idea that in their texts, diasporic novelists perform and present more heterogeneous notions compared to the texts produced in 'home-land' territory. In terms of the different political views within the Kurdish diaspora the diversity and variations can be classified as those, which are affiliated to the politics of the PKK, and those which are not, and they become one of the most influential factors in the Kurdish novelistic discourse. In diasporic novels that do not adhere to the ideology of the PKK, Kurdistan is perceived as the real 'home-land' grasping all aspects of reality. They also tend to base their texts on their experiences, mainly after the 1980 military coup. Most importantly, they challenge the idea that 'home-land' is not necessarily an ideal place to live. Nevertheless, in the novels affiliated to the ideology of the PKK there is a combination of both real and ideal home. In other words, the understanding of 'home-land' is both real and imagined with idealized notions. In addition, the novels affiliated with the ideology of the PKK in diaspora, especially those published before 1999, defend the idea of a "Greater Kurdistan" combining the Kurdish regions of four separate countries into its national liberation discourse. This discourse considers the Kurds as a uniform nation that has sovereign rights to create a "Greater Kurdistan" because before 1999 the PKK's ultimate aim was to establish an independent, united Kurdistan.

However, after the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 the PKK explicitly abandoned its demand for an independent Kurdish state and instead demanded the creation of a democratic republic in Turkey in which the cultural and linguistic existence of the Kurds was recognized. In this regard, the idea of homeland and the belief in national liberation in the novels also changed accordingly. These changes can

be clearly seen in the novels published after 1999 in diaspora. Even so, it can be argued that the novels defending the PKK national movement (almost all novels in Turkish Kurdistan and few in diaspora) involve a more united approach to all parts of Kurdistan, creating a national consciousness for solidarity and liberation. In this respect, a softer portrait of Kurdistan and Kurdish identity is drawn through the descriptions of places and characterization.

By contrast, the novels criticizing the PKK (the majority of the novels in diaspora) do not attempt to support an independent united Kurdistan and tend to approach Kurdistan-related issues more critically, as if they are constructing an anti-Kurdistan image offered by the PKK's discourse. These novels often criticize the Kurdish national struggle, since even Kurdish history does not hesitate to present mistakes made by Kurds in the past. They demonstrate the idea that betrayal of the national cause has been a significant issue in the history of Kurdistan. The enemies of Kurdistan are not only other nations, e.g., Persians, Arabs and Turks, but are Kurds as well, i.e., village guards, Kurdish Shaikhs and landowners (*Aghas*) etc. Accordingly, these novels also recognize the existing states and demand autonomous forms of government within the existing sovereign states. In addition, these novels concentrate on the negative aspects of Kurdish identity avoiding idealization of any characteristic features. However, despite the fact that the notions of homeland and belonging are imbued with emotions of loss and longing and of homesickness for particular places, however 'real' or 'imagined' they might be, the novels affiliated with the PKK also project optimism in order to reinforce the movement's target for liberation.

On the other hand, in almost all novels in Turkish Kurdistan, Kurdistan is regarded with its idealistic features, which declare the notion that Kurdistan is pure and ideal unless there is intervention by others. In relation to this, the PKK-affiliated novels attempt to project optimism for the future through the national struggle, which is created through various mental projections of Kurdistan. The depiction of 'natural home' in many diasporic novels and 'ideal home' in the novels of Turkish Kurdistan can also be seen in the dichotomy between the constructions of destroyed urban Kurdistan against idealized rural Kurdistan.

The fact that the social and political discourse in which the novelists are involved is not independent from the formation of their novelistic discourse contributes to create different discourses. Accordingly, Mikhail Bakhtin in his essay *Discourse in the Novel* (1981) draws attention not just to the variety of social discourses activated in the novel but to the novelist's own attitude to these discourses. In this sense, changes taking place

in Kurdistan with regard to the ongoing conflicts affect the outlooks and ideologies of novelists, which, in turn, undoubtedly influence the production of the novels. Thus, as mentioned in the Introductory chapter of this study, an extrinsic approach was applied during the textual analysis of the novels because of the profoundly autobiographical aspects and the socio-political contexts of the Kurdish novelistic discourse. In this regard, it is felt that, since extrinsic factors such as the personal memoirs of the novelists and the socio-political lives of the Kurds have influenced the process of producing these novels, it is essential to take the diaspora context of the exiled writers into consideration because of its tremendous impact on their literary works. There are always diverse factors in internal and external meanings that will shape the structure of a particular diaspora community. It depends both on the country of origin left behind in the past, and on the new environment in which the migrant resides at the present time. Although the creation of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe is a relatively new phenomenon dating back to the 1960s and made up mainly of Kurds as workforce, it has expanded incredibly with high numbers of political refugees. The political, economic, and cultural structures and processes of the new country of residence have affected Kurdish diasporic members (lacking state/sovereignty and in the position of being de-territorialised voluntarily or by force) in various ways.

The diverse realities of the novelists' lives are reflected in their fiction. However, I argue that, due to generational differences, the influence of the host country, the effects of political fractions before exile, and resistance to being forgotten through being away from one's origins, diasporic novelists in general tend to narrate more about their lived experiences. Memories become the main source for returning to the image of Kurdistan in the past for Kurdish novelists in diaspora who are in the process of creating an alternative version of the past to illuminate and transform the present through their narratives. In this context of revising the past, memories and remembering associated with personal experiences are linked with particular moments and places. Certainly there are common features within these recollections that can reveal how memory interprets past events, and how 'home-land' is visualized within the context of their remembering. They are usually fictional autobiographies; they draw on the author's own experiences and do not choose to dramatize their exilic experiences.

Furthermore, what makes diasporic novels so diverse is that they are political critiques of 'home' in which the novelists invest their literary visions. In other words, diasporic novelists use their novels to critique their homeland. In fact, in the case of displacement, 'home' is usually considered to be a "mythic place" and "imaginary

homeland” of diasporic imagination, as suggested by mainly postcolonial scholars and writers, such as McLeod (2000), Cohen (1997), Brah (1997) and Rushdie (1991); however, the majority of Kurdish diasporic novels challenge this view as they attempt to portray the actual picture of home based on facts devoid of any praise and idealization. ‘Home’ is not an idyllic place of safety and an ideal place to return to. The diasporic articulation of nostalgic discourse shaped in conditions of homelessness and non-belonging produces a pessimistic view of the present. In other words, sorrowful days in the past shape the present from a melancholic perspective. ‘Home-land’ is memorized along with its tragic past due to betrayals, its corrupted present due to the conflicts, and its lost future due to lack of solidarity. For almost all the diaspora novelists, ‘home-land’ is under the shadow of past experiences, most of them having been subjected to imprisonment and torture before the departure to exile. For example, Diyarbakir always arouses unpleasant memories of experiences that are usually associated with torture and imprisonment. This also produces the notion that the original homeland fails to satisfy the characters’ need for a home; nor is the host country seen as a new place in which to be re-homed. Lack of adaptation to a new environment is related not only to a new culture (that has no relevance for them), but also to the lack of unity among the other members in the diaspora community (which is also very significant in constructing this sense of ‘in between’). They fail to form an affective bond both within and beyond the borders of their community. In this case controversies and fragmentation, memories and imagining the past become the only strong response by the diasporic members to displacement and as a way of countering the harsh realities of exile. The global conditions of diaspora, personal issues of the novelists with national politics, and the physical separation from the homeland for a certain period of time can be suggested as the reasons for the expression of Kurdistan in this manner.

In contrast to the arguments on diasporic novels made above, the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan surprisingly suggests more nostalgic elements, which are exclusively proposed in relation to the exilic literary works by diaspora theorists and scholars. In other words, it can be argued that Kurdish novelistic discourse produced in the Kurdistan context is more compatible with the general diasporic discourses for the migrants’ link with their home country. Nostalgia usually applies to the migrants who moved and no longer have homes to go back to. The literary characters in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan usually express a more nostalgic harmonious past and hold an optimistic desire for a better future, which can mainly be formed thanks to active

political movement and national struggle. Kurdish novelistic discourse challenges the classic definition of 'home' as "the stable physical centre of one's universe – a safe and still place to leave and return to, and a principal focus of one's concern and control" (Rapport and Dawson 1998b: 6). The descriptions of 'home' include idealization, an intense nostalgia for the past of 'home', and a strong sense of loss and return. Although some novels are set in cities and urban areas, Kurdish ethnic identity in novels still puts an emphasis on pastoral (mainly village) settings, which are considered to represent pure Kurdish identity and struggle. For example, the characters usually long for their villages or desperately wish to return there one day. Also, the unification of Kurds from all regions is accentuated, since it is regarded as a principal requirement for liberation and freedom. The sense of 'home-land' is not fulfilled within the worlds of the characters, which are mainly associated with migrations, constant journeys, village evacuations, and loss of the beloved. However, for the present time it is unapproachable and lost but a message can be extracted that, through a constant struggle and resistance, 'home' can be regained for good in the future.

