In memory of Donald Quataert
(1941-2011)
Cengiz Korkut

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the Ottomans tried to create a uniform code. Yet, this attitude—namely, creating a religion with a definite beginning and end, without leaving any space for doctrinal *ikhtilaf*—was the spirit of the age shared by both Orientalists and Muslim reformers. This minor quibble aside, Semerdjian’s study is successful in complicating modern perceptions of Islamic law as they are found both in its traditional milieu and within the Islamic world today. It is well worth to pick up and engage with this book.

**Ramazan Hakkı Öztan**
University of Utah

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Reading Amy Mills’s book had an irrevocable impact on my relationship with the Kuzguncuk neighborhood in İstanbul. It all started in the early 1990s when I visited friends living there in a semi-communal apartment building. They were students of Boğaziçi University, who had moved there, refraining from living in the residential areas generally preferred by Boğaziçi student communities (such as Cihangir and Hisarüstü). Then, Kuzguncuk was only at the very beginning of its gentrification; rents were low enough for students to afford. Rents were no longer cheap when I became re-acquainted with Kuzguncuk in 1998. I was about to move from Ankara to Istanbul and stayed at a close friend’s place for two weeks while I was looking for an apartment in the city. Then I moved to Ortaköy, on the other side of the Bosporus, across from Kuzguncuk, but I kept going back to the neighborhood to visit my friend. During this time I shopped at its grocery store, ate köfte (meatball) at the street vendor’s in front of the church on İcadiye Street (which has by now become a small restaurant), had breakfast at Çınaraltı Café, ate fish and drank rakı (anis flavored Turkish spirit) at İsmet Baba, and started going to the local hairdresser.

We often talked about the old *mahalle* (neighborhood) atmosphere of Kuzguncuk that Amy Mills discusses in her book. Sharing greetings with the grocer, hot summer night visits to Çınaraltı for the nice breeze it offers, and similar lived experiences are the stuff of my pleasant personal memories about Kuzguncuk from these years. The pleasant mem-
ory of the place began to change once I started reading Mills’ book. One of the first disturbances was about Ilya’s *bostan* (vegetable garden). During the time when I frequently visited Kuzguncuk, there were plans to build in this green area amidst the neighborhood, and the *Kuzguncuklu-\-lar Derneği* (the neighborhood association) was calling for support to act against the development. What disturbed me was learning from Mills’ book that the *bostan* which the association was trying to protect was in fact private property that had previously belonged to a Greek family and that it had been confiscated by the Turkish state; indeed, there still exists a member of that family who now lives in another neighborhood, on the European side of İstanbul.

Kuzguncuk’s cosmopolitan past, the lived multi-cultural (meaning multi-religious) *mahalle* life, was always highlighted by the association’s discourse on neighborhood belonging and in their argument on why the *bostan* should be protected. Reading *Streets of Memory* enabled me to realize that this story was actually making invisible something very important: the not-so-pleasant history of non-Muslims in Kuzguncuk. The multi-culturalist discourse embraced by the association did not publicly acknowledge the sufferings of non-Muslims, despite the fact that the *bostan* was living evidence of this suffering. It was as if the *bostan* had no specific history, which is in fact a painful one for non-Muslims, one that Muslim Turks pretend to forget or prefer to be silent about.

In December 2010, the neighborhood association organized yet another demonstration and festival in opposition to the development plans. I was there. The half-day event started with a march from Çınaraltı to the *bostan*, with people carrying wooden scarecrows as symbols of their will to protect this green area from the planned development. The scarecrows, which actually looked very much like wooden crosses, were then put aside as the festival started: food was served and talks were being delivered. I looked at the scarecrows and imagined in their place a cemetery of non-Muslims. The sight of them made it impossible for me to cheer up and join in the festive protests that day, as I could not get rid of the imaginary cemetery in my mind. I encountered the scarecrows again in February 2011, while walking along İcadiye Street, the road that cuts across the neighborhood and leads down to the sea. This time they were on display, attached to trees along the road, dressed and made to look like human beings. It was but impossible for me not to imagine them as the ghosts of the non-Muslims who had to leave Kuzguncuk.

