

The Crazy Turk of New York City: Fact and Fiction in Erje Ayden's Work

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ABSTRACT

This essay introduces Turkish-American author Erje Ayden and his work. Both have thus far been neglected in the twenty-first century scholarship, although Ayden had been a veritable legend in Greenwich Village during his lifetime. Most of his self-published novels are being currently reissued by various publishers. This essay discusses the unique amalgam of fact and fiction they contain, focusing on *The Crazy Green of Second Avenue* and *The Legend of Erje Ayden*. It argues that his novels are ensconced within a tradition of the twentieth-century American novel, and that some reveal pioneering work in the non-fiction novel genre. Ayden is moreover able to articulate the predicament of the Turkish-American who finds him/herself situated in two different social and cultural milieus.

The main aim of this essay is to put Turkish-American author Erje Ayden (1937-2013) and his work on the map of American literary studies. A legend in Greenwich Village in his lifetime, he served during “the 1960s and 70s [...] as house pulp fiction writer to the New York School of painters and poets. Friend and sometime bodyguard to the artist Willem De Kooning, Ayden self-published 7 pop novels, written in rapid amphetamine bursts in borrowed apartments and rooming houses” (“Sadness”). The novels purport to be autobiographical, yet as his friend the poet Frank O’Hara put it, Ayden “prob[es] and disfigur[es] ordinary reality, accepting its most peculiar and neurotic aspects as quite unexceptional. [...] Through his eyes we see an ‘Amerika’ as odd as Kafka’s; as funny and absurdly sad” (“Introduction” to *The Crazy Green of Second Avenue*). Most of his works, among them *The Crazy Green of Second Avenue* (1965), *From Hauptbahnhof I Took a Train* (1966), *The Legend of Erje Ayden* (1968), *Confessions of a Nowaday Child* (1970), *Seven Years of Winter: An Autobiography* (1970), and *Sadness at Leaving: A Novel of Espionage* (1972), have since been reissued by various publishers. This essay will discuss two of them, *The Crazy Green of Second Avenue* and *The Legend of Erje Ayden* in particular, and argue that, although ignored by the reading public, his novels are ensconced within a tradition of the twentieth-century American fiction featuring male characters in urban settings epitomizing the malaise of the times, and deserve to figure in the canon. Moreover, his ability to freely blend fact and fiction allowed him to do pioneering work in the non-fiction novel genre. A distinguishing trait of Ayden’s work is that he succeeds, in the fashion of a social historian or commentator, to reflect the predicament of the Turkish-American

culturally positioned between two opposing worlds, socially inhabiting two different strata.¹

From Erce to Erje

I first learned of the existence of Erce Aydıner, who would make a name for himself as Erje Ayden, in the 1960s when I was a college student on a train ride between Istanbul and Ankara. Two men entered the compartment I was occupying and struck a conversation with me. As we talked, I must have told them I was studying literature, and one of them said he had a son in New York who was a writer. Yet he said it somewhat contemptuously. I was not sure at the time whether it was what his son wrote that the man did not like, or whether he also found the idea of his son being an author unpleasant. He was a senator and introduced himself as Hidayet Aydıner. He would be made minister of justice in 1969, between August 1, and November 3, just before the general elections. Then in August 1970, there was this bit of news in the press: “Son of former justice minister Aydıner stripped of citizenship” (“Eski Adalet Bakanı Aydıner’in Oğlu Vatandaşlıktan Çıkarıldı” 1). It appeared that Aydıner’s thirty-one-year-old son Erce had asked his father to arrange for his exemption from the (compulsory) military service. Aydıner had refused, and so Erce, who was living in the United States at the time and therefore was not only unwilling but also unable to report to authorities in Turkey in due time, lost his citizenship. The anonymous news item was in print on the front page of the Istanbul daily *Milliyet* on August 9, 1970 (“Eski Adalet Bakanı Aydıner’in Oğlu Vatandaşlıktan Çıkarıldı” 1, 9). On August 25, in the same paper, a series of articles on Ayden began to run under the title “From Erce to Erje” (my translation) by a Turkish academic residing in New York. At the time Talât Halman (1931-2014), who had begun writing a column in that paper in 1969, did not yet possess the renown that he would later achieve.²

Well, at least the man on the train had not made up his story: this young man did indeed exist and, at first glance, he seemed like a rebel without a cause, someone whose utterances appeared to be most at odds with the worldview his right-wing, conservative father obviously espoused. Still, I did not pay much attention to this upstart author then; no one that I knew did, for that matter. His case was not such big news in a country that had experienced the 1960 coup, the upheaval it caused, and, as a result of subsequent military coups in the years to come, would

¹ Although the history of migration from Turkey to the United States reveals that there have been unlettered peasants among the Turkish immigrants, the majority in the twentieth-century were from the middle-class or above, finding themselves déclassé in the New World.

² A professor of Turkish literature who, after retiring from NYU, went on to teach in his native Turkey, Halman was also a poet, translator, and much sought-after speaker. He became a household name in Turkey after he was made the first Minister of Culture of the country in 1971 (see Pultar, “The Mad Nomad: Interview with Talât Sait Halman”; for an obituary [in Turkish], again by the writer of these lines, see “Bir Patrisyenin Ardından: Talât Sait Halman [7 Temmuz 1931-5 Aralık 2014]” [In Memoriam a Patrician: Talât Sait Halman (7 July 1931-5 December 2014)]).

have many of its intellectuals flee abroad, with many losing their citizenship. I remember also, again vaguely, that sometime in the mid-1990s, as I was discussing the Turkish colony in New York City with some acquaintance, he said, “And then of course there is Erje Ayden who writes pornography,” or words to that effect. While I had not read carefully what the 1970 articles said, this information appeared to be in accordance with what the father had insinuated. Hence I visualized Erje Ayden as a man who had become wealthy by churning out salacious novels, someone who had deliberately chosen such a path to become rich: one of those best-selling authors leading bourgeois lives we read about in the magazine press. Students of literature would not deem their work worthy of study, nor would they be expected to.

Then in the 2000s, Ayden briefly made news in the Turkish press when translations of his novels, which began appearing in the country, were found to be obscene, and, as such, were in violation of laws in force in the country. Their publisher was taken to court. Yet the trial did not receive much media coverage. So many books had been banned for decades, for either obscenity or ideological reasons, that the Turkish public found it normal. The protests made at the time by the publisher, the once child prodigy artist Bedri Baykam, who had been making news more as a leftist intellectual than as an avant-garde artist, probably found more space in the press than any discussion of the novels themselves. The third book seized, along with the two Ayden novels, was by the Marquis de Sade, and that fact was highlighted in most news items, overshadowing the fate of Ayden’s texts. The acquittal, ultimately, of the books and their eventual republication made even less of a stir.

