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The Discourse of 'New Turkey' in Contemporary Polish Reportage Books (2009–2024)

Abstract This article examines how the concept of the 'new Turkey' is constructed and represented in six Polish literary reportage books published between 2009 and 2024. Using Norman Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and drawing on the author's background in Turkology, it investigates how language, ideology and power intersect in portrayals of contemporary Turkey. Although widely used, the term 'new Turkey' lacks a consistent definition and is often employed ambiguously—even within individual texts. Early reportages by Cegielski and Szabłowski associate it with republican modernity, while later works by Orchowski, Szumer-Brysz and Rostkowska link it to the AKP era and the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt. By comparing these works diachronically, the article demonstrates how the term's meaning shifts from a symbol of secular modernisation to a marker of ideological transformation in recent Turkish politics. Despite differing interpretations, the reportages share recurring themes: the status of ethnic and religious minorities, women's rights, urban transformation and the tension between tradition and modernity. These themes reveal both historical continuities and contemporary political shifts. The authors—often with progressive or left-leaning perspectives—foreground marginalized voices and critique dominant narratives, though their viewpoints are shaped by cultural distance and the conventions of the reportage genre. Ultimately, the article argues that the 'new Turkey' is not a singular, definable entity but a contested discursive space shaped by competing ideologies and personal experiences. As Rostkowska observes, 'no one knows if these countless New Turkeys will ever meet'.

Keywords 'new Turkey', Polish literary reportage, Critical Discourse Analysis, ideology and discourse, modernity and tradition, Max Cegielski, Witold Szabłowski, Thomas Orchowski, Marcelina Szumer-Brysz, Agnieszka Rostkowska

1 Introduction

Over the past two decades, more than a dozen book-length reportages on Turkey have been published in Poland. The first appeared in 2009 and nearly every subsequent year has seen the release of a new title.[1] The sheer number of works of literary journalism on Turkey—either originally written in Polish or translated into Polish—within such a short time frame is striking. This phenomenon reflects a longstanding Polish interest in Turkish themes, rooted in a complex historical relationship, including over three centuries of geopolitical proximity (1475–1792).

The earliest Polish sources of knowledge concerning the Ottoman Empire were closely tied to diplomatic activity. Following the establishment of official diplomatic relations in 1414, at least '160 Polish missions and embassies were sent to the Porte' (Kołodziejczyk 2000: 175), which places Poland among the leading European states in terms of diplomatic engagement with the Ottomans (Topaktaş 2015: 308). After the loss of Polish independence at the end of the 18th century, diplomatic correspondence was gradually supplanted by the memoirs of political emigrants who sought refuge within the Ottoman Empire. Another significant source of information about the Ottoman realm emerged from the accounts of pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem, which had been under Ottoman control since 1517. The 16th century, often referred to as 'the golden age of pilgrimages'[2] (Bystroń 1930: 10), yielded several noteworthy descriptions of Ottoman territories. However, it was in the 19th century that a substantial proliferation of pilgrimage narratives occurred. During this period, many pilgrims began to adopt the role of tourists in the modern sense, eager to document and publish their travel impressions (Filipowska 2024: 738). In that century alone, approximately thirty full-length book travel memoirs concerning Turkey were published in Polish (Filipowska 2017: 12–14). Poland's regaining of inde-

[1] The following is a chronological list of authors' names and the year their reportages were published in Poland: Cegielski (2009); Szabłowski (2010); Kelek (2011, translated from German); Mak (2011, translated from Dutch); Strittmatter (2014, translated from German); King (2016, translated from English); Smoleński (2016); Temelkuran (2017, translated from English); Orchowski (2018); Szumer-Brysz (2018); Kassabova (2019, translated from English); Rostkowska (2020); Tunç (2020, translated from Turkish); Szumer-Brysz (2021); Orchowski (2021). Six book-length reportage works originally written in Polish and entirely focused on Turkey were selected for this article: Max Cegielski, *Oko świata. Od Konstantynopola do Stambułu*; Witold Szabłowski, *Zabójca z miasta moreli. Reportaże z Turcji*; Thomas Orchowski, *Rzeź na Tarlabaşı. Opowieść o nowej Turcji*; Marcelina Szumer-Brysz, *Wróżąc z fusów. Reportaże z Turcji*; Agnieszka Rostkowska, *Wojownicy o szklanych oczach. W poszukiwaniu Nowej Turcji*; Marcelina Szumer-Brysz, *Izmir. Miasto giaurów*.

[2] All translations of quotations from Polish and Turkish, unless explicitly stated otherwise, have been provided by Sylwia Filipowska.

pendence in 1918 coincided with profound political transformations in Turkey, culminating in the proclamation of the republic in 1923. This convergence of historical events sparked renewed interest in Turkish affairs, resulting in the publication of several significant works of reportage in the inter-war period. However, this interest waned considerably after the Second World War. Post-war reportage on Turkey became exceedingly rare, a decline largely attributable to the travel restrictions imposed by the communist regime.

The situation changed markedly following the collapse of the communist regime in 1989; however, a significant catalyst for renewed Polish interest in Turkey emerged in 2006, when the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Orhan Pamuk. There is no doubt that 'the popularity of Pamuk's novels in Poland has had a considerable impact on the interest of Polish reportage writers in Turkey' (Filipowska 2022: 104). Another pivotal moment occurred on July 15, 2016, with the coup d'état attempt. This event serves as the starting point for three reportage books—those authored by Orchowski, Szumer-Brysz and Rostkowska. Furthermore, two of these authors chose to emphasize the transformative nature of contemporary Turkey through their subtitles: *The Story of a New Turkey* (Orchowski) and *In Search of a New Turkey* (Rostkowska). These titles suggest that the reader will encounter completely new insights, reflecting a perception that Turkey has undergone profound and possibly unprecedented change. This raises a critical question: were these transformations genuinely a consequence of the attempted coup, or does the invocation of the term 'new Turkey' function primarily as a rhetorical or marketing device, designed to attract readership by promising fresh perspectives? To address this question, it is essential to examine the usage of the term 'new Turkey' within the field of political science and to compare its conceptual framework with the narratives and themes presented in the aforementioned reportages.

