

**THE BELOVED UNVEILED:  
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN  
MODERN TURKISH LOVE POETRY  
(1923-1980)**

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## Abstract

The thesis explores the ideological aspect of modern Turkish love poetry by focusing on the works of major poets and movements between 1923 and 1980. The approach to the theme of love was metaphorical and mystical in classical Ottoman poetry. During the period of modernisation (1839-1923), poets either rejected the theme of love altogether or abandoned Islamic aesthetics and adopted a *Parnassian* approach arguing that love was the expression of desire for physical beauty.

A great variety of discourses on love developed during the republican period. Yahya Kemal sets the theme of love in Ottoman Istanbul and mourns the end of the relationship with the beloved who incarnates his conservative vision of national identity. The *Five Syllabists* contrast treacherous and sensual love in the city with pure and simple love in the Anatolian countryside, thus reflecting the Anatolianism of the nationalist intelligentsia. Nazım Hikmet approaches the theme from a variety of angles. He explores the links between love and human solidarity and humanises the beloved by writing about her in a realistic context. The *Bizarre* movement discusses the theme of love in the framework of its subjective realism and focuses more on the effects of love on the individual than on love itself. Socialist poets do not approach the theme uniformly but all of them advocate a socially engaged realism and are opposed to the individualism of *Bizarre*. The movement of the *Second Renewal* equates love with sexuality and explores its impact on human relationships. Islamist poets too adopt a realist stance. They abandon the idealised gardens of the *divân* tradition and go on a mystical quest in the harshness of everyday reality.

The ideological convictions of all these movements and poets are mainly expressed in the choice of setting of the relationship, in the image of the beloved and in the definition of love.

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## Introduction

### Aim, objectives, methodology

The aim of the thesis is to uncover the ideological element in modern Turkish love poetry. Throughout the twentieth century Turkey has been, geographically and politically, a place where different worlds, civilisations and blocks met or sometimes clashed: Europe and Asia, the Western and the Islamic world, the Eastern and the Western Block, the developed and the developing world. Various understandings of nationalism, socialism and Islamism have shaped the political and the literary debates in Turkey, a country where most literati believe that not only the writer or the poet but also their works have to engage in the social and political realities of the world they live in.

In the twentieth century the treatment of love, the preponderant theme in classical Ottoman literature, has evolved and has been affected by ideological concerns in modern Turkish poetry. Love could be defined as the expression of one human being's desire for another. The definition is broad enough to encompass every form of desire from platonic love to sexual fantasies. Hence a love poem is a poem in which any aspect of human desire is explored. World-views affect the narration of love in poetry and are expressed in the settings of the poems, in the image of the beloved and in the definition of love. The study of the continuity and the changes in the narration of love could serve as a basis for later researchers for the re-evaluation of the labellings of literary movements in Turkey.

Love has been an important theme in the three main phases of the history of Ottoman and Turkish literature, namely the pre-modern Ottoman period, the modernising post-*Tanzimat* period<sup>1</sup> and the modern republican period. Each phase has been characterised by a particular approach to the theme of love. Mystical love was the central theme of Ottoman *divân* poetry. The theme of love became an occasional theme in the post-*Tanzimat* period and poets abandoned the metaphorical discourse on love that has been predominant in the classical period. Politically engaged poets gave up the theme altogether, since it was seen as incarnating the principles of the obsolete classical Ottoman tradition. Later poets, at a time of increased political pressure, conceived love as the expression of the desire for beauty that could be sublimated in artistic creation. Republican love poetry is characterised by a great variety of approaches that focus on every aspect of ordinary life and by an increased politicisation of the theme.

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<sup>1</sup> By post-*Tanzimat* period, I mean the literature of the *Tanzimat* period (1839-1876), of the era of Sultan Abdülhamit II (1876-1909) and of the period of the Second Constitution (1908-1923). The three periods mark different stages in Ottoman political history. Since the literary developments that are discussed in this section lasted throughout the three periods, it seems more suitable to study them under the general heading of post-*Tanzimat* literature.

Despite the importance of the theme of love in the history of Ottoman-Turkish poetry, surprisingly little research has been published on modern Turkish love poetry. Anthologies of Turkish love poetry, such as Asena 1997 or Celal 2001, have only short introductions that discuss more the purposes and selection criteria for the anthology than the theme of love. Monographs dedicated to the major modern poets of the era usually include short sections on love as a theme in their works, but no attempt has yet been made to present the evolution of the treatment of the theme in modern Turkish poetry. It should be noted, however, that Cemal Süreya, a major Turkish poet, has written a short essay “Sevgilinin Halleri” (The States of the Beloved) in which he indicates the changes that took place in the representation of the beloved.<sup>2</sup> Konur Ertop, a literary journalist, has dedicated a book to sexuality in Turkish literature that covered most genres and periods of oral and written literature.<sup>3</sup> Quite naturally, he focuses more on novels and short stories, where the depiction of sexuality is more explicit. Even though the book does not deal with the literary aspect of the depiction of love, and poetry is rather neglected, it offers nevertheless a general introduction to the place of sexuality in the development of modern Turkish literature.

The thesis is based on the poetry written between the establishment of the Republic in 1923 and the military coup in 1980, a breaking point in Turkish political and cultural history. The thesis looks at the love poetry of the major poets and movements of Turkish literature and examines their poems in the context of main literary and political trends. Yahya Kemal Beyathlı (1884-1958) defends an Ottomanist conception of Turkish identity. The *Five Syllabists* (*Beş Hececi*) are representative of the nationalist intelligentsia, though their poetry is often of little more than documentary interest. Nazım Hikmet Ran (1902-1963) is the first Turkish socialist poet to make a real impact on Turkish literary history and revolutionises Turkish poetry. The *Bizarre* (*Garip*) movement, advocate of subjective realism, works towards the separation of the poetical and political but cultivates an uneasy closeness with the cultural establishment of the National Leader İsmet İnönü during the late thirties and fourties. Hasan İzzettin Dinamo (1909-1989), Attilâ İlhan (b.1925) and Atol Behramoğlu (b.1942), exemplify three different approaches to socialist literature. The opaque individualism of the *Second Renewal* (*İkinci Yeni*) represents a reaction to the ambient political commitment during the fifties and Edip Cansever (1928-1996) and Cemal Süreya (1931-1990) are two of the more accessible followers of this literary trend. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1905-1983) and Sezai Karakoç (b.1933) are the most influential Islamic poets and

<sup>2</sup>The essay has been published in three different publications without any change. It is the introductory essay to his anthology of love poems *100 Aşk Şiiri* (100 Love Poems), originally published in 1967 (Süreya 1991). It was republished in his 1976 collection of critical writing *Şapkam Dolu Çiçekle* (My Hat is Full of Flowers) (Süreya 1976). Finally the essay was reprinted in the Antalya based literary magazine *Bahçe* (The Garden) in their spring 1999 special issue on love (Süreya 1999).

<sup>3</sup>Ertop 1977.

were the models for the group known as the *Muslim Poets*, that developed in the late seventies and established itself during the eighties and nineties.

Given the prominent role of women as the subject of poetry in post-*Tanzimat* and republican poetry and the rapid developments regarding the position of women in society in the Turkish republic, it is striking that few women published poetry, let alone love poetry, in the years before 1980. The syllabist poets Şükûfe Nihal (1896-1973) and Halide Nusret Zorlutuna (1901-1984) as well as Gülten Akin (b.1933), who was associated with the *Second Renewal*, are exceptions, but their works do not really break with the conventions of the literary groupings they belong to. Studying them under the heading of women's love poetry would not fit in the systematic approach of the thesis which is based on literary and political trends. Moreover, it is controversial to argue in favour of the existence of a separate poetic tradition by women, that would be independent and isolated from the mainly male dominated literary tradition. Several women poets refuse to be categorised according to their gender (Celâl 1999:64) and do not allow, for instance, the inclusion of their works in anthologies exclusively dedicated to women poetry (Cosman, Keefe & Weaver 1979:30).

The poetical works of Yahya Kemal, the *Five Syllabists* and Nazım Hikmet will each be studied as a coherent unit without focusing on individual poems. The ideological issues involved as well as the continuity and coherence in their respective approaches to the theme of love make such an organisation more suitable. Since there is a lot of material available on the art of poetry of Yahya Kemal, the *Five Syllabists* and Nazım Hikmet, stylistic analysis, which is required by the discussion of individual poems, is not essential. In the chapters on *Bizarre*, the socialists, the *Second Renewal* and the Islamic poets, in-depth discussion of particular poems is necessary for different reasons. In the case of *Bizarre*, the theme of love is approached from a variety of points of view that make it difficult to discuss the bulk of their works as a coherent unit. The socialist poets, the *Second Renewal* and the Islamic poets are groups and movements that consist of strong individual figures whose approaches are best highlighted by the study of individual poems representing certain recurring themes.

Though the close reading of texts and the detailed analysis of poems are trademarks of New Criticism<sup>4</sup>, the approach in the thesis has only a superficial kinship with this movement, since the goal of the research is shared by New Historicists.<sup>5</sup> The aim is the uncovering of the conflicting political and social ideas that are expressed in the works of the poets and not the discussion of the literary value of the studies texts.

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<sup>4</sup> On New Criticism, see John Crowe Ransom, *New Criticism*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1979. Terry Eagleton makes a critical assessment of the literary and socio-political repercussions of New Criticism in Eagleton 1985: 44-53.

<sup>5</sup> A lot of literature is available on New Historicism. Among those Gallagher & Greenblatt 2000 and Greenblatt 2000 are suitable introductions to the aims and practices of new historicists in the field of literary and cultural studies.

Poetry can be considered a textual production of a society and a mental reconstruction of reality mirroring social and ideological struggles. Hence the study of a poem should take into consideration the socio-political and private contexts of production and reception. This is why throughout the discussion of the poems, a variety of texts, literary or otherwise, are also quoted and sometimes discussed, such as newspaper articles, declarations and manifestos. Every study of the theme of love in the works of each poet and movement is preceded by a historical introduction that situates the discussed authors in the general literary and political context of the period. In certain cases, it has been necessary to take a comparative approach with European, mainly French, literature, since French poetry has been a major influence on Turkish poetry in the post-Tanzimat and republican eras. Each chapter ends with a short summary of the poet's or movement's approach to the theme of love and discusses possible implications for the debate on the nomenclature of Turkish literary movements.

The chapters will explore the following topics: Yahya Kemal Beyatlı chants a lost love for an independent minded Ottoman lady, who incarnates his conception of the Turkish nation. The *Five Syllabists* oppose the complexity and misery of love in the cosmopolitan city to the simplicity and joy of life in the Anatolian village, thus expressing the Anatolianist discourse of liberation war literature. Nazım Hikmet (1902-1963) distinguishes between love as an abstract concept which is complementary to revolutionary aspirations and love in practice which is depicted as an obstacle to them. However in poems written for Pirâye, he develops a new holistic image of the beloved who is represented both as a lover and a comrade. The *Bizarre* group reject lofty narrations of love and focus on the effects of love in the life of ordinary people in the framework of their subjective realism, which was commended by the political establishment. The trend towards increased realism is confirmed by the socialist poets who approach love in varying ways and develop an ideologically motivated social realism that does not crush individual forms of expression. In the poetry of the *Second Renewal* distinctions between higher and lower forms of love disappear and the love relationship allows the poet to study conflicts between individuals and genders. The acceptance of the real world in the neo-mystical love-poetry of the Islamic poets shows that they accept modern Turkey as the framework in which they start their mystical and political quest.

The prominence of the woman as the beloved in modern Turkish love poetry and her changing representations according to the respective ideology of the poets make it necessary to outline briefly the position and image of women in twentieth century Turkish society. Social scientists have focused on the tremendous social changes that have affected the position and image of Turkish women in the republican period.

The Kemalist conception of the role of women in society was greatly influenced by the ideologue of Turkish nationalism Ziya Gökalp's (1876-1924) representation of women as guards of Turkish modernity<sup>6</sup> (Arat 1998:14). After the establishment of the republic several revolutionary steps were taken in order to establish the equality of men and women, such as mandatory free education for both sexes, the abolition of the *shari'a* (the Islamic law) and the adoption of the Swiss civil code. Emphasis was theoretically put on education in order to change mentalities. In the years following the reforms women started to play a more active role in politics and in the work place.

However during those years conflicting images of women were developed and started to exist side by side. Kemalist ideology too established contradictory images of women. It encouraged the participation of women in the socio-economic sphere and even considered it to be essential for the modernisation and development of the country. But at the same time Kemalism emphasised that motherhood was the most important duty of women (Arat 1998:175). The emphasis was not only on urban women but also on village women who were portrayed as powerful and wise and as depositories of original Turkic culture untainted, according to Gökalp, by the influence of Byzantine, Persian and Islamic civilisation (Arat 1998: 132-133). In more recent years, however, a new image has emerged that depicts the village woman as ignorant, down-trodden and conservative and the urban woman as educated, emancipated and progressive.<sup>7</sup> The media, on the other hand, have confirmed the conflicting images of women who are either portrayed as good wives and mothers, that is unsexed beings, or as free and available women, that is purely sexual beings, that already existed in society.<sup>8</sup> Socialists, on the other hand, developed the stereotype of the *bacı* (sister), the asexual, depersonalised woman comrade, since the sexuality of women was considered potentially dangerous to revolutionary solidarity. This is a perception of women that has much in common with the one which is prevalent in Islamist discourse<sup>9</sup> (Tekeli 1995:252). Islamists too have developed ambiguous images of women who are expected to be both good housewives and militants.<sup>10</sup> The different images of women

<sup>6</sup> Gökalp's ideas on the role of women in the modernisation of society are discussed in K.E. Fleming's article "Women as Preservers of the Past: Ziya Gökalp and the Women's Reform" in Arat 1998: 127-138.