I am writing this to describe the situation in which Ayden found himself vis-à-vis his native Turkey when he died in 2013. It is noteworthy that although I have known about him since the 1960s, I never sought him out during any of my many trips to New York City, and never thought of him in relation to any Turkish-American material I was working on.³

Before the Legend: The Early Life

Assuming Ayden did not mislead him, I think the biographical data provided in Halman’s six articles in August 1970 is the most reliable information and also the most detailed readers will find on Ayden until someone makes it their business to search for further facts. Perhaps the biography that Ayden himself wrote in 2009 for the banker-turned-author Selçuk Altun (“ABD’de bir Türk:

³ Why not indeed? One reason is that Americanists in Turkey did not—and to a great extent still do not—consider “Turkish-American” topics to be “American studies material.” My work in that area was seen as idiosyncratic, and not worthy of consideration. One reason, on the other hand, of my present interest in him is of a totally different nature. During these last few years, I have come across quite a number of RC graduates having returned to Turkey after a long professional career in the United States, possessing homes in both countries and having the best of both worlds. I could not help thinking that if only Ayden had not made such a mess of his life, he would have been in the same situation.

Erje Ayden” [A Turk in the USA: Erje Ayden]) may also be a reliable source of biographical information. However, much that has been floating around in the USA about him is the product of fabrication, contributing to the legend of Erje Ayden, a phenomenon which the author apparently relished to the point of making it the title of one of his works—the fictional? factual? autobiographical?—*The Legend of Erje Ayden*. On the other hand, Ayden was angry with his father for propagating false information about him. A news item on August 9, 1970 stated Erce was publishing a sex magazine in the USA. “Nothing can be further from the truth,” Ayden said to Halman, “my father is continually slandering me” (Halman, “Türk Vatandaşlığından Çıkarılan Hidayet Aydın’ın Oğlu Erje Ayden’le Amerika’da Konuştuk” [We Talked in the USA with Hidayet Aydın’s Son Who Was Divested of Turkish Citizenship] 1, 9).

Erce was born in 1937 in Fenerbahçe in Istanbul, a district on the Anatolian coast of the city that served at the time as a holiday resort for the upper class.⁴ He was the younger of two boys. His older brother Yüce would survive him for six months (Yüce died on April 18, 2014). Erce was raised in Çemberlitaş in the old part of Istanbul, the district where the Grand Bazaar is located; and in Baltalimanı on the Bosphorus, a locality which would inspire Ayden to write in 2007 the story “Baltalimanı Hotel,” which was only published online posthumously in 2014. In the story, the first-person narrator-protagonist features as “Erce,” and, unlike in his previous work, all the characters are Turks with Turkish names.

He started his secondary studies at what was then called Robert College—a former missionary school turned private boys’ school that was still run by Americans.⁵ The language of instruction at the school was English, and the first two years, called Special I and Special II classes, were spent learning the language. It was considered the best lycée in the country—as well as the most competitive and expensive. An entrance exam based on reasoning rather than rote learning selected the best minds, and once in, students were expected to demonstrate industriousness as well as intelligence. Pupils who failed to do so were severely penalized. And that is what must have happened to Ayden, as he was expelled after only two years. “He is unable to learn English” was the school administration’s comment (qtd. in Halman, “Erce’den ... Erje’ye: Hiç Türkçe Konuşmuyor ve Yazmıyor” [From Erce ... to Erje: He Never Either Speaks or Writes in Turkish] 9). Even back then, Ayden must have manifested the nonconformist streak so representa-

⁴ Different sources give this date as 1936, 1938, or 1939.

⁵ Robert College (RC), the first American educational institution operating abroad was opened in Bebek, on a hill overlooking the Bosphorus in 1863, during the Ottoman era. It was basically a missionary school. Along with its “sister” school, the American College for Girls, situated on a hill in the neighboring Arnavutköy district, RC (incorporating a secondary school for boys and a school of higher education, at first for boys only but later made co-educational) was allowed to continue operating; still, it was stripped of its former express mission, after 1923 when the Republic of Turkey was founded. In the 1970s, the American Board running RC decided to split it: a co-educational secondary school (Istanbul Amerikan Robert Lisesi), that is still functioning today, was set up on the Arnavutköy campus, but the Bebek campus was turned over in its entirety to the Turkish government which opened there Boğaziçi (Bosphorus) University, retaining English nevertheless as the language of instruction (see Freely; and Greenwood).

tive of his adult life, and was probably too unruly to apply himself to the only course that really mattered at that early stage. The remainder of his life seems to have been spent with only one aim in mind: proving to the world that he was indeed capable of mastering English and that he could do it with great bravado.

Upper-upper class Turkish boys who failed to “make it” at Robert College were usually sent to the U.K. or Switzerland by their parents to continue their educations. But the Aydınler family was not in that league. Perhaps it would be good at this point to look more closely at his family, at least at his father, in order to get a sense of the social and moral background of his early years that was in polar opposition to that of his New York existence. Hidayet Aydınler (1900-1973) was a country boy born in a Central Anatolian village to a *hafız* (Muslim man of religion who has memorized the Quran and is expected to recite passages during ceremonies). After the *rüşdiye* (Ottoman junior high school), Aydınler started studying at the Konya *medrese* until such institutions were closed down by the Republican government. He then moved to Istanbul to study at the *Kuzzat Mektebi* (Islamic law school). He ended up at the Faculty of Law of Istanbul University; yet hard up as a student, he had to hold jobs while studying. Upon graduation, he worked as a judge, then as a lawyer, before being elected to parliament as a representative of the rightist *Demokrat Parti* (1946-1960, in government 1950-1960) from his native city, Konya, in 1950 and 1954. He left politics in 1957. However, after the May 27, 1960 coup, the new head of state, the coup-leader-turned-president, General Cemal Gürsel (1895-1966) appointed him as one of the newly created presidential senators. This supra-party position enabled him to become, before the general elections in 1969, an impartial minister of justice, as the law requires during elections in Turkey. He was a senator from 1961 to 1972, the year before his death in 1973 (“Hidayet Aydınler”). It appears that he worked hard all his life to achieve what he did and refused to commiserate with anyone not deploying the same kind of effort. He must have thus failed to realize that thanks to his own accomplishments his sons were born into more advantageous circumstances than he was, making them more easy-going and less predisposed to seek success and recognition in the same ways their father had done.

