

“Anonymous Collectivity” and “Sly Civility”: Postcolonial Defiance in a Satirical Short Story by Aziz Nesin

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ABSTRACT

Until a few years ago, Turkey was usually seen as irrelevant to colonial studies owing to its non-colonial status. More recently, however, there has been a more flexible approach to considering the possibility of studying modern Turkey under the heading of postcolonial studies. By acknowledging the socio-political similarities between Turkey and colonized countries, the current study employs a postcolonial framework to analyze a short story by a Turkish author. In doing so, Aziz Nesin’s “Don’t you have any Donkeys in your Country?” is studied to show how Nesin contributes to the political and socio-economic status of Modern Turkey and the highlighted controversy over the applicability of postcolonial perspectives to the Turkish context. The present study draws upon Albert Memmi’s notion of “anonymous collectivity” and Homi K. Bhabha’s “sly civility” as postcolonial means of indirect defiance, to identify the ways in which the narrative contributes to its contemporary milieu. We argue that throughout the story Nesin satirizes the so-called expert colonizer for his fundamentally false assumption about the naïveté of the colonized nation. The story reflects that although the Turkish peasant has unconsciously internalized the colonialist ideology of “anonymous collectivity,” the very same indirect means of defiance is consciously used by the peasant to overcome inequality and white supremacy in the sphere of selling Turkish carpets as one of the most prestigious products to the Western world. This study contributes to the literature on postcolonialism, first by raising the possibility of including modern Turkey in postcolonial studies, and then by examining Nesin’s response towards the postcolonial-like ideology whereby it is concluded that oppression creates contradictions in the ostensible colonized/colonizer, impairing and reversing both groups’ identity and humanity. We also conclude that the narrative reverses the dominant ideologies of clever and knowledgeable Americans by giving voice to a subaltern Turkish peasant whose goal is to resist the enduring effects of economic and cultural oppression.

Keywords: Albert Memmi; “anonymous collectivity”; Aziz Nesin; Homi K. Bhabha; “sly civility”

INTRODUCTION

Aziz Nesin’s “Sizin Memlekette Eşek Yok Mu?” was first translated and published in English (“Don’t You Have any Donkeys in Your Country?”) by Louis Mitler in *Turkish Stories from Four Decades* (1991). This hilarious story, originally published in 1971 and set in Turkey, recounts the story of a simple, illiterate and remarkably honest Turkish peasant

who outsmarts an established American rug expert by selling him a mangy donkey five hundred times its normal price.

Mehmet Nusret Nesin, commonly known as Aziz Nesin (1915-95), was a controversial Turkish poet, novelist and short story writer whose symbolic and iconoclastic stories are still popular among Turkish readers as well as those interested in Turkish literature. In his book *A Millennium of Turkish Literature: A Concise History*, Talât S. Halman hails Nesin as “Turkey’s best satirist ever” (2009, p. 171). In 1971, with “Sizin Memlekette Eşek Yok Mu?” he continued to maintain his humor and satire, suggesting that Western values should not be naïvely and blindly accepted, and that the interactions between East and West were doomed to fail as long as both Americans and Turkish peasants resorted to economical inequities and deception in business, especially in the context of tourism, upon which Nesin based his story. Through this story Nesin shows how he is worried about the future of farming in Turkey because the Turkish peasants had long learnt to be lazy and stopped sowing and farming for excavation and selling almost whatever they dug up to all tourists who paid exorbitant amounts of money for their country’s treasures. Nesin’s short story is a social criticism about the effect of modernization and tourism on agriculture and farmers. It shows how the expansion of archeological excavations in Turkey, just as an example of cultural exploitation, made the peasants stop their traditional, agricultural way of life in which honesty and simplicity of the peasants were questioned by clever tourists. In fact, the peasant’s trickery is a proactive response to the American Tourists’ swindling the Turks for many years. In other words, in this story Nesin adopted a relation built on sharp practice and duplicity that fostered a sense of suspicion and distrust between the locals (the Easterners) and tourists (the Westerners).

This paper reads the deception in Nesin’s story through two concepts of indirect defiance used in the colonial and postcolonial frameworks: “anonymous collectivity” and “sly civility,” introduced by Albert Memmi and Homi K. Bhabha respectively. In this study, we acknowledge the concept of “sly civility” as a useful lens through which to view the attempts of the colonized to counteract the colonizer’s intentional, repetitive references to “anonymous collectivity,” a term that refers to the use of plural (pro)nouns instead of singular ones when the colonizer intended to call a colonized individual. Although at first glance any attribution of postcolonial approaches to a Turkish short story with the setting of an uncolonized land would seem inappropriate, the dominant atmosphere of Nesin’s story emanating from characters’ interactions is one of deception and mistrust between the superior American expert and the inferior Turkish peasant from a Turkish narrator’s point of view, which is more befitting of a postcolonial text. This, however, does not imply that any literary work dealing with the themes of deception and mistrust is somehow related to postcolonial studies. In keeping with recent trends¹ towards acknowledging the socio-political similarities between Turkey and colonized countries, the current study employs a postcolonial framework to analyze a short story by a Turkish author to illustrate how “Don’t you have any Donkeys in your Country?” contributes to the political and socio-economic status of Modern Turkey and the highlighted controversy over the applicability of postcolonial perspectives to the Turkish context.