This study applies Norman Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its principal methodological approach to investigate how the notion of the 'new Turkey' is discursively constructed in Polish works of literary journalism. Fairclough conceptualizes language not as a neutral medium of communication, but as 'a form of social practice' (Fairclough 1989: 22). In this view, language is understood as being inherently embedded in social structures—it is simultaneously a component of society, a social process and a socially conditioned activity. As such, language plays a pivotal role in the production, reproduction and contestation of ideologies, power relations and cultural hegemonies. The analysis is conducted in accordance with Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse, which facilitates a comprehensive examination of the texts by addressing three interrelated levels: text, discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough 2006: 63–73). The textual level focuses on the formal and linguistic features of the texts, including vocabulary, metaphorical expressions, syntactic structures, rhetorical devices and other dis-

cursive strategies employed to construct representations of the 'new Turkey'. The discursive practice level investigates the processes of text production, distribution and reception. This includes identifying, who articulates the notion of the 'new Turkey', within which cultural and historical contexts, and under what ideological assumptions. The social practice level situates the discourse within broader socio-political frameworks, examining the ideological implications embedded in intercultural narratives and the ways in which the term 'new Turkey' reflects or challenges dominant power structures. This multidimensional approach enables a critical interrogation of how Polish literary journalists construct the image of contemporary Turkey and whether their narratives serve to reinforce prevailing stereotypes or, conversely, seek to question and deconstruct them. Furthermore, it allows for the identification of dominant discourses shaping the portrayal of Turkish sociopolitical realities and their potential consequences within the broader field of intercultural communication.

2 The term 'new Turkey' in political sciences

The term 'new Turkey' undeniably possesses a distinctly political origin in the context of the 21st century. Initially, it was associated with Turkey's aspirations to join the European Union, symbolizing a vision of modernization, democratization and alignment with European norms. This interpretation of the term persisted for an extended period, particularly in the discourse of journalists and political scientists operating outside of Turkey (Morris 2005; Yavuz 2007). Inside Turkey, however, the meaning of 'new Turkey' evolved over time. Around the period of the 2010 constitutional referendum, the term began to be appropriated by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) as part of its political rhetoric. It came to signify a promise of stability and prosperity under AKP governance—a form of social contract predicated on the continuous construction of a renewed and improved national reality. Turkish politicians frequently employed the phrase in conjunction with the concept of *inşa* ('construction'), as in *Yeni Türkiye'nin inşası* ('the construction of the new Turkey'), thereby framing it as an ongoing project of national transformation (Yaşlıçimen 2014: 1).

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan prominently invoked the concept during his presidential campaign and upon his election as the 12th President of the Republic of Turkey on August 10, 2014, he pledged to implement his political programme under the banner of the 'new Turkey'. In this context, the term functioned as a rhetorical shorthand encapsulating a broader ideological vision for the country's future.

> These statements emphasized the idea that the 'Old' Turkey was a country of coups, and the 'New' Turkey would leave coups and revolutions behind. (…) The emphasis that this 'New' Turkey would be the pioneering states and a regional power of the

> 21st century is another idea that was promoted. Within this context, the vision of a 'New' Turkey that is 'local and national', 'not Western-oriented' and determines its own interior and foreign policies was adopted. (Gulmez and Tuysuz 2020: X)

The development of the term 'new Turkey' has been marked by both unexpected shifts and substantial implications. Originally employed to describe a state aspiring to European Union membership and thus oriented toward Western democratic norms, the term has undergone a profound semantic shift. Over time, it has become one of the most frequently invoked—yet simultaneously ambiguous and ideologically charged—expressions in Turkish public discourse. What remains consistent, however, is its strong association with the post-military political era dominated by the AKP and the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Waldman and Caliskan 2017: 1–5).

This interpretation is also reflected in Polish political science literature (Surdel 2017; Wódka 2015; 2017). A particularly insightful contribution comes from Mateusz Chudziak, an expert at the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw, whose study titled *The Coup as Founding Myth: The Ideological Pillars of the New Turkey* offers a compelling perspective. Chudziak identifies four core values underpinning the ideological framework of the new Turkey: the nation, the state, the leader and the struggle for a better future. He argues that the failed coup attempt of July 2016 served as a catalyst for the AKP to implement far-reaching transformations. In this context, the coup is reinterpreted not merely as a political crisis, but as a foundational moment—'the symbolic birth of the New Turkey' (Chudziak 2017: 17).

3 Cegielski: The old Constantinople and the new Istanbul

The semantic ambiguity of the term 'new Turkey' is also reflected in Polish literary reportages concerning that country. Chronologically, the first such work is Max Cegielski's *Oko świata. Od Konstantynopola do Stambułu* [*The Eye of the World: From Constantinople to Istanbul*], published in 2009. The narrative structure of the book is explicitly organized around the binary opposition of 'old' and 'new', where the former denotes the Ottoman legacy and the latter refers to the republican era. This dichotomy is underscored through the chapter titles, each beginning with either 'Constantinople' or 'Istanbul', thereby juxtaposing the city's historical past with its contemporary identity. Cegielski asserts that Istanbul cannot be approached other than by 'following in the footsteps of his predecessors' (Cegielski 2010: 15), so he repeatedly cites the opinions of nineteenth-century Polish travellers. His text is replete with historical dates, factual annotations, quotations and contextual explanations. This deliberate intertextuality and historical layering reflect what he describes as the necessity to 'carry the baggage of erudition' (Cegielski 2010: 15), which in turn underscores the enduring strength of the tradition of writing about Turkey in Polish literature.

Cegielski appears to be motivated by a desire to fill the nearly century-long gap in Polish reportage on Turkey. In doing so, he selectively reconstructs key moments in the history of the Turkish Republic, beginning with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, whom he credits with having 'saved the country and created a modern republic, but destroyed Ottoman tolerance and cosmopolitanism' (Cegielski 2010: 86). The values introduced by Atatürk in the early twentieth century are repeatedly questioned and reinterpreted by Cegielski's interlocutors. One such figure is the artist Extrastruggle, who, during his 2007 exhibition at the Istanbul Modern art museum, presented posters referencing Atatürk's iconic slogan *Ne mutlu Türküm diyene* [*How happy is the one who says 'I am a Turk'*], replacing the word Turk with alternative identities such as Kurd, Armenian, communist, Christian and Islamic orthodox. This artistic intervention underscores the contested legacy of republican nationalism and the growing visibility of marginalized identities in contemporary Turkey. Another symbolic rupture with Atatürk's legacy is represented by the planned demolition of the Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM) in Istanbul's Taksim Square. Cegielski reflects on this development by asking: 'I wonder if Turkey is changing so much that under the AKP government it needs new symbols to replace the old ones from Atatürk's time' (Cegielski 2010: 250). The transformations introduced by the AKP do not escape the reporter's attention; he senses the emergence of yet another iteration of the 'new' in Turkey's political and cultural landscape. At the same time, he begins to experience a degree of conceptual disorientation in distinguishing between what is 'new' and what is 'old'. For instance, describing the tense atmosphere following the AKP's victory in the 2007 parliamentary elections, he notes that the 'old elites' disapprove of the fact that President Abdullah Gül's wife wears a traditional headscarf. Unnoticeably in Cegielski's narrative, the new republican elites became the old ones… This inversion reflects the fluid and contests nature of political identity in modern Turkey.