Instead of going to the U.K. or Switzerland, Erce went on to study at the Gedikpaşa Ortaokulu (middle school / junior high school), in Laleli within walking distance of Çemberlitaş where he lived.⁶ This was like moving from the Waldorf Astoria to a YMCA hostel. And fate would have it that this time he would want to hide the fact that he knew any English at all.

⁶ Laleli used to be a sleepy neighborhood between Beyazıt, start of the Grand Bazaar, and Aksaray, a popular commercial center. The 1980s, which saw the liberalization of the economy in Turkey, making it easier to import and export products, witnessed its gradual conversion into a shopping area selling textile and leather goods made in Turkey. As it is located within the historical peninsula, which includes the Sultanahmet neighborhood, home to Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, it had among its buyers tourists attracted by the cheap leather articles on display (real deluxe items would of course be elsewhere). Among these, tourists from the former Soviet Union came to fill suitcases with goods they would later sell in open-air markets in their own countries. When the Laleli stores started gearing their merchandise to suit their demands, the suitcase trade was born.

Talking to Halman, Ayden reminisced on his Gedikpaşa days and mentioned one teacher in particular, whom *Milliyet* reporter Suat Türker found and interviewed before the series was over. Nezahat Somer was by then teaching literature elsewhere yet remembered Erce well. She owned that he had been a headstrong pupil, but that was because of his intelligence, as he was a bright child. She was troubled that everything had turned out the way it had for him. “He was older than his classmates. He was mischievous alright, but his mischief was in the form of argument and criticism. He knew English well, but he wouldn’t take part in a play in English because he didn’t want others to know he did” (qtd. in Türker 3). A forthright, open-hearted boy, according to his former teacher, “he was a good writer. His grammar was good. He had read a lot of books for his age, more than his classmates had.” She could sense from what he wrote that he was feeling down: “But his blues was not a conscious one. When I gave a [composition] subject, he would tap into the social aspect and write away, down to details. For me, he was a good student.”⁷

According to the biography he wrote for Altun, Ayden then attended İstanbul Erkek Lisesi (the Istanbul Lycée for Boys), one of the oldest state high schools in Istanbul.⁸ Founded in 1884, it became one of the first Western-style secondary schools of the Ottoman Empire and has been housed since 1933 in Cağaloğlu (now the heart of the tourist district in old Istanbul), in an impressive building, surrounded by a large garden, built in 1897 by the Levantine French architect Alexandre Vallauray (1850-1921) as the Ottoman Public Debt Administration headquarters. Although no match for the private schools situated in modern districts, which the gilded youth were attending, it had—and still has—the reputation of being a very good school. It counts many distinguished Turkish personalities among its alumni and would have provided a similar advantage for Ayden, if only he had completed his courses and graduated.⁹ The biography does not mention any diploma, and Baykam writes of his “attending” that school “for some time” (“Önsöz” 9). Whether in 1956, as the biography maintains, or 1958 as the Halman

⁷ Gedikpaşa Ortaokulu would be in the news in the 2000s after the Erdoğan regime acceded to power, when the pro-government city authorities decided to sell the plot on which the school stood to a building contractor. The protests went unheeded, and the “Laleli Hilton Hotel” now stands where the school used to be. Since coming to power in 2002, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi [Justice and Development Party, 2001-] has based its politics on generating wealth through construction.

⁸ German was made the language of instruction in 1958, and since 2000 the school is able to provide the Abitur exams to those who wish to take them. In the meantime, it became co-educational in 1964, and was renamed İstanbul Lisesi in 1982 when it was also formally turned into an “Anadolulisesi” (a type of state high school requiring an entrance exam, with instruction in science subjects in one of the major Western languages).

⁹ The school is renowned for having produced three prime ministers so far: Mesut Yılmaz, leader of the Anavatan (Homeland) Party (1983-2009), was prime minister three times, between 23 June 1991–20 November 1991, 6 March 1996–28 June 1996, and 30 June 1997–11 January 1999; Ahmet Davutoğlu, leader of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Party (AKP) was prime minister between 28 August 2014–24 May 2016; and Binali Yıldırım, the current leader of AKP, has been the prime minister since May 24, 2016.

articles claim, Ayden left for the United States without finishing high school, “in order to study” in New York City (“ABD’de bir Türk: Erje Ayden”).

Out of Turkey: Taking on Menial Jobs and Playing the Mercenary

Yet, once on U.S. soil, there is no studying in Ayden’s life. He first worked as a warehouse clerk at Record Hunter. He soon married the daughter of the owner of a women’s clothing store called Plymouth. The couple opened an art gallery in New York City, but when that venture didn’t work out, they separated. When Halman interviewed him in 1970, he was married to Patricia Brownell, an English major, and could not remember how many times he had been married before, except to say that he had an eight-year-old daughter from one of his previous marriages (“Erce’den Erje’ye: Mezarlıktan Uşaklığa Kadar Her İşi Yapmıştı” [From Erce to Erje: He Did Everything From [Being a] Gravedigger to [Being a] Manservant] 1, 9). Baykam presents a slightly different picture when he writes in 2001, reporting that Ayden’s only child was a then forty-three-year-old daughter born out of wedlock (“Önsöz” 9). According to Halman, Ayden was known in New York City’s artistic and bohemian circles not only as a powerful writer but also as a good-looking man, and his novels suggest he was involved in numerous romances (“Erce’den Erje’ye” 9). His marriage to Brownell lasted from 1969 to 1975. Whatever relationships he may have had after that date, Ayden spent the last twenty-eight years of his life with the Finnish-born fashion designer Elisabeth (Lisa) Holm, whom he married in 1985, and who is now his widow. Baykam, too young obviously to be under the spell of the Beat Generation and its legends the way Halman so readily was, specifies that Holm was his third wife (“Önsöz” 9).

In “From Erce to Erje,” Halman quotes Ayden: “I had a lot of adventures during my first years. I did a lot of menial jobs. I slept in the bum neighborhood the Bowery, went hungry, spent nights out in the open under snow-deep weather” (9). He was in turn a stuntman in a TV series, a gravedigger, a carpenter, a manservant (a valet in a private home), and a crook. Apparently, he accepted doing these jobs because such experiences could serve him later on in his writing.