It is true that in almost all of them, both in Kurdistan and the diaspora, Kurdistan is mostly described in relation to constant war and conflicts, which is not different from a battlefield. However, a difference is revealed when Kurdistan is portrayed exclusively through its natural aspects or idealistic aspects. In this case, the questions arise as is 'home-land' in Kurdish novelistic discourse a 'natural' or 'ideal' place for its subjects? Tucker (1994) notes how "most people spend their lives in search of home, at the gap between the *natural home* [conceived as the home environment conducive to human existence, i.e. dry land] and the particular *ideal home* where they would be fully fulfilled."

In parallel with Tucker's suggestion, it can be argued that while diasporic novelistic discourse not affiliated to the politics of the PKK tends to conceive Kurdistan as the 'natural home' which has a great range of negative features, it is far from being an 'ideal home' for the characters under these circumstances. However, in the novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan and the diasporic novels embracing the politics of PKK, there is a great range of references to the idea that despite the external factors turning Kurdistan into a battlefield, it is still the ideal 'home' that they wish to live in for the rest of their lives. Indeed, the stress on the sentimental and nostalgic aspects of 'home-land' constructs Kurdistan as the ideal 'home-land'. In so doing, the evaluation of 'home-land' is not necessarily based on positive descriptions; instead it conveys that negative circumstances recur, due not to the natural conditions of 'home-

land' but to the influence of others. In other words, without the intervention of others, Kurdistan is the ideal 'home-land' for the characters. In most of the novels, villages and pastoral areas are usually suggested as the representation of the entire Kurdish land, which is usually fictionalized with its topographic features.

However, in addition to stressing the beauty of the natural environment of Kurdistan or the identification of the characters with the natural beauty or landscapes of Kurdistan, it is also important to note that these novels also make evident that the pure and peaceful life in Kurdistan is never perfect, since this idealized and beautiful village also reflects the fragmented and violated environment caused by wars, conflicts, and migrations. In this case, the beauty of the village and lands are evoked with a sad and dramatic undertone expressing the loss of the beauty and the security it embodied. The narrators usually recount the difficult life conditions of villagers due to conflicts and the cruelty of the Turkish state. In other words, the sense of place and the allusions to the mountains, the clouds, the winds and uplands recall the images of Kurdistan, which reminds them of a peaceful paradise, until it was raided and corrupted by others, mainly by soldiers.

It is still important to mention that the level of sentimental and nostalgic aspects related to Kurdistan in the novels of Turkish Kurdistan is much higher than the PKK-affiliated diasporic novels. For example, although PKK-affiliated diasporic novels present a critique of Kurds, e.g., honour killings, the suppression of Kurdish Shaikhs and landowners, the novels in Turkish Kurdistan portray a Kurdistan without any internal destructive sources but only external ones. Even though the depiction of 'home-land' in the novels of Turkish Kurdistan conflicts with the reality of the lived experience of 'home-land', it is still reflected in the form of idealized, romanticized and nostalgic emotion embedded with mythical and symbolic elements.

Here, the study argues that being in the territory of stateless homeland, directly facing oppression and assimilation and being more involved in the national struggle places the sense of 'home' in a more mythical, distanced and nostalgic perspective. In this respect, it could be said that instead of distance, living in a fragmented territory in a condition of statelessness joins longing with nostalgia. Being in the territory of homeland does not destroy the sense of estrangement; by contrast, in the case of the Kurds, it increases it since they constantly experience statelessness and political uncertainty in their daily lives, which leads to the novelists producing exilic literature. Thus, it appears that Kurdish novelistic discourse in Turkish Kurdistan promotes Kurdistan as the ideal home through reducing the realist elements within the narrations.

In this respect, it can be broadly argued that on the one hand in the novels in Turkish Kurdistan, Kurdistan is conceptualized as ‘ideal’; in the novels of diaspora; on the other hand, it is conceptualized more as ‘reality’. However, as this research has also confirmed, the fact that changing global conditions, transnational relations, political transformations, the evolving Kurdish national movements and politics have a strong influence on the way the authors approach the idea of ‘home-land’ and Kurdish identity; this in turn, conveys the idea that in the future new articulations of ‘home-land’ and ‘identity’ within texts will be produced in relation to changing politics and contexts.

APPENDIX A. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Abidîn, Zeynel was born in Varto (Mus). He was imprisoned a couple of times, after which he migrated to Europe. He has worked in editorial positions for certain publishing companies in Berlin specializing in Kurds and the Kurdish language. He knows both Kurmanji and Zazaki dialects of Kurdish.

Akbel, Sabrî was born in Batman in 1950. He graduated from teaching training college in Siirt and worked at various locations as a teacher. He later studied Turkish Literature at Istanbul University, and still lives in Istanbul.

Akgul, Rêşad was born in 1968 in a village near Diyarbakir. He finished high school in Diyarbakir, and in 1991 went to Cairo, studying at the university there for three years. He then moved to Hannover in Germany, and since 1997 has been working for Kurdish television channels.

Alan, Remezen – born in 1968 in Sirvan (Siirt), he moved to Diyarbakir where he studied Turkish literature at Dicle University. He has written literary reviews and commentaries in many journals. He began by writing poetry in Kurdish, and went on to write literature-related articles in Kurdish as well. He currently lives in Diyarbakir.

Aydogan, İbrahîm Seydo was born in Kiziltepe (Mardin) in 1976, and studied literature at Dicle University. Graduating in 1997 he worked in Istanbul as a teacher, and began writing articles only in Kurdish. He moved to France in 2001, where he studied for a Master's degree followed by a PhD in literature. He currently lives in Paris, teaches Kurdish, and produces programmes for Kurdish television channels.

Aydogan, Mustafa was born in 1957 in Kiziltepe (Mardin), and relocated to Sweden in 1985. He has translated the works of many well-known authors into Kurdish.

Ayebe, Lokman – born in 1981 in Derik (Mardin), where he still lives, he studied accountancy at Dicle University. He has been writing since the age of 18, and in addition to novels, his articles and stories are regularly published in Kurdish journals.

Aykoç, Fêrgîn Melîk was born in Varto (Mus) in 1951. He worked as a teacher before the military coup of 1980, at which time he was arrested and subjected to torture. He also lost his job and eventually had to move to Germany, where he has been involved in politics and works on Kurdish language-related activities.

Baksi, Mahmud was born in Batman in 1944. In 1967 he published a local newspaper and started to become involved in politics. Around the same period he was sentenced by the Turkish courts to fifteen years in prison for promoting Kurdish nationalism. He fled to Germany in 1970 and later moved to Sweden where he lived until his death in 2000.

Barişer, Atilla was born in 1974 in Malazgirt (Mus). He has published two Kurdish novels, *Mandalîn* in 2005 and *Bi Xatirê Te Enqere* in 2009.

Bohtî, Diyar was born in Siirt in 1958. He was a student in a *madrasah* (Muslim religious school) for some time and then studied at Agricultural College. He worked as a civil servant for six years, a period during which he was arrested many times and spent months in prison. He currently lives in Europe and produces programmes for a Kurdish radio station.

Bozan, Mezher was born in 1957 in a village of Kiziltepe (Mardin). He worked as a teacher throughout Turkey, being exiled many times from one city to another. In 1986 he emigrated to Sweden where he still lives.

Cewerî, Firat – born in 1959 in Derik (Mardin), he emigrated to Sweden in 1980 and has been living there ever since. For ten years he was the editor of *Nûdem*, a Kurdish newspaper. In addition to writing his own novels, he has translated classic novels into Kurdish.

Colemêrgî, Îhsan was born in 1944 in Hakkari. He graduated from teacher training college in Diyarbakir and afterwards he has worked as a teacher. He has published many articles on Kurdish mythology and on the history of Hakkari in journals and newspapers.

Çolpan, Rıza was born in Mazgirt (Tunceli) in 1936, and emigrated to Australia in 1970. His first written works were in Turkish, but around the early 1980s he started to concentrate on writing in Kurdish. He has also been involved with many Kurdish associations in Australia.

Dehsiwar, Mihemed was born in 1959 in Batman. He emigrated to Sweden following the military coup in 1980, and continues to live in Stockholm. He studied international relations at Stockholm University and currently works in a library.

Demir, Silêman was born in 1956 in Nusaybin (Mardin). He has been living in Sweden since 1986.

Denîz, Hesên Huseyîn was born in 1960 in Nusaybin (Mardin). Graduating from Agricultural High School in 1979 he then started work as a technician. He was arrested in Mardin in 1981, during the period of the military coup, and for seven years was subjected to torture and cruelty in Diyarbakir prison. Following the assassination of his brother (Huseyîn Denîz) and his uncle (Musa Anter) in 1992, he began to write more actively. As well as writing novels and stories in Kurdish, he also teaches Kurdish and works for a Kurdish language daily newspaper.

Dilovan, Jîr – born in Midyat (Mardin) in 1956, he finished his university studies and qualified as a teacher. However, he has been more involved in literature and media. He currently lives in Germany where he presents programmes, mainly about literature, for a Kurdish radio station.