<sup>7</sup> On the conflicting images of Turkish village women see Emine Onaran İncirlioğlu's article "Images of Village Women in Turkey: Models and Anomalies" in Arat 1998: 199-223.

<sup>8</sup> On this issue see Ayşe Saktanber's paper in Tekeli 1995: 153-169.

<sup>9</sup> The position of women in the Turkish socialist movement is the subject of a critical study by Fatmagül Berktaş, "Has Anything Changed in the Outlook of the Turkish Left?" in Tekeli 1995:250-262).

<sup>10</sup> The image of women in the Islamic movement is discussed in various articles. See for instance Feride Acar's article "Women and Islam in Turkey" (Tekeli 1995:46-65) and Yeşim Arat's analysis of the Islamic women's monthly *Kadın ve Aile* (Woman and Family) in Tekeli 1995: 66-78. Jenny B. White in "The Islamist Paradox" (Kandiyoti & Saktanber 2002: 191-220) and Yael Navaro-Yaşın in "The Market for Identities: Secularism, Islamism and Commodities" (Kandiyoti & Saktanber 2002: 221-253) also discuss the changing role of women in the Islamic movement.

are reflected in the poetry of the time. Kemalist conceptions of women are expressed in the poetry of Yahya Kemal and the *Five Syllabists*. Nazım Hikmet and the first generation of socialist poets, *the Generation of 1940*, develop various images of the *bacı*, even though Nazım Hikmet does not deny the sexuality of women and neither do more original poets such as Attilâ İlhan (b.1925) and Atıf Behramoğlu (b.1942). The *Bizarre* group and the *Second Renewal* on the other hand are more interested in free and available women in their poetry where sexuality and love are conceived as two different things. Islamic poets too chose to focus in their neo-mystical poets on relatively free women, representing modern society, as the gateway to divine love.

In order to approach the theme of love in modern Turkish poetry, it is necessary to outline the conception of love in Ottoman poetry during its classical and post-*Tanzimat* phases. The aim is not to give a detailed account of the development of the theme throughout the centuries but to summarise the conflicting conceptions of love during those two periods.

### Love in classical Ottoman poetry<sup>11</sup>

Classical Ottoman poetry was mainly love poetry. Other literary genres such as religious lyric poetry, panegyric poetry, war poetry, satirical poetry, moralising poetry, epic poetry and commemorative poetry also existed and their importance should not be underestimated when making a general appreciation of classical Ottoman literature. It is nonetheless true that love poetry, or in the terminology of Alessio Bombaci, author of a concise study of Turkish literary history, “erotic mystical-poetry” was the principal genre of Ottoman literature until the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> This view is shared by Beşir Ayvazoğlu, a literary critic and columnist for the conservative *Zaman* newspaper, in *Aşk Estetiği* (The Aesthetics of Love), an essay on Islamic aesthetics. He maintains that *aşk*, by which he means divine love, was the central preoccupation of all artists in the Islamic world.<sup>13</sup> In his book he argues in favour of a mystical interpretation of the Islamic arts, such as calligraphy, miniature paintings, architecture, music and literature. The love he refers to throughout his work is the “*primary condition for the realisation of the sûfi desire to reach the Unique One*” (Ayvazoğlu 1999:20). An important point of his essay is that even in secular works the beloved is discussed with the same imagery as in

<sup>11</sup> Folk poets approach the theme of love like the *divân* poets. The themes of classical epics *Leyla and Mecnun*, *Yusuf and Züleyha*, *Ferhad and Şirin* are also encountered in folk poetry and mystical readings of folk poetry are always possible. In folk poetry too, love is above all metaphorical. Mystical Islam was an ideology shared by both the Istanbul elite and the Muslim Anatolian population until the *Tanzimat* (Moran 1994:12).

<sup>12</sup> Alessio Bombaci introduces the different genres of classical Ottoman (and other Turkic) literature in his introductory essay for the second volume of *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*: Alessio Bombaci, “The Turkic Literatures: Introductory Notes on the History and Style”, in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta II*, Wiesbaden: Steiner, xi-lxxi.

<sup>13</sup> The book was published for the first time in 1982 and was re-edited 5 times. I used the latest, slightly modified fifth edition ( Ayvazoğlu 1999).

mystical works. This encourages a mystical reading of the whole Ottoman literary tradition (Ayvazoğlu 1999:176). Ayvazoğlu's analysis relies primarily on the Ottoman *divân* tradition.

The clichés that had been used for centuries in order to depict the idealised beloved were found in secular and in mystical love poetry.<sup>14</sup> Hence a mystical reading of secular works was always possible. Metaphors such as *servi* (cypress), *nihâl* (twig) or *şem'* (candle) describing the stature of the beloved as well as *nergis* (narcissus) or *bâdem* (almond) referring to her eyes could even be found in profane works and were not restricted to realms of metaphorical mystical love. The reason why poets made an abundant use of those clichés until the 17th century was that

“for the classical Ottoman poet, this world and nature in general were not the primary sources of inspiration for poetic creation. His sources were limited to those of classical tradition. For example, a poet who wanted to depict the beloved in his poem did not turn to the living examples living around him as mimetic models. Instead he preferred to read the *divâns* of older poets, the masters of the art, and he tried to imitate the symbols and metaphors that they had already accepted as representing or signifying beauty” (Silay 1994:34).

Since the beloved of *divân* poetry was usually devoid of any true sexual attributes, she could be easily adopted by woman poets, and *divân* poetry written by women did not have any distinct characteristics in form or matter.<sup>15</sup> The generally accepted conventions did not allow the poet to make any notable modifications in the portraiture of the beloved. Through the use of images, symbols and metaphors the poets were not trying to describe the beloved but to veil her. A reaction against the stagnancy in literary matters started during the seventeenth century and poets such as Nabi (1642-1712) adopted a critical stance towards the clichés of the classical tradition. Though Nabi introduced new metaphors and novel images as well as unusual conceptions of the love relationship, he nevertheless continued to use established clichés beside his innovations. The nature of love too remained ambiguous since the perpetuation of certain images continued to evoke a distinctive mystical universe. This probably allowed poets such as Nedim (1680-1730) to get away with their more daring verses. Even in those poems, love remained unrequited and the narrator hopelessly longed for the *visâl*,

<sup>14</sup> Most of those attributes are listed in Kemal Silay's work on the early eighteenth century poet Nedim (1680-1730) *Nedim and the Poetics of Ottoman Court* (Silay 1994:35-37).

<sup>15</sup> Though Ottoman poetry was a mainly male realm, there were a few woman poets such as Mihri Hatun (1460-1506), who was described quite startlingly as an Ottoman Sappho by the German historian Hammer (quoted in Tamsöz 1994:12) or the major eighteenth century woman poet Fitnat Hanım (1725-1780). It is remarkable that even though Mihri Hatun is known to have been, considering the strict standards of the time, a free spirit, her poetry only perpetuates the imagery developed by male poets. Although she is undeniably a more talented and sophisticated poet than Fitnat Hanım, she follows the established techniques of *divân* metrical prosody and makes abundant use of the metaphors and symbols of the genre.

the union with the beloved. The resulting melancholy of the frustrated lover who burned with the desire for a furtive kiss or a caress was among the conventions of the genre. The little evolution in the poetic narration of love between the sixteenth and early nineteenth century was exemplified in Şeyh Galip (1757-1799)'s *Hüsn ü Aşk* (Beauty and Love), which, even though considered by the British Orientalist E.J.W. Gibb, as “*the crown and consummation*” (quoted in Holbrooke 1994:3) of classical Ottoman poetry, did not introduce a new discourse on love and perpetuated classical images.<sup>16</sup>

Love for Ottoman *divân* poets was primarily mystical love. It was the expression of the *sûfî* desire to realise the union with the divine beloved. The description of the beloved was symbolic because she was a metaphor. *Divân* poetry described the strivings of the poets who tried to realise the union with the divine beloved. It is true that profane human love could be hidden behind those mystical cravings, but the point is that the mystical vocabulary was used in both cases.<sup>17</sup> The narrator's attraction to beauty was not directed towards its physical appearance but towards God, its original source.<sup>18</sup>

### Love in post-*Tanzimat* poetry

The shift from concern for inner, divine beauty to concern for external, physical beauty, representing a shift from Islamic to European classicist aesthetics, is the major distinction between classical *divân* and post-*Tanzimat* love poetry. Nonetheless the approach to the theme of love in the post-*Tanzimat* era was not uniform and evolved during two phases. The first phase was marked by the rejection of tradition and the neglecting of the theme of love. The second phase was characterised by the adoption of, what could best be described as, *Parnassian* aesthetics and by the celebration of physical beauty.

The *Young Ottomans*, among them many celebrated literati such as Ziyâ Paşa (1825-1880) and Namık Kemal (1840-1888), reacted against the *divân* tradition. The metaphorical nature of *divân* poetry, the belief that the metaphor was a bridge that led to the ultimate truth<sup>19</sup> was precisely what the modernising poets of the period entirely rejected. *Divân* poetry was, according to Namık Kemal, not suited to the new age of

<sup>16</sup> Virginia Rowe Holbrook wrote an interesting and enriching reflection on the poetics of Şeyh Galip and on the contradictory discourses on classical Ottoman poetry that prevailed in Turkey in the first half of the twentieth century (Holbrooke 1994).

<sup>17</sup> The depiction of secular love usually had an educational purpose. The *gazels*, the *mesnevis* but also the *rubâis*, *kıtas* and *tuyuğs* depicted highly idealised relationships on which their restrained audience ought to model their behaviour (Meisami 1987: 244-245).

<sup>18</sup> The most comprehensive introductions to Ottoman poetry remain E.J.W. Gibb's (1857-1901) monumental six-volume *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (Gibb 1900-1909) and Alessio Bombaci's *Storia della Letteratura Turca* (Bombaci 1956). Walter C. Andrews' *Poetry's Voice, Society's Song: Ottoman Lyric Poetry* (Andrews 1985) is an anthology of Ottoman Turkish poetry, which focuses exclusively on the pre-*Tanzimat* period.

<sup>19</sup> Al-majâzu qantaratu'l-hakîka.

civilisation. Ziyâ Paşa, İbrahim Şinâsi (1826-1871) and the reformist poets and authors had little time for the elaborate craftsmanship required by the classical tradition. Poetry, literature in general, had to be a tool of education in order to enlighten the people, who had until now been ignored by the literary establishment. Since classical poetry dealt mainly with the theme of love, the latter was rejected as a relic from the past. The famous nightingale of the *divân* poets, became an object of ridicule and Namık Kemal occasionally subverted the literary conventions of the classical genres. "*Who cares about the nightingale crying out in the rose garden*", he asked in an introductory couplet to one of the chapters of his 1876 novel *İntibah* (The Awakening), "*I am now in the hands of drunkenness with a beauty with rosy cheeks*"<sup>20</sup> (Kemal 1998 :79).

Nevertheless Namık Kemal and other *Young Ottoman* literati wrote some love verses according to the conventions of *divân* poetry. They made no attempt at transforming the understanding of love of the *divân* poets and perpetuated the tradition in which they had originally been trained. Their more daring and novel writings were reserved for new forms that they introduced to Ottoman literature, namely the novel, drama and also journalistic writings. Poetry as a whole, though intensely politicised, largely remained in the margins of their reformist endeavours.

The constitutionalist and democratising endeavours of the *Young Ottomans* transformed Ottoman political and literary life. Sultan Abdülhamit II (1876-1909) established a constitution in 1876. This was a short-lived experiment which was followed by an era of censorship and persecution. The literary elite had to re-evaluate the role of literature in a context of increased political pressure, which led to the gradual disengagement of the literary elite from politics. Abdülhak Hamit (Tarhan) (1852-1937) and Recâizâde Mahmut Ekrem (1847-1914), the two major poets of the Abdülhamit era, switched to more personal and confessional poetry and avoided political controversy. Their attitude reflected the spirit of a new generation of poets who preferred to stay away from the political arena, but nevertheless believed in the need to continue with the modernisation of Ottoman poetry.

Recâizâde Mahmut Ekrem exposed a new conception of poetry to the Ottoman reader, by espousing *Parnassian* ideals. The theories of the *Parnasse*, an influential French literary movement that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, had been introduced to Ottoman literary circles by diplomats, students and exiles based in France. The *Parnassians* advocated art for art's sake. Formal perfection and the reflection in poetry of objective beauty were central in their quest. The personality of the poet had to be eclipsed and the ultimate aim was the creation of pure poetry. In France the *Parnasse* was primarily a reaction against the passionate outbursts and the political engagement of romanticism. For the Ottoman poets, the adoption of

<sup>20</sup> Ko feryâd eylesin gülşende bülbül çâk çâk olsun/ O gül-ruhsâr ile sâgâr-be-dest-i işretim şimdi.

*Parnassian* aesthetics represented a clear break with the political poetry of the *Young Ottomans* and a return to an elitist conception of poetry, close to that of the *divân* poets. However it was also a switch from Islamic to western aesthetics.

Recaizâde Mahmut Ekrem reintroduced the theme of love, which became an important theme in his own work and in the works of his followers, who grouped around the cultural journal *Servet-i Fünûn* (Wealth of Science), founded and edited by him in 1891.