In his effort to address the absence of Polish reportages on the republican period of Turkish history, Cegielski devotes considerable attention to pivotal events and figures that have shaped modern Turkey. He discusses, among others, the anti-Greek and anti-Jewish pogroms of 6 September 1955; the figure of Ali Ağca, known in Poland primarily for the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II in 1981; the assassination of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007; the rise to power of the AKP; the literary significance of Orhan Pamuk; and the legacy of Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet, whose Polish ancestry renders him particularly meaningful to Polish readers. Cegielski's reportage is especially attuned to socio-cultural dimensions of contemporary Turkey. He explores the status of religious and ethnic minorities, such as the Alevis (attending a religious ceremony in a *cemevi* with his interpreter's cousin) as well as the everyday lives of street traders, men sitting in the cafés, residents of *gecekondu* (informal housing settlements), the Romani community in the Sulukule district and independent artists and performers. Even stray dogs in Istanbul's urban landscape become

subjects of his ethnographic curiosity, exactly as they were present in the memoirs of 19th-century Polish travellers (Filipowska 2017: 154–156). His approach to urban space is informed by a critical awareness of industrialization and gentrification processes. While historical monuments are typically discussed within chapters labelled as part of 'old Turkey', Cegielski consistently supplements these descriptions with reflections on their contemporary context, e.g. in the case of the Eyüp mosque and cemetery:

> It's spring, it's green, but there's nothing flowering yet. We are climbing uphill. Loti in *Constantinople in 1890* described Eyüp in May, when roses and jasmine were in fragrance beside the gravestones. On one of the paths he met three little girls, 'as if they were out of place'. We also met three girls, teenagers who hid here from the sight of their parents. In Loti's time, there were no such Turkish girls in the city. Wearing jeans, sneakers and T–shirts, they smoke one cigarette together, giggling when they see me. (Cegielski 2010: 50)

One of the recurring themes in Cegielski's reportage is the position of women in Turkish society, a subject to which he devotes considerable attention. His inquiry centres on the boundaries of women's personal freedom, with clothing emerging as a key symbolic marker of autonomy and identity. During a visit to the apartment of two Alevi women from Sivas, Cegielski, prompted by 'a piece of colourful strings visible above the trousers', initiates a conversation about 'appearance as a declaration of worldview' (Cegielski 2010: 157). Filiz, a fashion designer, reflects on the performative nature of dress in Turkish society. She describes how some women tailor their appearance to align with the expectations of different male figures in their lives—dressing one way for a boyfriend on a date and another in the presence of a father or brother. In her view, 'Turkish society is conservative in terms of morality' (Cegielski 2010: 156). This observation is echoed in an interview with Esra, a resident of the affluent Nişantaşı district, who notes that her great-grandmother uncovered her head even before the fall of the Ottoman Empire, suggesting a more complex and historically layered narrative of women's visibility and agency. The repeated focus on women's dress may also reflect enduring Polish stereotypes about Turkey and Turkish women. This thematic preoccupation has historical roots, as nineteenth-century Polish travellers often devoted separate sections of their accounts to the subject of women's clothing and social roles (Filipowska 2017: 221). Cegielski's engagement with this motif thus not only reveals contemporary tensions within Turkish society but also resonates with a long-standing tradition in Polish travel writing.

A central focus of Cegielski's reportage is the Turkish left-wing opposition and the history of anti-socialist violence, both past and present. He revisits key moments of political repression, including the Sheikh Said uprising in 1925, the Taksim Square massacre during the 1 May parade in 1977, the attack on

the Alevi cultural congress in Sivas in 1993 and the shootings at Alevi cafés in Istanbul on 12 March 1995. These events are situated within a broader narrative of marginalization and political exclusion, particularly of groups such as the Alevis and Kurds. Cegielski notes that socialist ideals are often embraced by Kurdish communities, who are described as being 'socially excluded' (Cegielski 2010: 54). In an effort to engage directly with these marginalized voices, the reporter travels to Gazi Mahallesi, a peripheral district of Istanbul predominantly inhabited by migrants from eastern Turkey. The neighbourhood's reputation for political unrest is so pronounced that only the third taxi driver he approaches in Taksim agrees to take him there. Cegielski's sustained interest in such spaces is evident in the structure of his book: nearly half of the chapters devoted to 'new Istanbul' (9 out of 20) are subtitled *Gazi Mahallesi*, *Return to Gazi Mahallesi* or *Küçük Armutlu* (another district with a similar socio-political profile). His interlocutors from Küçük Armutlu are described as 'stigmatised people—for social and religious reasons. They are known as the '3K'—Kurds, communists and Kızılbaş (a pejorative term for Alevis, literally meaning 'red heads')' (Cegielski 2010: 129). This triad of identities encapsulates the intersection of ethnic, political and religious marginalization in contemporary Turkey and underscores Cegielski's commitment to documenting voices from the periphery of mainstream political discourse.

Cegielski's interlocutors include, among others, Mesut, a member of the socialist Freedom and Solidarity Party (Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi, ÖDP, later renamed as the Left Party in 2019); Hasan, the manager of an Alevi clinic; and the husband of a political prisoner who died during a hunger strike (he chooses to remain anonymous). The reporter openly acknowledges that during his initial visits to Istanbul, he lacked access to *gecekondu* neighbourhoods and only through collaboration with local translators was he able to engage meaningfully with residents of these marginalized districts. One of these translators is Bayram, a sociology student at Bosphorus University, who identifies as 'an atheist and socialist' (Cegielski 2010: 277). It appears that the political orientations of the translators may have influenced not only the selection of interviewees but also the choice of locations visited. This, in turn, contributed to the distinctly left-leaning perspective that characterizes the reportage. Cegielski himself addresses this issue in the second edition of the book, noting that some readers criticized the work for its perceived ideological bias. For instance, Marzena, a Pole working in the editorial office for the English-language supplement of an Istanbul-based newspaper, accused him of 'exaggerating the importance of the left-wing opposition in the country' (Cegielski 2010: 336). In response, the author offers a measured defence, stating that he 'does not have a monopoly on the truth about reality' (Cegielski 2010: 337). This remark encapsulates a fundamental principle of the reportage genre: the acknowledgment of subjectivity and the situated nature of narrative perspective.