The present study argues that throughout the story Nesin satirizes the so-called expert colonizers for their fundamentally false assumption about the naïveté of the colonized nation. The study aims to show that despite the fact that the Turkish peasant displays the colonialist

¹ Evidence supporting the existence of such trends lies in the studies by a number of Turkish writers, among whom are Hamit Bozarslan, Meltem Ahiska, and Erkan Erçel, who all embrace the possibility of a postcolonial view of Turkey. “Since the late 1990s,” Erçel remarks, “there has been robust dialogue and engagement in Turkey as some scholars mobilized the critical analysis strategies of Orientalism and postcolonial critique of Said, Bhabha, Chatterjee and Chakrabarty to inscribe the Ottoman-Turkish experience into the history of modern colonialism” (2016, p. 82).

ideology of “anonymous collectivity,” the very same indirect means of defiance is consciously used by the peasant to overcome inequality and white supremacy in the sphere of selling Turkish carpets as one of the most prestigious products to the Western world. This study claims that the pessimistic atmosphere of the story, resulting from a strained relationship between the local peasants and the Americans who had deceived each other hundreds of times for several years, is by no means accidental and that the author, whatever his intention might be, is well aware of the negative consequences of cultural exploitation in modern Turkey and thus creates a quasi-colonial ambience out of the relationship between the two main characters of his story. Before applying two postcolonial concepts to a short story about Turkey, it is necessary to discuss the debated postcolonial status of Turkey. Admittedly Turkey was never formally colonized, yet some critics assert that it developed institutions similar to other postcolonial states. In the following section we will discuss that Turkey faced similar challenges of postcolonial states and could arguably fit into postcolonial studies.

TURKEY’S UNIQUE AND CONTROVERSIAL POSITION IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (1300–1922), the rise of the Republic of Turkey, with its robust secular ideology, marked a turning point in the history of this country. Soon after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey witnessed a series of fundamental reforms under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who laid the foundations of modern Turkey and brought about a different shape and a new identity to a country born out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. In his attempts to replace a Muslim theocracy gripped by religious extremism and old traditions with an extensively modernized Turkey, Atatürk embraced certain aspects of Western culture and used them as an exemplar of development and modernity. “In his opinion,” according to Yi Lin and Bailey Forrest, “modernization and Westernization would reinforce each other and have to go hand in hand” (2014, p.160). As a consequence of these beliefs, Turkey underwent massive structural and institutional changes ranging from the abolition of Islamic laws and courts to the adoption of the Latin alphabet in place of the Arabic one (Elhadj, 2006, p. 99). Women were, as Elhadj asserts, granted equal political and citizenship rights, the Islamic calendar was replaced with the Gregorian or Western calendar, and Turks were encouraged to wear European attire (Elhadj, p.99). Regardless of how Turkish people engaged with these changes, they were nevertheless implemented by the state.

Until a few years ago, Turkey was usually seen as irrelevant to colonial studies owing to its non-colonial status. More recently, however, there has been a more flexible approach to considering the possibility of studying modern Turkey under the heading of postcolonial studies. In his article “Turkey: Postcolonial Discourse in a Non-colonised state,” Hamit Bozarslan (2008) divides postcolonial discourses on Turkey into three periods: “the Kemalist republic (1923–38); the period of radical protests and left-wing movements (the 1960s and 1970s); and the period following the Second Gulf War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991–2006).” The intellectuals, Bozarslan states, “treated the Kemalist régime as a[n], or even the, alternative to colonialism” (2008, p. 425). He accounts two reasons for anti-colonial and “subaltern” debates in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s: First, the development of harmonious relations with the West by Ismet İnönü, successor to Mustafa Kemal, who opposed the views of the weak Communist Party and any anti-colonial debates. However, after the 1960 coup d’état, a change in expressing anti-Western views occurred. According to Bozarslan (2008), this change had its main roots outside Turkey:

The long-lasting effects of Turkey's support for the Korea War, the emergence of a radical and strongly left-oriented workers' and students' movement during the 1960s, the feelings of solidarity with Palestine, reactions against the Vietnam War, the symbolic impact of anti-colonial wars in Africa; all provoked strong reactions in Turkey both against the Western bloc and against the pro-Western Turkish government. (p. 425)

Second, the emergence of discussions around Turkish nationalism that took into account colonial discourse by some intellectuals, on Kemalism, Westernism and communism, who stressed that Turkey had experienced "the colonisation of mind[s]," if not that of the land:

For these intellectuals (Cemil Meriç, Erol Güngör, Mehmed Dogan, Nurettin Topçu) Kemalism, Westernism and communism were the avatars of the same process of alienation, which operated through the destruction of the trust of the colonised or subordinated peoples, namely the Muslim and Turkish peoples of the world. The emergence of a Westernised élite class meant the colonisation of mind[s]. Some left-wing intellectuals, such as Idris Küçükömer (1969), claimed that the Ottoman and Kemalist reforms constituted a process of 'alienation', which produced the domination of a Westernised bureaucracy over the people through the destruction of their cultural and social values. (Bozarslan, pp. 6-425)