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Streets of Memory investigates the intersections of nationalism, ethnicity, and identity in their situatedness in place. Mills approaches the question of national identity from the perspective of a cultural geographer, putting place and landscape first and showing how the urban cultural transformation of the landscape has an integral role to play in the process of imagining the nation. Focusing on the street as the locus of collective memory, Mills explains the ways in which Turkish national identity is performed in everyday urban life among ordinary Muslim Turks and non-Muslims who have common—yet often conflicting—claims to place. Mills links the scale of the street to that of the city and then to the scale of the nation, to show how belonging to the nation is manifest in the production of belonging to the neighborhood.

Mills explains how urban transformation is related to the changing cultural profiles of populations occupying the neighborhood, their reasons for coming and leaving, their narratives of belonging (what is called Kuzguncuklu olmak). In the 1950s, it was the history of the involuntary emigration of non-Muslims away from Kuzguncuk and a simultaneous population of the neighborhood by Muslim Turkish immigrants of rural background coming from the Black Sea region to Istanbul. This particular transformation had a lot to do with property transfer from leaving non-Muslims (Armenians, Jews, and Greeks) to incoming Muslim Turks. After the 1980s, another urban transformation took place, this time by way of gentrification, which involved the transfer of property from lower-middle-class immigrants or residents of working-class background, to upper-middle-class urbanites capable of appropriating not only economic, but also cultural capital, in the form of the historical residential urban fabric in the neighborhood and its re-processed cosmopolitan associations. Mills shows how revoking this cosmopolitan history via a multi-culturalist discourse, voiced by secular educated urbanites currently gentrifying the neighborhood, works to obscure and silence a painful history of ethnic discrimination.

Chapter One gives the historical background to the particular urban context of present-day Kuzguncuk, which has a powerful image in the imaginary geography of Istanbul as a place with harmonious multi-ethnic history and nostalgic mahalle character. Dwelling on nationalist state policies such as the “Citizen Speak Turkish” Campaign of the early Republic, the 1942-43 Wealth Tax, the September 6-7, 1955 pogroms, and the 1964 deportation of Greek citizens, Mills demonstrates how the Turkish state produces a narrative of the Turkish nation through the transformation of inhabited urban space. Mills puts this history into context in her examination of the Turkification of Istanbul and shows
how the residents inhabit the nationalizing city and make sense of the state’s national imaginary.

In Chapter Two, Mills analyzes how the nostalgic image of Kuzguncuk—as a cosmopolitan neighborhood accommodating peaceful multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural co-existence—is constructed. Focusing on the relationship between the material environment and its image, Mills shows the ways in which the material urban fabric, represented as evidence of undestroyed mahalle life, is used to create an aura of authenticity in Kuzguncuk. Streets of Memory demonstrates that imagination, which invokes representations, is closely connected to the social production of landscape “on the ground,” by drawing on how the “real” Kuzguncuk is defined by its representations in popular television series that re-enact and celebrate old-fashioned mahalle relations. Mills explains how “landscape” is created in the image of collective memory and how then the material built environment is called forth and presented as objective evidence of the narrative represented by the landscape. In other words, Mills shows how place and memory are constitutive of each other. This explains how landscape production, as an imagined harmonious mahalle in the case of Kuzguncuk, is an ideological act that works to erase the facts of its production.

In Chapter Three, Mills focuses on the bostan as a contested place and on how visions of its pasts and futures reveal competing claims to the neighborhood, which define belonging to or exclusion from the nation. Mills explains how the struggle by the Kuzguncuklular Association, voiced under the banner “The bostan belongs to the people of Kuzguncuk,” transmits not easily visible signs of an obscured cultural politics. In this picture, the bostan becomes a symbol of “lost İstanbul,” the object of nostalgic longing for an imagined past adorned with memories of tolerance. This nostalgic view of a harmonious past is challenged by the non-Muslim perspective that is voiced by the last descendant of the Greek family who used to own the bostan. Mills shows the ways in which the dominant politics of nationalism and identity performed by the ordinary (dominantly Muslim Turkish) residents of Kuzguncuk relate to uneasy issues, such as non-Muslim property confiscated by the state in particular and the histories of non-Muslims in İstanbul in the twentieth century in general.