Ekrem, whose theoretical output was of greater importance than his poetry, introduced a new conception of love into Ottoman literature. In *Takdir-i Elhân* (The Valuation of Songs), one of his major critical works published in 1886, he wrote that “*from the atom to the sun, everything which is beautiful is poetry*” (Ekrem 1301:9) and that poets were “*all apprentices of nature*” (Ekrem 1301:11). The aim of the poet was to recreate in a work of art the beauty that existed in nature. This attitude was fundamentally new, since the Ottoman classical poet never aimed at imitating the surrounding world. He was attracted to beauty indeed, but his search was for abstract, spiritual beauty and not for the concrete physical beauty of the natural world. Ekrem’s theoretical writings represented a clear switch from Islamic to western classicist aesthetics. His new theory of poetry did not go unopposed and mainly Muallim Naci (1850-1893) tried to keep the *divân* tradition alive, even though he too wrote poems which were closer to western than to Islamic aesthetics. In *Tâlim-i Edebiyat* (The Tuition of Literature), published in 1879, Recâizâde Mahmut Ekrem wrote that women, beside nature, were the original source of beauty and thus ought to be a major source of inspiration for poets (Akyüz 1986:84). He introduced the western romantic myth of the “Eternal Feminine”, which was alien to *divân* poetry. With Ekrem, the physical beauty of women became a theme in poetry. He sowed the seeds of a more sensual love poetry. Moreover, by focusing on the female body as an expression of beauty, Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem clearly distanced himself from the sexually ambiguous poetry of the classical tradition. Although the physical features of the beloved woman were a source of attraction, the expression of sensual desire was not the avowed aim of the poets: Their goal was the reflection of the aesthetic perfection of the female body in lyrical poetry (Ertop 1977: 237-240).

Compared to the beloved of the *divân* poems, Recaizâde Ekrem’s beloved was humane and more emotional. She lived, felt and cried. But the narrator’s love for her was still surrounded by a mystical aura, since the beloved was unattainable (Parlatır 1985:37-38). His love poetry was certainly not as daring as his theoretical writings may suggest. His writings were influential for the younger poets in *Servet-i Fünûn* who put his ideas firmly into practice. The *Edebiyat-i Cedide* (New Literature, 1896-1901) and the *Fecr-i Âti* (The Dawn of the New Age, 1909) groups can rightly be considered as

his spiritual offspring. They produced a love poetry that had more in common with the French *Parnassians* than with the generations of Ottoman *divân* poets who had preceded them. Meanwhile the poets who wrote in *Genç Kalemler* (Young Pens), a journal propounding *National Literature*, reintroduced folk motives into love poetry and used the theme of love in mainly didactic poems.<sup>21</sup> For nationalist poets and advocates of art for art's sake, love was now a theme amongst others and nothing but that.

### Considerations on literary modernity

The change of focus in the depiction of love reflects the debates on modernity, both political and literary, in the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey. The concept of modernity, political or other, is very loaded and no single definition could encompass everything that is associated with it. The German social philosopher Jürgen Habermas (b.1929) points out three political and cultural transformations that lead from the middle ages to modern times: the European "discovery" of the Americas, the Renaissance and the Reformation (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1998:145). Thinkers of the French Enlightenment cultivated the idea that modernity was a superior period in the development of humanity. This notion was adopted by successive generations who emphasised that their own present had a prominent position within the modern.

Post-colonial theorists, however, have rightly emphasised that modernity is not a particular period of time in European or human history but rather a discourse pertaining to modes of social organisation and to the development of rationalism and secularism that emerged in the sixteenth century and became influential throughout the world as a result of European expansionism (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1998: 144,145). The concept of modernity is a product of European historical development. This explains the confusion in the late Ottoman Empire and even in contemporary Turkey, of the terms modernisation (*muasırlaşmak* or *çağdaşlaşmak*) and westernisation (*garplılaşmak* or *batılılaşmak*).

Not only did Europeans conceive the present modernity as superior to the past, but they also believed that modern European civilisation was superior to pre-modern non-European cultures, a view that legitimised the colonial endeavours of European nations. The superiority of western modernity was a vision that was readily adopted by the ideologues of the *Tanzimat* reforms who were supportive of the promulgation of the westernising *Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümayînu* (Imperial Edict of Gülhane) in 1839 by the reformist Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşit Paşa (1808-1858) during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecit (1839-1861). The *Young Ottomans*, however, reacted against the westernised bureaucracy that implemented the reforms. They were conscious that the

<sup>21</sup> The development of the nationalist *Young Pens* is discussed in Chapter III.

modernisation and the salvation of the Empire could not simply be achieved by the mere adoption of western civilisation. They noticed some short-comings of superficial westernisation and tried to develop, without using this particular terminology, an indigenous form of modernity that aimed at, in İbrahim Şinasi's words, "*marrying the virginity of the ideas of Europe to the ancient wisdom of Asia*."<sup>22</sup> Leading Young Ottoman intellectuals assigned a dual function to literary creation, which ought to be a guide leading to modernisation and the product of a modern society.<sup>23</sup>

Politics and literature were closely linked in the works of the writers who believed that literature had a leading role to play in the modernisation of the empire and the enlightenment of the people. There has always been a close interconnection between literature and politics in republican Turkey, a fact that was underlined in an essay by the critic Murat Belge in 1975<sup>24</sup>, in which he argued that Turkish literati, unlike their western peers, did not grow tired of politics, because they were continuously confronted with social change from the period of the *Tanzimat* reforms to the present day (Belge 1994:68). The *Young Ottomans* adopted western literary forms such as the novel and drama and were critical of traditional narrative forms. They argued that prose, theatre and journalism were better suited for the dissemination of their ideas. Poetry as a genre was neglected and its form changed little even though its content was politicised. The *Young Ottomans* were in a complex situation: They hoped to bridge the gap between the ruling class and ordinary people by addressing the latter, who were still largely illiterate in the second half of the 19th century. Moreover they were part of the ruling establishment that they were trying to transform. This ambiguous position of the Turkish intellectual, who was always part of the system that he tried to reform, remained until the 1950s, when the democratisation of education finally bore its first fruits and the intelligentsia was not restricted to the middle-class of large cities any more.

The *Young Ottomans* had a modern conception of the role of literature since it was based on a critical stance towards the past and on the desire to build something

<sup>22</sup> "Asya'nın akl-ı pirânesi ile Avrupa'nın bıkır-i fikrini izdivaç ettirmek" (Parla 1993:17).

<sup>23</sup> There are only a few publications in western European languages that broadly discuss developments in poetry during the post-*Tanzimat* period in the Ottoman. Among those, Beatrix Caner's recently published *Türkische Literatur: Klassiker der Moderne* (Caner 1998) should be noted. She covers the post-*Tanzimat* period up to Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, on whom she focuses. Her analysis of late nineteenth century literature is much indebted to Tanpınar's groundbreaking *Ondokuzuncu Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Tanpınar 1997). Meanwhile, there are several studies which have been published on the intellectual debates of the period. Among them Şerif Mardin's *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernisation of Turkish Political Ideas* (Mardin 1962) and Niyazi Berkes' recently re-edited *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Berkes 1998) are two now classical works that introduce the complex and often contradictory strands of thoughts that developed during the second half of the nineteenth century and aimed at rescuing the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>24</sup> The essay "Politik Roman Üstüne" (About the Political Novel) was originally published in the left-wing monthly *Birikim* (Knowledge) in November 1975 and is included in Murat Belge's collected essays on literature (Belge 1994: 65-79).

new. Their literary productions, however, could not be considered modern, since they mainly consisted of the adoption of western genres and of the rejection, in theoretical writings, of the classical tradition. There was, as there would be for the subsequent generations too, a clear gap between theoretical writings and literary practice.

Literary modernity is difficult to define and it is questionable that one could argue in favour of a definition that would fit various literary traditions. Literary modernity could be characterised as a break with tradition accompanied by the acceptance of contemporary life, both of which would be expressed in novel literary approaches. The adoption of western models in Ottoman Turkey was not a modern attitude in itself but it was a first step which led to a reflection that engendered an indigenous form of modern literature. This modernising phase was characterised by problems not unlike those encountered in other developing countries in the wake of decolonisation: The rejection of “imperial” *divân* literature started with the *Young Ottomans* and left the next generations of poets with the arduous task of re-inventing indigenous literature, because authors of the second half of the nineteenth century had developed a discourse that represented classical Ottoman literature as foreign. This discourse was still mainstream a century later. In 1964 Oktay Rifat (1914-1988), the poet, argued in an international literary conference in Sofia that Turkish literature had no classics (Goodwin 1999:xiii).

The continuous controversy regarding the supposed rootlessness of twentieth century Turkish poetry too has parallels with post-colonial literature. Focusing on Anatolian Turkish folk literature, Turkish intellectuals, chiefly the father of Turkish nationalism Ziyâ Gökalp (1876-1924), argued that the continuity of Turkish poetry had been interrupted by the development of *divân* literature which was the poetry of the ruling class and was foreign.<sup>25</sup> However a major difference with post-colonial literature was that, in post-colonial societies, the continuity of the national literary tradition was interrupted by the arrival of colonial powers and the imposition of a foreign language and culture, whereas in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, the disruption was the result of a discourse developed by indigenous intellectuals.

The development of this discourse on national literature is an important component of the definition of Turkish literary modernity, beside the critical stance towards the classical tradition, the acceptance of contemporary life and literary innovation. But none of the major literary movements at the start of the twentieth century could make a convincing claim to modernity. The group of poets and writers around the *Servet-i Fümûn* journal simply argued in favour of the adoption of western *Parnassian* poetics. The nationalist *Young Pens'* interest in folk literature was an important step in the direction of a national literary modernity, but they mainly

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<sup>25</sup> These arguments will be further discussed in Chapter III.

advocated the replacement of the classical tradition with the folk tradition. Literary innovation was only a marginal concern. The first poets to combine literary innovation and nationalist quest were Yahya Kemal and the *Five Syllabists*, even though their explorations resulted in radically different works.<sup>26</sup>

### **On the threshold of modernity : Ahmet Haşım**

Ahmet Haşım (1884-1933) is an outstanding figure among the poets who were associated with the *Fecr-i Ati* group. He deserves extra scrutiny, since unlike many of his contemporaries, he is still widely read today and this despite the obvious obstacle created by his ornamented Ottoman prosody. The critic Nurullah Ataç was wrong when he claimed, more than half a century ago, that “*after his generation passed away, nobody would read books like Göl Saatleri (Hours by the Lake) or Piyâle (The Chalice)*” (Kurdakul 1994a: 181), Ahmet Haşım's only two poetry collections.<sup>27</sup> Ataç, a radical advocate of the turkification of the language, misjudged the lasting impact of Haşım's poetry because he focused exclusively on linguistic issues and ignored that Haşım had shown the ability, in the critic Asım Bezirci's words, “*to combine private and universal concerns*” in his poetry (Bezirci 1972: 98). Ahmet Haşım was a deluded and tormented individual, prone to sudden fits of depression, who wanted to create the harmony in his poetry which did not exist in his private life.

The regular publication of new editions of his poems are a tribute to the continuous interest shown to this influential poet on the threshold of Turkish literary modernity. Ahmet Haşım introduced to the reading public a poetical theory that had a lot in common with French symbolism. Yet, in his theoretical writings he referred more often to Nedim and Şeyh Gâlip than to Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), the spiritual father of the symbolists, and Jean Moréas (1856-1910), the founder of the symbolist school. He mentioned some of the similarities that existed between the symbolist approach and the classical Ottoman approach to the concept of reality, but he never deepened the subject. He did not advocate an original synthesis of French symbolist and classical Ottoman poetry. Had he done so, the product of his reflections could have been rightly seen as the first examples of Turkish modern poetry. But for Haşım, just as for the poets who had preceded him in this transitional phase of Ottoman Turkish poetry, the theory remained theory<sup>28</sup> and his poems were influenced by the theoretical

<sup>26</sup> This case is further argued in the introductory sections of chapters II and III.

<sup>27</sup> They were published respectively in 1921 and 1926. Ahmet Haşım also published two collections of his writings as a columnist in various publications: *Gurabahâne-i Laklakan* (The Shelter of the Storks, 1928) and *Bize Göre* (In Our Opinion, 1928) and a travel report about his journey and stay in Germany *Frankfurt Seyahatnamesi* (Travel Notes from Frankfurt, 1933).

<sup>28</sup> Gül Atal broadly discusses this issue in her unpublished PhD thesis *Turkish and French Symbolism: Ahmet Haşım* (Atal 1962).

writings of the preceding generation, in his case, Mahmut Recâizade Ekrem's brand of *Parnassian* poetry.

Ahmet Haşım's encounter with symbolist poetry and symbolist theories dates back to his years at Galatasaray High School, when he read, according to Asım Bezirci, an influential anthology of French symbolist poetry, *Anthologie des Poètes d'Aujourd'hui* (Anthology of the Poets of Today), which was edited by Paul Léautaud and Van Bever (Bezirci 1972:8). He also became an avid reader of the French journal *Mercure de France* and was thus introduced to the most important symbolist poets of the time. It is difficult to find a suitable definition for symbolism since, properly speaking, there was no symbolist movement. Symbolism was a broad church, or, in the poet Henri de Régnier's (1864-1936) words, "a refuge where newcomers in literature were taking shelter" (Akal 1962:28). In a response to an article by the nationalist poet and ideologue Ali Canip (Yöntem) (1887-1967), Ahmet Haşım too argued that symbolism "had no clear programme. Hence there had never been a clearly defined symbolist literary formation"<sup>29</sup> (Haşım 1991b:293).