Unlike Bozarslan's overt and visible categorizations of postcolonial discourses in Modern Turkey, Meltem Ahiska emphasizes the uniqueness of "uneasy relation of Turkey with colonialism and its consequent invisibility in postcolonial theories" (2003, p. 359). Ahiska asserts that Edward Said excluded Turkey and especially the long Ottoman history from his study on Orientalism.² However, in a footnote, Ahiska highlights the possibility of arguing for Turkey's postcolonial situation by drawing upon Bart Moore-Gilbert's broad definition of postcolonialism, in which he connects the cultural form of the relationship between Turkey and modern European colonialism and imperialism to postcolonial criticism (Ahiska 2003, pp. 374-375). In Moore-Gilbert's view,

Postcolonial criticism can still be seen as a more or less distinct set of reading practices, if it is understood as preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, challenge or reflect upon the relations of domination and subordination – economic, cultural and political – between (and often within) nations, races or cultures, which characteristically have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism and which, equally, characteristically, continue to be apparent in the present era of neo-liberalism. (1997, p. 12)

Moreover, Barış Erdoğan draws upon discourses of internal colonialism and the postcolonial mental structures, and finds it "possible to adopt a post-colonial perspective to generate knowledge and conduct analyses of nation-states such as Turkey, which has never been run by colonial powers or whose human or economic resources have never been directly colonized" (2015, p. 126). Similarly, making use of Frantz Fanon's theories, Erkan Erçel claims that "this new Turkish-Ottoman imaginary and its discourse of a Turkish nativism and Occidentalism which emphasizes minority rights, tolerance and the harmonious coexistence of plurality remain an under-explored territory for postcolonial criticism" (2016, p. 73).

² Ahiska's rationale for Edward Said's exclusion of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey from his study of Orientalism is included here: "Said's silence on this issue is significant, since he describes the same period as a time when the 'Orient' increasingly 'appeared to constitute a challenge to the West's spirit, knowledge and imperium' (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p. 52). Said primarily locates the Oriental other in the Arabic world to which he partially belongs, and his neglect of the Turkish case implies that Turkey stands in a very problematic relationship to the Arab world, the Ottoman Empire being the former colonial power there. This may reflect Said's own ambivalence toward the history of the Ottoman colonization of Palestine: the Ottoman Empire disrupts the binary oppositions of East and West, colonizer and colonized that inform his analysis." (Ahiska, 2003, p.359)

With the mentioned postcolonial studies on Turkey, it becomes possible to focus on Aziz Nesin, whose life and writing reflected a particular form of engagement with the dominant Western values in modern Turkey. Nesin's works represented the destruction of social, cultural and economic assets of Turkey by the West. In one of his satirical short stories, for example, he targets the deleterious effect of Western tourism on Turkish agriculture and society.

Nesin, as Halman postulates, was overall against any type of oppression, especially economic oppression:

In scores of books, Nesin provided a strong indictment of the oppression and brutalization of the common man. His hero is the man in the street beleaguered by the inimical forces of modern life. He lambastes bureaucracy and exposes economic inequities in stories that effectively combine local color and universal verities.

(2009, p. 171)

This interest in economic inequities and resulting oppression allowed Nesin to both identify and critique Turkey's implication in its own tyranny.³ Alongside this accusation, Nesin was also seriously critical of the West's role in the oppression against Turkey. In her essay entitled "The Roots of Anti-Americanism in Turkey 1945-1960," Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç (2015) argues that in the late 1940s "those who were outspoken critics of the US included famous leftist novelists like Sabahattin Ali and Aziz Nesin. Ali and Nesin published a series of political satire magazines titled *Geveze*, *Marko Paşa*, *Merhum Paşa*, *Ali Baba*, *Başdan*, etc" (p. 257). Such authors intended to start an anti-American trend but to no avail. "Nesin," Bilgiç continues, "was sentenced to ten months in prison because he criticized American aid in his article titled 'Whither are we going?' which had[sic] been typeset at the printing house but not yet published" (2015, p. 257).

In this article, we make use of a postcolonial framework in order to read and critique Nesin's "Don't you have any Donkeys in Your Country?", arguing that Nesin gives voice to the subaltern peasant whose goal is to fight back the enduring effects of economic and cultural oppression. Through the notions of "anonymous collectivity" and "sly civility" in Nesin's story, we suggest Nesin mocks the West's exploitation of lower classes in Turkey and counteracts the Western stereotype of ignorant Turkish peasants by making a far more satisfactory ending for an apparently naïve Turkish peasant who could reclaim a slender shred of personal and national pride. In the following section we define what we mean by "anonymous collectivity" and "sly civility" and to see how these notions aid in considering Nesin's story and its context within a postcolonial framework.

"ANONYMOUS COLLECTIVITY" AND "SLY CIVILITY": TWO POSTCOLONIAL MEANS OF DEFIANCE

The concept of "anonymous collectivity" was first theorized by Albert Memmi (1990), in his work *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Memmi argued that the encounter with the colonized was largely based on negation. The colonizer, in Memmi's view, negated all the good attributes of the colonized to the extent that he was gradually deprived of both his humanity and individuality. Memmi called the process of gradual depersonalization "anonymous collectivity." He further argued that,

³ According to Orhan Kemal Cengiz, Nesin once resorted to the famous quote (proposed by Alexander Hamilton) that "the masses are asses" by saying that, "sixty percent of Turkish people are stupid!" (2008, p.26). Nesin's acerbic claim, however, was not an approval of some old-fashioned Western misconceptions about Easterners, but an indirect criticism of Turkish society that is ignorant of or even turns a blind eye to common stereotypes.

