

# Displacement and Liminality in *Birds Without Wings* by Louis de Bernières

## Louis de Bernières'in *Kanatsız Kuşlar*'ında Sürgün ve Eşiksellik

Neslihan GÜNAYDIN ALBAY 

Doğuş Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi,  
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı, İstanbul, Türkiye  
Doğuş University, Faculty of Faculty of Arts and  
Sciences, İstanbul, Türkiye  
nalbay@dogus.edu.tr  
(Sorumlu Yazar-Corresponding Author)



### Abstract

Penned in 2004 by Louis de Bernières and articulated through the viewpoints of diverse characters, *Birds Without Wings* illuminates the harrowing scenes of war and their impact on local inhabitants and migrants during the formative years of the new Turkish Republic. Examining the reverberations of the national struggle in the international context, this paper specifically investigates the repercussions of the population exchange between Greece and the emerging Turkish state in 1923, focusing on a South-West Anatolian village (Eskibahçe) in a tumultuous historical era, which is the central issue in *Birds Without Wings*. Employing polyphony, that is, a multi-voiced narrative style with Bakhtin's terminology about the novels with a variety of perspectives and narrators, the novel explores themes such as war, love, forced migration, and identity. The plot unfolds against the backdrop of a multicultural late Ottoman Empire, where Turkish-speaking Christian villagers and Greek Orthodox migrants initially coexist harmoniously but later face social isolation and loneliness after being exiled to Greece. Therefore, this paper aims to underscore individual and social isolation resulting from the devastating impact of wars on the idyllic lives of villagers in *Birds Without Wings*, drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's third space theory. Another objective of this study is to demonstrate that *Birds Without Wings* celebrates hybridity and ethnic diversity by reevaluating the forced migration between Greece and Turkey, prompting reflection on the villagers' attempts to redefine their identities after the Turkish Republic's establishment and an analysis of its long-term implications.

**Keywords:** Liminality, displacement, Louis de Bernières, *Birds Without Wings*, third space

### Öz

2004 yılında Louis de Bernières tarafından kaleme alınan ve farklı karakterlerin bakış açılarıyla dile getirilen *Kanatsız Kuşlar*, yeni Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluş yıllarında savaşın yürek parçalayıcı sahnelerini ve bunların yerel halk ile göçmenler üzerindeki etkisini aydınlatmaktadır. Millî mücadelenin uluslararası bağlamdaki yansımalarını inceleyen bu makale, özellikle Yunanistan ile 1923'te ortaya çıkan Türk devleti arasındaki nüfus mübadelesinin yansımalarını, çalkantılı bir tarihsel dönemde Güneybatı Anadolu'daki bir köye (Eskibahçe) odaklanarak araştırmaktadır ki bu da *Kanatsız Kuşlar*'ın ana konusunu oluşturur. Romanları farklı bakış açıları ve anlatıcılarla anlatan Bakhtin'in terminolojisiyle çok sesli bir anlatım tarzının kullanıldığı romanda savaş, aşk, zorunlu göç, kimlik gibi temalar işlenmektedir. Hikâye, Türkçe konuşan Hıristiyan köylülerin ve Rum Ortodoks göçmenlerin başlangıçta uyumlu bir şekilde bir arada yaşadığı, ancak daha sonra Yunanistan'a sürgün edildikten sonra sosyal izolasyon ve yalnızlıkla karşı karşıya kaldığı, çok kültürlü Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son dönemine bağlı olarak gelişmektedir. Bu nedenle bu makale, Homi K. Bhabha'nın üçüncü mekân teorisine dayalı olarak, *Kanatsız Kuşlar*'daki söz konusu savaşların köylülerin cennet gibi yaşamı üzerindeki yıkıcı etkilerini ve sonrasında ortaya çıkan bireysel ve toplumsal izolasyona dikkat çekmeyi amaçlamaktadır köylülerin cennet gibi yaşamı üzerindeki yıkıcı etkilerini ve sonrasında ortaya çıkan bireysel ve toplumsal izolasyona dikkat çekmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın bir diğer amacı da Yunanistan ile Türkiye arasındaki zorunlu göçü yeniden değerlendirerek romanın melezliği ve etnik çeşitliliği desteklediğini göstermek, köylülerin Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşundan sonra kimliklerini yeniden tanımlama girişimlerine ışık tutmak ve bu sürecin uzun vadedeki etkilerini analiz etmektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eşiksellik, sürgün, Louis de Bernières, *Kanatsız Kuşlar*, üçüncü mekân

Geliş Tarihi/Received 08.01.2024  
Kabul Tarihi/Accepted 06.05.2024  
Yayın Tarihi/Publication Date 22.06.2024

Cite this article: Günaydın Albay, N. (2024). Displacement and liminality in *Birds Without Wings* by Louis de Bernières. *Current Perspectives in Social Sciences*, 28(2), 271-280.



Content of this journal is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

## Introduction

In the early twentieth century, a substantial portion of the non-Muslim population was forcibly displaced from the recently delineated borders of the Turkish Republic and nation-state. In his novel *Birds Without Wings*, De Bernières challenges the legitimacy of criteria like race, religion, and language in the context of nation-building. He mourns the departure of Greek residents from an Anatolian town, lamenting the loss of an idyllic way of life. The article posits that the central theme of *Birds Without Wings* revolves around “multiculturalism,” emphasizing how the novel illustrates dynamic relationships implied by the term through formal and narrative elements like chapter organization, shifting perspectives, blending of languages, genres, and the symbolic usage of names. A significant multitude of non-Muslims are forcibly expelled from the newly established national boundaries. They lack the ability to oppose or escape the forceful current that carries them away, akin to birds without wings. The narrative in the book resonates as an elegy lamenting the forfeiture of a harmonious way of life rooted in mutual comprehension, tolerance, and collaboration. Initially coexisting in harmony as hybrid identities within the diverse cultural milieu of the late Ottoman Empire, Turkish-speaking Christian villagers, or Greek Orthodox migrants face displacement to Greece. This resulted in their exposure to social isolation and loneliness, stemming from their unfamiliar and unwelcoming experiences.

