

**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)**

Ozlem Galip

Submitted to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Kurdish Studies

November 2012

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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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Chapter One – Introduction.....	7
1.1. Introductory Remarks.....	7
1.2. Kurdish Literature in Turkish Kurdistan and its Diaspora: An Overview.....	9
1.3. Research Questions and Argument.....	21
1.4. Methodology: An Eclectic Approach beyond Analysis of the Text.....	22
1.5. Theoretical Considerations.....	30
1.5.1. Novelistic Discourse: Reality, Identity, and Humanistic Geography.....	31
1.5.2. Constructing ‘Identity’, ‘Place’, ‘Home-land’, and ‘Diaspora’.....	36
1.5.2.1. Discourses on ‘Identity’ and ‘Kurdish National Identity’.....	36
1.5.2.2. Conceptualisation of ‘Place’ and its Meanings.....	40
1.5.2.3. ‘Home-land’: A Fundamental Aspect of Identity.....	44
1.5.2.4. Defining ‘Diaspora’ and ‘Kurdish Diasporic Identity’.....	50
1.6. Chapter Overview.....	54
Chapter Two – The Kurdish Novelistic Discourse in Diaspora: Constructing ‘Home-land’ and Identity’.....	56
2.1. Novelistic Discourse in Diaspora: Realist and Critical Reflections.....	57
2.1.1. The Experiences of Displacement: Diaspora as a ‘Temporary Space’.....	58
2.1.2. Between ‘Implied Author’ and ‘Overt Narrator’: Purposeful Narratives..	67
2.1.3. Ideological and Political Orientations of the Novelists within the Narratives.....	74
2.1.4. Diasporic Imagining of Kurdistan: Under the Lens of Realist Portrayal..	85

2.1.5. Re-visioning Kurdistan within a Critical Frame.....	91
2.2. Diasporic Memory: From the Individual's Narratives to the Collective Past...	106
2.2.1. The Politics of Remembering: From History to the Recent Past.....	107
2.2.2. Autobiographical Memory: in the Shadow of 1980's Military Coup and Diyarbakir Prison.....	113
2.3. Concluding Remarks.....	121
Chapter Three - The Kurdish Novelistic Discourse in Turkish Kurdistan: Constructing 'Home-land' and 'Identity'.....	124
3.1. The Territorialisation of Kurdistan: Imagined 'Greater Kurdistan'.....	125
3.1.1. 'Us' versus 'Other': The Power of Regional Mapping and Naming.....	131
3.1.2. The Construction of 'Kurdishness' as a Unified Entity.....	138
3.2. Fictionalising Kurdistan in Different Time Zones.....	144
3.2.1. 'Home-land' in the Past: An Idealized Vision with Nostalgia.....	145
3.2.2. 'Home-land' Now: The Land of Destruction and Struggle.....	150
3.2.3. Imagining the Future of 'Home-land': 'Newroz' and Heaven.....	160
3.3. The Meanings of Unattainable 'Home-land'.....	168
3.3.1. 'Home-land' as a Beloved Woman.....	169
3.3.2. 'Home-land': A Land of Longing and Yearning.....	174
3.4. Concluding Remarks.....	185
Chapter Four - A Comparative Analysis of the Novels: From Turkish Kurdistan to its Diaspora.....	187
4.1. The Intended Construction of Novelistic Discourse: Factual or Symbolic?.....	188
4.2. Kurdistan and the Impact of Diverse Political Ideologies.....	196
4.2.1. Overview of Kurds: Are They 'Welatparêz' or 'Caş'?.....	204
4.2.2. The Relationship with Kurdish Lands: Destroyed Urban Kurdistan versus Idealised Rural Kurdistan.....	210
4.3. The Perception of 'Home-land': the Constant Sense of 'Outsideness'.....	220
4.4. Concluding Remarks.....	227
Chapter Five - Conclusion.....	232
Appendix A: Biographical Notes on the Authors.....	242
Appendix B: Synopses of the Novels.....	248

Bibliography.....271