Another sign of the colonized's depersonalization is what one might call the mark of the plural. The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity ('They are this.' 'They are all the same.').

(1990, p. 129)

In the insistence on the term "anonymous collectivity" Memmi suggests that the colonizer intentionally addresses the colonized person with plural pronouns rather than the third person singular subjects of "he" or "she." We may wonder why the colonizer creates such a false and plural reference to a colonized individual. The colonizer's intentional focus on pronouns -as indicative of 'mass'-thinking in the 'anonymous collectivity' approach, is a kind of strategic way of controlling the colonized. That is, if the colonizer finds fault with a particular colonized subject, or if a single person stages a rebellion or breaks the law, the entire group could be labeled as rebellious transgressors by the colonizer. It is at this time that the colonizer can punish all the colonized for an act of defiance on the side of a single colonized person. Such a severe communal punishment would instill fear in the colonized not to ever imagine any acts of individual or communal defiance because for a single crime of an individual, the whole group has to pay off, no matter the colonized are right or wrong. In deliberating "anonymous collectivity," the colonizer aims to assert that all the colonized are exactly the same and that there is no essential difference between them and that horrendous violence of the colonizer in the colony for a petty crime is justifiable because its responsibility falls on the shoulders of the entire group.

Memmi's notion of "anonymous collectivity" is similar to Elleke Boehmer's notion of "crowd imagery" (1995, p. 95). Boehmer describes "crowd imagery" as a process of "othering" (p. 95). When the colonized person was "resistant to [the colonizer's] requirement," the European colonizer portrayed him/her as "unruly, inscrutable, or malign" and without individuality. Thus Europeans employed "crowd imagery" to represent the colonized's "lack of character and individual will" (p. 95).

Similar to Memmi, Fanon sees the colonial world as Manichean, a system of violence premised on false categories of good and evil, light and dark. Both Fanon and Memmi share the idea that the colonizer extends pluralization and sameness to all the colonized individuals. However, Fanon goes one step beyond Memmi when he theorizes that the answer to mass-thinking and sameness of the colonized is mass-thinking and the sameness of the colonizer. Although Fanon does not directly refer to "anonymous collectivity" for this theory, he extends Memmi's concept when he asserts, "To the saying 'All natives are the same' the colonized person replies, 'All settlers are the same'" (1963, p. 92). It is possible to infer from Memmi and Fanon's discussions that both the colonizer and the colonized resort to "anonymous collectivity" in the colonies for strategic reasons. For Memmi, "anonymous collectivity" is a false portrait created by the colonizer in order to reject the possibility of the colonized person's individuality. The problem of the colonial structure arises when this false portrait is accepted by the colonized in the sense that he or she may turn against themselves and in so doing adopt characteristics of the colonizer. This act could be seen as a defense mechanism on the part of the colonized as part of a wider attempt at survival and against the false portrait of "anonymous collectivity."

Although a potentially comprehensive term, Memmi's "anonymous collectivity" is restricted to the colonial system in which both the colonizer and the colonized are conditioned to accept the false portrait of anything negative attributed to the colonized community and, by contrast, anything positive to the colonizer. Nevertheless, we here suggest that this term is applicable to any kind of popular misconception about a particular gender, race, culture and it is specifically applicable to the Turkish context as we have argued above. It is also useful when considering misconceptions about particular religions. In her book *Islam, Muslims, and the U.S.*, Asma Barlas employs the concept of "anonymous collectivity"

to draw parallels between colonialism and fallacies about Islam and Muslims. “Like the colonizers,” Barlas (2004) asserts, “most non-Muslim Americans also believe of Muslims that ‘They are unpredictable!’ ‘With them, you never know!’ And, like the colonized, Muslims also are ‘never characterized in an individual manner; [they are] entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity’” (p. 65).

Ahad Mehrvand’s deployment of Memmi’s term in relation to the critique of literature has extended our understanding of the concept’s usefulness. For example, he identified the consequences of “anonymous collectivity” in works such as Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles* (Mehrvand, 2009) and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in which instead of punishing one individual as Fresleven’s murderer, the whole villagers imagined “would collectively be blamed for the actions of the single murderer” (Mehrvand, 2012, p. 53), and Richard Wright’s *Native Son* that discussed the issue of racism and its devastating effects on black Americans, particularly represented by the novel’s antihero Bigger Thomas. Here, Mehrvand shows “the extent to which ‘anonymous collectivity’ and the depersonalization that flows from it played a major role in Bigger’s first murder” (2012, p. 52).

For Mehrvand, the colonial context that gave rise to the theorization of “anonymous collectivity” has extended ways in which we might conceptualize the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, the colonizer and the colonized (Mehrvand, 2009, pp. 69-71). The practice of “anonymous collectivity” has been, Mehrvand argued, used to justify, rationalize or fight back against forms of perceived injustices or original violence (Mehrvand, 2012, p. 95).

While the practice of “anonymous collectivity” is one of the colonizer’s means of complete domination over the colonized, the latter is not devoid of reactions, but rather armed with their own secret weapons. In this regard, the colonial performance of “anonymous collectivity” is always present in the face of serious conflicts between the colonizer and the colonized. “Sly civility” is what Homi K. Bhabha (1994) calls those reactive, yet covert means of resistance employed by the colonized against the colonizer. In his seminal book *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha discusses the application of such non-proactive strategies as “mimicry,” “hybridity,” and “sly civility” by the colonized whose main objective is to obliquely challenge the authority of the colonizer.