*Birds Without Wings* illuminates the harrowing scenes of war and their effects on local inhabitants and migrants during the formative years of the new Turkish nation-state. Drawing on Bakhtin’s concept of polyphony as the narrative style the novel mirrors the reverberations of themes, such as war, love, forced migration, and cultural identity. The plot unfolds against the backdrop of a multicultural late Ottoman Empire, where Turkish-speaking Christian villagers and Greek Orthodox migrants initially coexist harmoniously but later confront with social isolation and loneliness after being exiled to Greece. Meanwhile, Muslim villagers mourn for the lost harmony with other cultural and ethnic inhabitants, experiencing a sense of loneliness, helplessness, and economic/spiritual deprivation in the partially deserted and decaying village. The residents of Eskibahçe, who once achieved social cohesion and acquired a hybrid identity through centuries of cohabitation, suffer from the absence of a third space in the national discourse as well. They must forge a new identity, leading to a renewed form of hybridity. Therefore, *Birds Without Wings* highlights individual and social isolation resulting from the devastating impact of wars on the idyllic lives of villagers, drawing on Homi K. Bhabha’s third space theory. Furthermore, the novel celebrates hybridity and ethnic diversity by reevaluating the forced migration between Greece and Turkey, prompting reflection on the villagers’ attempts to redefine their identities after the Turkish Republic’s establishment and an analysis of its long-term implications.

## Theoretical framework

Ben Lazare Mijuskovic (2012) analyses loneliness from various perspectives and searches for the causes and effects of loneliness, besides its relation with such feelings as sadness and depression. As he refers, James Howard suggests that we may try to conquer our loneliness either by (a) an incorporation, an encapsulation of the other within ourselves, bringing the other reflexively into our own sphere of consciousness; or (b) a transcendence, a reaching out for the other (Mijuskovic, 2012, p.16). In accordance with Howard’s opinion, it is essential to integrate with the other to overcome our loneliness instead of removing it from our vision or consciousness. Being withdrawn into our inner world and getting closer to the Other simultaneously force the mind to exert dual ability and two-fold battle to relieve desolation and loneliness. Sinking into one’s own shell and being unable to come out of your shell mirrors one’s rigid stance against the other like an indestructible wall. On the other hand, the German-American philosopher Paul Tillich indicates “the word ‘solitude’ expresses the glory of being alone, whereas the word ‘loneliness’ expresses the pain of feeling alone” (Tillich, 1980, p. 453). With a tragic tone, the sense of loneliness permeates into Louis de Bernières’ novel, especially under the pressure of the population-exchange decision between Greece and Turkey. In a microcosmic world and a hybrid society, individuals are forced to disrupt the order of their lives and plunge into an ambivalent life in a third zone. Philosophers such as Tillich (1980) and Mijuskovic (2012), and the psychologist Moustakas (1961) favoured a consciousness detached from all other consciousness while they dream of epistemic concurrence with others, and hence, absolute loneliness emerges. With a critical eye, Linda Wood (1986), rejects these conceptualizations and she emphasized that “loneliness is the individual experience of failed intersubjectivity” (Wood, 1986, p.188). In addition, Wood (1986) focused on the role of language in shaping our experience of loneliness and she also explored the potential cultural and societal factors that lead to loneliness like social isolation, and the breakdown of conventional social structures. She discusses that addressing to these social problems may contribute to reducing levels of loneliness in individuals and in different social groups. In liminal borders, Bhabha asserts, there is a space “in-between the designations of identity” (1994, p.4) and that “this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (1994, p.4). In accordance with

Homi Bhabha's ideas of the "realm of the beyond" (2004, p. 1) and liminality as the beyond, the 'beyond' is defined as a contested place. Each character in *Birds Without Wings* undergoes the anguish of war and forced immigration in their individual manner, and it would be unjust to recount their distinctive experiences through a single authoritative narrator. Consequently, De Bernières grants a voice to numerous characters, which makes the novel polyphonic. Additionally, an omniscient narrator occasionally interjects with general observations, yet more prominently, the reader is frequently exposed to the voices of the characters.

In psychoanalytic criticism and multicultural societies, the existence of the individual self depends on the other. Identification of the individual self is realized through the reflection of the other as suggested by Lacan's psychoanalytic criticism. Rich in terms of postmodern elements, Louis de Bernières' novel presents postmodern individuals who can be directly linked to hybridity. Hybrid identities do not have a stable, permanent self. In contrast, they are in constant flux and change as they both construct and deconstruct themselves in their interaction with the Other. In a period when the Ottoman empire started to collapse, the author points to the intercultural encounters and intercultural awareness gained in a time of intense war, forced marches and massacres and ultimately the peaceful life is destroyed by the intrusion of the outside world, external forces, and the affliction of religious and nationalist movements.