Chapter Four brings together a variety of perspectives on the events of 6-7 September 1955 and puts them into conversation with each other as they converge on the attacks on non-Muslim property on İcadiye Street. Mills shows how narratives of normative collective memory suggest that “the riots have never happened in Kuzguncuk,” although these
two historical days have had traumatizing effects on all Kuzguncuklus and have entailed a silence about how actually cosmopolitan neighborhood life there was destroyed. From a past not mourned, from the fact that there was no open grieving in memory of the riots in the neighborhood emerges a nostalgia for a unifying nation-state memory producing its own propriety—a nostalgia that is the flip side of silence.

Chapter Five analyzes the role of gender in belonging and exclusion in Kuzguncuk. Mills shows how ethnic differences are lived and reproduced in convivial neighborhood relations among women, and how rules of propriety govern their neighboring relations and work to betray a traumatic local history. Mills compares the neighboring practices of long-term resident women of Black Sea origin and recently arrived middle- and upper-middle-class women, with neighborhood life among poor minority women who have inter-married and the more recently immigrated, and sometimes conservative, Muslim women. She shows how the recently arrived, economically and socially more mobile women want more personal privacy than the women of Black Sea origin, who are mostly housewives. This prevents the former from establishing old-fashioned maballe-like ties in the residential community through komşuluk, defined by the author as a socio-spatial tactic that involves the habit of ongoing, spontaneous, and reciprocal visiting. By analyzing the poor minority and Muslim women and the dynamics of their neighboring practices, Mills makes a case that gender also plays a role in the construction of national identity. This chapter shows that belonging to a neighborhood community is realized only at the price of minuscule practices of oppressive propriety.

In Chapter Six, Mills focuses on the role of the neighborhood in constructing and maintaining the identity of Kuzguncuklu Jews. Mills conducted interviews with Jews from Kuzguncuk both in İstanbul and Tel Aviv and saw that the latter were openly narrating their stories while the former were not. Kuzguncuklu Jews who continue to live in İstanbul—not all are necessarily living in Kuzguncuk now—did not want to talk openly about past negative events against non-Muslims, due to the fear that this would increase their ethnic community’s vulnerability. Indeed, they were in some cases voicing a positive discourse of tolerance in public, while among themselves they expressed a tension about being a member of an ethnic minority in Turkey. Meanwhile, Kuzguncuklu Jews in Tel Aviv not only maintained a continued attachment to Kuzguncuk, but they also re-enacted the elite İstanbulite discourse emphasizing the rural-urban divide and inferiorizing the rural migrants coming to İstanbul with regard to a hierarchy of culturedness. According to this hi-
There is some minor information missing from the book: First, when Mills writes about the population profiles of several historically non-Muslim neighborhoods undergoing gentrification within the last two to three decades, she fails to mention the Black Sea immigrants who have been populating Fener beginning with the 1940s (p. 20).\(^1\) This would have been interesting to know in terms of thinking about the similarities and differences between Fener and Kuzguncuk regarding their non-Muslim pasts and post-1955 ethnic compositions,\(^2\) both marked by a predominance of Black Sea immigrants. Second, giving a short history of Beyoğlu from the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, Mills writes that here ports were developed for trade with European countries (p. 21). It sounds as if a port in this area emerged for the first time in the nineteenth century. In fact, a port existed in Galata at least since the time of Constantine I (324-337).\(^3\) Third, to demonstrate that the historical landscape is consumed through its nostalgic images, Mills gives the example of postcards and reproductions of the famous photographer Ara Güler’s photographs of 1950s Beyoğlu, displayed on the walls of Ara Café, which is owned by the photographer himself (p. 21). Here, she falls short of adding that Ara Güler himself is Armenian.\(^4\) In other words, in this case the producer of such images is a non-Muslim. This would have been relevant to the discussion of the consumption of historically non-Muslim neighborhoods in the form of cultural commodities in cases of gentrification (whose cultural value derive partly from their non-Muslim pasts). Indeed, Ara Café is an establishment that contributes to the gentrification of Beyoğlu.