The concept of “sly civility” entails a deliberate decision on the part of the colonized to resist and to disobey the colonizer, but this refusal is accomplished in such a way that the colonizer does not realize that he has been deceived (Bhabha, p. 99). By “sly civility,” Bhabha (1994) means a kind of strategic plan for indirectly refusing to fulfill the colonizer’s requirements, or “the native’s refusal to satisfy the colonizer’s narrative demand” (p.99). Nevertheless, such strategy, unlike “anonymous collectivity,” needs to be covert and unnoticed so that the colonizer will not be able to suppress the process. As Anne Fuchs (1999) explains in her book entitled *A Space of Anxiety*, “sly civility” can be regarded as “a form of civil disobedience masquerading under the disguise of civility” (p. 152).

Rather than stressing the helplessness of the colonized subjects and their victim-like position, “sly civility” underscores their capacity to withstand and challenge the psychological hegemony of the colonizer. Given that the colonizer resorts to blatant violence for any acts of overt resistance of the colonized, it is not unreasonable to expect a surreptitious psychological attack from the colonized subject through a series of indirect reactive strategies, all of which are part of a process, interestingly referred to as “psychological guerrilla warfare” (Moore-Gilbert, p. 132). The colonized, being disdained, denigrated, and denied of their fundamental rights, employ “sly civility” as a secretive means to both undermine the colonizing dominance and to recover their sense of self-esteem, all the while maintaining a pretense of civility.

Bhabha's "sly civility" bears some similarity to his concept of "mimicry," first expounded in "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" (1984). Set against a backdrop of colonialism, "mimicry" refers to a process of imitation by which the colonized, driven by a "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other," mimic the colonizer. Nonetheless, a colonized subject's emulation of a colonizer's manners and morals is not as pleasing, simple, and trouble-free for the colonizer as it seems. Whereas the final result of "mimicry" is intended to be a colonized subject's admission to a colonizer group, it never leads to sameness and identity. Rather, "mimicry," in Bhabha's words, renders the colonized "almost the same, but not quite." Furthermore, its ambivalence, that "mimicry" has the potential for mockery and that it might be developed into a means of subversion against the colonizer too, endows the term with both "resemblance and menace" (1984, pp. 7-126). Therefore, "mimicry" is not merely a simple emulation of the colonizer by the colonized, but a clever, indirect method of resistance in the form of a distorted imitation that has the potential to produce a seriously destabilizing effect on their seemingly unshakeable domination.

To sum up, "anonymous collectivity" and "sly civility" are two sides of the same coin – both are used to underline the tempestuous relationships between the colonizer and the colonized and neither is restricted to colonial situations. They could be used in any form of oppression. Both operate intentionally with a difference that the former is visible and direct, whereas the latter is indirect and covert. In the following section we aim to bring together and highlight moments where the practice of "sly civility" and "mimicry" are performed as antidotes or responses to the oppressive nature of the practice of "anonymous collectivity."

READING NESIN'S STORY IN LIGHT OF "ANONYMOUS COLLECTIVITY" AND "SLY CIVILITY"

For Memmi, colonization follows destructive and re-creative patterns: "It destroys and re-creates the two partners of colonization into colonizer and colonized. One is disfigured into an oppressor [...] the other into an oppressed creature" (1990, p. 89). Memmi argues that dehumanization is the resulting devastating impact of racism on the colonized. There are two kinds of dehumanization that could be inferred from Memmi's study of colonization. One is turning the colonized into an animal and an object, referring to the colonized with the singular third person pronoun "it" instead of "he" or "she," as Fanon, Memmi and Césaire claimed in their study of colonization.⁴ (Mehrvand, 2016, p. 25). The other is the practice of "anonymous collectivity" which, we assert, can also change the colonized subject into the plural third person pronoun "they," hence (he/ she → they). The purpose of dehumanization is "othering" and in the process, making the colonized inferior to the colonizer.

In Nesin's "Don't you have any Donkeys in Your Country?", the relationship between the American and the Turk is similar to that of the colonizer/oppressor and the colonized/oppressed along the lines that we have argued above. However, the Turkish professor/translator (twice), the American (six times) and the Turkish peasant (twice) intentionally use the plural names or the pronouns "they" and "them," whereas these pro/nouns, in fact, refer to a single person. We maintain that since both the Turkish peasant and the American refer to pluralization, such generalizations might be closely related to the

⁴ In "A Postcolonial Reading of Amiri Baraka's 21st Century Political Poem on America," Mehrvand draws upon Aimé Fernand David Césaire and Memmi's colonial discourse and defines colonization and decolonization through the use of third person pronouns. He asserts, "if colonization changes the colonized subject into an object/ animal (he/ she → it), decolonization reverses the order, creating a human being (it → he/ she)" (2016, p.25). Fanon's views on this subject support Césaire and Memmi's findings: "Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men, but this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself" (1963, pp. 36-37).

colonial concepts of “anonymous collectivity” and “sly civility” and they are playing a significant role in the deception in this story.