### **Forced migration versus cultural diversity**

When we look at *Birds Without Wings* to search for the examples or traces of loneliness in the lives of the main characters, the well-known landowner, Rüstem Bey stands out. Overwhelmed by the loneliness stemming from the lack of a wife, Rüstem Bey intends to make a trip to Istanbul in order to buy himself a concubine. He is perplexed by the cosmopolitan tumult of the city. In terms of mirroring the colourful variety or multicultural society within the empire, the prominent landowner Rüstem Bey's observations and first impressions on Istanbul are just a reflection of the characters from different race or ethnic backgrounds that he comes across in a street amid the chaos of the capital. Moreover, exhibiting a small example of a cosmopolitan world with its inhabitants including Greek Orthodox Christians and Turkish Muslims before the population exchange, the village of Eskibahçe was an exemplary place to live in harmony or, in other words, 'unity in diversity' (Bhabha 1992, p. 46) which even 'seems to stem out of its heterogeneity' (Golban, 2015, p. 46). In this context, De Bernières' Eskibahçe is perhaps somewhat idealised or glorified (Bedlek, 2015, p. 101) as its name, literally meaning Old Garden, suggests, it can even be considered as an Edenic space, albeit one dwelled by "benevolent but flawed" characters (Golban, 2015, p. 46). The local people in Eskibahçe were also profoundly affected by the dislocation of their Christian friends and neighbours who reinvigorated their lives with their supreme feelings of love, help, and cooperation. As Iskander the Potter puts it, the town of Eskibahçe has lost its multicultural charm and colourful appeal, and turned into a forlorn and bleak place due to the deportation of the Christians:

*"Left on our own now, there is a sadness seeping out of the stones of this half- deserted town... There are many here who say we are better off without the Christians who used to live here, but as for me, I miss the old life of my town, and I miss the Christians. Without them our life has less variety, and we are forgetting how to look at others and see ourselves."* (De Bernières, 2014, p. 1-5)

Being one of the key topics of *Birds Without Wings*, the dislocation of ethnic groups is argumentative in terms of social construction of exiled identities. The case of the population exchange between Turks and Greeks brings about some identity crises and conflicts on individual and social levels because of feeling isolated, excluded, or marginalized in exile or migrated countries. Set just before the First World War, Louis de Bernières' novel defies all kinds of differences, such as religious, ethnic, economic, or individual in a reference to the multicultural aspect of the Empire including a great variety of multitudes or social groups under the same roof. The successful management policy of the Ottoman Empire depended on its "adoption of flexible administrative practices that could accommodate the needs of different religions and different cultures" (Cleveland, 1994, p. 43). At that time, the town Eskibahçe inhabited Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Armenians living side by side in the frame of respect, harmony and solidarity. More particularly, the novel scrutinizes the poor and the wealthy, the literate and the illiterate, the sane and the insane in a lively, heavenly atmosphere. The author highlights these contrasts or oppositions at the beginning of the novel just in order to demonstrate later that one-dimensional nationalist policies of the new nation states after wars such as forced migration can restrict this hybridity in society. The multi-voiced narrative style of the novel through various narrators is also harmonious with the multi-dimensional society and individuals that the author creates within the composite nature of Eskibahçe. Individual love, social unity and harmony are all interwoven with ethnic and cultural differences, chaos caused by wars and hostility among different ethnic groups in this vibrant/fluid Eskibahçe, which embodies a microcosm of life in other places of the world. Referring to this cultural diversity, particularly in Istanbul

fantastically De Bernières explains

*“It is said that in those days one could hear seventy languages in the streets of Istanbul. The vast Ottoman Empire, shrunken and weakened though it now was, had made it normal and natural for Greeks to inhabit Egypt, Persians to settle in Arabia and Albanians to live with Slavs. Christians and Muslims of all sects, Alevis, Zoroastrians, Jews, worshippers of the Peacock Angel, subsisted side by side and in the most improbable places and combinations. There were Muslim Greeks, Catholic Armenians, Arab Christians and Serbian Jews. Istanbul was the hub of this broken-felloed wheel, and there could be found epitomised the fantastical bedlam and babel, which, although no one realised it at the time, was destined to be the model and precursor of all the world’s great metropolises a hundred years hence, by which time Istanbul itself would, paradoxically, have lost its cosmopolitan brilliance entirely.”* (De Bernières, 2005, p. 167)

In her novel *Hasret* (Yearning) Canan Tan indicates that the departure of the Greek minorities in Keskin from Keskin because of the decisions taken during the population exchange was very dramatic. They leave behind many experiences, memories, loves and their dead. From that moment on they set out on a difficult journey. Exchange provisions and Tacettin’s feelings towards this bitter truth in the novel are given by these lines:

*“Article 1: Compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion settled in Turkish territory and Greek nationals of the Muslim religion settled in Greek territory (Exchange obligatorie) will be initiated starting from 1 May 1923. None of these people can return to Turkey without the permission of the Turkish Government or to Greece without the permission of the Greek Government and they won’t be able to settle there... What was this! Tacettin’s death warrant? He couldn’t believe what he hears, he rebelled against what he believed. Patricia, Aris, Omorphia, Yorgo, Sofia, Anastasia, Vasili and the others who spent all these years in peace in these lands... Their friends, their confidants, the ones with whom they went to the military, the ones with whom they danced halay at weddings, the ones with whom they sat at the same table. Those people with whom they clink glasses and share common joys on different holidays. So they would be exiled to foreign lands that they do not know, whose air they do not breathe and whose water they do not drink and forced to reside there! Could Tacettin, mourning for Artin, send three precious beings that he knew dearly; Ali, Patricia and Aris abroad forever? No, it couldn’t be! There was definitely a solution. It should have happened... According to the second article of the exchange agreement, the exchange envisaged exempted the Greeks living in Istanbul and the Muslims living in Western Thrace from forced migration. Accordingly, all Orthodox Greeks living in Anatolia were included in the exchange. “It was obvious that no one would be ignored.”* (Tan, 2013, p. 98 -99)