Dilsoz, Omer was born in 1978 in Hakkari. His articles have been widely published in many Kurdish newspapers and journals. He currently lives in Diyarbakir.

Eroĝlu, Yunus was born in 1984 in Mardin. He studied English Literature at Middle East Technical University in Ankara. In addition to writing novels, he also translates works from English and Spanish into Kurdish.

Eser, Bûbê was born in 1955 in Derik (Mardin). Arrested at the beginning of 1980 he was incarcerated in Diyarbakir prison and subjected to torture during the military coup period. After his release in 1983, he emigrated to Sweden where he still lives.

Ferho, Medenî was born in Midyat (Mardin) in 1940. He worked as a teacher for seven years and then as a journalist, publisher and writer until the military coup in 1980. He was imprisoned for over six years during the military coup period. Following his release, he emigrated to Europe, and worked for *Azadiya Welat* newspaper and Med TV in Belgium.

Gernas, Aram was born in Silvan (Diyarbakir). After graduating from the Institute of Education he started teaching. During and after the 1980 military coup, he was arrested many times. He emigrated to Sweden in 1983 and while there, undertook further studies in education and worked as a Kurdish language teacher. He returned to Turkey in 2003 where he still lives.

Guven, Eyup was born in 1963 in Derik (Mardin). He worked for a local newspaper and also published two books related to the history and culture of Derik.

Janbar, Mîran was born in 1974 in Kiziltepe (Mardin), and graduated from the Mathematics Department of Dicle University in 1997. He was initially involved in theatre and poetry, and then started publishing stories in journals. He joined Lal Laleş and Yaqob Tilermenî in setting up a publishing house named Lîs in 2004. He currently lives in Diyarbakir.

Kîran, Eyûp was born in 1945 in Siverek (Şanlıurfa). He was working as a civil servant and retired from an agriculture related institute in Diyarbakir.

Kıyak, Özgür was born in Mardin in 1974. He has only one published book.

Metê, Hesenê was born in Ergani (Diyarbakir) in 1957. Since the 1980s he has been living in Sweden. In addition to writing novels, he has translated several Russian classics into Kurdish.

Mîrzenî, Xurşîd was born in 1950 in Lice (Diyarbakir). He was arrested following the military coup in 1980 and released in 1982 after which he emigrated to Europe. He currently lives in Paris. As well as writing, he has worked on television programmes for children.

Orgun, Kemal was born in Kigi (Bingol) in 1970. He started to become involved with theatre in 1991 while he was a university student in Istanbul. He has worked as an actor, writer and director, and in addition to writing and translating for the theatre, his articles have been published in many journals and daily newspapers. He also teaches various courses in an art academy.

Osman, Îbrahim was born in Viransehir (Sanliurfa). He emigrated to Europe when he was young and still lives there. He writes in various Kurdish newspapers and journals.

Özmen, Şener was born in Idil (Sirnak) in 1971. He studied painting at university, and in addition to writing, he has been involved in activities relating to modern art, participating in artistic events in many different countries. He writes in both Turkish and Kurdish.

Polat, Lokman was born in Lice (Diyarbakir) in 1956. Before the military coup of 1980, he was involved in publishing political news and commentaries. He was arrested several times because of his activities and was eventually sentenced to ten years imprisonment in absentia. In 1984 he moved to Sweden, where he still lives and publishes books in Kurdish and Turkish. He has also been involved in journalism and published a journal named *Helwest*.

Qasimlo, Mîr was born in 1980 in Varto (Mus). He worked for a Kurdish journal for three years before he had to leave the country. He moved to Germany in 2000 and has lived there ever since.

Qaso, Laleş was born in 1957 in Kiziltepe (Mardin). He was imprisoned for ten years in Turkey because of his political views. He has been living in Sweden since 1990.

Roj, Cîhan was born in 1965 in Mus. He got his writings published with a nickname Jehat Gimjim until 1993. Apart from some poetry and short story books in Kurdish, his second novel with the title of *Meşa Morîyan* (The March of the Ants) was published in 2011 by Evrensel publishing house based in Istanbul.

Şemdîn, Nûrî (Naci Kutlay) was born in 1931 in Agri. After graduating from the Medical School of Ankara University he worked as a surgeon. He published eleven books on sociology and the history of Kurdish literature. He was also involved in politics, and for a time was the vice-president of a Kurdish political party.

Tarim, Nesîp was born in 1977 in Batman. In 1995 he was sentenced to life imprisonment in Turkey on political grounds; his status remains unchanged. His first novel, *Xezal*, was written while he was in prison, and was published through the Belkî publishing house.

Tilermenî, Yaqob was born in 1972 in Kiziltepe (Mardin). After studying physics at Dicle University he started teaching. He was imprisoned for a month in Mardin and was put on trial, accused of teaching Kurdish. He was eventually released, but was later exiled to another part of Turkey. His articles and stories have been published in many Kurdish journals and newspapers.

Torî (Mehmet Kemal Işık) was born in 1931 in Midyat (Mardin). He was one of the last graduates of the Village Institutes that were established to train teachers to serve in the rural villages. After finishing his training, he worked as a teacher for many years, but because of the tough climate after the 1980 military coup, had to emigrate to Sweden in 1983. He returned to Turkey in 1991 and lived in Istanbul until his death from a brain tumour in 2010. He wrote mainly on language, literature and history. He published 27 books, and his articles appeared in many Kurdish journals and newspapers.

Uzun, Mehmed was born in 1953 in Siverek (Sanliurfa). As a writer, he did much towards shaping a modern Kurdish literary language and reviving the Kurdish storytelling tradition. From 1977 to 2005, he lived in exile in Sweden as a political refugee. During this time, he became a prolific writer, author of a dozen Kurdish language novels and essays, which made him a founding member among writers of modern Kurdish literature in the Kurmanji dialect. He returned to Istanbul in June 2005, was diagnosed shortly afterwards with cancer, and died aged 54 in Diyarbakir in 2007.

Yiğit, Abdusamet was born in 1978 in Cizre (Sirnak). He was imprisoned for 10 years between 1994 and 2004. He adapted some traditional Kurdish stories and epics into novel form which were published by Han publishing house based in Berlin.

Zana, Mehdi was born in 1940 in Silvan (Diyarbakir). Elected as the first independent socialist mayor of Diyarbakir in 1978, he was incarcerated in Diyarbakir prison after the military coup in 1980, and remained there for 16 years. When released he moved to Europe, where he currently lives. After his imprisonment, he refused to speak Turkish again and spoke only in his native Kurdish. Mehdi Zana has been married since 1975 to the well-known politician Leyla Zana; they have two children.

Zin, Arîn was born in 1977 in Tatvan (Bitlis). Since he comes from a nomadic family, and is a shepherd, he has always lived in nature, in remote areas and wild landscapes, visiting the city only once or twice a year. In 1994 he was arrested and imprisoned for ten years. He learned to read and write in prison and all his novels and stories are written in Kurdish. He is still working as a shepherd and continues to write.

Zozanî, Adil was born in 1970 in Hakkari, and has been writing since 1990. He was imprisoned for a year and a half because of his published articles. He currently lives in Diyarbakir, and works for *Azadiya Welat*, a daily newspaper published exclusively in Kurdish language.

APPENDIX B. SYNOPSES OF THE NOVELS

***Ardûda* (Arduda)**

In this novel, which can be categorised as science fiction, the novelist creates a complete fantasy world with conflicts similar to those in our world and time. There are wars between galaxies and weak peoples are dominated and ruled by the powerful. Ardûda is a professor who has experimented throughout his professional career with cloning, and has succeeded in replicating some human beings. Finally, he managed to clone himself, with exactly the same physique and appearance. However, the professor cannot control his clone, which takes his place and kills people. These incidents are investigated by Detective Ro and by the end of novel the clone has itself been killed.

***Asim* (Asim)**

The novel, as a *bildungsroman*, focuses on a character named Asim from his childhood to adulthood in the early 1980s, and is a portrait of a Kurdish family in Mardin, which the narrator describes as a Kurdish city where Kurdish is banned. The family is forced to move into Istanbul where life becomes as hard as the life they left behind in their home town. Because of his political activism Asim gets into trouble in Istanbul.

***Av Zelal Bû I-II-III-IV* (The Water has Become Clear I-II-III-IV)**

This series of four novels in the form of a *bildungsroman* focuses on the character named Davud, from his childhood to adulthood. The series begins when Davud moves to Adana to study at a boarding school, in which he and other Kurdish students are discriminated against because of their ethnic identity. Due to his education and training, he moves around among many Turkish and Kurdish cities, and falls in love with a Turkish girl whose friends beat him up. Such negative experiences push him into being politically involved. While studying at the university in Konya, he is again subjected to discrimination. After a period of teaching in Diyarbakir and Elazig, he is transferred to Zonguldak, where he begins to have political confrontations with his colleagues. In a sort of paranoia, he starts to mistrust everyone around him as he moves on and on, from one city to another.