4 Szabłowski: Two Turkeys

Witold Szabłowski, in his collection *Zabójca z miasta moreli. Reportaże z Turcji* [*The Assassin from the Apricot City: Reportage from Turkey*], published one year after Cegielski's work, also engages with the concept of republican Turkey as the 'new Turkey'. Reflecting on the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, he writes:

> As president, Kemal sets the bar extremely high for himself. In the course of a decade, he aims to change a benighted leviathan into a modern country, and the traditional fez-wearing Turk into a New Turk—a rightful citizen of Europe (Szabłowski 2013: 180).

In contrast to Cegielski, Szabłowski's primary focus lies in the contemporary period—specifically, the first decade of the 21st century. Historical references appear only sporadically and serve primarily to contextualize present-day phenomena. He briefly discusses Atatürk's reforms, recounts the story of his marriage to Latife Hanım and references figures such as Nazım Hikmet and Ali Ağca. However, even these historical elements are firmly anchored in the present, as Szabłowski explores their ongoing resonance in Turkish society. For instance, he highlights the enduring cultural phenomenon of *Hikmetomania*—the continued reverence for Nazım Hikmet among contemporary Turks. He visits the family of Ali Ağca, who was incarcerated at that time and conducts an interview with İpek Çalışlar, author of a 2006 biography of Latife Hanım, who was accused of insulting Atatürk and brought to trial.

Szabłowski directs his attention to contemporary issues or events from recent years that continue to provoke intense debate within Turkish society. One entire chapter, titled *Moustachioed Republic*, is devoted to Prime Minister Erdoğan and the rise to power of the AKP. Rather than offering direct evaluations or commentary on the party's policies, Szabłowski employs a subtle and symbolic approach, using the motif of the moustache. He opens the chapter with the following thesis:

> In Turkey you can recognise the politicians by their moustaches. The nationalists have the longest ones. The socialists are slightly shorter, and the shortest ones belong to the Islamists. (Szabłowski 2013: 87–88)

The chapter concludes with a description of a meeting held on 15 July 2007, during which terms such as 'Islam', 'Sharia', or 'Qur'an' were not mentioned even once, yet the audience was predominantly composed of men with short moustaches. Szabłowski also explores political attitudes and perspectives on the European Union through a visit to a shop selling The Bye-Bye Bush Shoes, manufactured by Ramazan Baydan. This brand gained international notoriety after a journalist threw one of its shoes at President George Bush during a press conference in Bagh-

dad in 2008. The majority of the shop's clientele consists of individuals critical of the West, such as Zeynep, a student from Istanbul. She expresses a desire to throw a shoe at Orhan Pamuk as well, arguing that he, having come from a wealthy background and never having worked even one day in his life, was awarded the Nobel Prize solely because 'he vilifies the Turkish nation' (Szabłowski 2013: 171).

Szabłowski demonstrates a deeper interest in questions of morality than in politics, once again employing the power of detail—not only as a memorable narrative device, but also as a vehicle for metaphor (Szczygieł 2022: 54–55). The distribution of condoms outside a mosque serves as a springboard for a broader discussion on sexuality in contemporary Turkey. Among the topics addressed are premarital virginity, public houses where many Turkish boys experience their first sexual encounters, sexual advice columns authored by Güzin Abla, circumcision, pornography, homosexuality and prostitution. Szabłowski conducts interviews with a diverse range of individuals, including Üstüngel, a gay man whose sexual orientation is openly acknowledged among his friends in Istanbul but remains concealed from his family and acquaintances in his hometown; Saliha Ermez and Ayşe Tükrükçü, former sex workers who ran as candidates in the 2007 parliamentary elections—despite attracting media attention, they received fewer than a thousand votes; and members of Lambda, an organization that advocates for LGBTQ+ rights and organizes equality parades. An entire chapter is devoted to the issue of honour killings and the work of the Kamer foundation, which intervenes to protect women at risk. The narrative is anchored in an interview with Hatice; a woman whose own father attempted to kill her for allegedly tarnishing the family's honour. As in other parts of the book, Szabłowski refrains from overt commentary, instead presenting statistical data and factual accounts to allow the reader to draw their own conclusions.

> On the day I was admiring Mesopotamia from the plane, a father killed his daughter in Şanlıurfa. Why? Because she sent a text message to a radio station with best wishes for her boyfriend. Her first name and surname were mentioned on air. The father believed she had tarnished her virginity. (Szabłowski 2013: 39)

In further exploring the theme, Szabłowski observes that 'all starts with a rumour' (Szabłowski 2013: 44). This pervasive atmosphere of suspicion and social control leads him to reflect on his own behaviour: while walking down the street, he avoids smiling at unfamiliar women, fearing the potential consequences. 'Maybe it's exaggeration, but I think my smile could kill someone, so I lower my gaze and keep walking' (Szabłowski 2013: 45). He engages in a conversation with Deniz Akçay, the screenwriter of the popular television series *Little Women*, to discuss the status of women in Turkey. Through this dialogue, Szabłowski uncovers the profound challenges faced by single women in Turkish society, where traditional norms and expectations continue to exert significant pressure.

Szabłowski also draws attention to the plight of immigrants in Turkey, particularly those residing in the country without legal status. He interviews Mahmoud, an Iraqi man stranded in Istanbul, who survives by teaching English, selling stolen passports and acting as an intermediary for human smugglers. In an attempt to delve deeper into the issue, Szabłowski travels to Izmir, where he seeks contact with smugglers—an effort that proves unsuccessful. Migrants, wary of exposure, refuse to speak with him or allow photographs to be taken. As a result, Szabłowski supplements his narrative with data from international reports and vivid descriptions of the grim realities faced by refugees: overcrowded boats being pushed back and forth between Turkish and Greek territorial waters and beach cleaners removing the bodies of drowned migrants before tourists arrive. He portrays illegal migrants as suspended in a liminal space—trapped 'in the middle', like on a bridge, with no clear path forward or back.

