

In Search of Contemporary Revolutionary Writing: A Reading of Ohran Pamuk's Snow

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The pale yellow streetlamps cast such a deathly glow over the city that he felt himself in some strange, sad dream, and, for some reason, it made Ka feel guilty. Still, he was mightily thankful for this silent and forgotten country now filling him with poems.

Ohran Pamuk, *Snow*
Exile is to the thinker what home is to the naïve; it is in exile that the thinking person's detachment, his habitual life, acquires survival value.

Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*

In his *Liquid Modernity*, Zygmunt Bauman claims that utopias and dystopias 'are no longer written these days' (2005: 61-62).¹ This kind of statement is not new. In 1999, Russell Jacoby had already announced the end of utopia in a broader, non-exclusively literary, scale. Many researchers and writers working in the prolific field of Utopian Studies beg to disagree for their views on contemporaneity and the findings of their readings and research prove that both the utopian thought and utopia as a literary genre didn't die; they simply evolved into more complex and hybrid systems/specimens.² Since one of my research interests lies precisely in this field of studies,³ I not only disagree with Bauman (and Jacoby), but I am particularly interested in non-conventional utopian and dystopian contemporary novels. By 'non-conventional' I mean texts that are not immediately located under the label of utopias or dystopias, because they don't strictly follow the narrative procedures and conventions of the genre,⁴ but, nonetheless, contain utopian or dystopian themes, features, concerns, or strategies.

When I first encountered Ohan Pamuk's *Snow*, I had no intention of including it in my research. I read it for leisure and not as part of my work, but as soon as I began reading it, I realised that I had found a potential candidate to my lot of contemporary utopias/dystopias. This is, therefore, my first approach to the book (and to the writer, in fact) and I am aware that it may be a bit tentative. Nevertheless, I believe there is much to be studied in *Snow* by using the wide range of conceptual tools tackled by the multidisciplinary field of Utopian Studies.

Originally published in Turkish, in 2002, *Snow*⁵ now stands in an English book collection that celebrates 'provocative political fiction from around the world' (*Snow*, back cover), coherently titled 'Revolutionary Writing'. The Faber collection is particularly interesting because it seems to disprove Bauman's claims twice. In *Liquid Modernity*, Bauman not only announces the decline of literary utopias and dystopias, but also the end of revolutions and revolutionaries.⁶ However, besides *Snow*, the Faber collection includes seven other prime 'revolutionary' novels:

A Fine Balance, by Rohinton Mistry
The Black Album, by Hanif Kureishi
The Children of Men, by P. D. James
Leviathan, by Paul Auster
GB84, by David Peace
The Feast of the Goat, by Mario Vargas Llosa
The Last King of Scotland, by Giles Foden

I wish to highlight the presence of P. D. James's *The Children of Men* (1992) in this assemblage. Both the book and Cuarón's impressive screen version plunge the reader/viewer into the world of dystopia. Thus, despite Bauman's claims, dystopia seems, indeed, well and alive.⁷ Contrary to utopias, which represent balanced attempts to build better societies, based on sustainable development and common good, dystopias usually reproduce totalitarian powers and/or repressive and violent societies that end up by destroying humanity through selfishness, corruption, and the annihilation of individual freedom as well as any form of subjectivity.⁸ As far as I can see, that is precisely what happens in P. D. James's novel and Cuarón's loose adaptation of it. In a not so distant future there seems to be little hope for humanity as humans can no longer procreate and everything that is bad or corrupt in human nature seems about to win the battle against common good (and common sense). Since no child has been born for two decades, the discovery of a pregnant woman represents a true miracle, which should be celebrated, but there are many people

ready to harm both the mother and the child. Hence, they have to be protected at all costs and taken to an organisation understandably called Human Project for the survival of this child may well be the survival of humanity. Chaos, prejudice, racism, violence, fear, impotence, paranoia, *The Children of Men* has it all. What about *Snow*?