***Ay Dayê* (Oh Mum)**

The novel narrates two time periods that develop in parallel with each other; Diyarbakir prison in the 1980s, and the Armenian Genocide in 1915. In Diyarbakir prison the protagonist meets an elderly Chaldean called Şemun, and after their release he comes

across Şemun once again. The protagonist wishes to record Şemun's experiences and memories related to the 1915 genocide. As he listens to the stories told by Şemun, the narration goes back to the beginning of the 20th century to illustrate aspects of the genocide and the involvement of the Kurds in the 1915 events.

Bavfileh (Proselyte)

The trilogy of novels by Yaqop Tilermenî (*Kitim, Qerebafon, Bavfileh*) follow each other sequentially while covering several periods in relation to various issues particular to the period. *Bavfileh* presents a story in which events in the early 20th century are described in parallel with the 1990s as it tells of an Armenian woman who, as a child in 1915, manages to survive the Armenian genocide and is brought up by Kurds. Her is changed from Prapiyon to Hedla, a Kurdish name, as is discovered after a series of incidents. The modern era of the trilogy focuses on a group of young Kurds living in Istanbul who face many troubles and difficulties because of political tensions. The period from 1998-1999 in particular is documented, mainly with reference to political conflict and developments.

Bêhna Axê (The Scent of Earth)

In order to survive, two former guerrillas who have recently been released from prison try to support each other. Both have many emotional and political conflicts in their inner world, and both find it hard to adapt to society after many years of imprisonment and years of exile in the mountains. They live and work in the same place and try not to spend any time apart. Eventually they decide to move away from the big city where they are living. The novel ends with a description of their arrival in Van in Turkish Kurdistan, since as soon as they step into Van their sufferings and moods of loneliness are also at an end.

Belqitî (Belqiti)

The first part of the novel revolves around the central character, Belqitî, who grew up in poverty and is therefore very greedy and will do anything that serves his self-interest. Since his childhood, he has been accustomed to stealing from people. He leaves his village and moves to another village, where he assumes a different identity, but even steals from the owner of the house in which he is staying. The second part of the novel taken place in the 1930s and concerns a group of people in Diyarbakir who try to survive in the big city. Like Belqitî they have no hesitation about lying, stealing and selling stolen goods to survive. In portraying the degenerated relations among the

members of this group, the novel attempts to explain how Kurds have been assimilated and why they have so far remained divided.

Bigrî Heval (Cry Friend)

The novel focuses on the personal struggle of Avjîn, a woman guerrilla, against her Party, which, from indications throughout the novel, is clearly intended to describe the PKK. Because of her inappropriate attitudes the Party committee has confirmed that she must be killed. Through the narrative, which deals with Avjîn's escape from execution, the narrator expresses his disbelief concerning the party's politics.

Binefşên Tariyê (The Violets of Darkness)

The novel takes place mainly in Ankara and concerns a lecturer called Bawer who falls in love with a student called Binefş who is engaged to another man. Before becoming a lecturer Bawer had been imprisoned for five years. He is unable to come to terms with either his prison experiences or his hopeless love for Binefş. Since Binefş and Bawer cannot come together because of her status, they decide to go away to the mountains to join the PKK guerrillas. The final part of the novel takes place in the mountains and describes their experiences with the guerrillas. After a short period Binefş is killed, and Bawer feels desperate guilt, holding himself responsible for her death.

Bîra Qederê (The Shaft of Fate)

In concentrating on the Bedir Khan family and their political struggle, the novel clearly exposes feelings of loss and despair. Throughout the narrative, family members struggle to unite, but every attempt results in more fragmentation and discontinuity. The life of Celadat Ali Bedir Khan, as the central focus of the novel, is told through fifteen family photos. Stretching from the 19th century to the 1950s, the novel also reflects the details behind the publications of Kurdish journals such as *Kurdistan*, *Hawar* and *Jîn*.

Bi Xatirê te Enqere (Good Bye Ankara)

The novel is set at the beginning of the 1990s, at the height of the conflict between the PKK guerrillas and the Turkish military. It narrates the struggles from the perspective of two Kurdish students in Ankara and the decision of the protagonist to join the guerrillas and in the end to leave Ankara.

Cembelî Kurê Mîrê Hekarî (Cembeli the Mir of Hakkari's Son)

This heroic novel is adapted from the early epic *Cembelî û Binevsa Narîn*, and describes the love story between Cembelî, the son of Mîr Yezdan, and Binevş the Yazidi. There are many differences between the novel and the original version of epic, since the novel

concentrates mainly on a desperate love affair set against the historical and social background of the Kurds during the Ottoman period. Unlike the original version of the epic, *Cembelî* and *Binevş* – despite all the obstacles, including religious differences – manage to marry and live happily ever after.

Çirîskên Rizgariyê (The Sparkle of Liberation)

The novel takes place mostly in Arbil (*Hewlêr*) and Sulemaniyya, two large cities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The protagonist, a Kurdish migrant named Sevdîn, leaves England to return to his country and to become involved in various political operations to save Kurds. Since he holds views that differ from the ideologies and tactics of the current political parties, he – along with some other Kurds – establishes an alternative party that seeks a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue.

Çiroka Me (Our Story)

The novel takes place in a Kurdish village through a female character, Sînem Xan, and is an attempt to provide a historical past for the Kurds, with the narrator frequently referring to the rebellions of his ‘ancestors’ (*bav û kal*). Sînem Xan tells in detail the story of Şahmaran in relation to the betrayal of Cansab who fails to keep his promise and instead tells people of the place where she is to be found, with the result that they kill her. The novel mainly addresses the on-going betrayal within Kurds.

Dîlên li ber Pûkê (Captives in the Snowstorm)

Based on the accounts of Apê Musa (Uncle Musa), who appears as both protagonist and narrator, the story is set the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Turkish republic, and carries within it a strong sense of loss and mourning. Through flashbacks to past memories, Musa exposes certain facts behind the Dersim massacre during the 1930s, and recounts details of the forced migration of Kurds to other cities in Anatolia.

Dora Bacinê Bi Dar e (Bacin Amongst the Trees)

The novel is based on the experiences of an exiled Kurd, Ape Cemîl (Uncle Cemil) living in Germany who is not only unable to integrate with his new country but cannot return to his homeland. Meanwhile he criticizes Kurds living in Germany for neglecting their culture and values. Through Cemil’s narrations, a large part of the novel is also concerned with the brutal massacre of Yazidis in a Kurdish village named Bacin, of which it is strongly critical.

Evîna Mêrxasekî (The Love of a Young Man)

The story is an adaptation of *Dewreşê Evdî*, a Kurdish epic, and takes place mainly during the Ottoman Empire, at a period when, for religious reasons, all Muslims, including Kurds, attacked the Yazidi Kurds. Yazidi Evdî's son Dewreş falls in love with a Muslim Kurdish girl called Edûle, the sister of Temîr Pasha. Discovering the affair between his sister and Yazidi Dewreş, Temîr Pasha attacks Yazidi neighbourhoods, so the Yazidis begin to migrate to Şenegal, their sacred mountain. The novel also focuses on the Kurdish struggle for independence. Because of invasions by Arabs and Turkmens, Temîr Pasha eventually makes peace with the Yazidis and asks them to fight in the Kurdish struggle against the enemies. Dewreş joins in the fighting but loses his life in one of the battles.

Evîna Pinhan (Hidden Love)

The central focus of the novel is the natural beauty of a village called Deştê in which the story takes place. Salih, the protagonist, gets in trouble because of his stepmother, and decides to escape to another village where he begins to work as a shepherd. The girl he had fallen in love with gets married to a rich man, which drags him into a deeper sadness, and after several unhappy years, he returns to his home village only to find that his father has passed away.

Ez ê yekî Bikujim (I Will Kill Someone)

Based on the complex psychology of Temo, a former prisoner, the novel concentrates mainly on the changes and damage caused by political conflict in Diyarbakir, the biggest Kurdish city. After fifteen years of imprisonment, Temo feels isolated and alienated in his hometown, where people speak Turkish rather than Kurdish, children are begging on the streets, and prostitution has increased rapidly. Confronted by the assimilation and degeneration of the Kurds, Temo experiences deep depression and regret for his lost years in prison. He is obsessed with the urge to kill someone as a way to calm his anger. Then he comes across Diana, a former guerrilla who now works as a prostitute. At first Diana hopes Temo will save her from this life, but when she meets an exiled Kurdish writer who has come from Sweden for a conference in Diyarbakir, she wants him to take her to Sweden. Consumed with jealousy, Temo ruins all her plans.

Ez Stêrka Sîpan im (I am Star of Suphan)

Through the central characters, Filît and Hamid, who are described as exiles living on the Suphan Mountain and hiding from soldiers, the novel refers symbolically to the ongoing war between the PKK and the Turkish military. The villagers near the mountain

help Filît and Hamid to hide from Turkish soldiers. In a sub-plot within the novel, Dewran and Nergîz avoid an unfortunate fate and the love between them results in a story that has a happy ending.