Before the end of the 1950s, however, Ayden seems to have left for Europe. He landed in France in 1959, started living in Paris and apparently worked for the Algerian liberation movement. He had brushes and even clashes with the French police, writes Halman in the *Milliyet* series, according to what Ayden must have told him. *The Legend* contains a whole passage in the first person on narrator-protagonist Erje’s exploits with Algerians in 1960. In fact, the text starts immediately in the fall of 1960 with the first-person narrator collaborating with Algerian underground fighters in Paris, with members of the “ALN” (*Armée de Libération Nationale*), probably an allusion to the real-life FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) that fought for independence from the French. His job seems to have been collecting ransoms from pimps, prostitutes, hoteliers and bar owners to be sent to the freedom fighters in Algiers; he also seems to have acted as a courier, taking trips across borders through illicit means, and to have witnessed fellow travelers being killed during such trips. His companions seem to have been prostitutes,

who, he recounts, were solicited for a variety of sexual fetishisms, including defecation. All this is recounted univocally and unidimensionally by an anti-hero par excellence. For O'Hara, Ayden's writing works at "probing and disfiguring ordinary reality [...] and accepting its most peculiar and neurotic aspects as quite unexceptional [...] thus being] able to convey the real trouble underneath the bizarre and the banal" (Introduction 11). I suggest that the "trouble underneath the bizarre and the banal" is conveyed through the stance Erje's narrator adopts, which echoes that of Albert Camus's Merseault in *The Stranger*. The detachment and indifference displayed towards events of both social and moral consequence, as well as the total insensitivity to and disregard of moral considerations are similar. In fact, in his utter inability to appraise the significance of the events he witnesses, Ayden's character is akin to Benjy Compson of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. This is exactly what Claude-Edmonde Magny identifies as one of the specific characteristics of the twentieth-century American anti-hero in *L'Âge du Roman Américain*. Devoid of psychological depth, these behaviorist characters apprehend the world at face value without ever resorting to introspection, and the narrators retelling their stories refrain from offering any moral judgments, or even any commentary. What is so striking in *The Legend* is not so much that the lack *per se* of introspection or commentary in the tale, or "impatience with analysis" as O'Hara calls it, is a characteristic trait of all of Ayden's work, but that the recounting of actions in Europe is coupled by protagonist Erje's stories concerning his native Turkey (28-30, 50-54). Told in the nature of flashbacks, these include real-life people, implicitly introducing a set of values totally absent in Erje's Algerian adventures, thereby presenting a schizoid state of affairs that is both baffling and fascinating at the same time. The contrast between Erje's social positions in the West and in Turkey could not be greater, and that is what I believe makes Ayden's work unique. It is in such instances, as I suggested above, that Ayden is able to pen the predicament of the Turkish-American, who finds himself/herself situated in two different social strata.

He mentions his (real-life) father and great-uncle Hakkı Karagülle, both members of parliament, as well as the former president of the Republic İsmet İnönü (1884-1973), who all attended Karagülle's daughter's engagement party.¹⁰ The guests at the party must have included the upper echelons of the People's Republican Party, of which Karagülle was a member, İnönü who was its president, as well as gentry from Konya, in Central Anatolia, from where hailed both Karagülle and Aydınlar. The party, a grand bourgeois social function, starkly contrasts with the shady dealings and downright criminal acts of the Algerian operations in the text. In *The Legend*, the narrator-protagonist Erje recounts that he asked (the fictional?) İnönü cheeky questions to which he got witty answers (uncharacteristic of the former head of state—at least contrary to his image in the public sphere in Turkey). Later, the family drove him home, and, during the ride, İnönü, on learning Erje was to leave for the United States, cautioned him away from Ernest Hemingway. According to *The Legend*, İnönü had met the American author while Hemingway was a young journalist, in Lausanne where the Turkish statesman had been head-

¹⁰ In *The Legend*, Erje recounts that his father was İnönü's brother's lawyer.

ing the Turkish delegation at the peace talks with the Allied Powers. Lasting from November 1922 to July 1923, these consultations would culminate in the founding of the Republic of Turkey in October 1923. Hemingway made him drink so much one night, İnönü recounted, that he was unable to function the next day. He even told Mustafa Kemal about this experience on his return to Turkey.

However, a close reading shows there is a slight problem. At first glance, it may seem that the narrator-protagonist wanted readers to read his text as the reflection of real-life events, that is to say, as the recounting of historical facts. But he has İnönü and Hemingway meet in Lausanne in 1924. Unless it is a typo to which a non-Turkish copy-editor (if indeed one was employed) could easily not have been alert, it is a gross error. Every Turkish schoolchild knows that the Lausanne peace talks started in November 1922 and ended in July 1923 with the signing of the treaty. If it is not a typo, then I wonder if this was not Ayden's metafictional way of pointing out that he is fabulating, writing fiction, the way Salman Rushdie will deliberately make mistakes when writing down historical facts in *Midnight's Children* (1981)?¹¹

Most biographies of Ayden will mention his having been a spy for a time in his youth. "It's doubtful the teenaged Erje was a spy in Europe, let alone a hit man, as he often told the story," Eliot Weinberger states upon Ayden's death. Be that as it may, spying would be a recurrent element throughout Ayden's work. *Sadness at Leaving: An Espionage Romance* prefigures *The Americans*, an FX television series created by former CIA officer Joseph Weisberg and first aired in 2013. As the American press reported, ten real-life Russian agents who had been living for decades in the United States would be uncovered by the FBI in 2010, arrested, "charged with conspiracy to act as an agent of a foreign government without notifying the U.S. attorney general" (e.g., "FBI: 10 Russian Spies Arrested in U.S."), and exchanged in Vienna for a group that the Russian Federation handed over. Writing about a Russian agent posing as an all-American citizen already in the 1960s and 1970s, Ayden anticipated the discovery of foreign agents living as naturalized citizens. His later work, *Matador* (1999), is also a spy novel.