The Turkish professor in the story, whose main job was translating from Turkish to English and vice versa for the American Rug expert, is the one who, at the beginning of the story, comes to an anonymous narrator and tells the reason why he is so ashamed and “disgraced.” He is agitated over his participation in the business of buying a carpet for the American whereas the carpet was not given to him. The Turkish professor begins and ends his story, frequently slapping his hand and forehead, repeating “I am disgraced.” The narrator is both surprised and curious. Twice the Turkish professor tells the anonymous narrator that he felt so because in his presence “They sold a man a broken down, mangy donkey for two thousand five hundred liras” (Nesin, 1998, p. 101).

The question is that who the pronoun “they” in the above excerpt refers to. After reading the whole story, we see that this plural pronoun refers to the Turkish peasant who sold the donkey. We may infer that the Turkish peasant’s apparently unconscious use of a plural pronoun in the above quote is much in line with what Memmi refers to as the colonial concept of “anonymous collectivity” which goes beyond mere pluralization and generalization because, as we assert, “anonymous collectivity” in the form of the plural pronoun “they” in the above statement shows the reversal of power relations between the inferior Eastern locals and the superior Western tourists. Trickery is a method used by both the skilled American and the apparently inexperienced Turkish peasant to outsmart each other in the carpet-donkey trade.

Similarly, in the story, the Turkish peasant twice draws upon plural pronouns when he utters the plural noun “Turks” whereas he truly meant “a Turk” or “he” himself. Here the Turkish peasant refuses to sell his donkey to the American, because he says that since his donkey is old and broken down, “It would be a shame to do an American like that. He’ll go home and say Turks swindled him” (Nesin, 1998, p. 104). The Turkish peasant is curious to know why the American intends to buy his donkey which is also mangy, lame, and male: “Just ask this American effendi: ‘don’t they have any donkeys at all in his country?’”

The Turkish peasant’s first usage of the plural noun in the above paragraph intends to surprise the American, while encouraging him to believe in the Turkish peasant’s apparent honesty and innocence in business. It is used to create a level of trust in the deal with the American. However, the second use aims to show how rare donkeys are in his country, which may imply that the Turkish peasant is amazed to know that donkeys are also rare in the U.S.

In the story the American demystifies that his true intention is not buying the donkey, but the old carpet at the back of the donkey. The American discloses that he is an accomplished writer of three books on carpets and a holder of “an enormous treasure” of ancient rugs (Nesin, 1998, p. 102). Through what the American rug expert called “methods” and “tactics,” for some four decades, as he proudly boasted, he had been tricking the locals into selling him some valuable antiques in exchange for a small amount of money. In one case, for instance, he bragged how he cheated an Iranian peasant by coaxing him into selling a precious piece of carpet for only one dollar whereas it was worth “at least thirty thousand dollars” because it had eighty knots. However, in his close analysis of the dirty carpet on the back of the donkey, the American confessed to the Turkish professor that the carpet was “a masterpiece” with an amazing color and design, and fabulous workmanship: “It has exactly *one hundred and twenty knots* [emphasis added] per cubic centimeter. Nothing like that has been seen in the world before, it’s priceless” (Nesin, 1998, p. 104). He further claimed that the best carpet in the world had *only a hundred knots*. So he had to buy the donkey in order to deceive the donkey seller to give the old, dusty and torn carpet as a bonus because he was sure that the peasant would ask for a lot of money if he directly asked for the carpet.

In the donkey-carpet trade, the American uses plural nouns and pronouns five times. The first and the second use of it occur in a conversation in which both the American and the Turkish peasant referred to the Turkish peasant with a plural noun/pronoun. In the following dialogue, we have italicized the references to what we call “anonymous collectivity” (the intentional pluralization) in order to highlight the inconsistencies arising from the use of plural (pro)nouns whereas their referents are singular subjects. The conversation is begun by the peasant:

“It would be a shame to do an American like that. He’ll go home and say *Turks* [emphasis added] swindled him” I told the American this. “*The Turkish peasants* [emphasis added] are a very innocent, very honest people,” he said. “Anywhere else *they* [emphasis added] would have sold it to me right away. Since he’s a good hearted fellow, I will pay him a lot of money.” (Nesin, 1998, p. 104)

It is important to know that both the American and the peasant use third person singular pronouns along with the plural ones. The reason why both resort to what we call “anonymous collectivity” is to use the Manichean value system (approved of by the Turks) that intends to say “the Turks” as a group are good/innocent and that they are not evil/swindlers. In fact, through their own “methods” (of national stereotypes), the Turkish peasant and the American draw upon the same concept of “anonymous collectivity” to either prevent distrust or build trust in the donkey-carpet trade, respectively. The idea that the swindle would bring shame and dishonor to the Turks rather than the Turkish peasant per se is an example of accepting “anonymous collectivity” by the peasant. Also, the American’s depersonalization of the Turks prevented him from seeing the individuality of this Turkish peasant who is not as naïve and innocent as the American thought him to be. An interesting aspect of Nesin’s story is the two main characters’ similar attitudes towards one another; that is, they both consciously recourse to and accept the use of plural pro/nouns, believing that the other is the deceiver and that they may have been deceived in the deal. For instance, the Turkish peasant, who had received two thousand five hundred liras for such a donkey which was about to die any moment and whose true value was just five liras, says, “I probably sold my broken down, mangy donkey too cheap but never mind” (Nesin, 1998, p. 105).

The third to the sixth uses of pluralization by the American have been italicized in the following excerpt, which entails an attempt to trade the donkey. After counting a list of disadvantages of the donkey, the American is shocked to hear that the donkey’s price is raised to ten thousand liras. It is at this time that for four times he refers to the Turkish peasant with plural (pro)nouns to show that they are the same and evil.