Feqiyê Teyran (Faqi Tayran)

The novel is based on the life of Feqiyê Teyran, a Kurdish classical poet whose original name was Mihemed. Mihemed was educated at a medresseh and began to be known throughout Kurdistan. Feqiyê Teyran, who is praised like an epic hero throughout the novel, had the ability to combine religious and philosophical tenets. He decided to go to Botan to acquire greater knowledge and meet other poets. The novel focuses on his journey to Botan and on his experiences along the way.

Fîlozof (The Philosopher)

Highly critical of Kurds, the novel touches upon their mistakes and the betrayals of their cause from the historical past to the modern period. Through the narration of the central character, Fehmîyê Bîlal, who comes to the world as a soul from heaven, important Kurdish figures such as Ehmedê Xanî, Sheikh Said, and Mustafa Barzani are given voices with which to comment on what has been lacking in the Kurdish national movement and in the struggle in general. The conclusion that is reached is that Kurds have negotiated with other sovereign states and that they have not hesitated to betray their fellows for their own self-interest.

Gardiyân (The Guardian)

The story is narrated from the perspective of a former guard who admits the brutal incidents that took place in Diyarbakir prison at the beginning of 1980s. The guard recounts to a journalist called Sîdar the bad treatment inflicted on the prisoners by himself and other guards. After telling his story, and under the intense pressure of his past deeds and his guilty conscience, the guard commits suicide.

Gava Heyatê (The Step of Life)

This *bildungsroman* novel reveals the protagonist's entire life, from childhood to adulthood, in different places and various identities, and in so doing, exemplifies how Kurds can experience multiple identities throughout their lives. The novel starts by describing village life and how the villagers suffer from infertile lands. Hemo, his wife and their two children migrate from their village, encountering along the way an accident in which a woman has died but her baby is still alive. As they cannot find any of the baby's relatives they take the child with them, and give him to Qado who does

not have a child. Throughout the novel, the narrator presents an episodic account of the orphan's life through individual subtitled stories.

Gitarê bê Têl (Guitar without Strings)

The novel is set in Mardin, where the protagonist, Sadî, who is a Kurd, carries out his work as a doctor. Following his education and training he has returned to his home to try and serve his people. Sadî has an affair with Turkish nurse called Selîn but they begin to experience some cultural clashes. Selîn would to move to her home town in Western Turkey; however, believing that his people need him, Sadî does not wish to leave his land and Selîn agrees to stay with him in Mardin. Throughout the novel, there are strong references to the Kurdish issue and political conflicts.

Giyânên Bahozî (Stormy Souls)

The story concerns a woman named Zerî who has married when very young. For political reasons, she and her husband are forced to escape to Germany, where her husband dies in exile. The novel focuses on how she is gradually politicised since, in order to alleviate her homesickness, she becomes involved with national issues and engages in political activities. Another central character is Artîn, who is desperately in love with Zerî, but this is a hopeless love since Artîn dies before his wish to be with her can become true.

Gotinên Gunehkar (Sinful Words)

This novel concerns the story of Behram who makes a visionary journey to the first sin and before the first sin. The journey is full of legends and religious references, which are reversed and turned inside out. Behram pursues the ancient truth; in fact he is reunited with his self and essence. A sinner emerges from a religious follower; when he awakens from this dream, he becomes alone. The novel concludes that the human always searches for the self and through various beliefs and different ways, aims at reaching the truth.

Gul bişkivîn (Rose Sprout)

The protagonist departs from his beloved to join other guerrillas in fighting against the Turkish state. Much of the novel takes place in the mountains and describes the way guerrillas are involved in the conflicts. Economic issues such as smuggling and migration to other places to survive are also emphasized throughout the novel.

Gundikê Dono (Dono's Village)

The novel presents a portrait of a village that is involved in inter-tribal conflicts, describing the misuse of religion by the shaikhs, and showing how the villagers are exploited by the landowners, as well as pressured by government officials to obey their orders. The elderly *agha* (landowner) is the central focus of the narrative; he cooperates with the state officials and forces a young girl into marrying him. With the arrival of a tractor in the village, the villagers even lose the possibility of labouring on the land.

Hawara Dîcleyê I-II (The Cry of Tigris I-II)

In Mehmed Uzun's two linked novels, the massacre of non-Muslims during the Ottoman Empire is told from the perspective of a Yazidi *dengbêj* (bard) called Biro, who takes care of Ester, a Chaldean girl. To survive, both have had to flee from their lands, and even though they have managed to escape, feelings of exile, isolation, alienation and strong yearnings for their lands prevent them from living in peace. More than twenty years later, when Biro and the former emir of Botan meet in Damascus, they can share only their disillusionment and despair. Biro could not continue life as *dengbêj* after he had left his lands; nor could the emir carry on as ruler of Botan after being sent into exile. Biro cannot rid himself of feelings of loneliness and isolation, even after returning many years later to Botan.

Hêlîn (Helin)

The plot of the novel develops through the observations of Hêlîn, a Kurdish girl who, with her family and other villagers, has suffered through political conflicts. Hêlîn's father and mother are both detained by Turkish soldiers and severely tortured. Political conditions force them to leave their village and flee abroad to escape the pressure of Turkish officials. With the help of Helîn's uncle, the family makes its way first to Syria and then Beirut, from where they manage to reach Sweden as political refugees.

Hêvî Her Dem Heye (There is Always Hope)

This can be regarded as a war novel since it is set during the war between the PKK and the Turkish state from the first actions taken by the PKK. It focuses on an injured guerrilla who is on his own in the mountains. While he is alone, he thinks back to the past and questions many ideas and incidents. Despite his pain and his physical condition, he never loses hope that he will be rescued. At last some of his friends come to find and save him, but he must then struggle to save his injured leg from amputation.

Hêviyên Birîndar (Wounded Hopes)

The story involves an old man called Bangîn and his grandchild Hejar, whose parents died a long time ago. They both plough their land to make a living. Hejar goes to Colemêrg (Hakkari) to study, and at school experiences much strictness and cruelty from the Turkish teachers and management. Then they are moved out of their village. Hejar becomes involved in political action and is put in prison. Bangîn dies, since he cannot survive away from his lands.

Jar Lê Sermest (Miserable But Drunk)

Through the main protagonist, Sermest, the novel focuses on homosexuality, suicide, death and loneliness. The narration resembles Sermest's weekly journal. His best friend, Jar, has committed suicide and Sermest cannot get rid of his depression over that event. Later, we learn that in fact he murdered Jar in order to conceal and to forget the fact that had carried on a homosexual affair with his friend. At the end of the novel, amongst hundreds of people at a concert, he commits suicide by shooting himself.

Jiyanek (A Life)

The novel is based on a character called Serdar who, following three years of incarceration, is released from prison. The author relies heavily on autobiographical elements in placing most of the narrative within the prison setting, mainly in Diyarbakir. Through Serdar's personal stories, the novel reveals how the Kurds struggle daily against both economic and political hardship.

Kassandra (Cassandra)

As a mythological novel, *Kassandra* focuses on war (the Trojan War) between Trojans and Achaeans (Greeks) over the city of Troy (in north-west Turkey), which is likened to the present and on-going war between Kurdish guerrillas and the Turkish state. Gods do nothing to stop the endless war but only watch. Cassandra rejected the love of the god Apollo, and as a punishment was cursed by him. She regrets this, as she believes that Apollo might have protected their lands from invasion by their enemies.

Keje (Keje)

Set at the beginning of 1980s the novel, which focuses on a boy called Koçero and his family, begins with a description of Beboke village, which lacks electricity and a school. The narrator exposes the difficult living conditions of the villagers and the malice of the Turkish state. Because Koçero wants to go to school, the family decides to

send him to boarding school in Adana, a city in Southern Turkey. The rest of the novel focuses on the experiences of Koçero and his Kurdish friends at the boarding school.

Kewa Marî (Mari the Partridge)

The novel focuses on a female character, a journalist called Marî who, influenced by her former boyfriend, a Kurd, goes from Istanbul to Kurdistan to report on the Kurdish issue. In doing this she experiences a number of tragic incidents. Eventually, while she is in the mountains to interview one of the PKK commanders, she is captured by Turkish soldiers. After her release she escapes to Romania to save herself, and decides she will write of her experiences in the form of a novel.

Kitim (The Reckless)

The novel focuses on the lives of two different characters. One is Fendo who is detained by the military and rescued by guerrillas who take him to the mountains to write a novel about them. The other character is Seyda, who is an experienced guerrilla. Seyda and Fendo become very good friends on the mountains, and the novel retreats into the past through flashbacks from the journals of Fendo and Seyda.

Kodnav Viyan (Nickname Viyan)

This is a continuation of the author's earlier novel *Robîn* (Robin) which is based on a couple called Robîn and Viyan who are Kurdish agents. Working for an Intelligence Service called *Parastin* (Defence), they are involved in various political operations to fight against Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime, and are urged to stay on the mountains or hide for several weeks in different places. The novel deals mainly with the conflicts inside various Kurdish political groups.