Apparently, Ayden was one of the first practitioners of what would come to be termed *faction*, or non-fiction novel, the amalgam of fact and fiction that French author Emmanuel Carrère and Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgaard have published in the twenty-first century to great acclaim in their respective countries. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to pin down one specific precursor, because of the diverse aspects of what has become a genre in itself, but, in U.S. literature, Truman Capote is considered to have pioneered it with *In Cold Blood* (1965). Norman Mailer and Tom Wolfe followed with *Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History* (1968) and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), respectively, published the same year as *The Legend*, Ayden's best-known faction

¹¹ In other words, Ayden may have included the wrong date on purpose. In real-life, Hemingway did go to Lausanne to cover the talks (Lynn 184), but to my knowledge there is no record of İnönü and Hemingway spending an evening together drinking (for one thing, İnönü was far from being the kind of urbane military officer this would imply). The perennial rebel Ayden must have taken pleasure in rewriting history.

novel. The current must have been in the air and Ayden's "antennae" must have caught it. It is on his return from Europe, in the early 1960s, that Ayden started writing, when "he proceeded willfully and systematically to divest himself of his Turkish orientation and plunge into the English language and New York life" (Halman, "A Breakable Bird" 161).

The Birth of an Author: New York in the 1960s

Ayden started writing in English in New York City in the 1960s, and because Americans found it difficult to pronounce his name, he changed it to Erje Ayden (Halman, "Erce'den ... Erje'ye" 9). That is how he would sign the books he wrote. Not surprisingly, his early writings were rejected by prominent publishers. Halman writes about Ayden's "carefree" ease at "speaking away" in English, without heeding in the least bit either the grammar or pronunciation mistakes he was making ("Erje Ayden: Biri Ben Öteki de Clay'dir" [Erje Ayden: One (of the Two) is Me and the Other is Clay] 3). I believe the mistakes must have found their way into the written texts, and this may have also contributed to the rejections. Nevertheless, in 1964, with the help of friends, Ayden decided to self-publish a collection of short stories titled *The Harbor of Whales and Other Short Stories*. He delivered the copies of the book to the Eighth Street Bookstore, the now legendary bookshop of Greenwich Village, which would close down in 1979.¹² *The Harbor of Whales* "attracted some attention [...] as an imaginative start for a very young author grappling with his newly adopted language, to which he brought many fresh turns and twists" (Halman, "Bird" 161). Yet, Ayden would go on writing. His second book, a novel, which again he would have to self-publish, was to meet with great success, a success neither he nor his, by then, large circle of friends had ever expected.

The Crazy Green of Second Street

The expression adult movie has become synonymous with a pornographic film, denoting that one needs to be an adult to watch the explicit scenes, whether of a

¹² Central to the Beat movement, the bookshop was "a literary gathering-spot" (Reed), the "literary nerve center of Greenwich Village in the 1950's and 60's" and "the touchstone of a generation" (Thomas). At a time "when 'beat' poets and writers were emerging, the Eighth Street Bookshop was the very hearthside of hip, the cynosure of cool." Robert Thomas Jr. wrote in the obituary for the owner Eli Wilentz; it was "more than a place to buy books. To a generation of struggling young poets and writers, the store [...] was at once club, post office, employment agency and bank. Struggling poets knew that Mr. Wilentz would let them use the store as a mail drop, that he might hire them as clerks or even lend them money." Corinthian Books, the publishing house the Wilentz brothers founded, was "an adventurous publishing company that served as a logical extension of a store specializing in books too avant garde [sic] for other stores to carry, or too obscure." But "the chief attraction was the 60,000 meticulously selected titles, including what many considered the city's largest selection of poetry." Douglas Martin stated in yet another obituary, "the store was one of the first to offer a large section of quality paperbacks," which as Bill Reed specifies, was a "big factor in the store's success."

sexual or violent nature, it contains. The first trait of *The Crazy Green of Second Street*, recounting a young man's sexual exploits, is then that it is an adult novel. Halman describes it as "a stark and sometimes startling sex novel" (161) and, writing in the 1970 *Milliyet* series, presages that the explicit scenes it contains are apt to make it a watershed in the history of the sex novel in the United States, somehow bypassing Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) and its treatment of sex ("Erce'den ... Erje'ye" 9). Basically a *Bildungsroman* structured through the prism of sex, *The Crazy Green* is in a way an *éducation sentimentale* transposed into New York City in the 1960s, with sex as the object of pursuit.

The later editions would contain a foreword by Seymour Krim, and an introduction by Frank O'Hara. Ayden used the verse "A green fire-escape, an orange fire-escape, a black, a gray spider" from O'Hara's long poem "Second Avenue" subtitled "In memory of Vladimir Mayakovsky" as an epigram for *The Crazy Green* (*The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara* 149). Krim, Beat author, critic, and friend of Ayden's, identifies in Ayden's work an unmasked openness and honesty similar to Gertrude Stein's and Hemingway's. He finds that Ayden treats the erotic with freshness and truthfulness, and quotes William S. Burroughs, who said that Ayden brings "a healthy, Oriental approach" to sex (9). Nevertheless, over the years both publishers in the United States, who would reject later novels by Ayden, and censorship authorities in Turkey, who would outright ban his books, begged to differ about the "healthy" aspect of the novels, and chose to label as *pornographic* what Krim deemed "erotic" (9).¹³ I would suggest this explains, at least in part, why Ayden never became a big name in U.S. literature, even after the success of *The Crazy Green*. While a California judge may have exonerated Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* (1956) of the charge of obscenity in 1957 (Sederberg), and the U.S. Supreme Court may have "ruled that *Tropic of Cancer* was not obscene" in 1964 (Machlin), it appears that an author of texts in which every other word is either *cunt* or *cock* still had problems getting his work published in 1965.

For O'Hara, who was an even closer friend, Ayden was "the traditional 'foreigner,' perhaps no more foreign to our language and ways than was D.H. Lawrence," continuing that like "Lawrence he has the advantage of viewing our *morés* [*sic*] and our verbal locutions from [an] alien and strong tradition" (*The Crazy Green* 11). The (Turkish) tradition from which Ayden viewed the American scene and its speech is indeed both alien, in fact much more alien than Lawrence's was, and strong, in fact so strong that the viewing is always done through a double consciousness, if I may so employ William Du Bois's famous dictum (2). In a way, Ayden's "double consciousness" is a replica of the predicament of the Turkish-American who finds him/herself situated in two different social strata and two different cultural spheres, as the observation is done not only through an acquired American lens, but additionally with the whole cultural baggage transported from Turkey.

