Amerikan Başkanlar. : Amerikan Başkanlık Seçimlerinde Yaşanan Rezaletler. Türkkaya Ataöv. İstanbul: İleri Yayınlan, 2011. p/bk 299 pp. ISBN 9789944109697. Price TL 18.00.

Besides her natural beauties and touristic attractions, Turkey offers various enigmas to the curious observer. Turkey has often been ranked as the most anti-American country while youngsters have often expressed their determination to make their American dream come true, seeking ways to study and live in the States. As American targets have intermittently been attacked by fundamentalist terrorists in big cities of Turkey, the men and women on the street are enjoying their time in Starbucks before making their choices among Hollywood blockbusters. Anti-American legacy has a long and established history in Turkey but talking about the States assuming a sterile objectivity of a scientific mind still poses a challenge.

Türkkaya Ataöv's *Amerikan Başkanlar - Amerikan Başkanlık Seçimlerinde Yaşanan Rezaletler* (*American Presidents - Infamous Presidential Elections in America)* seems to be caught on the horns of a similar dilemma. Türkkaya Ataöv is a renowned professor of international relations who served in distinguished universities in and out of Turkey as well as being a columnist, a political activist, and ardent advocate of the official thesis of Turkey on Armenian genocide. He has had almost 50 years of published research on international relations and political history, including *Amerika'da Hıristiyan Köktendinciliği (Christian Fundamentalism in the United States), Amerika, Nato, ve Türkiye (The United States, NATO, and Turkey), Federasyon, Başkanlık, Yarı-Başkanlık (Federation, Presidential System, and Semi-Presidential System), Amerikan Emperyalizmi Doğuşu ve Gelişimi (American Imperialism- Its Genesis and Progress)* and many more. Therefore, Ataöv's historical and political character makes it really hard to confine any discussion of the book to its mere content and context. The book itself stands out as a political manifesto of the author, a historical document of fraud and shame, and beyond that, "an epiphanic awakening" for the blindfolded crowds of Turkey. Ataöv clarifies his intention of enlightening the masses in the foreword, warning the readers that this book unveils "political games, monkey business of the political machinery, ruthless lies and dirty tricks in American politics" (9). Ataöv piles up a huge archive of written documents and testimonies on presidential elections and provides

a comprehensive bibliography for the researchers but also he, personally as a student and a researcher, testifies to the contemporary history of the presidential lineage and presents a (very) subjective account of his observations. While this duality in the personality of the author may as well be taken as an advantage considering a general audience of popular non-fiction, Ataöv's story-telling voice often interrupts the authenticity and formality of the historical documents. Except a simply informative and brief introductory chapter, Ataöv pursues an informal authorial voice to unravel the secrets and scandals behind the presidential elections and presidential eras in 29 chapters, with a special emphasis on more contemporary examples - chapters on Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama take up the half of the book.

Ataöv does seem to follow a scientific method and rely on a vast bibliography to support his claims. He certainly provides in-text citations and footnotes throughout the text when he presents encyclopedic information about the presidents, but he deliberately fails to do so especially when he is supposed to explain how presidents of the United States were cooperating with mafia, having extramarital relations, or drowning in fraud and corruption, even while he quotes full statements and testimonies. Once dazzling readers with gossip and hearsay, Ataöv doesn't hesitate to attach awkward parallels to Turkish politics for example the PKK guerillas and the Kurdish problem. His criticism of American presidents becomes most disturbing when he spices up his accounts of infamy with the tittle-tattle of homosexuals (56, 123), alcoholics (28, 64, 223), and rascals (79, 136, 157, 172, 178) in the Oval Office.

It takes away all the fun to read the book with a red pencil at one hand to correct that Elia Kazan was born in İstanbul, not in İzmir (130) and with a dictionary on the other to understand some coined words like *baştanımaz*, *izdeş*, *ağarası*, *işlemce*, *gizdüzen*, *günlük*, and *yumurta ofis* most of which don't exist in most Turkish dictionaries and the rest are misused.

Ataöv's book is a good read for the general audience; they will probably be satisfied with the scandalous stories of American presidents and justify their conspiracy theories about the political machines in American elections. However, the book promises only a little to a conscientious researcher with its gossipy content and biased authorial comments. It is almost undeniable that American democracy is ill-structured and there is

much to be criticized in the characters and deeds of American politicians. Nevertheless, political opposition, once insufficiently and improperly done, is inclined to become farcical and unreliable, which eventually reinforces the imperialist ideology against which, I believe, Ataöv sincerely struggled all his life.

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