The metaphor of the bridge, of being in the middle, appears frequently in Szabłowski's work. It is, in fact, the dominant compositional feature of the reportage, which begins with the chapter *Bridges on the Bosporus*, where the motif of being torn between East and West, tradition and modernity, appears for the first time:

> We are sailing from Europe to Asia. The journey takes about a quarter of an hour. Here there are businessmen along with beggars, women in chadors with women in mini-skirts, non-believers with Imams, prostitutes with dervishes, the holy with the unholy—all Turkey on a single ferry. (Szabłowski 2013: XV)

The book concludes with a reflection on a photograph published in the Turkish daily 'Hürriyet', depicting two women standing in the sea—one topless, the other wearing a full-body swimsuit designed for Muslim women, revealing only her eyes. The accompanying editorial comment reads: 'That's Turkey for you' (Szabłowski 2013: 210). This striking juxtaposition of East and West, tradition and modernity, echoes themes frequently explored in the works of Orhan Pamuk. The motif of a cultural and ideological split between East and West is among the most prominent and recurrent in the oeuvre of the Turkish Nobel laureate. In Szabłowski's reportage, the division of Turkey into two distinct spheres—cultural, ideological and social—is more pronounced than the often-invoked dichotomy between the 'old' and the 'new' Turkey. His narrative focuses almost exclusively on the modern, republican state, while simultaneously acknowledging that profound transformations are unfolding before his eyes—signs of an emerging 'new' reality.

In later editions of the book, Szabłowski added a chapter devoted to the 2013 Gezi Park protests. He spent a week at the site, engaging with both demonstrators and their opponents in an effort to understand the underlying tensions:

> What unites them, and what divides them? And how will the occupation of the park leave its mark on them in general? (Szabłowski 2013: 1)

This new chapter was placed at the beginning of the volume, thereby disrupting the previously established compositional structure and shifting the thematic focus more explicitly toward the notion of the 'new'.[3]

In contrast to Cegielski, Szabłowski possesses a functional command of the Turkish language, which significantly facilitated his access to a wide range of interlocutors. He asserts that he gained more insight into Turkish society through conversations with individuals such as Mustafa, a truck driver, than during two semesters of study at Marmara University. Nevertheless, he frequently encounters a recurring sentiment among his interviewees: that he, as a foreigner, cannot truly understand them because he is not Turkish. Despite this perception, Szabłowski succeeds remarkably in capturing the nuances and complexities of the Turkish mentality. His reportage has been met with critical acclaim not only in Poland but also internationally. The book has been translated into numerous languages, including English, Czech, Estonian, Dutch, German, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Italian. Notably, the chapter devoted to the poet Nazım Hikmet was published in Turkish by Osman Fırat Baş (Baş 2023).

5 Orchowski: A truly 'new' Turkey?

While Cegielski concentrated on Istanbul as a whole and Szabłowski explored various regions of Turkey, the third reporter, Thomas Orchowski, narrowed his focus to a single district of Istanbul—Tarlabaşı. His reportage, *Rzeź na Tarlabaşı. Opowieść o nowej Turcji* [*The Slaughter in Tarlabaşı: The Story of a New Turkey*], was published in 2018, although the majority of the material was gathered prior to the attempted coup d'état in 2016.

The opening chapter, *Tanks at the Bosporus*, appears somewhat appended to an otherwise completed manuscript. It is notably brief—only five pages in length—and resembles a press-like report of the events of July 15, presented in an hour-by-hour format. The chapter concludes with the assertion:

> Thus, the fifth coup in Turkey's recent history fails. It has neither the support of the public, nor of the majority of the military, nor of politicians, even those in the opposition. Why? (Orchowski 2018: 15).

However, this question remains unanswered, as the subsequent chapter does not continue the discussion. Instead, it opens with a depiction of snowfall in Istanbul in January—an allusion to Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*—and a description of stray dogs roaming the streets of Tarlabaşı, followed by a historical and con-

[3] In the English edition this clear structure has been disrupted. The sequence of the chapter is different. The chapter on the Gezi Park is first, while the name of the chapter *Bridges on the Bosporus* has been changed to *Instead of a Preface* with Roman pagination.

temporary portrait of the neighbourhood. The theme of the coup attempt resurfaces only toward the end of the book, most prominently in the penultimate sixth chapter, which recounts Orchowski's visit to the presidential palace in Ankara and his interview with presidential advisor Saadet Oruç. Conducted just two weeks after the failed coup, this conversation provides the foundation for Orchowski's claim: 'In post-coup Turkey, the events of 15 July have become the new myth founding the country of the President' (Orchowski 2018: 197). This statement closely echoes the analytical framework of aforementioned Mateusz Chudziak, a specialist at the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw. The topic re-emerges once more in the book's final pages, where, as at the beginning, a similar question is posed: 'What happened on July 15, 2016? In fact… we still don't know' (Orchowski 2018: 256). Orchowski only revisits widely circulated speculations: that the majority of Turks, according to opinion polls, believe the Gülen movement was responsible; that European intelligence services attribute the coup to a faction of officers fearing imminent purges; and that some voices suggest President Erdoğan himself orchestrated the event.

The 2016 coup d'état attempt, which serves as a kind of compositional frame for Orchowski's reportage—although evidently added later, after the majority of the book had already been written—is presented as a pivotal moment in the ongoing effort to define the concept of the 'new Turkey'. However, the author's use of this term is not entirely consistent. At the beginning of the book, 'new' refers to the founding of the republican state: 'Trauma and irritated pride—these were the circumstances under which the new Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923' (Orchowski 2018: 84). Later in the narrative, the 'new Turkey' denotes the contemporary state governed by the AKP and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is referred to as 'the New Father of the Turks' (Orchowski 2018: 259). In this vision, the 'new Turkey' is characterized by monumentalism and grandiosity—each new project is expected to surpass the previous in scale and visibility: the largest Çamlıca Mosque, the longest third bridge over the Bosporus, the most expansive new airport. Within this framework, the impoverished residents of Tarlabaşı are perceived as an affront to the national image: they are, as Orchowski puts it, 'salt in the eye of the new Turkey' (Orchowski 2018: 113), because poverty does not align with the state's aspirational self-image. He further comments:

> The expression of modernity in this vision is not human rights, equality or democracy. Nor are clean air or trees. Great and visible with the naked eye—this is the new Turkey (Orchowski 2018: 115).

Orchowski's reportage is thus situated between the historical legacy of republican Turkey and its contemporary sociopolitical realities. Without question, the central theme of his work is the condition of national minorities in Turkey.