It is, however, on language that O'Hara dwells, when he points out that Ayden was, "as foreign [...] as Joseph Conrad was to English at the beginning of his great labors." Like Conrad, Ayden uses a language that was not initially his, and ac-

¹³ What constitutes an "Oriental approach to sex" is of course also open to debate.

ording to O'Hara this is an advantage: "because of his [Ayden's] struggles with acquired language he has a vigor uncommon among our novelists" that renders him "able to convey the real trouble underneath the bizarre and the banal," without "the mannerist inclinations of Salinger, Pynchon, Barth, or Updike." O'Hara offers further guidance when he asserts that "[i]n adopting Fitzgerald as his model, Ayden links himself with other off-shoots of that germinal stylist's attitude: Nathanael West, Horace McCoy and even Dashiell Hammett," meaning that "[h]e has the same brevity, the same swift pace, the same tendency of observation and impatience with analysis. Neither daring nor caring to make a beautiful English sentence." For O'Hara, Ayden is "able to get some of that marvelous Fitzgerald quickness and pointedness, which in the latter's case made Hemingway's most machine-gunned sentences seem rather studied" (11-12). While these words were penned basically to promote a friend, they help situate Ayden as an author within an American literary tradition.

Fitzgerald is in fact an important model, not only in terms of his style and language—the brevity, swift pace, quickness and pointedness—but his content as well, as O'Hara is quick to point out, when he maintains that "[a]s with Gatsby and Rosemary, Ayden's characters are quickly fixed by events in an airy space which belongs to no one, least of all them" (12). Discussing the latter, "Elliott in *Crazy Green*, 'I' in *Confessions of a Nowaday Child*, the hero of *From Hauptbahnhof I Took a Train* who keeps changing his name," as he puts it, O'Hara maintains that they are "always on the go, whether their destination is set or not, in order to keep alive" (12).

Preppies and Phonies

There are also similarities between J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Crazy Green of Second Street*. As Ayden wrote that novel between 1963-1964, he may have read and been influenced by Salinger's work. He may even have deliberately emulated it. However, in the 1960s Salinger had yet to acquire the fame and position within American literature he would achieve later on (as O'Hara's *not* mentioning him makes clear), so rather than deliberately emulating *The Catcher in the Rye*, Ayden may have been merely transposing on paper a mood particular to the literary circles of the period in New York City. He is described always in relation to Greenwich Village and the bohemian artists and authors he befriended there, among whom he spent his life and later emerged as a cult figure. Ayden's patrician background obviously allowed him to see beyond the Village and its way of life. The *Crazy Green's* implied author appears to have had a wider scope of observation than the Village resident. What's more, the novel contains many comical yet sordid scenes that follow each other in episodic succession, and it is almost as if its anti-romantic and, of course, anti-heroic narrator-protagonist Elliot has adopted the persona of an aged *picaro* to imply it was not so much he who was depraved, but the times that were.

As with Holden, Elliot ends his odyssey in a clinic. They both come from a wealthy, upper class background, and both are far from having close, loving rela-

tionships with their parents. They also both have an older brother who is successful in the eyes of others, but not according to their own principles, like Elliot's congressman brother whose wedding starts off the novel. They are both "preppies" (Segal 3) ill at ease with "phonies" (Salinger 17). Both novels progress through flashbacks, although *The Crazy Green* alternates back and forth chronologically. Elliot lands in the clinic after numerous failed marriages. He says they are being nice to him at the clinic because they know his days are numbered. The reader does not know whether his alcoholism has brought him to this point, whether he is truly in a terminal stage, or whether Elliot is in a ward for the insane, merely imagining things.

Holden seems merely an ingenious teenager when compared to Elliot, who is much older and has been living a life of continuous amorality. Whereas Holden is, more than anything else, confused about sex, Elliot, whom the reader follows in non-sequential, staccato flashbacks from masturbating small boy to ailing adult, is a sex-obsessed man with a history of incessant love-making with the fair sex, incest, bestiality, homosexual sex, group sex, and a record for being a macho who does not refrain from hitting women with whom he is sexually involved. Hence I would like to suggest that it would not be wrong to view *The Crazy Green* as an adult version of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Rotten Crowd

The amorality also reminds the reader of *The Great Gatsby*. There is the same attitude of the very rich towards the 'lesser' beings, the same belief the very rich hold that they have the right to tamper with the lives of others without being affected themselves by any tragedy that may ensue. At eighteen, Elliot falls for and starts seeing one of the typists named Kathleen in his father's office. When she becomes pregnant, the father agrees to their marrying, especially as he finds the two are very much in love with each other. But the mother opposes it—as most mothers of eighteen-year-old boys would. Yet, the way she ultimately prevents the marriage is by sleeping with her son. Later, another flashback dating from an even earlier period reveals that she has seduced her son before, and perhaps even many more times. Elliot ends up having to spend some time in a clinic, while Kathleen is obliged to have an abortion before being whisked off to Paris to "study art" (44).

Earlier, while still an adolescent, Elliot had become friends with Gino, whose father was in the service of the family's neighbors in Long Island. Although not older than Elliot, Gino is the initiator: he takes Elliot to have sex with a pony, then to prostitutes, for group sex. They go on seeing each other as they grow older. Eventually, Gino gets married, has two kids, and owns a gas station, which Elliot helped him buy. In the meantime, Elliot finds Kathleen and marries her after all. She becomes pregnant again; however, she loses the baby at birth. At the same time, Elliot's father dies. Elliot again enters a clinic, and divorces Kathleen. Gino is appalled by the state Elliot has fallen into, and, to help him recuperate, invites him to come and live for a time with him and his family. They are leading a calm and uneventful life in a Long Island that is deserted and peaceful during the winter. Elliot accepts the offer and stays in their home, only to take Gino's wife Dana

away a few days later, and start living with her in the city. Proud Gino accepts the fait accompli, and talks of selling the gas station to reimburse Elliot. But Elliot is at another plane altogether: being who he is, he cannot stop himself from seeing Kathleen again, and staying with her overnight. When Dana finds out she jumps from the roof, and it is only two days after her suicide, when he returns from Kathleen, that Elliot learns about it. At the funeral, all he can think of is getting back to Kathleen to make love to her. Then, some time later, Kathleen announces she is leaving Elliot because she happened to fall for someone else. Just like that. Exit Kathleen.

Again, the lack of introspection or the “impatience with analysis” (O’Hara, Introduction 11) in Ayden’s characters is striking; it is the reader who feels the need to stop and make sense of the rampant amoralism, and the Benjy-like lack of adequate appraisal of experience. As in *Catcher*, a whole milieu and period are being debunked. Elliot’s father is a successful businessman—the fortune he amasses will allow Elliot to do as he wishes all his life, pursuing an author’s life almost on the side.¹⁴ The father is almost always away on business, invariably with a secretary, never named and perhaps always changing. His idea of taking care of his sons, which is never realized because he is never home, is to take them to a fancy restaurant and then for all of them to have a good time with “girls” (54). The mother spends her time with her girl friends, one of whom, Elliot finds out, she is having sex with. There is not one instance when the family has an ordinary domestic life at home, and the parents divorce halfway through the novel.