Tacettin, who stayed in Keskin while all this migration occurred, thinks that he made the mistake of his life, that he does not even have the right to shed tears, and that he will pay for this mistake by longing for a lifetime. Omorphia’s feelings towards the reality of exchange are expressed in the following lines: “We are separated from our homeland where we are born, where we grow up, and where we are kneaded with a thousand joys and sorrows and migrate to lands we do not know. And we call those lands homeland. Is it easy for uprooted trees to grow roots in other lands? Omorphia couldn’t say these things. He buried it all inside” (Tan, 2013, p. 144) The separation of the Turkish and Greek people, who have been living together brotherly for years, in accordance with an agreement, brings with it the stories of longing that will last for years.

### **Nationalism versus Hybrid Identities**

Influenced by Austria-Hungary and Russia, the diverse communities of the Balkans and the Near East were unravelling their historic coexistence and interdependence. Among them, impassioned individuals and ideological proponents advocated the doctrines of isolation and supremacy: “The slogans are ‘Serbia for the Serbs, Bulgaria for the Bulgarians, Greece for the Greeks, Turks and Jews out!’ There has been interbreeding for centuries, but no one stops to ask what exactly a Serb or a Macedonian or a Bulgarian or a Greek actually is” (De Bernières, 2014, p. 16). The treaty of Lausanne required an obligatory population exchange in the Aegean region just following after the Greco-Turkish War that lasted from 1919 to 1922. Based on this treaty, the displacement of more than one million people was approved in accordance with their religious background. Orthodox Christians living in Asia Minor were exiled to Greece while the Muslims residing in Greece were deported from Greece and sent to Turkey. Louis de Bernières deals with the previous and subsequent lives and identities of Christian Greeks and the Muslim Turks after the war and decision of displacement dramatically. Especially the integration process of Asia Minor Greeks into Greek Society with their Ottoman background renders the novel intriguing as far as hybrid identities and

their search for a “third place” in exile or migration are concerned. Before the rise of nationalism, the Orthodox Christians who inhabited in Asia Minor were regarded as the local people of Anatolia although they were defined as only “Greeks” by the nationalist ideology that exiled them to their origin culture and ancestral home. Orthodox Christians of Anatolia shared almost the same nationalist feelings with the Muslim Turks as they lived together for ages. Thus, the Ottoman identity of Orthodox Christians maintained its existence wherever they arrived after they were deported from Anatolia.

As regards the historical background of the events in the novel, the impending war leads to a turmoil for the citizens of the town who are forced to yield to the wind of change and imposed movements of nationalism and this situation restricts the existence of hybrid identities and impairs the wholeness of a multicultural society as a single unified identity. When the Ottoman Empire fell apart, the spirit of nationalism and the construction of new borders required the exclusion and exile of ethnic cultural groups for the welfare and maintenance of the new Turkish state. Rene Hirschon indicates that with the rise of nationalism and population exchanges, the peoples of the Aegean have lost “familiarity which carries with it the possibility for understanding and respect, and this is all too often replaced by suspicion, hostility and the inability to cooperate” (Hirschon, 2009). In the first chapters of the novel, Louis de Bernières depicts the peaceful, unified society in Anatolia that were composed of different ethnic groups realistically in the novel. According to the modern view, the underlying aim of the population exchange was to get rid of the ‘Other’ in national territories and for the sake of a homogenous Turkish society this ethnic cleansing was compulsory, while the displacement of the Muslims in Greece who were originally “Turks” was also necessary for a homogenous Greece. Greece and Turkey aimed to form homogenised societies out of the people coming from the imperial custom and legacy. Benedict Anderson stresses

*“Many ‘old nations,’ once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by ‘sub’-nationalisms within their borders - nationalisms which, naturally, dream of shedding this sub-ness one happy day. The reality is quite plain: the ‘end of the era of nationalism,’ so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.”* (Anderson, 2006, p. 3)

In the novel *Birds Without Wings*, the village’s diverse character, evident in the simultaneous presence of a mosque and a church, is most conspicuous in the sections portraying the daily interactions of the townspeople. Iskander the Potter recalls the moments when the cheerful Christian customs infused delight into the otherwise austere Muslim way of life. Moreover, when Tamara, who is injured and disgraced on allegations of disloyalty, takes refuge in their residence, Ayse, apprehensive of losing her husband owing to the attraction of this new woman, implores Polixeni to illuminate a candle in the church, beseeching for Tamara’s swift recovery and departure from their home (De Bernières, 2014, p. 123). Similarly, during Karatavuk’s service at the front, his mother entreats Polixeni to venerate the icon and entreat [her] Panagia for the safeguarding of her son (De Bernières, 2014, p. 302). Concepts of nationhood have been articulated diversely, yet blood, religion, and language have consistently constituted key criteria. It has been demonstrated that a shared religion is not imperative for fostering unity within a community. Deliberating on the numerous atrocities committed in the pursuit of establishing a homogeneous nation, Bernières endeavours to systematically challenge and diminish each facet of national identity.