“Didn’t I tell you? That’s the way *these people* [emphasis added] are. *They* [emphasis added] want lots of money because *they* [emphasis added] think it’s valuable. What if we had tried to buy the carpet? He’d have wanted a hundred thousand liras. I could offer him ten thousand liras for the donkey but then he would want fifty thousand when I started to pay him. That’s why you have to bargain firmly with *them* [emphasis added].” (Nesin, 1998, p. 105)

In Nesin’s story, the American rug expert adopts a denigrating approach to the locals as he constantly boasts about how he swindled them out of their valuable objects. However, his confidence in belittling the Turkish locals is undermined as he himself is outwitted by a Turkish peasant at the end of the story, an event indicating that he was insensitive to the values of the local culture. The way in which the American rug expert repeats a general misconception that people and their living conditions are the same in Turkey as in other places in the Near East also carries the Manichean “connotations of a binary contest between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘self’ and ‘other’” (McEwan, 2014). Similarly, in this story as the above

quote shows, the binary opposition makes the Turks as “them/Others whereas the Americans could be “us”/“we”/self.

Apart from the use of colonial discourse, cultural and economic exploitation is another issue Nesin has depicted in his sarcastic short story. The Turkish peasant’s complaint against the locals and the foreigners is indicative of such exploitative approaches,

‘Our people here are real lowdown types,’ the peasant said. ‘They have sold all our country’s treasures to the foreigners. They found such stone columns and tombs that if they could learn their value and sell them, they could found ten more Turkeys [...] and who are these foreigners we’re talking about? They’re all of them thieves. They have continually pilfered these antiques that are dug up and smuggled them out.’

(Nesin, 1998, p. 103)

In his thesis entitled “The Western Image of Turks from the Middle Ages to the 21st Century: The Myth of ‘Terrible Turk’ And ‘Lustful Turk’” Nevsal Olcen Tiryakioglu (2015) asserts, “Terrible Turk” and “Lustful Turks” were two of the most dominant stereotypical and negative images of the Turks in “Western discourse since the Middle Ages that they have become a myth which survived until the 21st century” (p. 2). The stereotype ‘Terrible Turk’ was, accordingly, associated “with themes such as, despotism, indolence, backwardness, ignorance, sensuality and sexual vices.” (p. 4). Tiryakioglu postulated that even Orientalist depictions of the Turks represented their ignorance and mental deficiency: “Turks’ indolence, inferiority and barbarous nature were not the only features that were emphasized by the European travelers. Their ‘ignorance’ and ‘backwardness’ were also predominantly represented in the Orientalist discourse” (p. 120).

Nesin intended to fight back against Western stereotypes⁵ such as “Terrible Turks” or ignorant and backward Turks, which aimed to show how evil, backward, indolent, and ignorant the Turks were. Through the use of the titular pun on donkeys that was indicative of his witticism and a riveting story rich in conveying the representation of practices such as “anonymous collectivity” and “sly civility,” Nesin was showing of the stupidity of the American tourist. In “Don’t You have any Donkeys in Your Country?”, Nesin employs certain strategies reminding us of colonial discourse and postcolonial theory. His characters’ power and cultural relationships in the trade are suggestive of a remarkable similarity between the East-West relations and colonial conditions in a sense that the American rug expert’s attitude towards the locals as far as the opposition of smart/good self and ignorant/evil other is concerned is strikingly similar to that of the colonizer’s towards the colonized. The rug expert is not an inexperienced newcomer. He has already travelled all around the Eastern countries seeking his fortune. He has witnessed how the local peasants there “have gotten lazy and now they don’t sow anything,” how they “have left their work and they sell whatever they find by digging up the excavation to all those foreigners that pour in,” and how they have become crafty swindlers in palming off their fakes as genuine works of art (Nesin, 1998, p. 103). That is why some nine times the American uses the phrase “it is the same” when he refers to the Turks and the Asians in general, which means he sees them through the lens of Manichean dichotomy that divides evil from good and the Easterners/the same from the Westerners/the different.

The ending of the story, however, is significant due to the transformation that occurs to the American from “anonymous collectivity” to the true identity of the individual Turkish peasant as a different being. The significance lies in the fact that his depersonalized and pluralized concepts of the Turks who were assumed to be the same is replaced by his acceptance of the true identity of this Turk who is an individual and not like the others: “The

⁵ According to Esmail Zeiny and Noraini Md Yusof, “These stereotypes gain their power from repetition, especially repetitions of representation of difference” (2016, p. 134).

American rug expert said, ‘Now this is something that doesn’t go on anywhere else. It’s never happened to me before. Everything is the same as elsewhere here, but this is a different sort of a ploy’” (Nesin, 1998, p. 106).

The ending of the story is also remarkable due to the clever use of the “stake” of the donkey as the symbol of loss. In fact, the American rug expert lost his money, the donkey and the possibility of collecting the rug whereas he paid a lot of money and only gained a stake. Towards the ending of the story, suspense occurs when the peasant calls after the dealers saying, “Stop, stop, you forgot the donkey’s thing.” The thing, however, was just “the iron donkey stake with the ring on the end from his hand” symbolizing that the American dealer staked both his money and reputation on a useless saddlecloth. The American wanted to add the stake to his collection as a souvenir. More surprisingly, he thought he got the stake “cheap at two thousand five hundred.” But what kind of a clever, experienced Westerner can assume it a good deal? Although the American rug expert’s forty years of experience is hardly comparable with the peasant’s five years of selling donkeys, the method of swindling and haggling employed by the Turkish peasant was more effective due to his mastery of deceptive techniques by making the American believe his surface sincerity, thus providing the conditions for his final deception.