French symbolists, whose spiritual fathers were Charles Baudelaire<sup>30</sup> (1821-1867), Paul Verlaine<sup>31</sup> (1844-1896), Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) and Stéphane Mallarmé were poets who reacted against positivism, realism and the modern world. Despite all their differences, the Greek-born Jean Moréas, Henri de Régnier and the Belgian Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916), at least in his early works, shared similarities. They were evoking objects, in Mallarmé's words, "little by little so as to reveal a mood" (Cuddon 1992:940). They were trying to blur reality so that the Ideal could appear. The emphasis was on the musicality of the language because the latter played an important role in the suggestion of moods. This is why they advocated the use of the free verse, that gave a greater creative freedom to the poet. They argued against rigid poetical forms that limited the evocative and suggestive power of poetry.

Ahmet Haşım subscribed to the elitism of the symbolists in his major theoretical essay "A Few Reflections on Poetry", which was published as a preface to his second poetry collection *Piyâle*<sup>32</sup>. The essay, written in response to criticism regarding the supposed obscurity of his earlier verses, discussed the importance of meaning (*ma'nâ*) and clarity (*vuzûh*) in poetry.

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<sup>29</sup> The article "The Value of Symbolism" was published in *Hayat* (Life) on 26 May 1927. Ali Canip's article had been printed some weeks earlier in the same magazine. Ali Canip claimed that *Symbolism* was a clearly defined and structured movement and branded it an anathema. Ahmet Haşım's article was meant as a testimony to the survival of Mallarmean ideals in contemporary French literature.

<sup>30</sup> Charles (Pierre) Baudelaire was a French poet who combined rhythmical and musical perfection with a morbid romanticism and eroticism.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Verlaine emphasised the importance of rhythm and melody in poetry and became, just like Arthur Rimbaud, with his conception of the poet as a seer, a major influence on the symbolists.

<sup>32</sup> The essay is an edited version of an article previously published in the journal *Dergah* (The Lodge) in 1921.

First of all, Ahmet Haşim stipulated that the language of poetry, in contrast to the language of prose, was meant to be listened to and that it was closer to music than to words. Hence poetry and prose were two completely different genres (Haşim 1926: 6). In poetry, the meaning of words was less important than their musicality and their associative power. Those associations were part of the melody of the poem (Haşim 1926:8). Since the poet rejected the outer meanings of the words in favour of inner or hidden meanings, it meant that poetry could only be understood by a small minority (Haşim 1926:9). He confirmed this point and wrote that poetry, that could be understood by everybody is the work of minor poets (Haşim 1926:9). This was close to the elitist conception of poetry of the *divân* tradition, which had been rejected by the first generation of poets of the post-*Tanzimat* period. Not even the poets of the *Servet-i Fünûn* had argued, as openly as Ahmet Haşim, that poetry should only be written and enjoyed by a minority, even though they had often implied it.

Haşim's elitism, his emphasis on harmony and the power of evocation of words, as well as his belief that nature in poetry was a projected state of sensibility of the soul were indicative of his intellectual closeness to symbolism. Various writers, however, remarked that Haşim did not refer to symbolist terminology in his essay (Atal 1962: 54 & Bezirci 1972:75). When he wrote about the opaqueness of poetry, he referred to how Nedim was misunderstood by his contemporaries (Haşim 1926:8-9). In his groundbreaking article "The Value of Symbolism", Ahmet Haşim argued that symbolism in itself was not a new literary theory but that Mallarmé's definition of symbolism had been reached by poets centuries before him (Haşim 1991b: 295). Indeed the search beyond the real world for ideal forms and essences was also central in Neo-Platonism and in mystical *tasavvuf* poetry.

This is why it can well be argued that Ahmet Haşim was at least as much indebted to Şeyh Galip as to French symbolism (Ayvazoğlu 2000:36-40).<sup>33</sup> The combination of symbolism and *divân* mysticism was also reflected in the imagery of Haşim's poetry. The presence of lakes, rivers, trees and birds, that recalled the poetical universe of French and Belgian *Parnassian* and symbolist poets, cohabited with the nightingale and the rose, the classical metaphors of *divân* poetry.

Ahmet Haşim's approach to the theme of love similarly included elements from the *divân* tradition and the *Parnassian* and symbolist schools. His biographers and critics explored the possible autobiographical input in his love poems. They focused on his numerous platonic affairs and on his supposed self-hate and inability to relate to

<sup>33</sup> In the introductory poem of the collection *Piyâle*, he wrote that Fuzûli (1495(?)-1556), and *Mecnûn*, Leylâ's famous lover, had drunk from the chalice (*piyâle*) that gave his collection its name. These opening references to Ottoman-Islamic literature in a collection that includes his *symbolist* manifesto suggest that his source of inspiration may not have solely been Paris, as has usually been argued by literary historians. Beşir Ayvazoğlu published in 2001 a new biography of the poet in which he explores the Ottoman background of Haşim's works.

women.<sup>34</sup> It is striking that even though Ahmet Haşim made a stylistic evolution and gradually distanced himself from the flowered prosody of his first poems, he did not go through any thematic evolution and continued to focus mostly on nature and love. His early poems, not included in any of his collections, bore the marks of the influence of the great masters of the *Servet-i Fünûn* journal, namely Tevfik Fikret (1867-1915) and Cenap Şehabettin (1870-1934). These poets brought the spirit and the precision of painters to poetry and tried to ennoble the subject of their poems in order to create absolute beauty. In his early poems, Ahmet Haşim treated the theme of love according to their aesthetic cannons: The beauty of the beloved, real or imagined, was a source of inspiration for the poet. The emphasis in those poems was on the physical beauty of the beloved, of women, who were at the centre of an idealised natural landscape.

Between 1909 and 1921, Ahmet Haşim developed his own poetic language and started to formulate his symbolist principles. He did not integrate them into his poems, which mainly consisted of deeply emotional depictions of nature. They were collected in his first collection of poems *Göl Saatleri* (Hours by the Lake), published in 1921. The theme of love was only of secondary importance in those poems and the approach was *Parnassian*. His second collection, *Piyâle* (The Chalice), published in 1926 was characterised by shorter poems, written in a less ornamented language. Love and nature were combined in most of the poems. Ahmet Haşim included some of his unpublished poems, written during his adolescence, in the collection *Piyâle*. Those poems were the sequence “Şiir-i Kamer” (Poem of the Moon). They mostly dealt with the poet's recollections of his long walks with his mother on the banks of the Tigris. The setting of those early poems evoked the setting of his later poems, but the poet clearly mentioned the geographical settings of the walks by naming the river. The poems shared most of the characteristics of his later love poems, which has led some critics, like Asım Bezirci, to point to a possible oedipal dimension in his poetry (Bezirci 1972:36).

Haşim's approach to the theme of love had always some characteristics that were close to *divân* poetry. Love was never represented in the present tense and was either remembrance or illusion. The encounter with the beloved either took place in the past or in a dream. The union was never consummated. The landscape of the encounter and the image of the beloved, however, were a combination of *divân* and mainly French *Parnassian* conventions. Nonetheless this combination prepared the ground for the first modern discourses on love, in the poetry of Yahya Kemal Beyatlı and the *Five Syllabists*.

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<sup>34</sup> Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar, a close friend of the poet and the author of an emotional account of his life, gives a detailed account of Ahmet Haşim's failed amorous adventures. However he focuses only on anecdotes and does not try to find any explanation for the tormented and ambiguous behaviour of his friend (Hisar 1963: 124-134).

The focus on the aesthetic beauty of nature in the poetry of Ahmet Haşim was a convention of the *Servet-i Fümûn* poets but it was still considered a major novelty, because such depictions of nature had mostly been ignored by classical Ottoman poets. The post-*Tanzimat* authors had introduced nature to the Ottoman reader, but they had done so in a critical fashion. In Namık Kemal's major novel *İntibah*, nature signified lust and was the source of the main character's fall and disgrace. This attitude changed with the more introspective works of Abdülhak Hamit (Tarhan) and Recâizade Mahmut Ekrem: Abdülhak Hamit had a more "pantheist" approach to nature and Recâizade Ekrem focused on its aesthetic beauty. Recâizade Mahmut Ekrem (and his rival Muallim Naci) wrote the first examples of pastoral poetry in Turkish. The next generation of poets, influenced by Ekrem's theoretical writings and examples of French *Parnassian* poetry, represented nature as a reflection of ultimate beauty. Ahmet Haşim too espoused the ideals of the *Servet-i Fümûn* poets in his early works and focused on nature, which was to remain his major theme and the only setting of his love poems. The centrality of nature is exemplified by the limitation of his poetic vocabulary: Most of the 1146 words used in his poems relate to nature and to the sky (Bezirci 1972:99-100). Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar confirms that lakes, rivers and ponds were central in Haşim's poetic universe (Hisar 1963:80). His universe undoubtedly recalled the poetic universes created by the French symbolists, with whom he shared a common literary sensitivity. It was a world full of nuances and shades. It might have been an attempt to recreate the imagined idyllic landscape of his childhood in Baghdad. He worked very much like a painter when setting the imagery of his poems. But streams and rivers, trees and forests had only an aesthetic value in order to create a particular atmosphere, and no symbolic value could be attached to those elements in his poems. Haşim was fascinated by nature and dedicated several articles to its doings.

Ahmet Haşim's lovers always met at night, which was the poet's preferred time. Ahmet Haşim believed that the world at night was not "*the antiquated world in which we lived*" (Hisar 1963:175). The poet thought that evening and night-time were propitious times to dream. The following excerpt from a late article by the poet sheds some light on the reasons for his love of nature and the night<sup>35</sup> :

"Finally it was evening and we were overcome by darkness. Though we were facing one another, we could not see each other. We could just hear voices. Suddenly we heard a rustling that sounded like a whisper behind us. We turned our heads. A red moon was rising behind two pines. It was as if it were caressing the leaves, as if we were in the imperfect, vague universe drawn with the black ink of a Japanese painter. We were now saved from the pain of seeing everything clearly. The intoxication of deceitful vision and the ability to dream slowly made our

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<sup>35</sup> The article entitled "Ay" (The moon) was published by Ahmet Haşim on 5th September 1928 in *İkdam*.

bodies numb, like the smoke of opium. The sluggish trees around us had been replaced by a rich forest. The dirty girls of the poor family who were eating just across from us had become dreamlike figures set with jewels, thanks to the moonlight reflected on their faces. The muddy waters of the sea had disappeared and had been replaced by a luminous liquid on the sands that was singing songs" (Haşim 1991b:37).

The night created a beauty that did not exist during day-time. Haşim's aim was *Parnassian* since he wanted to reflect objective beauty, but he made use of symbolist narration by blurring reality. Reality was a source of unhappiness for Haşim from which he wished to escape.

The beloved too was always a dream-like figure, not real but imagined and thus the time for the encounter of the lovers was always at night: In "O Belde" (That Realm) the narrator and his equally melancholic beloved watch the beginnings of the night and imagine an ideal realm. In the sequence "Gelmeden Evvel- Geldin - Birlikte" (Before you came- You came - Together), the narrator waits for the beloved who appears in the evening. There are several other poems such as "Karanlık" (Darkness), "Bir Yaz Gecesi Hatırası" (Remembrance of a Summer Night) and "Havuz" (The Pool) where the theme of love is evoked at night-time. In the latter poem the poet clearly wrote that the "*beloved does not come during the day*".<sup>36</sup>

The landscape of love in Ahmet Haşim's poetry, just like his poetical universe as a whole, was firmly set in an imagined nature, that blended both *Parnassian*, i.e. objective and realist, and *Symbolist* elements.<sup>37</sup>

The beloved in Ahmet Haşim's first published poems shared all the characteristics of the poetry of the *New Literature* movement. The beloved was a highly stylised woman who incarnated beauty. The image of the woman as an inspirational source of beauty had its roots in the theoretical writings of Recâizade Mahmut Ekrem. Ekrem believed that the major aim of art was the creation of beauty (Ekrem 1311AH:577). He also claimed that women were one of the major sources of beauty and that every great work of art had been inspired by the beauty and the love of women (Tuncer 1996:143). Haşim decided not to include his first poems in his books because he probably believed that they were immature and impersonal works.

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<sup>36</sup> The only exception is the evocation of the "*the daughters of sleep and nothingness*" in "Öğle" (Midday), a poem which is part of the sequence "Göl Saatleri", that describes the variations of light and of atmosphere at various times of the day.

<sup>37</sup> The poem "Evim" (My House) was exceptional and not set in nature. It was an emotional reflection on a quest for a place that would really be his own. In that particular poem, Haşim imagined a house "*in which he would be waiting for love*". He was on a quest to find an ideal abode and an ideal beloved who would live with him. His ideal land was a land without cultural or political boundaries. It was the product of pure imagination. Yahya Kemal, on the other hand, would firmly set his poetic universe in the Ottoman past of Istanbul and take part in the debates on the emerging national synthesis in Turkey, to which Ahmet Haşim could have, had he not deliberately ignored it, made some interesting contributions.