Yılmaz Karakoyunlu, who covers important events that left their mark on the political history of the Republic of Türkiye in his novels, tells the stories that took place during the population exchange, one of the most important historical and social turning points in the history of the Republic, Thessaloniki in *The Purple Caftan* (2012) and tried to explain it without neglecting its political aspect. Patriotism is one of the major issues that mark the novel Thessalonica in the Purple Caftan. The common feeling that all the exchanges have in the novel is the great love they feel for the homeland they had to leave. For Turks, Turkey is the homeland, and for Greeks, Greece; But for immigrants, the homeland is always the land where they were born and raised. Leaving the homeland where you were born and raised means breaking away from your roots. In Thessaloniki in *The Purple Caftan*, the issue of breaking away from one’s roots or not being able to break away is also processed. The novel reveals the suffering experienced by people who do not want to break away from their roots/homeland. There are many examples of people who cannot break away from their roots in *Thessalonica in the Purple Caftan*. The first of these, perhaps the most important, is Markos. Markos dug his own grave before committing suicide. He also placed the tombstone next to the grave. The tombstone of Markos, who preferred to die by suicide rather than being torn away from his roots/homeland and leaving the land of his birth, reads: “Here lies Markos from Şarköy. Markos’ family cultivated these lands for more than a century. He sowed and reaped... Mark was born here, and he died here... He spent his life in true gratitude. He encountered ungratefulness” (Karakoyunlu, 2012, p. 239). In the novel, it is brought to attention that Greeks and Turks were able to live brotherly and amicably, but the conditions made the exchange necessary. Even though so much time has passed, it can be

said that this was the Turkish side's perspective.

In time, nationalist ideologies led to uprisings among the Ottoman subjects in the twentieth century and then the Ottoman people were split up as Greeks or Turks. Delineating between two religions helped the new Turkish state to found her "millet" system. Thomas Nairn asserts that "nationalism is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as "neurosis" in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world ... and largely incurable (Nairn, 1977, p. 359). Under the influence of the nationalist ideologies, ethnic groups under the reign of the Ottoman Empire ended their co-existence and chose their side. Depending on the Treaty of Lausanne, and the decision of population exchanges, Greece and Turkey were transformed in terms of social structure remarkably, which also influenced the social and cultural life profoundly.

Born into a turbulent historical period ruled by wars, political manoeuvres and the rise of nationalism, Mustafa Kemal was a very successful soldier of the Ottoman Army who had acquired great fame, a prestigious position and respectability in the Turkish War of Independence. Defending the nation against other imperial powers with nationalist sentiments, Mustafa Kemal envisioned to establish a totally independent country for Turks, as referred by Hobsbawm who underscores that the nation needs to be "imagined" first. E.J. Hobsbawm lists three developmental phases of nationalism: "A preliminary phase in which the idea of the nation is purely cultural and/or folkloric; A pioneering phase wherein political campaigners begin to try and raise awareness and mobilize the nation; and finally, the stage at which nationalist movements acquire mass support, an occurrence which can come to pass before or after the birth of the state" (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 12). In a similar vein, Turkish Republic was established thanks to the unique leadership, impressive power, stubbornness and perseverance of Mustafa Kemal, who changed the destiny of a nation as a towering figure in the twentieth century. Louis de Bernières draws attention to the significance of the leader of the new Turkish state for the new system. In Chapter twenty-two of the novel *Birds Without Wings* (De Bernières, p. 517) the author recounts the crucial changes and reforms led by Mustafa Kemal as well as the implementation of the population exchange decision between Turkey and Greece in the nation-building process of the new Turkish state in an objective, distant tone. He stresses: "the criteria are explicitly religious rather than ethnic, and in the interests of preventing future strife it looks like a good idea, until one takes into account the innocent people concerned (De Bernières, p. 518-19).

### Hybridity and the Third Space

The Greek invaded Asia Minor in 1919 and the fight was a milestone for the future of both the Turks and the Greeks. Both Christians and Muslims were deported from their motherland to an uncanny, unhomely place. Encouraging the effort to search for an open cultural 'third space' in defiance of the fallacies of exoticism, essentialism and cultural diversity, Homi Bhabha favours an international culture that emphasizes hybridity rather than difference. He puts forward: for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third place displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom (Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 1994, pp. 37-39). In Bhabha's view, decolonized subjects can have a chance to survive in this third space. In a hybrid space, cultures merge and gets involved in a "mutual contamination of imaginary purity both in the colonial and the postcolonial scenario" (Fludernik, 1998, p. 13).

*"Bhabha assigns cultural meaning to this space between cultures and views the productivity of internal differences that are denoted by the dichotomous constructions inside/outside, dominant/dissident, mainstream/subculture, and global/local as dynamics of hybridization, replacing colonialist, racist or nationalist conceptions of excluding the other."* (Fludernik, 1998, p. 13)

While the Third world and postcolonial world can also be considered as "third space," Bryne asserts that "it is thus a dialogue between positions, rather than people prior to positions (Bryne, 2009, p. 149). In addition, he suggests that the cultural 'thread' which constitutes this third space is enigmatic and culturally 'thick,' or difficult to penetrate (2009, p. 149). According to another view, as far as politics is concerned, a third space has been described as "a space where the weak resist the dominant by adopting elements from dominant, hegemonic discourses and thus challenging dominant forces with their own devices" (Lemay-Hebert and Freedman, 2017, p. 38). 'Third space' refers to a zone in which the sense of linear time disappeared. That is, binary oppositions such as past/present break down. Bhabha favours a time process in which the past interferes with the present. Bryne underscores: "This does not only make the present incomplete. It also shows what the

transition between times and places involves.” (Bryne, 2009, p. 151)