Pamuk's *Snow* tells the tale of a young man and a city whose names and paths become suddenly intertwined. The young Turkish journalist and poet is Ka; the remote Turkish city is Kars. Both the man and the city hide a deep turmoil and when a blizzard cuts off all connections with the outside world, and Ka is forced to lengthen his stay in Kars, he eventually becomes the reluctant protagonist of an inner and outer revolution. In this paper, I will be suggesting that Kars becomes, under the 'blessing' of snow, a heterotopian space where many individual and collective projects are staged without a happy ending, for heterotopias—spatial conquests—are bound to fail when subjected to the trials of time.

Before stepping into such fragile ground as snow/*Snow*, it is imperative to define the concept of 'heterotopia'. Any definition of heterotopia must, on the other hand, depart from Michel Foucault's influential presentation of the term in an essay revealingly titled 'Of Other Spaces':

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society - which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. [...] Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and talk about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (Foucault 1967: n.p.)

Foucault proceeds by providing numerous examples of heterotopias. He mentions hospitals, museums, cemeteries, places where the traditional order and rules of society are somehow subverted. However, heterotopias are not limited to buildings or other material places. Private thoughts and feelings trusted to a journal or a book can be a heterotopia; a friendship or a romantic attachment can so too. Accordingly, one could reinforce Foucault's definition with a more recent contribution by Kevin Hetherington. In *The Badlands of Modernity, Heterotopia and Social Ordering*, the author describes heterotopias as 'spaces in which an alternative social ordering is performed' (Hetherington 1997: 40). He adds that these spaces 'are set up to fascinate and to horrify, to try and make use of the limits of our imagination, our desires, our fears and our sense of power/powerlessness' (*ibidem*). Hetherington lists,

thus, six ways in which the concept of heterotopia has directly or indirectly been used:

1. As sites that are constituted as incongruous, or paradoxical, through socially transgressive practices [...].
2. As sites that are ambivalent and uncertain because of the multiplicity of social meanings that are attached to them [...].
3. As sites that have some aura of mystery, danger or transgression about them; places on the margin perhaps [...].
4. Sites that are defined by their absolute perfection, surrounded by spaces that are not so clearly defined as such [...].
5. Sites that are marginalized within the dominant social spatialization [...].
6. Incongruous forms of writing and text that challenge and make impossible discursive statements [...]. (idem, 41)

As we are about to see, Kars shares a bit of almost every item on the list. Indeed, with the exception of number 4 (sites of absolute perfection) and number 6 (incongruous forms of writing), the border and marginal Turkish city of Kars, portrayed in *Snow*, is an ambivalent site, surrounded by an aura of mystery and danger, personified by its inhabitants (and visitors) who all seem prone to transgression. In an interview to the *Spiegel*, Pamuk explained that he visited Kars when he was in his early twenties and became fascinated ‘by the foreignness of a city that was partly built by the Russians,’ and was, therefore, ‘very different from the rest of Turkey’ (Pamuk 2005: n.p.).⁹ In another interview, Pamuk added that:

In Kars you have a tangible sense of the sadness that comes from being a part of Europe but leading an un-European existence of want and struggle. My novel is about the internal conflicts of present-day Turks, about the contradictions between modernity and Islam, about the longing to be accepted by Europe and the simultaneous fear of this acceptance. (Pamuk / Lau 2005: n.p.)

Much to the utopian taste, in *Snow*, everything begins with a journey that, as it is clearly stated, would change the protagonist’s life forever.¹⁰ Ka, the protagonist, travels to Kars as a journalist to cover the strange case of a suicide epidemic among the city’s young women.¹¹ Right at the beginning of the novel, the reader learns from the narrator that

Our traveller had spent his years of happiness and childhood in Istanbul; he'd returned a week ago, for the first time in twelve years to attend to his mother's funeral. Having stayed four days, he had decided to take this trip to Kars. [...] Although he'd spent twelve years in political exile in Germany, our traveller had never been much of an activist. His real passion, his only thought, was for poetry. (Snow, 4)

Ka travels in snowy weather and the dance performed by the snowflakes during their progress from sky to ground feeds his poetic soul and inspire in him nothing but happy dreams:

As he watched the snow outside the window fall as slowly and silently as the snow in his dream, the traveller fell into a long-desired, long-awaited reverie; cleansed by memories of innocence, he succumbed to optimism and dared to believe himself at home in this world. Soon afterwards, he did something else that he had not done for years and fell asleep in his seat. (Snow, 4)