There is some ambiguity in the way in which Mills tells the story of how immigrants to İstanbul in the 1860s rode the newly introduced steamboats from the Black Sea region to İstanbul and how some of them settled in Bosporus villages such as Kuzguncuk (p. 41). First of all, it is not clear how she knows that one of those villages in which nineteenth-

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2 Here I refer to the pogroms of September 6-7, 1955.
4 I have also reviewed Mills’ own article that she gives as reference here (“Narratives in City Landscapes. Cultural Identity in Istanbul,” Geographical Review 95, no.3 (2005): 441-62), but I could not find any mention of Güler’s Armenian identity.
century immigrants settled was Kuzguncuk. Second, the Şirket-i Hayriye was founded in 1854 as an intra-city company running steamboats within İstanbul. Mills explains how the company built its first boat station in Kuzguncuk, after the restoration of the market area swept by a big fire that burnt 500 shops along the main street in 1865. We understand that the Şirket-i Hayriye boat service thus connected Kuzguncuk to İstanbul, making the former accessible for incoming immigrants to live and work there. But the way in which Mills tells this story is confusing: it sounds as if it was the Şirket-i Hayriye steamboats that carried immigrants from the Black Sea to İstanbul.

Mills notes that “today there are no meyhanes [taverns] in Kuzguncuk,” forgetting about the İsmet Baba meyhane next to Çinaraltı by the sea (p. 45). Similarly, businesses in up-and-coming “soft” industries (such as advertising, communication consultancy, public relations) that are common in gentrifying neighborhoods all over the world are also missing among those listed by Mills (during her time of research). Tribeca, a company specializing in communication consultancy and founded in 1997, is a good example. The founder of the company notes in his statement on the company website that Tribeca was named after the eponymous New York neighborhood, known for being populated by artists and intellectuals. For Kuzguncuk struck the co-founder of the business as similar to Tribeca, where he had lived in the past and which he had liked very much. Knowing about this dimension of the story gives us a better idea about the story of Kuzguncuk’s gentrification in comparison to other such cases in both local and global terms.

On two different pages in the last chapter, Mill gives us inconsistent information about when exactly Muslim Turkish immigrants with rural origins flowed into Kuzguncuk. On page 191, she notes that “the late 1930s and 1940s […] witnessed the first significant wave of rural-urban Turkish Muslim migration to Kuzguncuk,” while on page 198 she writes: “After the 1960s rural migration began to impact Kuzguncuk.” Perhaps this is a matter of expression: does she mean to say that immigrants started settling in Kuzguncuk in the late 1930s and the 1940s, while their impact on the neighborhood became visible only later in the 1960s? If this is the case, then a clarification of expression is needed.

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Mills’ book raises questions about the assumed top-down process of nation-making that is authored by the state and only adopted by urban residents. The author shows how urban residents appropriate the national narrative produced by the state, how they make it their own via identification with an urban place. The book discusses the extent to which the state has primacy in producing the nation, and the extent to which ordinary residents have power to sustain or to dismantle nationalist ideology. In other words, Streets of Memory shows how Kuzguncuk, a gentrifying neighborhood known for its close mahalle ties and harmonious multi-ethnic past, through its production, commodification, and interpretation becomes a medium through which nationalist ideology is made meaningful for urban residents. Mills argues that the nostalgia for a cosmopolitan past is a privatization of the state narrative. Furthermore, the imagination of a harmonious multi-ethnic mahalle life becomes integral to the production of cultural capital through urban space in the form of the gentrification of this historically non-Muslim mahalle.

The cultural politics of national identity work through the urban landscape, which plays an integral role in the reproduction and contestation of national imaginaries. Streets of Memory makes a novel contribution to the study of national identity in Turkey by locating it in urban space and thereby spatializing the making and maintaining of the nation through urban residents’ everyday practices. It also demonstrates very well the connections between the production of national identity and that of urban space through its focus on gentrification as a process in which local history becomes cultural commodity; thus, it also contributes to the literature on gentrification in İstanbul.

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