The immaterial nature of the beloved was to be a constant feature in most of his later poems dealing with the theme of love. She was always referred to with words suggesting dream and illusion, such as *hüsn-i muhayyel* (imaginary beauty) ("Şeb-i Nisan", April Evening) and *aşk-ı muhâl* (inconceivable love) ("Şimdi", Now). The beloved was a major source of inspiration, a muse in most of his poems, but she gained a new characteristic in the poems published after 1909: She soothed the pain and despair of the narrator, an ability that was only ascribed to his mother in his early poems. The sequence of poems "Şiir-i Kamer", originally published between March and June 1909 in the magazine *Resimli Kitap* (Illustrated Book) and later included in the collection *Piyâle*, consisted of reminiscences of the idyllic relationship between Haşım and his mother, despite her fatal disease.<sup>38</sup> Ahmet Haşım did not write any poems about his mother after 1908 but the physical and rare psychological characteristics of the beloved were the same as those of the mother (Kaplan 1997:478,479).

Psychological characteristics of the beloved were only seen in two poems - "O Belde" and "Merdiven" (The Stairs). In "O Belde", the beloved had a melancholic nature and she was very prone to day-dreaming, just like the narrator. Mehmet Kaplan remarked that similar poems were written by Cenap Şehabettin (Kaplan 1997:478). The two lovers were united against the real world that was symbolised by the contemporary (*bugünkü*) men who could not understand them and therefore despised them. In "Merdiven" too, the beloved was melancholic. She was about to cry and her face faded at sunset. This was in clear contrast to the moods of the playful beloved in Haşım's earlier poems, where she usually smiled and laughed, which was conventional for *Servet-i Fünûn* poetry. It was also in contrast to the beloved in *divân* poetry with whom such a psychological closeness could never have been conceived. Little information was given about the physical appearance of the beloved of whom only the eyes, locks and lips were mentioned, all of which were conventions of *divân* literature.

Cemal Süreya claimed that Ahmet Haşım approached the theme of love in a truly novel way by, among other, eroticising the body of the beloved (Süreya 2000:33). This claim does not withstand closer inspection. Ahmet Haşım wrote about kisses and about his desire for *vuslat* (union) with the beloved. "In "Şeb-i Nisân" the lips of the beloved "lead to enflamed madness". In "Şafakta" (At Dawn), the hand of the beloved reached to the narrator in order to fulfil the union. But the poet focused neither on the physical contact between the lovers, nor on the bodies. The physical union was potentially possible but never realised since the very existence of the beloved was doubtful. Haşım's conception of love remained inside the boundaries of *divân* poetry, except for his early *Parnassian* poems. It is true that Haşım's idealised natural landscape shared few characteristics with the stylised nature of the *divân* poets.

<sup>38</sup> Haşım's mother died when he was ten years old.

Nonetheless, just as in the classical tradition, love was never represented in action, it was always remembered or imagined. The encounters were referred to as dreams and the beloved had no real physical presence. It is classical *divân* love in a western context. This approach to love and the context of the relationship were to be transformed by the next generation of poets. Ahmet Haşim was the last Ottoman poet who brought the *Servet-i Fünûn* tradition to its climax and achieved something that many of his predecessors did not: poems that are still eagerly read by contemporary readers.

## Chapter I

### Paradise Lost: Yahya Kemal and the theme of love

#### Yahya Kemal Beyatlı

Yahya Kemal Beyatlı (1884-1958) is an exceptional figure in modern Turkish poetry, who is endorsed by the political and the literary establishment. A statue was erected for him in Istanbul after his death. There is an institute - the *Yahya Kemal Enstitüsü* - devoted to the publication of his complete works, that produces occasional publications which deal with various aspects of his life and works. There is even a *Yahya Kemal'i Sevenler Cemiyeti* (Society of Admirers of Yahya Kemal), which was founded during the life-time of the poet. Such literary societies may be common in the English-speaking world, but they are exceptional in Turkey.

His works bridged classical *divân* poetry and the modern nationalist discourse of the nationalist literati. The emphasis in his theoretical writings on the need to break with the imitativeness of the previous generation and to develop a national literary expression, as well as his own innovative literary output, make him a truly modern poet. His discourse however, was ambiguous and his romantic *Ottomanism* sometimes seems at odds with the *Anatolianism* that was extolled after the Kemalist revolution. Indeed it was only after the victory of the conservative Democratic Party that dethroned the Kemalist Republican People's Party (RPP) in the 1950 elections that Yahya Kemal was recognised as the *Millî Şair* - the national poet. That does not mean however that he had been in opposition to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and then later to the National Leader ( *Millî Şef*) İsmet İnönü. He was an MP for the RPP in 1923 , 1934, 1935 and 1939 and 1946. He was also for a short period an aesthetic advisor for the RPP.

The poetry of Yahya Kemal is a synthesis of the Turkish Parnassian's search for formal perfection and the *Young Pens'* quest for national literature. The theme of love was an important theme in his poetry, though his major themes were Ottoman history, Epicureanism (*rindlik*), the passing of the seasons, the ephemerality of happiness and, towards the end of his life, death.

Rather than synthesising the core of the argument of several Turkish language publications dealing with Yahya Kemal, I will focus on two particular aspects of his work in my introduction: the production and reception of his work and his conception of Turkish national identity. The former is a neglected field of research in Turkish literary studies and reveals, in the case of Yahya Kemal, fundamental facets of the

poet.<sup>1</sup> The latter provides information that is essential when interpreting the figure of the beloved in his works dealing with the theme of love.

### **A prophet without a book**

Yahya Kemal shared with the aesthetes of the *Servet-i Fünûn* group an interest in the linguistic and formal perfection of poetry. He wrote slowly and little and was extremely self critical. He told the journalist Hikmet Feridun Es, that he had started to "compose" poetry at a relatively late age and that "composing" poetry was a fastidious task<sup>2</sup> (Sesli 1963:19). In a letter sent to the poet Faruk Nafiz (Çamlıbel) in 1926, in which he explained his conception of poetry, Yahya Kemal discussed the complexity of the creative process in poetry and wrote that he pondered each verse for weeks and discovered that poetry was *a well hidden diamond* (Beyatlı 1971: 47).

The critic Mehmet Kaplan who wanted to date Yahya Kemal's poems asked him for help and Yahya Kemal answered that most of his poems were written and rewritten over a period of at least five years and that it took him some twenty years in order to complete certain poems (YKEM 1988:18). The scarcity of his verse is well illustrated by the comments about Yahya Kemal made by the poet and essayist Süleyman Nazif (1869-1927) to Ruşen Eşref in 1918:

"I have seen only 172 verses written by Yahya Kemal, of which only 61 were completed. And I liked what I saw. There are even people who acclaim Yahya Kemal's poetry with great enthusiasm and love, though they have not even seen that much. Mollâ Djâmî said the following about Djalâlu'd-dîn Rûmî:

*He was not a prophet but he brought a book.*

Our Yahya Kemal, however, is an ardent disciple of the tradition of those prophets who have no books " (Eşref 1334AH:124).

By calling Yahya Kemal a *disciple of the tradition of the prophets without books*, Süleyman Nazif was not only referring to the poet's hesitancy to publish but also to the huge group of dedicated adherents that were surrounding him. His poems, written with the *aruz* metrical prosody<sup>3</sup> of the *divân* tradition received wide acclaim even though at

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<sup>1</sup>Information on the production and reception of his works does exist, but it is scattered in various publications and, to my knowledge, no systematic attempt has been made to bring this information together.

<sup>2</sup>This was a rather unique situation, since after 1908, year of the establishment of the second constitution, the newly gained freedom led to a proliferation in publications of various types, including poetry.

<sup>3</sup>The poem "Ok" (The Arrow), written with the syllabic meter is the only published exception. There are also several drafts of syllabic poems in the collection of Yahya Kemal's unfinished poems (Beyatlı 1993).

the time he was writing, the use of forms such as the *hece*, the syllabic meter of the folk tradition, was encouraged by both the political and the literary establishment.<sup>4</sup>

His poems used to be copied from the journals, magazines and newspapers where they were first published. They were circulated hand-written on pieces of papers or orally, as several of his devotees used to memorise his verses. Likewise several books were published about his poetry during his lifetime. Many unscrupulous authors used this as a pretext to publish large excerpts of his poems with little more than one or two lines of comments (Tanyol 1985: 187-189).<sup>5</sup> Yahya Kemal was unsettled by this form of intellectual theft, but stubbornly refused to publish his poems in book form, even though his financial conditions would have been met by various publishers (Tanyol 1985: 188). He was in need of the copyright money (Hisar 1959: 69), since he had no regular income outside his temporary appointments as ambassador<sup>6</sup> (Uysal 1959: 37). Kıbrıslı Şevket had even offered him the money to publish 15000 copies (Hisar 1959: 69, 70), which was an impressive quantity at the time.<sup>7</sup>

After his death, the *Yahya Kemal Institute* and the *Society of Admirers of Yahya Kemal* undertook the publication of his complete works, respecting the wishes of the poet who had organised his poems in collections, as he intended to publish them.

*Kendi Gök Kubbemiz* (Our Own Dome of Sky) was published in 1961. This collection consists of three parts. In the first part *Kendi Gök Kubbemiz*, Yahya Kemal reflects on the constitutive elements of Turkish national identity. The second part, *Yol Düşüncesi* (Thoughts about the Journey) is a poetical meditation about death, the

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<sup>4</sup>During his lifetime he published his poems in the main journals and newspapers of the time, such as *Yeni Mecmua* (The New Review) (9 poems published in 1918), *Edebi Mecmua* (The Literary Review, 1919), *Şair* (The Poet, 1919), *Büyük Mecmua* (The Great Review, 1919), *Nedim* (The Friend, 1919) and *Dergah* (The Lodge, 1921-22). His articles and essays were published in *Peyâm-ı Edebi* (Literary News), *İleri* (Forward), *Dergâh*, *Tevhid-i Efkâr* (The Unity of Ideas) and he was for some time leader-writer of *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* (National Sovereignty). After the establishment of the republic, his works appeared in the following journals and newspapers: *Foto-magazin*, *İnsan* (Human Being), *Akademi* (1940-42), *İstanbul* (1943), *Aile* (Family, 1947-48), *Salon* (1947-48), *Resimli Hayat* (Life in Pictures, 1952-53), *Hayat* (Life, 1953), *Akşam* (Evening), *Cumhuriyet* (Republic), *Hürriyet* (Liberty, 1956-1957).

<sup>5</sup>Ongun 1947 is a typical example. The proportion of pages of poetry to pages of comments is four to one. It is undeniable that Ongun was answering a need at the time. Altuncuoğlu 1958 is another striking example. Published shortly after the death of the poet, the book consists of several (undated) newspaper articles published about Yahya Kemal and of 24 poems.

<sup>6</sup>Though Yahya Kemal's family was a big land-owning family in the Balkans, they lost most of their lands after the Turco-Russian war (1877-78), the consequent loss of Bosnia and the independence of Serbia. The remaining lands owned by the family were lost after the First World War.

<sup>7</sup>In 1938 the novelist and essayist Peyami Safa (1899-1961) gave the following figures: Abdülhak Hamit's (1852-1937) play *Eşber*, published at 2000 copies, sold only 1500 copies in 14 years. Süleyman Nazif's poems written while he was exiled in Malta, *Malta Geceleri* (Maltese Nights) sold only 600 copies in 12 years despite its low price. Halide Edib's novel, a milestone of liberation war literature, *Vurun Kahpeye* (Strike the Harlot) sold only half of its 3000 copies in 10 years (Safa 1938: 169).

horizon as a metaphorical borderline and Epicureanism (rindlik). The third part *Vuslat* (The Union) is a collection of poems centred around the theme of love.

*Eski Şiirin Rüzgarıyla* (With the Breeze of Ancient Poetry) was published in 1962. It consists of 6 parts . The poetic genres chosen by the poet were those that prevailed in the sixteenth century *divân* tradition: *gazel* , *kaside* and *şarkı* . The language too was close to 16th century Ottoman Turkish. This approach was reminiscent of the works *Le Pèlerin Passionné* (The Passionate Pilgrim) by Jean Moréas<sup>8</sup> (1856-1910), a French poet Yahya Kemal admired much and *Le Martyre de Saint Antoine* (The Martyrdom of Saint Anthony) by the Italian writer Gabriele d'Annunzio<sup>9</sup> (1863-1938). Both works were written in medieval French.

The first part of *Eski Şiirin Rüzgarıyla* consists of a long poem "Selimnâme" and retraces Sultan Selim the Grim's (1512-1520) military expeditions in Iran and Egypt. The second part titled *Gazeller* consists of 39 *gazels* influenced by the themes of mystical (*tasavvuf*) poetry. The other parts of the book as well exemplified his mastery of the classical genres of Ottoman poetry and contributed to his being considered by many as one of the greatest Ottoman *divân* poets ever (Açıkgöz 1993:160).

His mastery of the classical genres was again obvious in two small volumes of quatrains (*rûbai*) published in 1963. The first one consisted of the meditative *Rûbailer* (Quatrains) and the second of Yahya Kemal's translation into Turkish of Omar Khayyam's *Rubayyât*. Finally, his unfinished poems were published in 1976.

The language reform caused a lot of harm to the reception of his poetry.<sup>10</sup> Indeed the rapid changes taking place in the language made much of his poetry hardly intelligible for readers with an average education. As early as 1950, the poet Talip Apaydın (b. 1926) expressed the estrangement of the average reader in the following words:

"He has a perfect mastery of the language. He plays with Turkish and produces beautiful sounds, that reflect the emotions of the previous generations. But one has to be honest. I live in a poor village in the middle of the Anatolian wasteland. I have worries regarding the country and regarding myself. We live in 1950. I read a

<sup>8</sup> Jean Moréas (1856-1910) was a founding member of the Symbolist movement whose manifesto he composed. He later founded the Roman school in 1891 and, throughout his later work, he remained attached to the Greco-Roman classical tradition.