When I read this passage, it immediately brought back one of my favourite writers, James Joyce,¹² and the lyrical ending of his short-story 'The Dead':

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. ("The Dead": 255-256)

In Joyce's text, snow is the trigger for a personal epiphany. Gabriel Conroy, main protagonist of the short-story, seems to find in the democratic snow that falls upon all the living and the dead an opportunity to be reconciled with his wife, his country, his past, and, above all, with himself.¹³

On the contrary, in Pamuk's text, Ka soon loses his optimism for the snow, in Kars, 'no longer promised innocence. **The snow here was tiring, irritating, terrorising**' (Snow, 9, emphasis added). Indeed, in Kars, the snow offers both the perils and the blessings of isolation; a peril for all and a blessing solely for some and only for a limited amount of time since, as Gonçalo Vilas-Boas points out, heterotopias don't endure; they are spatial constructs, but temporal impossibilities (cf. Vilas-Boas 2002: 95).

At this point, I would like to go back to Hetherington and his definition of heterotopia. He explains that

In using the concept of heterotopia, it would be wrong to privilege either the idea of freedom or control. [...] It would also be wrong to associate heterotopia just with the marginal and powerless seeking to use Other places to articulate a voice that is usually denied them. An Other place can be constituted and used by those who benefit from the existing relations within a society [...]. (Hetherington 1997: 52)

Kars is the perfect example to illustrate Hetherington's words. When the blizzard isolates the city and the power of the Turkish state is temporarily suspended, different personal and collective projects of freedom and control are set in motion: Ka's, to begin with, and also the Islamists', the headscarf girls', the military's, and Sunay Zaim's, to focus only on the more relevant to the present study.

During his stay in Kars, Ka meets İpek, his sweetheart back at the university, who is divorced and ready to fall in love with him again (so he hopes). For a brief, but intense, space of time, Ka's troubled soul feels inebriated by the prospects of getting back to Germany with İpek by his side. His life seems filled with love and poems (*Snow*, 169), but this idyll soon develops into an ordeal when he becomes a pawn in a perilous game played by the other men in town.

The Islamists, who are poised to win the local elections, want to impose their religious values and remove from Kars any sign of Europe and of the West in general (*Snow*, 81). This faction is pungently represented by Blue, a charismatic leader, with whom all women in the novel seem to fall in love (including İpek and Kadife). In his tense 'conversation' with Ka, Blue makes clear that the journalist is not to write a single word about the suicide epidemic: 'Suicide is a terrible sin! It's an illness that grows the more you focus on it! [...] If you write that she was a Muslim girl making a political statement about headscarves, it will be more lethal for you than poison' (*Snow*, 77).

The headscarf girls, led by Kadife, wish to hold on to their pride and take a stand as women:

'You don't understand a thing!' said Kadife. 'A woman doesn't commit suicide because she's lost her pride; she does it to show her pride.'

'Is that why your friends committed suicide?'

'I can't speak for them. Everyone has her own reasons. But every time I have ideas of killing myself, I can't help thinking they were thinking the same way I am. The

moment of suicide is the time when they understand best how lonely it is to be a woman, and what it really means to be a woman.’ (Snow, 405)

Kadife later adds that one of the differences between men and women is that women ‘kill themselves because they hope to gain something,’ whereas men ‘kill themselves because they’ve lost all hope of gaining anything’ (Snow, 406). These girls are persecuted by the military due to their insistence in using the headscarf and when they decide to commit suicide as a protest, the Islamists also condemn them because suicide is, as Blue says, an unforgivable sin:

**HUMAN BEINGS ARE GOD’S MASTERPIECES
AND
SUICIDE IS BLASPHEMY (Snow, 434) ¹⁴**

These women are caught in the middle of a conflict between two opposing groups of men, who impose their wills on them—by enforcing religious values or an alleged freedom, through the form of a veil ban, that condemn them either to jail or suicide—, while claiming to act on their behalf,¹⁵ but their voice is never actually heard. That’s why Kadife so strongly emphasises the differences between men and women when approaching suicide. This also explains why she considers womanhood a lonely condition. Regardless of the men in power, free will is a luxury non attainable by the women of Kars. Their physicality perpetuates this state of violence for they are, as Kathleen Kirby might say, nothing but surfaces, as far as those men can (or care to) see:

My sexuality centers my bodily consciousness, making an open berth for me to occupy as a specifically female subject. [...] Though subjects of all races, classes, and ethnicities may live their bodies as volumes, for subjects from marginal groups the margins of the body may prove more palpable, central, defining, and affecting. If I live my body as volume, my “femininity”, my gender, resides at its surface, on the level of the clothes I wear or the lipstick I (do or don’t) apply. [...] The surfaces of our bodies interact with the divisions between groups drawn up by ideology [...] and it is precisely when the space of the body coincides with the space of ideology that violence can occur. (Kirby 1996: 13)

When talking about individual and collective projects and ideologies, one cannot forget the military’s and Sunay Zaim’s. The militaries’ aim is to lead Turkey towards a progressive era, ‘in the name of republicanism and Westernisation’ (Snow, 416), and, in order to achieve this, they use the isolation brought by the snowstorm to

arrest, and massacre, 'all the radical Islamists and reactionaries in town' (Snow, 308), including the headscarf girls, if need be. As Nanki Chawla shrewdly observes, 'The massacre itself is interesting. It is not as one would assume, reading Western media, Islamic fundamentalists killing the secularists, but instead, secularists killing the Islamic high school students for threatening their new, Westernised state.'

As a true Orwellian disciple, Sunay Zaim, an actor and also the head of the military, uses his power to fabricate the news and the *Border City Gazette*, owned by Serdar Bey, becomes the depository of his fictional written news. A good example of this would be the untruthful piece of news that, following Zaim's orders, Serdar Bey writes, exposing Ka's life to mortal danger in the process:

We have been hearing many rumours about the so-called poet who came close to ruining yesterday's joyous performance by the Sunay Zaim Players when he strode on the stage halfway through the celebrations of Atatürk and the Republic and robbed the audience of their happiness and their peace of mind by bombarding their ears with a joyless, meaningless poem. [...] Can it be true that his efforts to provoke an incident at our religious high school resulted in his making the following statement [...]: 'I am an atheist. I don't believe in God, but that doesn't mean I'd commit suicide, because after all God - God forbid - doesn't exist.' Can these be his exact words? [...] Is it because you are ashamed of being a Turk that you hide your true name behind the fake, foreign, counterfeit name of Ka? (Snow, 301-302)

In spite of being a Turk, Ka is seen by the inhabitants of Kars as the outsider, the European or the Westerner. As a result, the military use this article to threaten Ka and make him act in their behalf for, if published, this text would make him a target for radical Islamists. Tailoring the news is thus an expedient often used in Kars, by Zaim and his cohorts, who are not ashamed to confess it and see it, in fact, as a proof of their kinship with the West:

'If this paper gets distributed, they'll shoot him in the street tomorrow.'

'Nonsense,' town.' He turned to Ka. 'I can see in your eyes that you haven't taken offence, and you know how much I respect your work - and the esteem in which I hold you as a human being. Please don't do the injustice of holding me to European standards that were never designed for us. [O]f course, we're going to run the sort of news our subscribers want to read. All over the world - even in America - newspapers tailor the news to their reader's tastes. And if your readers want nothing but lies from you, who in the world is going to sell papers that tell the truth? If the truth could raise my paper's circulation, why wouldn't I write the truth? Anyway, the police don't let me print the truth, either.' (Snow, 308, emphasis added) said Serdar Bey. *'Madam, I assure you, you have nothing to fear. The soldiers have rounded up all the radical Islamists and reactionaries in*

Although the news may not reflect the truth, they sometimes become true.
That's the case of Zaim's death on stage:

Yesterday, while appearing in an historic play at the National Theatre, Kadife the headscarf girl shocked audiences first by baring her head in a moment of enlightened fervour, and then by pointing a weapon at Sunay Zaim, the actor playing the villain, and firing. Her performance, broadcast live, has left the people of Kars trembling in horror.