Kulmek Morîkên Şînbirik (A Handful of Talismans)

Set in a village, the novel focuses on the hardships experienced by the villagers as a result of political conflicts and raids on their village by soldiers. The story is narrated from the point of view of a girl called Havîn. Her father refuses to negotiate with the soldiers who then force the family to take up arms against the PKK guerrillas. In order to escape from the pressure of the soldiers, Havîn and her family migrate to another place, leaving behind her brother who has decided to become a guerrilla.

Labîranta Cînan (Labyrinth of the Jinn)

The novel concerns the relationship between a teacher and a village. Kevanok is a teacher who moves into the village. In time, the teacher becomes like the inhabitants (sometimes he exaggerates); he goes out hunting birds although he was initially

opposed to doing so; he plays strange games with the children; he wagers with the villagers whether or not he can put his hand in boiling water; he then turns into someone who believes in and is most influenced by the stories of evil fairies. He becomes quite irrational and as a result of complaints from the villagers, he is dismissed from his job. Gûzi, who is the village's only well-known and accepted madman, becomes the only person who understands Kevanok and his activities.

Leyla Fîgaro (Leyla Figaro)

It focuses on the phenomenon of modern love through the perspectives of two characters: Leyla and Fîgaro, recounting an entire day of the couple with questions and flashbacks to the past that mainly concern their affairs. Leyla leaves the house after a big argument, and spends the night wandering alone through the streets. By the end of the next day (and the end of the novel as well), she returns home repentant, but entering the house sees that Fîgaro is not in the state that she had left him.

Mamosteyê Zinaran (The Teacher of Grottos)

The novel describes a wide range of characters, all of them teachers in a Kurdish village during the 1980s, with the aim of demonstrating how Kurdish students are forcefully assimilated by the heavy hand of education. Each section is devoted to one type of teacher and the relationships between the village *agha* and Turkish officials are also illuminated.

Li Qerexa Şevê Hîvron (At the Edge of a Moonlit Night)

The novel is written in allegorical form in a story-telling style in which each character tells a story to the others. Roberşîn who lives on the mountains in a cave meets another figure called Derdocan, and the two become friends. Derdocan appears to be an imaginary character who is embarking on an endless journey, because of which they go their separate ways. At the end of the novel, Roberşîn and Derdocan meet again. They become blood brothers and light a fire; Roberşîn goes into the fire like a stalk of wheat. Within a symbolic and implicit language, the novel strongly references current Kurdish issues.

Mandalîn (Mandarin)

The novel begins when two friends, Adar and Çeto, escape from their hometown, intending to go to Istanbul. Unable to get there they go instead to Izmir but cannot find work, are obliged to sleep on the streets and, being suspected of theft, are arrested. They find themselves having to move from one place to another; another accusation of theft is

made, and again they both escape but lose track of each other. At the end of the novel, Çeto has been arrested and Adar is lost in the city.

Mendik (Mendik)

A man named Mendik goes to Southern Turkey to study. The novel follows the many difficulties he experiences because of cultural differences, and how, despite such social and political conflicts, Mendik struggles to continue his studies.

Marê Di Tur De (Snake in the Sack)

The novel engages mainly with factual and historical incidents around the beginning of the 20th century, extending from the Ottoman period to the launch of the Turkish Republic. It touches upon the war between Ottomans and Republicans and the effects of this war on the Kurds. The narrator illustrates exclusively the betrayal of Kurds by their own people and the betrayal of Atatürk, the founder of Turkish Republic who failed to keep his promise to support an autonomous Kurdistan.

Mexmûr (Makhmur)

Set exclusively in the Makhmur camp in Iraqi Kurdistan, the novel mainly narrates the harsh condition of the refugees. While it points to the issue of fratricide (*Birakuji*) among Kurds, the novel elaborates particularly on the conflicts of various Kurdish political groups. The Kurdish refugees suffer not only from the Turkish officials, but also from the cruel treatment inflicted on them by the Kurdish Peshmargas.

Mirina Kalekî Rind (The Death of Old Rind)

The novel concerns Serdar, an exiled Kurd from Stockholm who returns to his village after many years in Sweden. After he meets an elderly man named Rind, who tells him old stories and epics, Rind becomes his only hope for preserving his ties with his lands, and Serdar starts to record these stories and epics in order to preserve Kurdish cultural and historical heritage. After Rind's death, Serdar feels he has lost all connection with his 'home'. In addition to the total loss of home, the loss of Rind indicates more 'otherness' and 'foreignness'.

Mişextî (Exile)

Through thirteen letters written by Bozo, the protagonist, the narrative focuses on Kurdish *mitirb* (nomadic groups) who live without national or official identity. It concerns the story of Bozo and his mother Sacoya Mitirb, and Emir Qasim Beg and his son Kavar who are described as relatives of the Bedir Khan family. Their lands and villages are raided by Turkish soldiers who order them to abandon their villages because

they think the inhabitants are assisting their enemies. The novel describes the harsh conditions of migration and life in exile.

***Nado Kurê Xwe Firo* (Nado Sold his Son)**

During the 1950s Nado, the anti-hero of the novel, leaves his hometown Dersim for economic reasons and goes to Istanbul where he, along with many other Kurdish migrants lives in harsh conditions. Self-centred Nado pursues his own interests and becomes daily more degenerate. He is involved in an unwanted affair, and when as a result he has a son from this affair, he sells his son to a childless family.

***Nameyek Ji Xwedê Re* (A Letter to the God)**

In this epistolary novel, which takes place in a university setting, the names of both the characters and the locations are given as nicknames. The central character writes letters to several people, most of whom are important individuals in his life. His letters resemble journals, referring to various subjects that range from personal confessions to the condition of Kurdish as an endangered language.

***Neynika Dilî* (The Mirror of Heart)**

This is a portrait of a Kurdish family whose lives have been fragmented by war and political conflicts. They had to leave their village and move to Istanbul but suffer from being away from their lands. Ehmed, the older son of the family, dies on the mountains as a guerrilla, and the mother has a stroke and dies. The other son, Mustafa, who is the central character of the novel, longs for their village but when he visits, finds that it has been completely abandoned and destroyed as a result of the war between the PKK guerrillas and the Turkish military.

***Otobês* (The Bus)**

The novel is based on a seemingly endless journey, though there is no mention of a starting point or the destination. It is set among a bus-load of passengers, all of whom have different backgrounds and stories. Each individual passenger narrates his/her own personal story, and while doing so all the passengers are also referring, indirectly, to the warring and conflicts between Kurds and the Turkish state.

***Payiza Dereng* (Belated Autumn)**

Ferda is an exiled Kurd in Sweden who returns to his hometown after twenty-eight years of exile. In the form of an epistolary novel, the story is narrated through the letters sent between Ferda and his best friend Ferîd. These letters explain not only Ferda's return from exile but also his past life, long before his departure. Ferda suffers from his

inability to adapt after his return and unintentionally becomes involved in certain political activities, because of which he vanishes at the end of the novel.

Pêlên Bêrikirinê (Waves of Longing)

The novel narrates a day in the life of an unnamed Kurdish exile in Stockholm who has flashbacks related to his past. While wandering around Stockholm, the protagonist introduces a great range of Kurdish individuals and institutions that offer a glimpse into the position of Kurdish migrants in Sweden in general.

Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî (The Unfinished Story Contest)

The central character, Sertac Karan, moves to Diyarbakir after marrying Merasîm, whom he has met at university in Mersin. In the novel, he constantly returns to his past – his childhood and his university years. The novel also includes various minor characters whose stories in many cases remain unfinished. While existential issues are narrated through these minor characters, the central focus is also on political conflicts and the assault on Kurdish cities by the police and militias.

Peyman (Deal)

As a mythological novel, the work is based on an imagined legend and centres on the war between Asians and Med (or Medes), referring to Asians as the ancestors of the Turks, and the Med as the ancestors of the Kurds. The main focus concerns how the Meds betrayed each other. Asteran, the warrior of Med who negotiates with the Asians, not only betrays the prophet Mazêden but also marries Mazêdan's beloved. However, Asteran cannot escape from knowing he is a traitor to his own people.

Pilingên Serhedê (The Tigers of Serhad)

The novel opens with a village called Qasiman in Mus, and recounts the slaughter and deportation of Armenians as well the Kurds' struggle during the Ottoman Empire. The novel is particularly concerned with relations among Kurdish emirs, *begs* and tribes, as well as with each other, with their common focus being the struggle to defend their homeland against the Ottomans. Much factual historical information on the final years of Ottoman Empire is conveyed through a figure called Zeynel, who has experienced many tragedies: his family is killed, he is expelled, and gets arrested. As the protagonist Zeynel spends his whole life hopefully trying to return to his lands.

Piştî Bîst Salan (After Twenty Years)

An exiled Kurd from Sweden returns to his hometown Nusaybin after twenty years in pursuit of Meryem, his first love. He finds that she has married and moved to Beirut.

When he confronts her, he sees that over time she is greatly altered and has turned into someone else. Disillusioned, he goes back to his life in exile in Sweden.