<sup>9</sup>Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) was an Italian poet, novelist and playwright, whose use of language and style of writing earned him much criticism and marked a departure from nineteenth century Italian literary traditions.

<sup>10</sup>Yahya Kemal's attitude towards the language reform has not been researched. It is doubtful that he approved of it for he refused to become a member the Turkish Language Society. Before the language reform though, he expressed himself on various linguistic issues (Beyatlı 1971: 83-105). He stressed the necessity to reform and unify the orthography of Turkish words. Yet he also emphasised the need for continuity in language.

poem like "Hayal Şehir" with difficulty. It does not mean anything to me. I am not deceived by the melodiousness of the language" (Kurdakul 1994a:200).

### **Yahya Kemal and Turkish identity**

Yahya Kemal published an important essay entitled "Memleketten Bahseden Edebiyat" (Literature that Speaks of the Homeland) in the first issue of *Kültür Haftası* (The Culture Week, January 1936), a journal that was to become the meeting point of conservative literary circles in which he summarised his views on national literature. National literature ought to be a reflection of the national identity. Turkish literature had gone through a necessary phase of imitation of European models, but time had now come for Turkish writers to turn their attention to national realities. This was a move from the *school of imitation* to the homeland (Beyatlı 1971:139-144). His view of national identity, however, was not compatible with that of the nationalists since he truly believed in the continuity of the Ottoman elitist cultural heritage. Yet, Yahya Kemal was neither a politically nor a socially engaged poet. He was not actively advocating any political idea, though his poetry reflects his worldview. The same is true of the writings of his critics. He is seen by some as the last Ottoman poet and by others as the first really *European* poet, a distinction made less on literary assumptions than on political ones.

The debates surrounding his work epitomises the ambiguity of the poet. Though the last defendant of a literary tradition that was doomed to die out in republican times, he is seen as one of the great poets of the republican period. In its June 1950 issue, the left-leaning Kemalist poetry monthly *Kaynak* (The Source) published a survey on Yahya Kemal. Most of the participants condemned Yahya Kemal as a non-revolutionary, that is non-republican, poet but they admitted that he was a good poet indeed. Meanwhile, conservative critics like Nihat Sâmî Banarlı and Ahmet Kabaklı endorsed him as the great poet of the republic. It is obvious that the focus of the debate was not so much on the work of Yahya Kemal but rather on the nature of the Turkish state.

Yahya Kemal dealt with the issue of national identity in several of his essays, a concern that was also reflected in his poetry. Yahya Kemal argued that the settlement of Turkish tribes on Anatolian soil after the battle of Malazgirt in 1071 gave birth to a new race, a new culture and a new language - that of the Anatolian Turks. The idea was fashionable after the revolution and was corroborating the official ideology of the new Turkish state. It was an efficient antidote against pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism. Yahya Kemal appropriated Maurice Barrès's idea that "*the motherland was where one's martyrs lie*" (quoted in Tanpınar 1995:46)<sup>11</sup>, but he never made any claims for

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<sup>11</sup>I could not retrace the original quote in French.

territories outside the borders of today's Turkey. Barrès (1862-1923)<sup>12</sup>, the romantic socialist turned nationalist, had developed his nationalist theory after France's loss of the Alsace-Lorraine territory, which included his birthplace Charmes, to Prussia after the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. Yahya Kemal however, had no desires of revenge for the loss of Skopje, his native town. He did not believe in the existence of superior and inferior races or in the need to fight, in Charles Maurras<sup>13</sup> (1868-1952)'s words, *oriental and Semitic barbarians*, though he had had contacts in Paris with the neo-classicist ideas of the founder of the *Action Française*.<sup>14</sup>

In cultural matters however, Yahya Kemal's vision of nationalism differed with that of the new state, because he emphasised the Ottoman Islamic roots of Turkish national identity, whereas Mustafa Kemal's regime promulgated westernising and secular reforms in the political and cultural realms.<sup>15</sup> The alphabet-change (1928), the gradual turkification of the language (1930s), the closure of the *medreses* (1924) and the outlawing of Ottoman classical music are indicative of the deep changes that were transforming society.<sup>16</sup>

Religion was central in Yahya Kemal's nationalism because he believed that Islam was one of the founding stones of Turkish Anatolian identity, an idea that he probably borrowed from Ernest Renan (1823-1892), a French thinker who emphasised the role of Catholicism as a constitutive element of Frenchness. Renan discarded Catholic dogmas but believed that the Catholic religion was the most suitable for what he called the *French soul*. Likewise Yahya Kemal was not a practising Muslim, but in poems such as *Süleymaniye'de bir Bayram Sabahı* (A Festive Morning in Süleymaniye) he depicts the importance of religious festivals as expressions of Turkish national identity. Islamic critics stress that the narrator in the poem is not among the worshippers

<sup>12</sup>The impact of Maurice Barrès on French literature and on the cultural and political ideas of the time is discussed in Sternhell 1985.

<sup>13</sup>The most suitable introduction to Charles Maurras remains his essential works in four volumes, Maurras 1954.

<sup>14</sup>The above points to the wide range of often conflicting influences Yahya Kemal acknowledges. This eclecticism is typical for the Ottoman intellectuals, educated in the pre-republican period. The incompatible teachings of Maurras, Bergson and Albert Sorel were synthesised and merged in Yahya Kemal's articles and essays. In 1950, he acknowledged this eclecticism to Cahit Tanyol and explained that, during his years in Paris, he had never missed any political meeting in the *Quartier Latin*. He had listened to the socialist Jean Jaurès (1859-1914) and to the Russian anarchist Pyotr (Aleksyevich) Kropotkin (1842-1921) (Tanyol 1985:136-138). Yet at the same time he had adopted the neo-classicist stance of Jean Moréas and Charles Maurras. Yahya Kemal even wrote that for two years (1904-05), he had been an atheist, had read socialist and anarchist newspapers, and had been entranced when listening to the International. Yahya Kemal concludes that his revolutionary fever had lasted until 1905 (Kemal 1973: 102).

<sup>15</sup>The promulgation and the impact of the reforms are discussed in Landau 1984.

<sup>16</sup>Yahya Kemal did not express himself openly on these issues or at least this was not recorded. However it is striking that in the years the reforms were taking place he was always appointed to embassies of lesser importance for the Turkish Republic (Warsaw in 1926, Madrid in 1929, Lisbon in 1931).

but is only an observer. The parallelism with Marcel Proust (1871-1922) is interesting. Proust's vision of the world was, just like Yahya Kemal's, deeply influenced by Bergsonian concepts<sup>17</sup> and he too was conservative in matters of culture. In August 1904, the Jewish-born Marcel Proust reacted against the anti-clerical measures taken by the French government and called for the restoration of traditional Catholic ceremonies that were of historical, social, aesthetic and musical value, and were as such expressions of French identity.

Yahya Kemal believed in the necessary continuity between the new Turkish state and the Ottoman empire. For Yahya Kemal, the nation was more than a mere geographical place, it was a consciousness and history was the memory of the nation (Tanyol 1985: 67). Hence Ottoman culture, product of that history, could not be denied. Yahya Kemal's conception of history was conventional and remained mainly restricted to military history, a chronicle of victories and defeats, of conquests and territory losses.

It was this continuity that Mustafa Kemal's reforms aimed at breaking. Yet Yahya Kemal was not disturbed by the political repression that forced leading Islamists, like Mehmet Akif, into exile. His advocacy of cultural Ottomanness remained restrained to his poetry and occasional articles that were never written with a militant tone.

### **Yahya Kemal Beyatlı and the theme of love**

Love and poetry were linked in the works of Yahya Kemal Beyatlı straight from the beginning. Yahya Kemal himself remarked that had it not been for love, he may never have become a poet (Uyguner 1992: 35). As a 12 year old, he wrote a poem in the form of the folk songs of his native Skopje for Redife Hanım, the Venus of Skopje (Uyguner 1992: 36), whom he had caught sight of during a circumcision celebration. Three years later, his secret love for Redife Hanım was the inspiration for another poem. He wrote it using the *aruz*, the metrical prosody of the classical *divân* tradition and not the *hece* syllabic meter of folk poetry. Rather oddly, he decided to show this new attempt to her husband, Şeyh Sadettin Efendi, who was the head of the Rûfâî mystical order in Skopje. Sadettin Efendi was renowned for his literary talent and he accepted to read the poem and to correct the metrical mistakes of the apprentice poet. The story goes that it is with the help of his teacher and rival, that Yahya Kemal fully grasped the subtleties of the *aruz* (Uyguner 1992: 36).

Except for a *muhammes*, a five-line stanza commemorating the ascendance to the throne of Abdülhamit II (published in the newspaper *İrtika* (Advancement, 1 September 1902)), Yahya Kemal's first published verses such as "Hatıra"

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<sup>17</sup>On the influence of Henri Bergson's works on French literature see Pilkington 1976. The relationship between Bergson's and Proust's works is discussed in Maxwell 1999.

(Remembrance) or "Mehlika Sultan" were melancholic variations on the theme of love. However he stressed that though he wrote about love memories, *true poetry in itself was not only the product of powerful emotions* (Uyguner 1992:35). There are contradictory opinions among critics regarding the auto-biographical input in Yahya Kemal's love poetry. Hüseyin Sesli believes that Yahya Kemal's love poems were based on experiences (Sesli 1963: 52), whereas Cemil Sena Ongun claims in a booklet, published in 1949, that Yahya Kemal's love lyrics

"were not written by a sentimental man, a man who has tasted the depth of love and has had his share of lovers. They were composed thinking about other people's experiences in order to please them. This is why the poems have an artificial and unnatural appearance" (Ongun 1949: 41).

Both views can be defended, though never completely convincingly in view of the available material. We will probably never know whether the moments related in those poems were inspired by experiences or were just the products of the poet's imagination. It should be said however that neither Sesli when writing his thesis, nor Ongun in 1949 had at their disposal the materials (that is mainly letters, personal belongings and more importantly tongues that became untied) that later researchers such as Tanyol, Banarlı or more recently Ayvazoğlu were going to have. Beşir Ayvazoğlu, a literary columnist in the conservative *Zaman* (The Time) newspaper, claims that all of Yahya Kemal's love poems were dedicated to Celile Hanım, his great love who was also the mother of Nazım Hikmet, the future *enfant terrible* of Turkish poetry (Ayvazoğlu 1996:128). Yet, the biographical identity of the beloved remains a mystery. The poet kept his sentimental life quite to himself and did not give biographical information regarding whom the poems were written for or about. Moreover, due to the difficulty in dating Yahya Kemal's poems, it would be impossible to assign particular poems to particular phases or women in his life, as is the case of the love poems of Nazım Hikmet.

Women who made a great impact in his emotional life were few. Beside his mother, who suffered as much as he did from his father's drunken outbursts, and the above mentioned Venus of Skopje, who died at childbirth, Yahya Kemal mentions few women in his personal writings. Although he spent several years abroad and wrote poems which praised the grace of Andalusian dancers ("Endülüs'te Raks"/ Dance in Andalusia) or the charms of Slavonic refugees ("Karnaval ve Dönüş"/ The Carnival and The return), he seems to have had no long lasting or influential sentimental relationship in Europe.

The great love of his life was Celile Hanım, Nazım Hikmet's mother. The relationship had gone so far that he was about to marry her in 1916, four years after his return from Paris. Celile Hanım signed her letters to him by *Karıcığım* (your dear wife).

The poet renounced the marriage at the last minute. Although he claimed that he was neither materially nor spiritually ready for marital life, it is generally believed that Yahya Kemal was distressed by the fact that Celile, a woman of the world, a talented painter and a regular of literary salons was the talk of the town. Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu confirmed that Yahya Kemal was of an extremely jealous nature and that he listened too much to various rumours about her (Ayvazoğlu 1995:126). Moreover, Celile's son Nazım Hikmet was opposed to their relationship and is said to have threatened Yahya Kemal with the words: "You will not be allowed to come back as my father to the house where you entered as my tutor" (Ayvazoğlu 1995:127). Yahya Kemal's attachment to Hikmet's mother is corroborated by Melek Celâl, another woman who had a close relationship with the poet. Not without a certain disappointment, Melek Celâl said that Yahya Kemal had never been able to forget Celile. Quite revealingly, Yahya Kemal never managed to finish *Atik Valide* (The Ancient *Valide* District), the poem he wanted to dedicate to Melek Celâl.

Though this relationship may not have had any direct impact on Yahya Kemal's poetry, there is more than circumstantial evidence to support the claim that Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, his friend and student, took Yahya Kemal and Melek Celâl's relationship as an inspirational source for his masterwork, the novel *Huzur* (Peace of Mind), published in 1949. Melek Celâl was a historian of art and together with Yahya Kemal, she enjoyed long walks visiting the high places of Ottoman culture in Istanbul. Just as Mümtaz and Nuran in *Huzur*, the poet and the art historian's friendship grew in intensity in parallel to their passion for Istanbul's Ottoman past.

The whole mystery of Yahya Kemal's sentimental life is well illustrated by an envelope containing two dried carnation petals found among his belongings. The note on the envelope read: "These were taken from the flower on the bosom of a beloved woman I bode farewell to at 10.00 p.m. on the 19th August 1940 at Sirkeci train station. I will forever keep and cherish these two petals she gave me" (Banarlı 1984: 69). No need to say that the identity of this woman remains a mystery.