In the following paragraphs, we aim to show how the Turkish peasant’s counter-chicanery in selling out a useless donkey for an exorbitant price can be seen as an instance of “sly civility,” and by doing so, a good example of the similarity between Turkey and a colonized country is illustrated. In Nesin’s story, characters deploy tactics of subversion in different ways. This is evident in the Turkish peasant’s linguistic reaction against the American trader’s degrading treatment of the locals as well as his resort to “anonymous collectivity.” First, the peasant adamantly refuses to sell his old, male, lame, mangy, broken-down and dying donkey at a high price proposed by the American so as to make him believe that he (the peasant) is a naïve, artless man. However, later his crafty plan is revealed to the American dealer when he (the American) realizes that the peasant was already aware of the saddlecloth’s high value and yet treated otherwise as though he was ignorant of its worth. The peasant’s initial deliberate concealment and his subsequent deception are highly consistent with the practice of “sly civility” as theorized by Bhabha. Such strategy is a negative reaction to the colonizer’s recourse to “anonymous collectivity.” In the peasant’s case, “sly civility” proves the falsity of the American dealer’s (the Westerner’s) fallacious generalizations regarding the locals (the Easterner).

Given that the situation of Turkish peasants was similar to that of colonized people, and by making use of Bhabha’s “sly civility,” it is reasonable to assume that in the donkey deal scene, the Turkish peasant does not intend to “satisfy” the American and that he refuses to play the role of a deceived man. Indeed, through many examples, the Turkish peasant may have realized that there was no place for a submissive role for Turkish peasants. Since trust is central to the trade, the peasant has adopted the policy of honesty to earn the rug expert’s trust. Therefore, he tells the American and his translator lots of stories about the Turkish peasants tricking the foreigners into buying their fakes as genuine works. Such a clever policy works well because by his apparently honest depiction of the Turks’ evil aspect he can communicate through the stereotypical image of “Terrible Turks.” This policy makes him sound like an honest, naïve and innocent peasant who never imagines deception in his trade because he frankly says to them everything is wrong with the Turks and the donkey. His policy, then, is nothing but what Bhabha called “sly civility.”

We stress that just like the American rug expert in Nesin’s story who was proud of the way he swindled the Turkish and Asian peasants for less than half a century, the Turkish peasant discloses several cases in which the local peasants resorted to swindling back the Americans for the same period of time.—Drawing upon Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and

Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, we assert that Nesin's story is postcolonial because it writes back, though indirectly, to the dominant Western discourse and it "foreground[s] the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing [its] differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (2002, p. 2).

CONCLUSION

Having transcended the boundaries of time and place, postcolonial studies today embrace more different fields of study to such an extent that any limitation to the scope would seem unreasonable until proven otherwise. Accordingly, given that Turkey has undergone some fundamental changes over the last century, we maintain that no other Middle Eastern country has been more exposed to and influenced by the Western culture than Turkey. Just as a colonized country struggles for keeping its national identity, so too modern Turkey has, ever since its foundation in 1923, struggled against Western cultural imperialism. Nesin, we insist, was aware of and worried about the dire consequences of turning a blind eye to one's own national identity, and thus voiced concern for the potential danger of the West's exploitation of his native land.

This study contributes to the literature on postcolonialism, first by raising the possibility of including modern Turkey in postcolonial studies, and then by examining Nesin's response towards the postcolonial-like ideology whereby it is inferred that not only do we embrace reading modern Turkish literature through postcolonial terms such as "anonymous collectivity" and "sly civility," but we also use an example, a Turkish short story, to substantiate the claim that a postcolonial discourse is applicable to modern, non-colonized Turkey. Nesin's narrative reverses the dominant ideologies of clever and knowledgeable Americans by making a subaltern Turkish peasant resist the negative effects of economic and cultural oppression. We specifically conclude that more than the story itself, the implication of this satiric story is significant. In fact, forty years of the American rug expert's deception is insignificant in comparison with five years of the Turkish peasant's defiance in which he collects the profit of the business without losing the donkey. Nesin's "Don't You Have any Donkeys in Your Country?" intends to condemn the oppression and the brutalization of the Turkish peasants by the American tourists. Surrounded by an aura of mistrust, the type of the relationship between the local peasant and the American rug expert in Nesin's short story is strongly reminiscent of a colonizer/colonized relationship whose defining characteristics, including domination and cultural exploitation, are closely associated with identity crisis. In summary, the current study unveils just the tip of the iceberg of a greater world in Nesin's stories, replete with quasi-postcolonial situations in modern Turkey. As just one example from his numerous works, the short story "Don't You Have any Donkeys in Your Country?" is an implicit criticism of the way cultural exploitation, under the guise of business in tourism, gradually deprives a country and its people of their individual and socio-cultural identity making them fight back against the colonizer's deception in business and their misrepresentation of the Turkish peasants as gullible, naïve and illiterate individuals.

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