Qerebafon (Gramophone)

Set in Mardin at the beginning of the 1990s the novel is about a group of young people who are friends. Through the viewpoint of the central character Ronahî, whose sole aim is to compose music to give voice to the anguish of the Kurds, the daily lives of the others are influenced by political conflicts. Although they are not actively involved in politics, by the end of the novel their lives are falling apart.

Reş û Spî (Black and White)

The novel begins with a Kurdish family's migration to Istanbul from their hometown (Diyarbakir), where there are also many other families abandoning their lands. The family members suffer from being migrants in a big city. As the leading character, Robîn, one of the family's sons, never ceases to feel isolated and an outsider in Istanbul. He continues to have nightmares about his hometown, and the soul of Seydo, his dead brother, will not stop pursuing him. One day he decides to go back to his hometown and face his friends and his past. The police continue to follow him, and he has to return to Istanbul to save himself.

Rêwiyên Bê Welat (Travellers Without a Country)

The novel describes how a group of Kurdish migrants, including the protagonist Kanî, make the journey to Europe to avoid persecution and imprisonment by Turkish officials. Kanî's father has arranged for an illegal network to smuggle Kanî out of the country. However, while waiting for the smugglers to organise the journey, Kanî spends some time with relatives in Istanbul, where he falls in love with their daughter, which turns into a hopeless situation. The novel ends as Kanî reaches Europe.

Robîn (Robin) [and see Kodnav Viyan above]

This is a parallel story of a father and son who have no contact with each other and spend time in different parts of the world. The novel focuses mostly on the son Robîn, who discovers when he is much older that his father, whom he has never met, is Kurdish although his mother is Russian. After learning this, Robîn, a commander in the KGB, starts to become involved in Kurdish issues. As he and Viyan, a Kurdish agent, begin to work together as a couple, they set up their own Kurdish organisation to fight against the enemies of the Kurds. They eventually get married and move into Dohuk, which they describe as an independent city.

Rojek ji Rojên Evdalê Zeynikê (One of the Days of Evdalê Zeynikê)

The novel retells a traditional epic by the well-known Kurdish *dengbêj* (bard) Evdalê Zeynikê, who is assumed to have lived at the beginning of the 19th Century. The novel begins when the exiled intellectuals, the Bedir Khan brothers, insist that another *dengbêj* named Ehmedê Fermanê Kiki should perform a poetic narrative by Evdalê Zeynikê as a way of recording an aspect of Kurdish cultural heritage. As this narrative poem of Zeynikê's is declaimed, the reader is not only informed about Zeynikê's entire life but also becomes aware of many Kurdish songs (*stran*) and ballads (*klam*).

Rojnamevan (The Journalist)

Karin, a Swedish journalist, is a strong supporter of the Kurdish struggle. She begins to report news about Kurds and to write articles for her Swedish newspaper. She travels to Kurdistan and goes through many bad experiences because of on-going political conflicts. After being imprisoned and eventually released, Karin returns to Sweden where she writes about her experiences and observations related to Kurdistan.

Rojnivîska Spinoza (The Diary of Spinoza)

All the characters in this novel are young, trapped, and troubled by political developments; a few of them try to find a way through their fragmented lives. The reader hears from Yasîn, the protagonist, many uncompleted stories that suggest uncompleted lives and hopes. Yasîn passes the entrance exams for university and has the chance to study art, but changes his mind about studying and instead stays in the city. He reads philosophy constantly, caught between self and society. Throughout the novel, the narrator recounts how Yasîn fails to adapt, even in his own surroundings.

Ronakbîr (The Intellectual)

Ronakbîr is a Kurdish exile who feels isolated and alienated in Stockholm, being neither integrated with European culture, nor able to return to his homeland. He is unemployed and cannot find a suitable job, despite having been educated in his homeland. He complains constantly about the lack of patriotism among exiled Kurds, including his wife with whom he also has a very problematic relationship.

Rondikên Hêviyên Wenda (The Tears of Lost Hopes)

Through recounting various stories, the novel focuses mainly on the suffering of Kurdish women because of traditions. Each story concerns a different aspect of the

problems that women have to face, such as honour killings and arranged marriages. There is also a strong focus on political conflicts and the feudal system in Kurdistan.

Ronî Mîna Evînê Tari Mîna Mirinê (Light Like Love, Dark Like Death)

The novel concentrates particularly on the war between rebels from the Mountain Country (Kurdistan) and troops from the Big Country (Turkey), the conflicts that occur among people because of this war, and the conflict between darkness and light. The story involves two characters: Kevok, a rebel fighting for the freedom of her people, and Baz, a military commander responsible to the state for clearing rebels off the mountains. Although they come face to face in the later part of the novel, it is known that some twenty years earlier, just a few days before Kevok was born, they were on the same train, Kevok's parents as forced emigrants, Baz as an officer in charge of the displacement of a group of people that included the parents. Their paths cross again on the mountains where each is the other's enemy, but their meeting turns into an affair, at the end of which both are killed by the Turkish military.

Saturn (Saturn)

With this novel, Remezen Alan adapts the *Memê Alan* epic, using the storytelling style (*çîrokbej*). The novel begins with an extract from *Mem u Zîn*. Mîrcin, a spirit, summons all storytellers, asking them to tell him their most reliable and amazing tales. It is a kind of competition among them. One of the stories concerns Bengîn, son of Emir Aramşar, and Xewbanû, sister of Emir Cezerin; this is also the story of *Memê Alan*. Once Bengîn sees Xewbanû in his room but the next day she is lost and Bengîn follows and tries to find her. The rest of the novel follows Bengîn and his adventures as he tries to find Xewbanû.

Serpêhatiyên Rustem û Namerdiya Namerdan (The Adventures of Rustem and the Vileness of the Vile)

This is the story of Rustem, the central character who leaves Dersim to go to Istanbul, and later moves on to Cyprus to work. The novel, set mainly in Istanbul during the 1960s and 1970s, includes many autobiographical features. It concentrates, from a mainly socio-cultural perspective, on conditions among Kurdish migrants in a metropolis.

Sê Şev û Sê Roj (Three Nights and Three Days)

This is the first book in a trilogy (being followed by *Xezeba Azadiyê* [The Wrath of Freedom] and *Wêran* [Ruinous] – see below), in which the novelist portrays social and

political conditions in Kurdish villages between the 1960s and 1980s. The story takes place in a village on the border of Turkish Kurdistan and Syria, and is basically an account of the tragi-comic relationship between Turkish officials on the border and local people who make their living through smuggling.

Serhildane Mala Eliyê Ênis (The Rebellion of the House of Eliye Unis)

The novel deals with the rebellion of Eliyê Ênis which occurred at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Turkish Republic. The novel is based on a story that the author heard from his father and appears in the prologue of the novel. Not only does the narrator provide information about the Kurdish struggle and rebellions, but crucially he also exposes the negotiations that took place between certain Kurdish tribes and Atatürk.

Siya Dema Borî (In the Shadow of Time Past)

The novel is a critique of two Kurdish novels that are assumed to humiliate Kurdish women by making one a Turkish commander's beloved or turning one into a prostitute. The narrator refers to Firat Cewerî's *Ez ê yekî Bikujîm* (I will Kill Someone, 2008) and Mehmed Uzun's *Ronî min a Evînê Tarî Mîna Mirinê* (Light like Love Dark like Death, 1998). The woman protagonist in Cewerî's novel is a former guerrilla turned prostitute; in Uzun's novel, Kevok has an affair with the Turkish commander Baz. The main character, Berjîn, who is also a writer like her father, decides to write a book about her martyred friend Cangorî). However, while following Cangorî's story, she discovers the realities of the women portrayed in the novels by Cewerî and Uzun, and decides to re-write their stories, believing that they struggled against their circumstances rather than submitting to them. The narrations now focus on the experiences of these two women who must confront many incidents.

Siya Evînê (In the Shadow of Love)

Uzun focuses his novel on the biography of Memduh Selim Beg, who founded *Hêvî* (Hope), the Kurdish Student Union, in 1912, and played a crucial role in the Kurdish Khoybun Organization and in Kurdish publishing in the 1920s and 1930s. His politics forced him into exile and he had to be constantly on the move. When obliged to choose between struggling for his country or marrying the woman he loved, he preferred to join other fighters in the Mount Ararat uprising. Initially, the hope of going home was strong, but by the end of the novel, the struggle to return had stopped. The novel refers also to the life of Celadet Bedir Khan, through which the reader is familiarised with the chronology of the Bedir Khan family and what eventually became of them.

***Sînor* (Border)**

Based on the issue of the border between Syria and Turkey and how the local people have to smuggle to survive, the novel looks at the relationship of the border soldiers with the local people who suffer badly from the oppressive behaviour of the officials. The conflict between PKK guerrillas and the Turkish military is described through the character Rizgo, who is also a guerrilla. While escaping from the military, he shelters in a house in the village, where he arranges an operation on the border. Afterwards, he goes to Diyarbakir to undertake other operations.