The symbolic locus of this theme is the district of Tarlabaşı—once a vibrant, multiethnic neighbourhood inhabited primarily by Greeks, Armenians and Jews (notably, the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz lived and died there), later depopulated through forced displacement and pogroms and eventually repopulated by impoverished communities, often including petty criminals. While the subject of minorities had already been addressed by both Cegielski and Szabłowski—whose works Orchowski references—his treatment is notably more detailed. He interviews descendants of Istanbul's minority populations and introduces lesser-known historical episodes, such as the tragic fate of the Struma, a ship carrying Jewish refugees during World War II and the *varlık vergisi* ('wealth tax'), which disproportionately targeted non-Muslim citizens. Many of the themes explored in subsequent chapters are familiar from earlier reportages: the experiences of homosexual and transgender individuals, honour killings, the status of women (with the recurring motif of the headscarf), urban revitalization in Istanbul, the figure of Latife Hanım, the political symbolism of male facial hair (a passage that closely echoes Szabłowski's work), the Kurdish issue and the PKK, the rise of the AKP and Erdoğan's ascent to power and the Gezi Park protests. However, Orchowski attempts to revisit these topics through new lenses, offering alternative examples or previously unexamined details—for instance, the *lubunca* slang used within the LGBTQ+ community, the cultural phenomenon of singer Bülent Ersoy, or a comparative analysis of Emine Erdoğan and Latife Hanım.

Importantly, Orchowski also introduces entirely new subjects not addressed by his predecessors. These include the situation of Turkish guest workers in Germany, developments in contemporary Turkish cinema, the figure of Fethullah Gülen and a compelling account of the precarious state of press freedom in Turkey. In this context, he visits the editorial offices of the newspaper 'Cumhuriyet' and conducts interviews with prominent journalists such as Murat Sabuncu, Can Dündar and Aykut Küçükkaya.

In light of the aforementioned observations, the subtitle of Orchowski's book—*The story of a new Turkey*—appears to be significantly overstated. It seems to function primarily as a marketing device, designed to suggest the promise of novel insights absent from earlier reportages on Turkey. In reality, the work proves to be the weakest among the three, reiterating numerous themes already explored by his predecessors. The reportage lacks compositional coherence, does not distinguish itself through stylistic finesse or analytical depth and is marred by editorial oversights. Notably, several proper names are rendered without the appropriate Turkish diacritical marks—for example, 'Gunes' instead of 'Güneş' and 'Ismail Bahadir' instead of 'İsmail Bahadır'. Despite these shortcomings, Orchowski has continued to position himself as a commentator on Turkish affairs, publishing a subsequent reportage on the divided island of Cyprus in 2021.

6 Szumer-Brysz: Just Turkey

Marcelina Szumer-Brysz is the author of two reportage books on Turkey.[4] The first, *Wróżąc z fusów. Reportaże z Turcji* [*Foretelling from the Coffee Grounds: Reportage from Turkey*], published in 2018, begins with the 2016 coup d'état attempt. The second, released in 2021, focuses entirely on a single city—Izmir—and bears the subtitle *Miasto giaurów* [*The City of Giaours*]. In neither of these works does the concept of the 'new Turkey' play a central role. The author does not seek to systematically document political or societal transformations, nor does she attempt to structure her observations within a scholarly framework distinguishing between the 'old' and 'new' orders in Turkey. Rather, her aim is to present the country as she has experienced it—perhaps somewhat chaotically, from multiple perspectives, at times with admiration, at others with criticism. What matters most to her are ordinary people and their personal stories. Thanks to her command of the Turkish language, her marriage to a Turkish man (which eventually ended in divorce) and several years of living and working in Izmir and its surroundings, Turkey has become her second homeland—one that she holds close to her heart.

Upon reading both of Szumer-Brysz's reportage books, one gains the impression that they are written with a specific target audience in mind—Polish women who, stereotypically, are familiar with Turkey primarily through popular television series and holiday tourism. This assumption is reinforced by the inclusion of dedicated chapters on Turkish TV series in both volumes, reflecting the author's astute observation: 'For Turkey's image in the world, the TV series—*Endless Love* and dozens of others—have done more than all diplomacy put together' (Szumer-Brysz 2018: 210). Szumer-Brysz addresses many themes already explored in earlier reportages, such as the situation of the Kurds and other national and religious minorities, the refugee crisis, the LGBTQ+ community, the legacy of Nazım Hikmet and the political left, the role of women in Turkish society and the phenomenon of femicide—murders of women committed by family members. Nevertheless, she demonstrates a keen journalistic intuition and honesty in capturing the fatigue and impatience of her interlocutors, who have likely been asked the same questions repeatedly. For instance, when questioned about the Armenian issue, Berrin responds with evident exasperation:

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[4] Her third book, *Turcja. Na wschód od Zachodu* [*Turkey: In the East of the West*], published in 2024, does not conform to the conventions of typical reportage, although it incorporates elements of literary journalism. It is a hybrid work that blends the characteristics of a travel guide, a concise history of Turkey, a compendium of cultural curiosities and personal reflections drawn from the author's years of living in the country.

> Oh, come on! Are you people in Europe still talking about Hitler? Certainly not, because that is a past issue (Szumer-Brysz 2018: 120).

Szumer-Brysz also succeeds in presenting well-worn themes—some of which were already considered tiresome in the 19th century—from fresh and engaging perspectives. For instance, she frames the topic of Istanbul's stray dogs through the personal and emotional narrative of burying her own dog and she explores Islamic teachings on sexuality by engaging in a candid conversation with a female hodja. Her writing frequently emphasizes the female perspective. When addressing the Kurdish issue in Turkey, she recounts the story of Leyla İmret, a Kurdish woman and daughter of a slain PKK fighter, who was raised in Germany and later returned to Turkey. At the age of 26, despite not speaking Turkish fluently, İmret became the mayor of Cizre. In discussing the refugee crisis, Szumer-Brysz focuses on the experiences of Syrian women in Izmir, drawing on interviews with a gynaecologist, social workers and schoolteachers. She also offers a unique portrayal of Atatürk through the lens of his mother, Zübeyde Hanım—referred to as the 'grandmother of the Turks'.

Among the newer themes explored in her work, social issues receive particular attention. Through her marriage to a Turkish man, Szumer-Brysz gained not only an intimate view of Turkish domestic life but also firsthand experience of it. She describes the cultural and generational clashes within the household, with special emphasis on her mother-in-law, humorously depicted as a *valide sultan* in reference to the popular television series *The Magnificent Century*. Her book on Izmir is especially noteworthy. It presents the city's cosmopolitan history alongside vivid details of contemporary life, such as the annual Dressed Women's Bicycle Tour, the Petkim refinery and the Mathematics Village founded by Professor Ali Nesin, son of the renowned Turkish writer Aziz Nesin.