### **Social isolation and individual loneliness**

Frieda Fromm Reichmann notes: “it is so frightening and uncanny in character that they [those who have once suffered loneliness] try to dissociate the memory of what it was like and even the fear of it” (Weiss, 1973, p. 11). According to her, “there was active rejection of the memory of loneliness, and not simply passive inability to recall” (Weiss, 1973, p. 10). Sullivan believed that loneliness was “an experience which has been so terrible that it practically baffles clear recall” (Weiss, p. 10). “Loneliness is caused not by being alone but by being without some definite needed relationship or set of relationships (Weiss, 1973, p. 17). Standing out with his capitalist aspect in the novel, Georgio P. Theodorou portrays himself as a philanthropist as well as being a merchant. Sarcastically he criticises the effects of the nationalist uprisings such as social trauma that divide the individuals and ethnic groups up in a multi-national society. His son, Leonidas devotes himself to his only ambition ‘the Great Idea’ as the most fervent Greek nationalist character in the novel. While Leonidas pursues his Greek nationalist ideals, his acquisitive, prosperous father makes fun of his Big Idea and challenges all his romantic ideas as a fervent Greek nationalist by denying his perspective harshly. On the other hand, the presence of the other can occasionally serve as the primary catalyst for aggressive and infringing actions. For instance, during the attack, the public encourages violence, insulting words and racist remarks toward Levon:

*“Haydi! Haydi! Haydi!” he shouted, pushing the Armenian in the sternum, and forcing him backwards. ‘Filthy shit! What do you think you are doing? Pig!’... Levon’s initial reaction was one of astonishment, and his mouth fell open. He said something inarticulate, and Constantinos merely thrust at him in the chest again. ‘Pig! Filthy Armenian! Traitor pig.’” (De Bernières, p.159)*

If we handle the theme of individual alienation caused by the global world affairs or the imperial and capitalist plans of other countries more closely in the novel, it is evident that Ibrahim, Rüstem Bey, Leyla, Philothei and Drosoula all suffer from individual and social alienation under the influence of turbulent wars and forced migration. To give an example, Ibrahim is a divided self as he is ensnared in a “disengaged” mind and in a sorrowful body afflicted with grief. As an existential analysis of sanity and madness, R. D. Laing’s *The Divided Self* defines the term schizoid, which directly refers to Ibrahim’s general mood and psychology after the war. Maybe his complex psychology and confused mind can be explicated with this term better: In the prologue of Iskander the Potter, he tries to interpret Ibrahim’s mysterious situation and attributes his madness to grief and love. After his return from the war, Ibrahim becomes completely isolated and inaccessible to his beloved Philothei. He is impenetrable in his feelings and intentions. Philothei observes his physical appearance and stresses his inaccessibility.

Iskander the potter makes a correlation between the great world and Philothei’s death in his epilogue and narrates how the war divided people up and led to her tragic end indirectly: “I say this not because her death was an accident, but because there would have been no accident it were not for the great world. It was the great world that went to war with us and attempted to divide us up and because of this decision Philothei ran to find Ibrahim and suffered the accident that killed her” (De Bernières, p.600). Indeed, the author implies that she would have married Ibrahim and led a happy and serene life if she had not been dislocated from Eskibahçe just owing to her religion and national identity. The new world and system do not offer them any prospects for the future. Ibrahim loses his individuality along with his collapsing mind and Philothei is driven to death as victims of the war and new world. Another important point about their prospective marriage is the matter of Philothei’s conversion. Philothei is aware that she must convert to Islam upon marriage and this case is not a big deal for her as the believers of both faiths join in and perform each other’s religious practices to some extent in daily life.

Another significant character who feels alone after forced migration is Drosoula, who cannot adjust to her new living area and accordingly feel out of place. She was among the Turkish Christians excluded from Anatolia and left both homeless and languageless. She suffers from an identity crisis because she is originally Greek; however, she feels like she is Turkish. She refers to her identity crisis and complicated situation like that: “because I may be Greek now, but I was practically a Turk then, and I’m not ashamed of it either, and I’m not the only one, and this country’s full of people like me who came from Anatolia because we didn’t have any choice in the matter. When I came here, I didn’t even speak Greek, didn’t you know that? I still dream in Turkish sometimes” (De Bernières, 2005, p. 20). She stresses that religion is not the single factor that influences one’s identity, as one’s identity is under the influence of language, experiences, and memories as well. She is frustrated owing to the losses she was exposed to because of leading a migrant life. Her personal life is badly affected by the war and the decision of forced migration. All the time she longs for the old days and memories she spent together with

Philothei and other friends in Anatolia after she moves to Greece. She recounts:

*"I lost my family, my town, my language, and my earth. Perhaps it's only possible to be happy, as I am here in this foreign land that someone decided was my home, ... But sometimes one should also forget the things that were wonderful and beautiful, ... They have gone as irrevocably as my mother, and my Anatolia, and my son who became a devil and drowned, and my sweet husband who also drowned at sea, and all those who died here in the war."* (De Bernières, 2014, p. 24)

Especially following the death of her son and husband Drosoula feels homeless, isolated, destitute and languageless in Greece as one of the expatriated Turkish Christians. Drosoula cannot get over the effect of the uncanny in her new home in Greece following a policy of essentialist national identity. As a social expatriate, Drosoula was ostracized by the local people in her new place, since she could not break her connection to Anatolia and adjust to the new culture right away. She felt she was totally out of place like a foreigner in Cephalonia. She was supposed to be originally a Turk and not adopted by the Greek culture. In despair, she was exposed to the prejudices of their relatives and family members. She feels highly proud although she was associated with being a Turk. She cannot speak Greece properly, which prevents her from being adopted by her new Greek society. Her situation proves that language plays a vital role in determining one's identity. She is afflicted with both social isolation and individual loneliness. She illustrates her formidable lifestyle in exile:

*"To lose a child is the hardest thing that a human has to bear. Mandras died in the sea, just like my husband Gerasimos, and now I am here in Cephalonia with no family at all. I was orphaned by my own decision in Turkey when I was faced by an impossible choice, then I was widowed by my husband, and then I was orphaned by my own child... Home isn't only the place you come from, after all."* (De Bernières, 2014, p. 557)

Drosoula depicts the notion of "home" in a reverse way. She adds a different perspective into its literal meaning by implying that sometimes the place where you go through migration turns into a homely place and becomes your native home completely. In the former multicultural society where identities were intertwined before the Ottoman Empire collapsed, it was difficult to divide or break up the society by applying cultural racism. People were not oblivious to the racial distinctions, yet they did not perceive them as an issue. Furthermore, they amused themselves by engaging in wordplay with terms or expressions that delineate ethnic backgrounds. Labelling or discriminating people based on their cultural roots or religious beliefs only disrupts the social order. However, as can be understood from the above sentences, the case may turn out to be the reverse as cultural integration as the foreigner or outsider can feel himself a part of the same society in which he was included later and strive to settle into the new identity as best he can.

Employing her false Circassian and Muslim identity as a defensive barrier against the societal framework of the town, Leyla inherently yearns for her authentic self as Greek Christian. She knows the Greek language better than the other Greek people in the town and humiliates them by speaking Greek. Leyla Hanım joined the Christians on the second day. Despite being tired and filthy she was cheerful. When she appeared in the encampment, she walked self-confidently and felt proud. Her head was high. She was not welcomed as she had anticipated before. After their first moment of surprise and reaction, the Christians soon started to murmur against her. However, she responds to them: "I am more Greek than any of you. I was born in Ithaca, and you are nothing but a pack of mongrel Turks" ... "From now on, said Leyla Hanım, reverting to Turkish, my name is Ioanna, and you will speak to me with respect" (De Bernières, p. 548-549).

With the words she uttered Leyla Hanım in fact touches on the essential components about belonging to a specific culture and identity, such as language, longing for hometown, the idea of return to the native land one day. Despite all these examples of racism, hostility, and social exclusion between different cultural and ethnic groups besides several examples of social harmony and cultural integration, remembering the old days with a nostalgic mind and commenting upon the prior condition of Eskibahçe, Iskander emphasizes the favourable effects of Christians on Muslims in his prologue at the very beginning: "We are in any case a serious people here. Life was merrier when the Christians were still among us, ... their revelry was infectious. Our religion makes us grave and thoughtful, dignified and melancholy, whereas theirs did not exact much discipline" (De Bernières, p.1).

Dido Sotiriyou, a famous exchange writer, describes the bloody conflicts and hostilities that took place during the nation-building process in her book *Say Hello to Anatolia*. This reaction of the famous writer is an expression of common reproach for the exchangeees, who were seen as a certain number of people belonging to a certain identity during the population exchange. Although those who were forced to migrate were considered passive actors against these practices, they



expressed their reactions in their own unique ways. Social memory, as a way of existence, has become a tool of resistance by the immigrants. Dido Sotiriyu's novel *Matomena Homa (Bloody Lands)*, which was translated into Turkish as *Say Hello to Anatolia*, had a great impact both in Greece and Turkey. Written in Athens in 1970, the novel tells the dramatic story of Manoly Aksiyotis from Şirince, who escaped from the war in the First World War when he was an Ottoman subject in Turkey and fought in the volunteer battalion in the Greek Army when the Greek-Turkish War began. Those were the years when ideological differences between Türkiye and Greece came to light intensely. According to the common opinion in the novel, imperialism caused the Turkish and Greek people to fight against each other. Manoli and Şevket have been friends since their childhood. Şevket, a Turkish boy working as a cattle herder, is perhaps the most important person in his life who understands Manoli. There are commonalities in their personalities, tastes and feelings of friendship. This is a common empathy. This empathy is an important value that holds individuals together in a common place and ties them together with strong ties, despite ethnic and cultural differences. Throughout the novel, two individuals are completely childish and naive towards each other; Only to that extent can one encounter real emotions and attitudes. You will feel throughout the novel that if these emotions and attitudes were effective in everything, there would be no ugliness left. It is this empathy that completes the novel. Imperialism has destroyed this empathy. However, the secret to being successful in this dirty game against this monster, that is, imperialism, is found in this natural, pure and clean empathy. As long as the people created by the same geography and culture show the ability and determination to return to this.

Dido Sotiriyu explains the cultural confusion in sharper terms: "Opposite, on the shores of Asia Minor, lights are blinking, eyes are blinking. We left houses against them, locked capitals, crowns in the iconostasis, ancestors in the cemeteries. We left behind children, families, siblings. The dead without graves. There. Karşı, that was our homeland until yesterday!" (Sotiriyu, 2017, p. 384). It has been concluded from the author's works that the exchange event is more voluminous in what is (un)said than in what is said, and it has been determined that the writer's internal responsibility towards Anatolia and the Anatolian people intersects in breaking the chain of failure to confront and denial. Individuals who had endured the strains of pressure, poverty, starvation, and hardship in Greece were preparing to depart from their birthplaces and childhood homes. They anxiously awaited Turkish ships to ferry them to Turkey, where they saw hope for a better life. For them, hope was synonymous with survival. In the midst of all the suffering and pain, a glimmer of hope had begun to shine (Sotiriyu, 2014; Arı, 2017, p. 77-85).