***Sorê Gulê* (Rose Red)**

From the perspective of Serdar, its central character, this novel presents a panorama of the border village between Qamishli and Nusaybin where, for economic as well as political reasons, local people must struggle to survive. In pursuit of liberation and revolution they unite to confront the landowners, but due to poverty many villagers go to the cities to find work.

***Soryaz* (Soryaz)**

This is very much a folkloric novel, and contains a great range of traditional Kurdish games and stories. It is set in an unknown period and the main character starts to work for the Emir of Botan, his mission being to get an answer to a question for the emirate. He travels from one village to another, meeting many people and listening to their stories – everyone he meets will tell a different story, even a religious story. He starts to follow a woman called Soryaz, hoping that she will have an answer to the question. However, she is of no help but is the cause of many troubles.

***Şopa Rojên Buhurî* (The Trace of Blazing Days)**

The novel is set in a village, with the characters Kalo (elderly) Cimşîd and Akif at the centre of the narration since they have the power to influence the villagers around them. Kalo Cimşîd as an elderly individual becomes the voice of history and refers to important Kurdish incidents in an instructive manner, whereas Akif is a courageous guerrilla and is greatly admired by all the villagers who describe his heroic nature. Information on Kurdish literature and history is inserted at several points in the plot.

***Tofan* (Flood)**

With its mystical language and in a magical realist form, the novel focuses on the anti-hero of the Kurdish epic *Memê Alan* (also adapted as *Mem û Zîn* (Mem and Zin) by Ehmedê Xanî). In the epic the lovers Mem and Zîn cannot be together because of

Beko's interference; thus Beko is known as a very hostile character. In Metê's novel, Beko returns to life and wanders around Cizre where the epic takes place. Observing how the people of Cizre have lost their culture and identity, Beko goes to Xanî's grave in Dogubeyazit and recounts his tragic thoughts about Cizre. Tofan concludes that Beko's only fault is to fulfil what he has been asked to do by God.

Toqa Naletê (The Strap of Curse)

This concerns a Kurdish woman who is forced to marry at very young age after her father's death. Because she makes a small trip to Silvan (near Diyarbakir) from her village, a rumour is spread about her, and her husband's family decides to kill her for dishonouring their family's name. Helped by her aunt she runs away and drifts through several cities before settling in Adana where she stays with a Kurdish family. She remarries but is always fearful about returning to her village. Then she moves with her new family to Mersin where again she feels very alienated as she does not speak Turkish. She returns to her village after twenty years but no longer fits in there, so goes back to Mersin. She feels quite lost since she does not belong to anywhere.

Tu (You)

There are two parallel narrations recounting two different contexts and periods with different points of view. One is the dialogue between a prisoner and an insect in a prison cell; the other highlights the details behind his imprisonment and his past. The novel not only highlights the wretched conditions of Diyarbakir prison in the 1980s but also includes a great range of traditional Kurdish stories and lullabies.

Veger (Return)

The novel, in a documentary format, presents the memoirs of a group of guerrillas who join the PKK from Europe. Individual sections are dedicated to the life stories of the guerrillas and the reasons why they decided to become members of the party, and the whole narration is based on their experiences on the mountains after they had enlisted with the guerrilla groups.

Wênayên Keserê (Pictures of Gloom)

A couple of Kurdish migrants living in Germany have conflicts, both with the culture of their host country and the homeland from which they fled for political reasons. After Mîrza arrives in Germany he meets Narîn, who becomes the focus of the novel. She has had some very bad experiences, including being forced to work as a prostitute, and raped by close friends. Mîrza, as a Kurd, becomes her saviour. Narîn meets Cemşîd,

another Kurdish refugee, who has also suffered a lot through politics. After Cemşîd and Narîn marry and return to Sulemaniya to live in the free lands of Kurdistan, Mîrza decides to live in a forest till Kurdistan's four parts are liberated.

Wêran (Ruinous)

The novel is a continuation of the author's earlier book, *Sê Sev û Sê Roj* (Three Nights and Three Days). The setting is a Kurdish village during the 1970s, seen from the perspective of Circîs, the protagonist. In discussing the various Kurdish political groups, the disunity within and among these groups is highlighted as the source of the failure of the Kurds' pursuit of independence.

Xaltîka Zeyno (Aunt Zeyno)

The novel tells the story of Zeyno, an elderly Kurdish woman who is the mother of a guerrilla named Berivan. As the protagonist of the novel Zeyno, who has been imprisoned for her political activism, is interviewed by another prisoner. In this way Zeyno talks of the history of the Kurds, and also tells her story of personal loss resulting from conflicts between the Kurds and the Turkish state. As her story unfolds, the reader discovers that she lost two of her sons due to political struggles.

Xewnên Pînekirî (Patched Dreams)

The novel is based on the struggle of Serdar, an injured Kurdish guerrilla on the mountains. While waiting to be rescued by his friends, he remembers the past and talks about his personal story before he joined the PKK. In the end he is saved by other guerrillas.

Xezeba Azadiyê (The Wrath of Freedom)

The last novel in Qaso's trilogy is set in a Kurdish village during the 1980s, a period during which persecution and the constraints on Kurds increased. The harsh treatments and wretched conditions in Diyarbakir prison are also narrated throughout the novel. However, instead of focusing deeply on the political conflicts, relations between men and women in the village are humorously described.

Xezal (Xezal)

The novel opens with a description of the sound of planes, helicopters, and guns in a village, where the villagers are trying to survive in crossfire of the war between the PKK guerrillas and the Turkish military. Incidents are depicted from the perspective of Xezal, a Kurdish mother. Throughout the novel, Xezal struggles to keep her children

away from the dangers of the war. However, all her children are lost because of the tragic incidents that they experience as a family.

Xidê Naxirwan û Tevkustine Dêrsim (Xide Naxirwan and Dersim Genocide)

This novel, part documentary and part fiction, takes place in the Dersim region during the 1930s and focuses on the massacres of villagers by the newly-founded Turkish Republic. The villagers live both in poverty and fear. In defiance of those who negotiate with the state, the protagonist Xidê Naxirwan, rebels against the soldiers and organises others.

Zarokên Me (Our Children)

This is effectively a continuation of several other novels since each of the writer's works concentrates on a certain period in the lives of various characters. Heavily autobiographical, the novel is divided into three parts named for places: thus Zonê, Qaser, Hewagê. Living conditions for the Kurds in these three places are the same. The novel presents the usual picture of a Kurdish family through the eyes of the child Rehat, who tells about the difficult conditions facing them. Turkish soldiers raid the village and the villagers are treated very harshly for not being able to reply in Turkish to the soldiers' questions, while at school, the children are not allowed to speak in their own language. The narrative refers to political acts during the 1960s and 1970s.

Zêna (Zena)

The story develops around the female character Zêna who, as a result of her father's profession, is obliged to live a long way from her hometown and her beloved. She is upset about going away, and is very homesick. After a few years, the family returns to their hometown but she is kidnapped by the son of a tribal leader and is forced to marry him. While the narrative illustrates the unhappy life of Zêna, the strain put on the Kurdish language is also touched upon quite strongly.

Zenga Zêrîn (The Rust of Gold)

The novel deals with the assimilative and very oppressive Turkish education system in Kurdish villages during a period when the writer was actually working as a teacher in a state school. The narrator in the novel, who is a teacher, witnesses and recounts the effects of a military coup. As a result, and as happened to the author, the teacher is detained and subjected to torture.

***Zeviyên Soro* (The Lands of Soro)**

This novel is about a village called Tendurek whose inhabitants make their living from farming the village lands. It narrates the cruelty of the *agha* (landowner) system, which makes Yusuf Agha more powerful but seriously weakens the villagers. The village agha wants to take all the land for himself from the labourers and plough it using tractors. The villagers decide to stand against the actions of the agha by uniting, and the protagonist Soro takes the lead in the resistance against the agha. The novel includes strong references to industrialisation, capitalism and communism.

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68. _____ (2003), *Leyla Fîgaro* (Leyla Figaro), Istanbul: Elma.
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70. _____ (2007), *Gava Heyatê* (The Step of Life), Istanbul: Belkî.
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75. Dilsoz, Ömer (2003), *Hêviyên Birîndar* (Wounded Hopes), Istanbul: Aram.
76. _____ (2005), *Bêhna Axê* (The Scent of Soil), Istanbul: Berçem.
77. _____ (2009), *Neynika Dilî* (The Mirror of Heart), Istanbul: Aram.
78. Eroğlu, Yunus (2007), *Nameyek Ji Xwedê Re* (A Letter to God), Diyarbakir: Lîs.
79. _____ (2010), *Otobês* (The Bus), Diyarbakir: Lîs.
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94. _____ (2009), *Qerebafon* (Gramophone) Istanbul: Do.
95. _____ (2009), *Bavfileh* (Proselyte), Istanbul: Do.
96. Torî (Mehmet Kemal Işık), (2002), *Mendik* (Mendik), Istanbul: Berfin.
97. Yiğit, Abdusamet (2009), *Feqiyê Teyran* (Faqi Tayran), Berlin: Han.
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