While the story is set in expensive residences in and outside of New York City, there is something dismal and abject about it all. First, the crass materialism of both the parents and the many small-town girls or married women he meets, who are ready for a fling, is sufficient to give that sense. Elliot is painfully aware of it and denounces it artlessly. Yet Ayden concomitantly puts on stage a world governed by sexual parameters, exposing an incest and adultery-ridden family life, and love relationships punctuated by abortions and miscarriages. Elliot, his family, and the characters he meets end up emerging collectively as “a rotten crowd,” to use Nick Carraway’s famous phrase (Fitzgerald 154). By the 2000s, *The Crazy Green* had sold 2.5 million copies in successive editions (Baykam, “Pyramid’den” 5). “The book’s impact was so dense and forceful that Erje Ayden became an instant legend in the art circles” (Krim qtd. in “[Erje Ayden] A Tribute”).

The Legend Continued, or the Aura of the Beat Movement

After the success of *The Crazy Green*, Ayden went on to write other novels. In *The Legend*, the narrator-protagonist states that becoming an author had changed his personality, given him a certain conscience, a certain pride. He could not, any

¹⁴ Elliot’s jabs at how society sees an author are a delight to read. Any author coming from a social milieu not accustomed to intellectual pursuits who, after having published a book, is still asked when s/he will start to work, when s/he will start thinking about his/her future, will enjoy reading the book.

more, steal from friends, live off women, or even ask for loans, which he never paid back (126). As mentioned above, Ayden was good-looking and therefore popular with women (Halman, “Erce’den Erje’ye” 9), which allows the reader to surmise that he may not have passed up the opportunity of living as a gigolo whenever the occasion presented itself, and that this would be reflected in narrator-protagonist Erje’s life. On the other hand, *The Legend* indicates that Erje was known as a tough guy, a bully, the invincible strong and quarrelsome “Turk,” the street fighter one should not provoke (41, and 90-91). This was an image, which, he found, gave him a bad reputation (161); however, it becomes clear from what he recounts that he may have indeed earned his living every now and then by entering into fights for other people.

When out of money, Erje was not above working as a house painter along with other artist friends, nor staying at the home of friends who had the extra space, nor, even, accepting money as a gift from friends who could afford to make such a contribution. The Dutch-born artist painter Willem de Kooning, the most famous of the many friends Ayden made in New York, started his life in the United States working as a house painter, and in *The Legend* Erje finds it pays well. He recounts how he, de Kooning’s assistant John McMahan, and Swedish-born artist Hans Hokanson decorated a home in East Hampton. When Erje had money, however, he was extravagant: he would stay at the famed Chelsea Hotel, or rent or co-rent with a friend or friends an apartment or a house, either in New York City or in Long Island in the summer.¹⁵ In fact, when Erje got hold of any sum, he spent it in one go: he became generous, and also spent profusely on women. He hosted or co-hosted huge parties to which even people who disliked him came because De Kooning would be there (80). Ayden/Erje wrote *Confessions of a Nowaday Child* after *The Crazy Green*. He would write between bouts of intoxication, between multifarious sex encounters, parties he attended, parties he gave, and outings in bars and restaurants, such as the legendary Cedar Tavern of the Village where artists and intellectuals congregated, as well as between more and more frequent stretches in hospitals (for ulcer of the stomach, or for heart trouble), the starting of publishing companies in order to defy the big publishers that always ended in failure, and of course, between running from the immigration authorities because he had become an illegal alien after losing his Turkish citizenship.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Chelsea Hotel is known primarily for the notability of its residents. Over the years it has been the home of numerous writers, musicians, artists and actors. Jack Kerouac wrote *On The Road* there. The twelve-story, red-brick building was one of the city’s first private apartment cooperatives. As of August 1, 2011, the hotel is closed for renovations, but long-time residents remain in the building, some of them protected by state rent regulations (“Hotel Chelsea”).

¹⁶ According to Michael Corcoran, “The Cedar Tavern held a special place in Greenwich Village notoriety because it was where abstract expressionists and beat poets drank after artist Robert Motherwell’s weekly salons in his nearby studio.” The drinks were cheap and there were no tourists or middle-class people around, so it became the favored haunt of these downtown artists (“Cedar Tavern”). Moreover, it was “reminiscent,” e.g., for de Kooning, of the so called “brown bars” of Rotterdam around which he grew up,” as Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan state, “a working-class saloon entirely without distinction.” They find that “in the New York of the fifties, [that] was precisely its distinction. It was not French, not tasteful, not smooth, not witty. These were important ‘not’s to painters determined to declare their independence from

It was O'Hara who saved Erje during the winter of 1965-1966 from becoming a junkie. A curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), he would be out working during the day, so Erje had the apartment to himself, and finished *From Hauptbahnhof* while living at O'Hara's place. It is also while he was staying there that O'Hara, vacationing with friends on Fire Island, off Long Island, would be killed in a car accident. O'Hara, a gay man, had once told Erje that he was being asked whether Erje Ayden was really staying in his home, adding how people so easily deduced a "Rimbaud-Verlaine" relationship even in the most innocent friendships (154). They were friends, with Frank telling Erje all about his past and present love affairs, and Erje would be greatly affected by O'Hara's death. *Summer Frank O'Hara Died* would be the next work he would pen.

In the meantime, he continued having difficulty placing his work. *From Hauptbahnhof* is a very funny novel, taking place in a city called "Mew Cork" in a country called Tamerika, and moreover reflecting admirably the slangy, street English of the time. It is also quite sad, as it starts with an anti-heroic narrator-protagonist on the run from the "Immition" (probably an allusion to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service known as "INS") people being caught and, nightmare of nightmares, deported. Yet, again it has more than its share of *cunt*, *cock*, *fuck*, and the like. Erje would end up publishing it with Candy Stripe, a company he had started; in other words, it would be self-published again—however hard to believe after the success of *The Crazy Green*.