Three days ago, the Sunay Zaim Theatre Company stunned the people of Kars with an evening of original revolutionary plays that gave way to a real-life revolution before their eyes, and last night, during their second gala, the Sunay Zaim Players shocked us yet again. The vehicle on this occasion was an adaptation of a drama by Thomas Kyd, a wrongfully neglected English playwright who nevertheless is said to have influenced the work of Shakespeare. [...]

This real-life drama reminded the people of Kars of the performance two days earlier in which the bullets flying across the stage had turned out to be real, so it was in the horrified knowledge that these were real bullets too that the people of Kars watched Sunay fall. (Snow, 343, emphasis in the original)

This is how Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* becomes *A Tragedy in Kars* (Snow, 399). Indeed, with Zaim all metaphors connecting the world of theatre with the world of war make sense. As he wishes to conquer immortality, he plans his death on stage and writes about it to guarantee that, the following day, the news reach the public exactly as he wishes. Sunay Zaim sees Kars as his private stage and he himself as the main character of an appallingly real *coup de théâtre* (Snow, 309):

'It was Hegel who first noticed that history and theatre are made of the same materials,' said Sunay. 'Remember that, just as in the theatre, history chooses those who play the leading roles. And just as actors put their courage to the test on the stage, so, too, do the chosen few on the stage of history.' (Snow, 202)

'What I am trying to do is push the truths of art to their outer limits, to become one with myth,' said Sunay. 'Anyway, once the snow melts tomorrow and the roads open again, my death will cease to have the slightest importance for the people of Kars.' (Snow, 344)

Sunay Zaim is right. As soon as the snow melts, all heterotopias fade away. Blue, the leader of the Islamists is killed; Zaim fulfils his wish and dies on stage, at the hands of Kadife who is arrested for two years;¹⁶ and back in Germany and living alone again, without his beloved İpek, Ka is murdered by someone who probably took the fictional *Border City Gazette's* news too seriously and considered him a traitor.

As the text clairvoyantly promises, 'life and art were to merge in a bewitching historical tale of unparalleled beauty [...]' (Snow, 373). Life and fiction are, indeed,

unmistakably intertwined in *Snow*. There are plays within the plays, a science-fiction novel within the novel—the first Islamist science-fiction novel ever—,¹⁷ a book of poetry,¹⁸ which collects the poems Ka wrote during his stay in Kars and which he (predictably, but meaningfully) entitled *Snow*—the exact same title of Pamuk’s tale—, and another novel by a storyteller named Ohran, who researches Ka’s misadventures in Kars, after his death.

Kars is, consequently, more than just a border city; it is, as Hetherington might put it, a marginal (and marginalised) site within the dominant social spatialisation of Turkey. It is a creative place, ridden with paradoxes, subversive dreams, and conflicting visions. It is a site of hope, mystery, danger, and transgression that overflow when a blizzard cuts off any connection with the outside world and various heterotopic plans collide as snowflakes falling from the sky.

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Notes

1 Bauman's full quote reads as follows: 'No wonder that dystopias are no longer written these days: the post-Fordist, 'fluid modern' world of freely choosing individuals does not worry about the sinister Big Brother who would punish those who stepped out of line. In such a world, though, there is not so much room either for the benign and caring Elder Brother who could be trusted and relied upon when it came to decide which things were worth doing and having and who could be counted on to protect his kid brother against the bullies who stood in the way of getting them; and so the utopias of the good society have stopped being written as well' (Bauman 2005: 61-62).

2 Extensive literature has been published on contemporary 'critical utopia' and 'critical dystopia.' See, for example, Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (eds.) (2003), *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, London and New York, Routledge; and Fátima Vieira (2006), "Still learning with More and Morris: Old Recipes for a New Utopianism", *Utopia and Utopianism*, nr.1, Madrid, The University Book, pp. 59- 71.