In his poems however the beloved is usually called "cânân" and is mostly addressed to as "sen", the familiar "you". "Cânân" is a Persian word meaning *beloved*. The Ottoman alphabet having no capital letters, it was possible for the poet to play on the ambiguity between Cânân, the first name and cânân, the common noun. However, after the language reform the poet opted for cânân, the beloved. Nevertheless several critics and biographers of the poet seem not to have been convinced as they spelt cânân with a capital C.

The corpus of poems dealing with the love theme will be discussed under four headings, exploring four aspects that underline the break with *divân* and post-*Tanzimat* conventions. Under the first heading "The geography of love: People and places in

Istanbul", the settings of the poems in Ottoman Istanbul are explored with a particular focus on Yahya Kemal's attitude towards the working class and his *orientalisation* of Ottoman Istanbul. In "The narrator", the focus is on the personality of the narrator. "Unveiling the beloved" discusses both the "real" and the metaphorical identity of the beloved. "Seasons and times of love" discusses the seasonal setting of the poems and the use of the tenses. The similarity of Yahya Kemal's concept of continuity to Henri Bergson's concept of duration is stressed.

### **The geography of love: Places and people in Istanbul**

Yahya Kemal's love poetry is usually set in Istanbul. Although the poet spent several years abroad, first as a student in Paris (1903-1912) and later on several occasions as an ambassador of the Turkish republic, places and people outside the Ottoman realms are scarcely mentioned in his poetry.<sup>18</sup> The clear geographic setting of the theme of love is a break with the conventional approach to the theme of love in a stylised context of the *divân* and the Ottoman *Parnassian* traditions. Istanbul was central in the life and the poetry of Yahya Kemal. Even though much has been written on this particular subject, contemporary critics cannot avoid dealing with the particular relationship existing between the poet and the *polis*.<sup>19</sup>

All the places mentioned in poems dealing with the theme of love are also in greater Istanbul. They are usually places that have a deep Ottoman identity and are associated with values and a life-style that the new republican regime rejected. Above all, they are not only places where love occurred, they are also places that were deeply loved by the poet himself. The poet's love for his cherished Istanbul was expressed in the opening couplet of the poem "Bir Başka Tepeden" (From Another Hill):

Sana dün bir tepeden baktım azîz İstanbul!	I looked at you from a hill dear Istanbul!
Görmedim gezmediğim, sevmediğim hiç bir yer.	I did not see a place that I had not visited or [loved.

<sup>18</sup> Although most of Yahya Kemal's poetry, relevant to this research, is set in greater Istanbul, there are two notable exceptions: the almost mythical "Endülüs'te Raks" (Dance in Andalusia) and the less known "Sicilya Kızları" (Sicilian Girls). "Endülüs'te Raks" was written by the poet when he was ambassador in Madrid (1929-1932). The poem is about a female Flamenco dancer whose movements the poet tries to render in verse. It is arguably Yahya Kemal's most sensual poem. Nihad Sâmî Banarlı remarks that he saw that the poet had written the words "If I return to Istanbul, I will stay forever." on one of the early drafts of the poem, (YKEM 1968:44) "Karnaval ve Dönüş" (The Carnival and the Return) and "Madrid'de Kahvehâne" (The Coffee-house in Madrid) ought to be added to the two poems mentioned above. "Karnaval ve Dönüş", about the carnival in Nice, and "Madrid'de Kahvehâne" share a common craving for Istanbul that links them to the above sentence scribbled on the draft of the Andalusian poem.

<sup>19</sup> A bibliography of essays and articles which deal with the poet's relationship to Istanbul is included in Şenler 1997:178-181.

Yahya Kemal's Istanbul can be divided into four parts: the Princes' Islands, Ottoman Islamic Istanbul, *Rum* Istanbul and finally proletarian Istanbul, which is only occasionally evoked in his works.

In private, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı used to call the four songs, which are part of the collection *Eski Şiirin Rüzgarıyla* and are set on the Princes' Islands, "*songs of the divine islands*" (Hisar 1959:53). Though Hisar claims that they were written in 1913 (Hisar 1959:53), they are usually recorded as written in 1918 (Ongun 1947: 38, 39). They expressed the poet's longing for a past love relationship but also for the setting of the relationships. The villages of these islands were mostly inhabited by *Rums*, Greeks living in the Ottoman realms. The mild climate of *Büyük Ada*, the largest of the islands, started to attract the English, the French and Italians who settled there from the 18th century onwards. In the nineteenth century the island became a fashionable resort for rich Jewish and Armenian families as well as for the Ottoman ruling class and intellectuals. The settling of Muslims was symbolised by the building of the Hamidiye mosque, commissioned by Sultan Abdülhamit II. In the poem "Eski Mektup" (An Old Letter) too, part of his other collection *Kendi Gök Kubbemizden* the narrator receives a perfumed letter from the Islands and he points to the beginning of a passionate and tormented love relationship.

Beside the cosmopolitan islands, Yahya Kemal mentions several other places that are well rooted in the Ottoman-Islamic tradition. Bebek is mentioned in "Ses" (Sound), Çamlıca in "İstanbul'un O Yerleri" (Those Places in Istanbul) and in "Karnaval ve Dönüş" and other places such as Kandilli, Göksu and Kanlıca share with the Islands the particularity of being places of sojourn for the entourage of the Sultan and sometimes the Sultan himself. From the 18th century onwards Bebek, on the European shore of Istanbul became a retreat in vogue for the imperial family and their suite. The Ottomanness of the place is emphasised by a 1725 mosque commissioned by Ahmet III's *sadrızam* Damat İbrahim Paşa. In the poem "Ses", the recollection of a past and uneasy love relationship starts with an evocation of Bebek:

Mevsim mütehayyil, vakit akşamdı Bebek'te. The season was fanciful, it was evening time in Bebek

From the reign of Murat IV onwards Çamlıca became an increasingly popular resort for the Ottoman ruling class. In the nineteenth century, it became a much favoured picnic destination for rich Ottoman youths, where they could catch precious glimpses of members of the opposite sex. These excursions are well documented in the novels of the late nineteenth century, where authors such as Namık Kemal would criticise with revolutionary verve the mindless flirting, that they considered so harmful to the social fabric. Çamlıca was a place regularly haunted by the lovers in Yahya Kemal's poetry:

Cânanla çıktığım tepeler... Başta Çamlıca  
 ("İstanbul'un o yerleri")

Those hills I climbed with the beloved... Above all  
 [Çamlıca.

Kandilli, Göksu and Kanlıca became fashionable places of sojourn for the Sultan, his family and his entourage and, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, for the emerging Ottoman bourgeoisie.

Occasionally the poet mentions places in Istanbul that were primarily Rum settlements and became increasingly fashionable for the westernising Ottoman elite in the nineteenth century, such as Erenköy ("Erenköyü'nde Bahar" (Spring in Erenköy) and "Karnaval ve Dönüş") and Moda ("Moda'da Mayıs" (May in Moda):

İstanbul'un öyledir bahârı;  
 Bir aşk oluverdi âşinalık...  
 Aylarca hayâl içinde kaldık;  
 Zannımca Erenköyü'nde artık  
 Görmez felek öyle bir bahârı.

The spring is like this in Istanbul...  
 Intimacy suddenly becomes love...  
 For months we lived in an illusion.  
 I do not think that in Erenköy,  
 There will be such a spring ever again.

("Erenköyü'nde Bahar")

The choice of Erenköy and Moda as settings for poems that deal with the theme of love is somehow unexpected. In most of his essays and articles, Yahya Kemal expressed his distress and anger at the fading away of the Ottoman *art de vivre* and the generalisation of the *alafranga* lifestyle. In an essay published in the newspaper *Tevhîd-i Efkâr* (23 May 1922), the poet wrote:

"Farewell to all these beautiful things. The European way of life has changed us. We now look like our masters from tip to toe. We cut our hairs like them, we shave like them, we eat like them, we drink like them, we lie down like them. We even like to stand on our feet like them and we sit down very little.

Since the day we fancied their lifestyle, their clothes and their eating habits, the Turkish market place has collapsed. The Turkish way of life has vanished. We look at all these beautiful objects on our walls or tables and see them as charming but obsolete remnants of the past" (Beyatlı 1990: 142, 143).

Echoing these lines from the essay "Türk Evi" (The Turkish Home), the poet, in another article "Ezan'sız Semtler" (Neighbourhoods without Calls to Prayer), questioned the Turkishness of neighbourhoods such as Kadıköy, Şişli and Moda because "in those districts neither can minarets been seen, nor can the call to prayer be heard. The days of *Ramazan* and of *Kandil* cannot be felt" (Beyatlı 1992: 121). In this article published in 1922, Yahya Kemal lamented the fact that Turkish Muslim families chose to settle in those quarters and he wondered whether children growing up in such a *foreign* environment would be able to grasp their Turkish Muslim identity.

However in "Başka bir Tepeden", the poet said that there were no places he had not loved in Istanbul. This point is confirmed by Nihad Sami Banarlı in, what could be called, a literary expounding of the poem "Erenköyü'nde Bahar":

"Can Çamlıca, the Bosphorus, Sarıyer, Beykoz, Bebek and Kanlıca be suitable settings for love stories during springtime in Istanbul? The answer to this question can only be given by those gentle souls who meet one another in the spring of Istanbul. Every part of Istanbul is beautiful and can be the setting, even the cause of great love stories" (Banarlı 1997: 106).

However it seems that the poet deliberately ignored certain parts of Istanbul as settings for the love theme. Whether Turkish and Islamic or cosmopolitan, the settings of the love-relationship in his poetry are always associated, according to the critics of the *ancien régime*, with the idleness of the Ottoman ruling class. The geography of his love poetry does not include emerging working class districts such as Kasımpaşa, Zeytinburnu, Kazlıçeşme, Beykoz or Yedikule.<sup>20</sup> Yahya Kemal did not disregard class issues altogether and wrote in the poem "Vuslat" (The Union) that the joy felt by two uniting lovers was equally experienced by the rich and the poor. Equality, which did not exist in society, existed in love. This is an exceptional verse, however, and the working class is usually ignored in his verses. Sermet Sâmî Uysal reports that Yahya Kemal branded all the proponents of social realism as "leftists" and that he was estranged by the world-wide democratisation of themes in literature (Uysal 1959: 170).

In his articles on Istanbul however, the poet acknowledged the existence of ordinary people and the role they played in giving a particular identity to the Ottoman capital. In his book about the cultural and literary views of Yahya Kemal, Yaşar Şenler quotes the poet emphasising the important contribution made by immigrants to Istanbul. This is not surprising because Yahya Kemal Beyatlı too was an immigrant from the Balkans:

"While I was trying to fully grasp the meaning of Istanbul, I suddenly realised that Istanbul had not only been built by the Sultans and the people of Istanbul. From the four corners of the country, from Konya, from Bursa, from Edirne, from Sivas, from Tokat, from Erzurum, from the Hidjaz, from Baghdad and from lands of the Maghreb such as Tunisia, Libya and Algeria, Turkish Muslims had come and gone and had sometimes settled in Istanbul. They came and brought their women and their elders, their traditional crafts, their music, their folk poetry and their learned poetry, their city planning, their exterior and interior architectural traditions. They built this city with every corner of the country, every period of history, with the memories and their crafts inherited from past centuries" (Şenler 1997: 178, 179).

Yahya Kemal does not depict ordinary people with such creative and active characteristics in his poems. In "Koca Mustâpaşa", Yahya Kemal writes about the

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<sup>20</sup> The emergence of the working class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic is discussed in Quataert & Zürcher 1995.

supposed passivity and the fatalism of the working class and he claims that the destitute and the dispossessed enjoy their grief:

Koca Mustâpaşa. Ücrâ ve fakîr İstanbul! Tâ fetihten beri mü'min, mütevekkil, yoksul, Hüznü bir zevk edinenler yaşıyorlar burada.	Koca Mustâpaşa. Remote and miserable İstanbul! Since the conquest you have been faithful, resigned [and poor. Those who enjoy sadness live here..
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Nadir Nadi (1908-1991), the Kemalist author, accused Yahya Kemal of advocating the social status quo (Nadi 1991: 226, 27) and indeed Yahya Kemal's lack of concern for social issues was always isolated for reproach. Even Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar explores this issue and points to the following contradiction in Mümtaz, the main character of *Huzur*:

"He loved Üsküdar, but the people who lived there were poor and Üsküdar itself had a neglected appearance. Mümtaz was able to live in this misery because Üsküdar reminded him of past melodies. But where was life, where was the invitation to live? To do something, to cure the ill, to find jobs for the unemployed, to make these sad faces smile, to transform these remnants of the past?" (Tanpınar 1996: 206)

These lines may very well have been a veiled criticism of the poet's attitude, at a time where a growing number of literati dealt with the hardships of peasants in Anatolia and with the exploitative nature of big landowners and industrial barons. Reşat Nuri (Güntekin), Halide Edip (Adivar) and Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu) among others, dealt with the almost feudal conditions in the Anatolian heartland. In poetry, the Syllabists had turned their attention towards the hardships of the peasants. The emerging socialist literary movement, whose most accomplished representatives were to be Nazım Hikmet (poetry), Orhan Kemal (novel) and Sabahattin Ali (short-story) wrote about the predicament of the working-class in Istanbul and in urban centres in Anatolia.

Cahit Tanyol, a great admirer of Yahya Kemal and a leading Marxist critic, is at pains to show some affinity that the poet may have had with egalitarian ideals. In an essay entitled "Yahya Kemal and Exploitation" he emphasises that he never heard Yahya Kemal speaking out against Marxism. The poet is reported saying that "*the West lost the most virtuous ideas to the Soviet Union*" (Tanyol 1985: 187). It is remarkable that only the first paragraph of the essay is dedicated to Yahya Kemal's thoughts about economic exploitation and that the remaining part of the essay is about the exploitation of Yahya Kemal's unpublished works by unscrupulous writers.