Szumer-Brysz does not attempt to delineate a binary division between the 'old' and 'new' Turkey. Instead, she portrays the country as she perceives and experiences it, openly incorporating her own reflections and commentary. Her fluency in Turkish and extended residence in the country enable her to access a wide range of social environments, although these encounters are not always comfortable—for example, her participation in a kinder party in Ankara, held within the circles of an ultra-nationalist youth group. While her books may initially appear light-hearted and seemingly tailored to a female, domestic readership, a closer examination reveals a nuanced and vivid portrayal of Turkish reality. Szumer-Brysz demonstrates a graceful command of the Polish language and a talent for crafting witty, insightful remarks. However, the reportage is not without its flaws. There are noticeable errors in Turkish orthography, particularly in the use of the dotted and dotless i (i/ı), as well as minor inaccuracies in frequently quoted Turkish phrases—for instance, *Müsait bu yerde* instead of the correct *Müsait bir yerde* (Szumer-Brysz 2021: 172).

7 Rostkowska: countless 'new Turkeys'

Agnieszka Rostkowska's reportage, *Wojownicy o szklanych oczach. W poszukiwaniu Nowej Turcji* [*Warriors with Glass Eyes: In Search of a New Turkey*], published in 2020, offers a particularly thorough and insightful examination of the concept of the 'new Turkey'. Drawing on her academic background in Turkology and International Relations, the author provides a nuanced portrayal of contemporary Turkey, shedding light on aspects of the country that have remained relatively unfamiliar to Polish readers. Even when revisiting well-trodden themes—such as the situation of Kurds, refugees and non-heterosexual individuals, likely in response to the expectations of her readership—Rostkowska approaches them from fresh and original angles. One illustrative example is her treatment of the Islamic headscarf. She writes:

> Hijab, the Islamic headscarf that covers the hair. I was not going to mention it. Described for decades, by everyone, in every way—how many ways can it be? Until I met Melek, who also used to see no reason to pay attention to the headscarf. (Rostkowska 2020: 156)

For Melek (a pseudonym), the headscarf becomes a symbol of freedom and feminism—an interpretation that defies conventional Western narratives. Rostkowska presents this perspective with sensitivity and depth, offering a compelling counterpoint to dominant discourses on gender and religion in Turkey.

Rostkowska's reportage begins with an account of the 2016 coup d'état attempt, yet it is presented from a perspective distinct from those adopted by previous reporters. The central figure of the first chapter is Ahmet Alkılıç, a devoted supporter of the AKP, who was shot in the head and arm while defending his homeland on the night of July 15. Although Rostkowska asserts that 'the coup d'état attempt is the legend on which the collective identity of the New Turkey is built' (Rostkowska 2020: 26), she locates the origins of this 'new era' earlier, in the 2013 Gezi Park protests. The second chapter introduces Cem Yakışkan, former leader of the Beşiktaş football club's ultra supporters and a vocal opponent of the AKP. He recounts his experiences during the Gezi protests and Rostkowska notes that 'there is the same nostalgia in his voice as in Ahmet's when speaking about July 15, 2016' (Rostkowska 2020: 39). Through this juxtaposition, the author effectively illustrates the deep societal divisions in Turkey and the extent to which political allegiances shape personal narratives and collective memory.

One of the most valuable aspects of Rostkowska's reportage lies in her efforts to engage with individuals across the political spectrum. However, she acknowledges the difficulty of gaining access to pro-government circles, where distrust of Western journalists runs deep. As she explains, 'a Western journalist, reporter, writer is either a spy or a manipulator working against Turkey. Talking to him is

like an instance of high treason' (Rostkowska 2020: 152). This belief is powerfully encapsulated in the words of one of her interviewees:

> This will be your last book. And your publisher's too. Are you really going to write why we support Erdoğan? In Europe, you only publish voices that vilify our president. If you break out of this pattern… (Rostkowska 2020: 150).

Although Rostkowska strives to present a diversity of perspectives and to maintain a high degree of objectivity—refraining from overt authorial judgments or commentary—a significant portion of her reportage is devoted to individuals who 'do not feel at home in the New Turkey' (Rostkowska 2020: 275). She offers detailed accounts of numerous sensitive and underreported issues that had not been addressed by previous journalists. These include the hunger strikes that began in the autumn of 2016 with protests in Ankara's Kızılay district, the suppression of oppositional media outlets, the gatherings of the so-called Saturday Mothers (*Cumartesi Anneleri*) and the 79-day curfew imposed in eastern Turkey in the autumn of 2015. It is important to emphasize that Rostkowska does not rely on extensive authorial commentary. Instead, she adopts a restrained narrative style, allowing the voices of her interlocutors and the facts themselves to carry the weight of the message. Her approach is more illustrative than interpretative, often letting the reader draw conclusions from the juxtaposition of testimonies and events, e.g.:

> Any Kurd suspected of connections with the PKK and subversive activity could have gone missing.
> Any Kurd could have gone missing.
> Anyone could have gone missing. (Rostkowska 2020: 198)

The search for a definition of the 'new Turkey' serves as the conceptual and structural foundation of Rostkowska's reportage. Throughout the book, she attempts to clarify a term that is frequently invoked yet rarely defined. At the beginning of the reportage, she writes:

> Nobody noticed when she came. She began to appear at election gatherings, popping up in television debates and press commentaries, until she dominated politicians' speeches and captured the imagination of foreign commentators. Some spoke of it as a liberation, while others as a curse. Named but undefined, the New Turkey transformed the lives of Turks before they had time to realise it. (Rostkowska 2020: 13)

By citing political rhetoric surrounding the term 'new Turkey', Rostkowska subjects these declarations to empirical scrutiny, engaging directly with individuals whose lives have been shaped by such transformations. For instance, in response

to President Erdoğan's 2015 statement that Beyoğlu would be the starting point for constructing the 'new Turkey', she examines the reality of the district—now marked by empty, modern shopping malls such as Demirören and Grand Pera, which replaced iconic cultural landmarks like the Emek Cinema, İnci Patisserie, Robinson Crusoe Bookshop and Kelebek Korse lingerie store. Symbols of this new national vision include the Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM), frequently mentioned by other reporters, as well as the mosque on Taksim Square and the former Romani neighbourhood of Sulukule, now redeveloped into luxury apartments primarily purchased by wealthy Arab investors. This rapid urban transformation, emblematic of the 'new Turkey', has also led to a rise in workplace accidents. According to the 1 Umut Association, which documents such incidents, these casualties are 'sacrifices on the altar of the New Turkey' (Rostkowska 2020: 129).