3 Since 2008, I've been collaborator of 'Mapping Dreams: British and North-American Utopianism,' a research line of CETAPS (Centre for English, Translation, and Anglo-Portuguese Studies, <http://cetaps.com/>), based at Faculdade de Letras, University of Porto. I also took part in a project titled 'Literary Utopias and Utopian Thought: Portuguese Culture and the Western Intellectual Tradition,' hosted by the Institute for Comparative Literature Margarida Losa (<http://www.ilcml.com/>) of the same Faculty, and supported by the Foundation for Science and Technology. This project was successfully concluded in September 2010 and the team is now working on a new one that aims at identifying and studying contemporary utopias in literature, predominantly, but also in other media, such as film, for example.

4 On utopia as a literary genre, see, for example, Vita Fortunati (2000), 'Utopia as Literary Genre,' in *Dictionary of Literary Utopias*, ed. by Vita Fortunati and Raymond Trousson, Paris, Honoré Champion Éditeur, pp. 634-643.

5 Henceforth all quotes from Snow will be identified by its title and respective page or pages.

6 'If the time of systemic revolutions has passed, it is because there are no buildings where the control desks of the system are lodged and which could be stormed and captured by the revolutionaries; and also because it is excruciatingly difficult, nay impossible, to imagine what the victors, once inside the buildings (if they found them first), could do to turn the tables and put paid to the misery that prompted them to rebel. One should be hardly taken aback or puzzled by the evident shortage of would-be revolutionaries or the kind of people who articulate the desire to change their individual plights as a project of changing the order of society.' (Bauman 2005: 5)

7 On Bauman's demise of utopia and dystopia, see Michael Hviid Jacobsen (2004), 'From Solid Modern Utopia to Liquid Modern Anti-Utopia? Tracing the Utopian Strand in the Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman,' *Utopian Studies: Journal of the Society for Utopian Studies*, Vol 15, No. 1, 63-87.

8 On literary dystopias, see Raymond Trousson (2000), 'Dystopia,' in *Dictionary of Literary Utopias*, ed. by Vita Fortunati and Raymond Trousson, Paris, Honoré Champion Éditeur, pp. 180-185.

9 Orhan Pamuk, 'Orhan Pamuk and the Turkish Paradox', *Spiegel*, Frankfurt Book Fair Special (21/10/2005), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,380858,00.html> [accessed February 16, 2012].

10 'If he hadn't been so tired, if he'd paid more attention to the snowflakes swirling out of the sky like feathers, he might have realised that he was travelling straight into a blizzard; he might have seen from the start that he had set out on a journey that would change his life for ever; he might have turned back.' (Snow, 3-4)

11 On the epidemic, see Snow, 13-17.

12 Curiously, Ka shares with Joyce not only a passion for writing, but also the condition of exile.

13 I address this subject more thoroughly in Márcia Lemos (2010), ““Bussoftlhee, mememormee!”: A Journey through Place and Memory in Joyce’s “The Dead” and Muldoon’s Horse Latitudes,” *Cadernos de Literatura Comparada* 22/23, org. by Alexandra Moreira da Silva and Gonçalo Vilas-Boas, Porto, Afrontamento / Instituto de Literatura Comparada Margarida Losa.

14 This self-explaining message could be read on a poster hanged above the entrance of the Divine Light Tea-house, in Kars.

15 See Snow, 372-373, emphasis added: ‘An announcer soon appeared, to proclaim that this evening’s live performance would bring to an end a tragedy that had visited social and spiritual paralysis upon the nation, and that the people of Kars would be delivered at last from the religious prejudices that for too long had excluded them from modern life and prevented women from enjoying equality with men.’ It is interesting, moreover, to notice the choice of the word ‘paralysis’ to characterise Kars. Joyce applies the exact same word to Dublin, in *Dubliners*: ‘Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis’ (‘The Sisters’, 7, emphasis added).

16 ‘They found her guilty of negligent homicide and lack of forethought [...].’ (Snow, 417)

17 This science-fiction novel is started by Necip and finished by Fazil who fears the mockery of Western readers (Snow, 419): ‘In the year 3579, there was a planet we haven’t even discovered yet. Its name was Gazzali and its people were rich, and their lives were much easier than our lives are today, but, contrary to what the materialists would have predicted, their rich and easy lives did not bring the inhabitants of this planet any spiritual satisfaction’ (Snow, 106).

18 Interestingly, Ka’s book project presents an imaginative snowflake structure. See Snow, 267.