### Conclusion

Portraying the turbulent history of a South-West Anatolian village dating back to World War I and then until the declaration of Turkish Republic in 1923, Louis de Bernières' *Birds Without Wings* enables readers to question the nature of forced migration based on the decision of population transfer between Greece and the emerging Turkish nation as well as the nature of a hybrid identity. While Turkish-speaking Christians were living side by side with Muslim villagers harmoniously through a largely shared culture and heritage under the patronage of the Ottoman Empire, this vibrant, fluid society became shallow with the leaving of Greek Orthodox Christians. The former harmonious co-existence is overshadowed by essentialist policies or movements of nationalism, and the uncanny effect felt by both the local Muslim villagers and Greek Christian in their new living space. Wherever these hybrid identities are forced to migrate, they feel unhomey because of the uncertainties or ambiguities as regards their Greek national identities. They are partly alienated from their mother culture as they speak Turkish rather than Greek or use Turkish words written with a Greek alphabet. This chaotic situation makes them redefine their identities. There is not a distance between the center (West/Greek) and the periphery (the Other/Turkey). In contrast, this cultural intermingling subverts the postcolonial discourse and leads to intimacy between two sides. Greeks need to find a third space to feel "at home."

The destiny of these hybrid Greeks after leaving Eskibahçe through forced migration is to feel like being on exile wherever they go because they are not completely accepted or adopted culturally. In the eye of the native/host culture they have become culturally corrupted and belong to another culture partially. Christian Greeks are regarded as "suspicious" when they return to Greece because they cannot even speak their mother tongue. This in-between situation creates an uncanny effect on their original national identity as Greeks because they have already integrated with the Other, that is, Turks. As Said stresses, "for the exiled, the past is made of loss and the future is always uncertain. The exile carries many things with them in addition to the weight of loss, they have with them a stigma of being the outsider" (Said, 2000). On the other hand, the new citizens of the new Turkish Republic are similarly exposed to an uncanny, unhomey influence and atmosphere in the half-deserted village, Eskibahçe.

**Hakem Değerlendirmesi:** Dış bağımsız.

**Çıkar Çatışması:** Yazar, çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmiştir.

**Finansal Destek:** Yazar, bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir.

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

**Financial Disclosure:** The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

## References

- Arı, K. (2017). *Manoli'nin Gözyaşları, Mübadele Öyküleri*.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.
- Bedlek, E. Y. (2015). *Imagined Communities in Greece and Turkey: Trauma and the Population Exchanges Under Atatürk*. IB Tauris.
- Bernières, L. D. (2014). *Birds Without Wings*. Vintage.
- Bernières, L. D. (2022). *Kanatsız Kuşlar*. Altın Kitaplar.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). 'Anxious Nations, Nervous States', in J. Copjec (ed.), *Supposing the Subject*. Verso.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, p. 12.
- Homi, B. (1990). "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford, Lawrence & Wishart, p. 211. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 37-39.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1992). 'The World and the Home', *Social Text Third World and Post-Colonial Issues* 32, 141.
- Cleveland, W. L. (1994). *A History of Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, p.43.
- Fludernik, M. (1998). "Introduction" to *Hybridity and Postcolonialism: Twentieth-Century Indian Literature*, ed. Fludernik. Stauffenburg, p.13.
- Golban, T. (2015). 'The Apocalypse Myth in Louis de Bernières' novel *Birds Without Wings*: –Rustem Bey and an Individual Apocalyptic Experience in the Kierkegaardian Frame', *Analele Universității Ovidius din Constanța. Seria Filologie* 1, p. 46.
- Hirschon, R. (2009). "Unmixing Peoples' in the Aegean Region", *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey*. Vol. 12.
- Hobsbawm, E.J. (1992). *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Karakoyunlu, Y. (2012). *Mor Kaftanlı Selanik*, Doğan Kitap.
- Kristeva, J. (1991). *Strangers to Ourselves*, Columbia University Press.
- Laing, R. D. (1990). *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, Penguin Books.
- Macmillan, C. (2021). "Narrating the Nation? National Identity and the Uncanny in De Bernières' *Birds Without Wings*", *Literature & History*, Vol. 30(2) 155–174.
- Moustakas, C. (1961). *Loneliness*. Prentice-Hall.
- Nairn, T. (1977). *The Break-up of Britain*. New Left Books.
- Royle, N. (2003). *The Uncanny*. Manchester University Press.
- Said, E. (2000). *Out of Place: A Memoir*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Sotiriyu, D. (2014). *Benden Selam Söyle Anadolu'ya*, Can Publisher.
- Sotiriyu, D. (2017). *İ nekri perimenun*. Kedros.
- Sotiriyu, D. (2017). *Matomena homata*. Kedros.
- Tan, C. (2013) *Hasret*, Doğan Kitap.
- Tillich, P. (1980). *Loneliness and solitude*. In J. Hartog, R. E. Audy, & Y. Cohen (Eds.), *The anatomy of loneliness* (pp. 547–553). NY: International Universities Press.
- Weiss, R. (1973). *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation*. The MIT Press.
- Wood, L. A. (1986). *Loneliness*. In R. Harre (Ed.), 'The social construction of emotions' (pp. 184–209). NY: Basil Blackwell.