Faruk Yaslıçimen, the chief executive of the NewTurkey portal—established in 2012 as a platform for reprinting and translating Turkish press articles into English—has observed that the term 'new Turkey' has increasingly acquired negative connotations, particularly in Western discourse. As a result, he decided to rebrand the platform under a new name: PoliticsToday.org. Rostkowska's years-long investigation into the meaning of the 'new Turkey' ultimately does not yield a definitive understanding of the term. Instead, it leads her to a crucial and thought-provoking conclusion: there is no singular or universally accepted definition—each individual constructs their own version. As she poignantly remarks, 'And no one knows if these countless New Turkeys will ever meet' (Rostkowska 2020: 313).

8 New Turkey, old themes

The term 'new Turkey' frequently appears in contemporary Polish reportage literature on Turkey, despite lacking a precise or universally accepted definition. Even within the work of a single author, the term is often employed inconsistently. It is also written differently—sometimes capitalized, sometimes not, and occasionally enclosed in quotation marks.[5] Nevertheless, a discernible evolution of the term can be observed.

In the first two reportages—by Cegielski and Szabłowski—the 'new Turkey' refers to the republican state, contrasted with the 'old' Ottoman Empire. These texts, written in the first decade of the 21st century, predate the term's widespread adoption in political discourse, where it later came to signify the era of AKP rule under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, particularly in the context of his pre-election rhetoric. Still, both reporters sense that significant transformations are underway, and that the balance between the old and the new is shifting. A key moment in this transition is the Gezi Park protests, which Szabłowski chose to include in later

[5] The original spelling has been retained in titles and quotations.

editions of his book—not as an appendix, but as the opening chapter, thereby disrupting the original, carefully structured composition.

The next three reportages—by Orchowski, Szumer-Brysz and Rostkowska—begin with the 2016 coup d'état attempt. Notably, two of them feature the term 'new Turkey' in their subtitles, suggesting that the coup marks the beginning of a new chapter in the country's history. The term is also used frequently throughout the texts, which may reflect a tendency to adopt the language of political newspeak. While Rostkowska's reportage offers a genuinely valuable and critical examination of the concept of the 'new Turkey', Orchowski's work appears to rely more on marketing strategy—pairing a catchy phrase with a timely political event in order to repackage familiar content in a seemingly new form.

A close analysis of the content of the reportages reveals that, regardless of how the term 'new Turkey' is defined, a consistent set of recurring themes emerges across all the works. Many of these themes have long been familiar to Polish readers, dating back to the accounts of travellers who visited the Ottoman Empire. These include the condition of ethnic minorities, the role of women in society—often illustrated through the recurring motif of veiling—the presence of stray dogs in urban spaces and the ongoing expansion and transformation of Istanbul. While these topics are contextualized through contemporary events, their persistent recurrence suggests a deeper, perhaps culturally embedded, readerly expectation. For similar reasons, nearly every reportage includes references to figures such as Nazım Hikmet or Mehmet Ali Ağca—individuals whose connections to Poland make them particularly resonant for Polish audiences. This pattern reflects the nature of reportage as a form of social documentation—one that does not mirror reality directly, but rather filters it through the cultural lens, personal experience and ideological orientation of the author, as well as through the conventions of the genre, which often imply a dialogue with one's literary predecessors.

Two additional tendencies are particularly noteworthy in the selection and treatment of subject matter: the reporters' generally left-leaning sympathies and a marked inclination toward sad, tragic or unsettling themes. The latter tendency is arguably characteristic of Polish literary tradition. As Nobel laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz once wrote in a letter from Constantinople in 1886—despite admiring the beauty of the Bosphorus from Çamlıca Hill—he would rather describe the dead dogs of Galata, because 'it is easier to move the saliva than the soul' (Sienkiewicz 1951: 327).

9 Conclusion

Applying Norman Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the corpus of Polish literary reportages on Turkey reveals that the term 'new Turkey' functions less as a stable political category and more as a dynamic discursive construct. Through Fairclough's three-dimensional model—text, discur-

sive practice and social practice—it becomes evident that Polish reporters do not merely describe Turkish reality but actively participate in shaping its representation through language.

At the textual level, the reportages employ a range of rhetorical strategies—metaphors (e.g. bridges, veils, sacrifice), symbolic juxtapositions (e.g. East vs. West, tradition vs. modernity) and narrative framing (e.g. beginning with the coup or Gezi Park protests)—to construct competing visions of Turkish identity. The term 'new Turkey' itself is inconsistently used, often undefined and variably capitalized or placed in quotation marks, reflecting its semantic instability and ideological fluidity. At the level of discursive practice, the production and reception of these texts are shaped by the authors' positionalities as Polish observers, often with left-leaning sympathies and a preference for marginalized voices. Their narratives are filtered through cultural expectations, genre conventions and the legacy of Polish travel writing. The recurrence of themes such as women's rights, minority oppression and urban transformation suggests both a continuity with historical representations of the Ottoman Empire and a response to contemporary political developments under the AKP. Finally, at the level of social practice, the discourse of the 'new Turkey' reflects broader ideological struggles over national identity, modernization and power. The reportages engage with and sometimes challenge dominant Turkish narratives—particularly those promoted by Erdoğan's government—while also reproducing certain Western liberal assumptions. The multiplicity of meanings attributed to the 'new Turkey' across the texts underscores the fragmentation of Turkish society and the contested nature of its political transformation.

Miles P. Davis's study on self-censorship among foreign journalists in Turkey offers an important comparative perspective that further illuminates the conclusions drawn in this article. His findings reveal how foreign correspondents—particularly freelancers—must navigate a complex environment shaped by surveillance, political pressure and the persistent threat of deportation or violence. These conditions foster widespread self-censorship, which manifests not only in the selection of topics but also in the framing and dissemination of stories, especially via social media platforms (Davis 2022). This dynamic closely parallels the cautious strategies employed by Polish reportage authors, who, despite operating from a relatively safer distance, are nonetheless influenced by ideological frameworks, cultural expectations and genre conventions. Their frequent reliance on metaphor, anecdote and indirect critique reflects a similarly constrained discursive space—one shaped less by immediate political repression and more by the subtler mechanisms of narrative tradition and audience anticipation. Both Davis's study and the Polish reportages analysed here demonstrate that journalistic discourse on Turkey—whether produced from within or outside its borders—is deeply embedded in structures of power, ideology and self-regulation.

Ultimately, the search for a singular definition of the 'new Turkey' proves elusive. Instead, the term emerges as a site of ideological negotiation—shaped

by historical memory, political rhetoric, power, ideology, self-regulation and intercultural perception. As Agnieszka Rostkowska states: 'And no one knows if these countless New Turkeys will ever meet' (Rostkowska 2020: 313). Discourse of 'new Turkey' in contemporary Polish reportage books is not merely descriptive but constitutive—it constructs sociopolitical realities.

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