He would write *The Legend of Erje Ayden* next. According to Halman's last of the 1970 *Milliyet* series, Ayden considered Cassius Clay (who later changed his name to Muhammed Ali) and himself as the "two greatest [men in the world]" (3).¹⁷ Clearly, *The Legend* is the written version of that statement, minus Clay. It is the recounting of the legend that Ayden/Erje himself believed he had become by the end of the 1960s, but it is also more. The faction *The Legend*, or the story spun around the character Erje, is first and foremost an elegy to those among the many he had known in New York City who died young. Apart from the poet O'Hara, there are the artist painters Franz Kline, and the Dutch Gustave Asselbergs, and actor Montgomery Clift whom he met by chance.

But it is finally the living he celebrates in the book, the many whose paths crossed with his, who were part of the Beat Generation, and made the Beat Move-

Paris. The Americans were hard drinkers at a dive whose existential aura owed more to Brando on the docks than to Sartre at Les Deux Magots."

¹⁷ As the 1931-born Halman also did his secondary studies at Robert College, he and Ayden might have been schoolmates, but there is no mention of this anywhere. Neither one acknowledged it during their lifetimes, probably because either Halman had already left when Ayden started, or perhaps because the period when they were both there was too short and the difference in age too great. But the relationship between Halman and Ayden continued after 1970. Ayden named the protagonist of *Sadness at Leaving* Carl Halman, and continued to present to Halman copies of the books he published. Some of these are now at the library of Bilkent University in Ankara where Halman taught during the last fifteen years of his life. Ayden handwrote in ballpoint "Erje Ayden—Talat Ağabey Happy new year. Love Jan 2001" on the copyright page of *Matador*, and "To Talat Halman—I'm sure you remember those days Love Erje Oct. 2004" on the first page of *The Woman from Sweetmilk Harbor* (2004), to give two examples. In turn, Halman wrote a review of *A Breakable Bird* (1972).

ment possible. The New York School, synonymous with abstract expressionist painting in art, but from the very start counting among its adherents poets, writers, musicians and dancers, comes alive in Erje's pen as a wondrous, unforgettable kaleidoscopic world. Almost anyone who had landed in New York City in the 1960s, and was anybody in the world of letters or art at the time, figures in that microcosm. Burroughs, Hokanson, de Kooning, Krim, Mailer, whom Ayden portrays as the character Hubert Cleaver in *Sadness at Leaving* in a barely-disguised parody, and McMahon have already been mentioned. Erje's awe-inspiring name-dropping includes, among those departed today, art critic and author Harold Rosenberg, author James Baldwin, poet Joel Oppenheimer, actor Vincent Price, art critic and art newspaper editor Bruce Hooton, artist painter and art teacher Hans Peter Kahn, Norwegian-born artist painter Otto Mjaanes, pop art artist Larry Rivers, poet and playwright Kenneth Koch, playwright Arnold Weinstein, Broadway press agent and publicist Frank Goodman, Estonian-born Peter Wrangell, poet Frank Lima, and writer Morris "Mac" Kaufman.¹⁸ Among those living as these lines are being written are artist painter Felix Pasilis, German-born artist painter Wolf Kahn, photographer Robert Frank, poet Allan Kaplan, Argentinian artist painter Fernando Maza, and the Dutch author painter Jan Cremer.

Like all Ayden characters, these dramatis personae seem to be "always on the go," as O'Hara put it, scurrying in a whirlwind of endless partying in homes, bars or restaurants in the Village that were *in* at the time. Furthermore, personalities of the New York School are revealed in their quotidian. De Kooning is portrayed not only as an alcoholic but a womanizer. With him at the time (of the episode Erje recounts) is Joan Ward, one of the very many girlfriends he had while remaining married to artist painter and art critic Elaine (Fried) de Kooning.¹⁹ Art student then illustrator Ward, whom de Kooning met in 1952, is singled out because she was the mother of his only child, Johanna Liesbeth "Lisa" de Kooning Villeneuve, a sculptress in her own right, but known especially for being during her life "a leading force in maintaining [...] her father's legacy" ("Johanna de Kooning Obituary"; and "Willem de Kooning Chronology"). The Turkish facet of the story, which started with the former president of the Republic İnönü, continues, on the one hand, with Erje's paternal aunt, the widow of a *pasha* and a frequent overnight guest of the Mother Sultana at the imperial palace, and, on the other, with a narrative pertaining to the "Armenian genocide," in which Turkish peasants are massacred by Armenian militants—a facet that is as incredible as it must be true. Moreover, the story corresponds to a certain exotic image of "Oriental" Turkey, while at the same time introducing a whiff of magical realism.

¹⁸ "Mac" is remembered for having been the husband of writer Agnes Boulton, former wife of Eugene O'Neill and mother of Oona O'Neill Chaplin.

¹⁹ Married in 1943, they led separate lives for a long time, but did not divorce, and were eventually reunited. Elaine de Kooning is known as the artist who painted in 1962 the portrait of President Kennedy for the Harry S. Truman Library.

Conclusion

According to John Ashbery, “Erje Ayden’s novels provide a little-known but fascinating view of American bohemian and bourgeois society from the point of view of a sympathetically bemused Turkish observer. The wonder is that Ayden’s not more famous, as he can be as addictive as Simenon or Proust” (qtd. in “[Erje Ayden] A Tribute”). Since his death, (Georges) Simenon’s position within the Republic of Letters has changed: the once best-selling author of airport novels is now being published in the prestigious Pléiade series in France, and his work is compared to that of the likes of Fyodor Dostoievski. Now that the *oeuvre* is completed, with Ayden’s death in 2013, the Turkish-American author also may see an elevation of his status, and perhaps even re-obtain his image as a cult figure. Ads accompanying the latest publications of his translated novels in Turkey associate him with Jack Kerouac and Charles Bukowski, hoping to thus generate a wave of interest in his native country, where the judges who condemned the first translations have already raised him on an equal footing with a classic author such as the Marquis de Sade. Yet in the U.S. scene, his work—and the life reflected in it—is a poignant walk down memory lane, a deep breath of nostalgia for the way New York City’s Greenwich Village used to be.²⁰

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²⁰ Works by Ayden not mentioned so far are *Seven Years of Winter: An Autobiography* (1970); *The People of Imprisoned City (Inscribed)* (1973); *The Mirror Creek. Novel as a Stage Play* (1987); *Memories of a Past and Present, Unwritten* (1991); a three-town trilogy on Leicester, Blackpool and Everton composed of *The Cross of Fifth Avenue* (1998), *A Lost Cloud* (2002), and *Goldberg Pasha* (2003); and *Hannah, Michael, Derek & the Rest of Us* (2001).

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