The places and people in Yahya Kemal's love verses are those of an imagined Ottoman Istanbul, the very city that attracted the attention of foreign travellers

throughout the centuries. Yahya Kemal's Istanbul was the product of the naturalising of orientalist assumptions and stereotypes. Beşir Ayvazoğlu accuses Yahya Kemal of having orientalised the social reality of Istanbul (Ayvazoğlu 1996: 41). He draws an interesting parallel to Pierre Loti (1850-1923), the French novelist and seafarer who became famous in Turkey with his orientalist novel "Aziyadé" (1879). Just like Pierre Loti, Yahya Kemal went on a quest of what he considered to be authentic in Ottoman Istanbul. It was a romantic and exotic vision, which, like other orientalist texts, converted, in Edward Said's terms, *instances of a civilisation into ideal bearers of its values, ideas and positions* (Said 1991:252). At every occasion, Yahya Kemal emphasised that Pierre Loti was no foreigner and that indeed he was truly Turkish. Tanpınar writes that Yahya Kemal felt himself closer to Henri de Régnier (1864-1936), Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) and Pierre Loti, authors and poets Yahya Kemal deemed to have understood and been sympathetic to the East, than to the members of the westernising *Edebiyat-ı Cedîde* movement (Tanpınar 1995:51). Nazım Hikmet attacked this romantic and mystical vision of the East and proposed an alternative vision in his poem "Şark-Garp" (East-West), which he dedicated to Pierre Loti. But the "frenk şairi", the *Frank* poet, mentioned in the poem could very well have been Yahya Kemal Beyatlı. Nazım Hikmet was not the only one who doubted the sincerity of those orientalist poets and artists that most of the literary salons celebrated in Istanbul. Years before him, İsak Ferera Efendi (1883-1933), an Ottoman Jewish poet, criticised Pierre Loti and pointed to the latent anti-Semitism in some of the French writer's remarks (Ferera 1324AH:22). Ahmet Haşım too approached Pierre Loti's work and what it represented in a much more critical way. In a humorous essay published in *Yeni Mecmua* (1 May 1923) entitled "Gurabahâne-i Laklâkân" (The Shelter of the Storks), Ahmet Haşım questioned the real aims of orientalist writers and warned against the excessive praise their works were paid in Turkey (Haşım 1991:7-14).

The fact that the republican intellectual has an orientalist conception of the Ottoman cultural past has recently started to be acknowledged<sup>21</sup>, but Yahya Kemal's orientalism, or indeed the orientalism of any republican poet has not yet been the subject of a detailed study, although some authors like Beşir Ayvazoğlu have pointed to this issue. Attilâ İlhan, who focuses in his essays on the flawed perception Turkish

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<sup>21</sup>In recent years Orientalism and Occidentalism have become new areas of research in Turkey (Keyman 1996, Parlakışık 1995, Sibai 1995, Topçuoğlu 1996). Several publications dealing with the issue also discuss the stance defended by Hilmi Yavuz that as a result of almost two centuries of westernisation, the Turkish intelligentsia has ended up orientalising Ottoman history. Indicative of this new trend is the fact that there are not less than three different translations of Edward Said's groundbreaking work *Orientalism* currently available in Istanbul bookshops. It is revealing of the current climate, that one of them is published by a nationalist editor (Timaş), the other by an Islamist (İrfan) and the most recent one by a centre-left publisher (Metis).

intellectuals have of their own culture, shares Ayvazoğlu's view and calls Yahya Kemal an *alaturka* poet (İlhan 1950: 141). The choice of the word is very revealing, since the term *alaturka* signifies a caricatured Ottoman way of life. Hilmi Yavuz, however, disagrees with the latter and, in an article on Yahya Kemal's deism, claims that Yahya Kemal's celebration of Ottoman architecture, music and history was an efficient antidote against the orientalist sophistries that belittled Islam and Ottoman society (Yavuz 1998:126).

It is certain that Yahya Kemal's quest was different from the quests of the orientalist artists. For the latter Istanbul and Ottomanness, what some western travellers called the *Orient*, was a refuge from western reality. Yahya Kemal, however, was looking for components of Turkish identity in Ottoman Istanbul (Tanpınar 1995:52). Nonetheless, his political passivity and the lack of active engagement for his cultural and political ideal makes us wonder whether he too did not simply settle for a world that existed only in his imagination.

Love, in his works, is always evoked in settings that are associated with the Ottoman ruling class. It is an Istanbul that may have attracted foreign travellers and may have been enjoyed by them and those who ruled the empire but it is nevertheless an Istanbul that remained unknown to the huge majority of the population. It was this very Istanbul that the Kemalist revolution intended to deeply transform.

### **The narrator**

In his study of Yahya Kemal Beyatlı's poetical works, the critic Şükran Kurdakul emphasises the egocentric nature of much of Yahya Kemal's poetry. When not dealing with historical events, his poems are usually centred around a sentimental narrator who addresses the universe or the beloved (Kurdakul 1994: 187-200). This is also the case in the poems that deal with the theme of love. The melancholy of the narrator evokes *divân* conventions.

There are three exceptions. The poems "Nazar" (The Evil Eye) and "Mehlika Sultan" (1919) were written in the style of folk tales and one poem "Vuslat" (The Union) consists of general observations on the felicity and ephemerality of the union of two lovers. The first two poems show that Yahya Kemal was not insensitive to Ziya Gökalp's call to Turkish writers to study folk literature and he acknowledged the importance of folk literature. In these two poems, the narrator can be considered a traditional storyteller. Though written in the metrical prosody of the *divân* tradition, the language used in the poems is standard Istanbul Turkish, without any Persian or Arabic grammatical constructs. In "Mehlika Sultan", the narrator intervenes in the flow of the story in order to make comments:

Bu emel gurbetinin yoktur ucu;                      Exiles of hope have no end.

Dâimâ yollar uzar, kalp üzülür;	Roads become longer and longer, and the heart breaks;
Ömrü oldukça yürür her yolcu,	Every traveller walks on all along his life.
Varmadan menzile bir yerde ölür.	And dies somewhere without reaching his destination.

Though "Vuslat" is of a different nature altogether, in this poem too the narrator shares his insights on love, life and death with the reader. In the three cases the narrator is pessimistic and conscious that everything comes to an end. In "Nazar", Leyla dies after being ravished by the moon, her deadly lover. The seven lovers of "Mehlika Sultan" disappear in a universe of illusion without ever meeting their beloved. In "Vuslat", the narrator describes his fear of the end of the "union":

Bir ân uyanırlarsa leziz uykularından	If they wake up from their sweet sleep for a moment
Baştan başa, her yer kesilir kapkara zindan.	From end to end, everything becomes as dark as
Bir faciâdır böyle bir âlemde uyanmak,	[a dungeon .
Günden güne hicranla bunalmış gibi yanmak.	It is a tragedy to wake up in such a world,
	To burn every day as if depressed by separation.

The melancholic and disillusioned mood of the narrator is also expressed in self-centred poems. In the poem "Özleyen" (Longing), the narrator mourns for the days gone by ("*Sen neredesin, ey sevgili, yaz günleri nerde!*"; Where are you, my love, and where are the summer days!) and in "Erenköyü'nde Bahar" he claims that the beauty of the days of togetherness with the beloved cannot be renewed:

Aylarca hayâl içinde kaldık	For months we lived in an illusion
Zannımca Erenköyü'nde artık	I do not think that in Erenköy
Görmez felek öyle bir baharı.	There will be such a spring ever again.

The narrator in Yahya Kemal's poetry shares similarities with the persona in *divân* poetry. Like him, he is disillusioned and unhappy with the present state. Yet the break with the classical tradition becomes obvious when we study the object of his dissatisfaction. The narrator now no longer craves for a future *visâl*, but he regrets the passing of it. Usually, the regrets for the end of the relationship are not accompanied by any bitterness directed towards the beloved, although in the poem "Deniz" (The Sea), the narrator contemplates suicide, calls the beloved a corpse and enjoins himself to get rid of her.

In "Ses" too, the narrator deals with the uneasiness that he felt at the end of the relationship. In the opening couplet of the poem, the narrator describes with relief that he reached a certain peace of mind ("*Günlerce ne gördüm, ne de kimseye sordum; /"Yârab! Hele kalp ağrılarım durdu." diyordum.*"; Neither had I seen her for days nor had I asked about her./Oh Lord, I thought that my heartache had finally ended), but in the last sextet of the poem, inspired by the spectacle of Istanbul, he remembers her and feels as if he wore a shirt of fire. Istanbul and love are so closely interwoven, that the mere mention of the city leads to reminiscences of the past relationship. Remembrance is both joy and a shirt of fire for the abandoned lover. The landscapes of Istanbul are

impregnated with the atmosphere of their relationship, as in the poem "Aşk Hikâyesi" (Love Story):

Bir taraftan Yakacık, mor dağlar  
Bir taraftan da, deniz, şûh adalar  
O gün ömrümde kader  
Geçecek aşkı resimleştirmiş  
Bu güzel çerçevede.

On one side Yakacık, purple mountains  
On the other, the sea and the lively islands  
On that day fate  
Drew a picture of coming love  
In this beautiful frame.

The narrator is in an ambiguous situation. He takes refuge from reality in the landscapes that evoke a happier time, yet the same landscapes remind him of the changes that have taken place and of the harshness of the present day:

Senden boşalan bağıma göz yaşları dolmuş!  
Gördüm ki yazın bastığımız otları solmuş.  
Son demde bu mevsim gibi benzim de kül olmuş.  
Geçtim yine dün eski hazan bahçelerinden.

My heart that separated from you filled with  
[tears.

I saw that the grass we once walked on  
[withered.

My face has become ash-grey like this dying  
[season.

Yesterday I passed again through those old  
[autumn gardens.

(Şarkı I)

In poems where he describes his state of mind after the end of the love-relationship ("Ses" (The Voice), "Şarkı III", "Şarkı IV ", "Özleyen" (Missing), the narrator is on his own. In the two latter poems, the narrator is alone by his own decision. In "Özleyen", he does not join fellow travellers who return to the village and remains alone on a hill. In "Şarkı IV", he describes himself on a rowboat passing outside the villa of the beloved. He hears laughter and music emerging from behind the walls of the house. His solitude and longing for the beloved is in contrast with the sounds of joy and music that can be heard from the house of his beloved.

In verses describing the love relationship too, outsiders are scarcely mentioned. The narrator and his beloved are usually isolated from the rest of the world. The narrator, being separated from his beloved, is unable to become part of the society he lives in. His friends, family or occupations are never mentioned.

There are two occurrences that point to the fact that the narrator might be a poet or at least somebody who is sensitive to the poetry of rare moments. The beloved is described as a woman who brought poetry to mind in "Erenköyü'nde Bahar" and as someone who transformed delight into moments, colours and poetry in "Geçmiş Yaz" (Last summer).

The narrator is a sensual aesthete inspired by the scent of the hairs of the beloved ("Vuslat"), the perfume emerging from a letter of the loved one ("Eski Mektup"), the life giving salt on the lips of the beloved ("Vuslat") and the spectacle of nature ("Viranbağ", "Özleyen" and others). Sounds and melodies are of great importance for him. Four of the poems about the theme of love are titled "Şarkı" (song)

and he is sensitive to the melody of the voice of the beloved ("Bir Tepeden"/ From a Hill).

The narrator always has to refer to dreams, illusions, apparitions and other mental images whenever he tries to describe blissful moments spent with the loved one, which is a device that reminds of *divân* literature. A summer spent with the beloved is a "summer like a dream" ("Geçmiş Yaz"/ Last Summer). The same simile is again used in "Bir Tepeden", in order to describe the setting of the sun. The time of love is a time when the lovers live in an illusion ("Erenköyü'nde Bahar"). The narrator does not claim that love is not real though. Love is described as if it were a dream, because his misery at the present time deprives him of the necessary vocabulary to depict it in the real world, which is a world of unbearable darkness ("Vuslat"). The word *rü'yâ* (dream) appears in not less than 21 poems of the collection *Kendi Gök Kubbemiz* (Kurdakul 1994a: 193). Unlike the poetry of Ahmet Haşim in which the narrator chants an imaginary lover and an imaginary relationship ("Hayâl-i Aşkım"/ The Illusion of My Love), the narrator in Yahya Kemal talks about a reality that now seems to have been of a dreamlike character.

The absence of the real world in the narrator's reminiscences and the continuous reference to mental images in order to describe past moments of joy remind of the fate of the seven lovers in "Mehlika Sultan". They went on a quest for the beautiful and unreal Mehlika who had started to haunt their dreams. At the end of their quest, a universe of illusion appeared and all of them decided to migrate to it:

Su çekilmiş gibi, rüya oldu!  
Erdiler yolculuğun son demine;  
Bir hayâl alemleri peydâ oldu,  
Göçtüler hep o hayâl âlemine.

The water receded and all became a dream!  
They had finally reached the end of the journey.  
A world of illusions appeared,  
And all of them migrated to this imaginary universe.

Mehlika Sultan'a âşık yedi genç,  
Seneler geçti, henüz gelmediler;  
Mehlika Sultan'a âşık yedi genç  
Oradan gelmeyecekmiş dediler!

Seven young men in love with Mehlika Sultan,  
Years went by, they did not return;  
Seven young men in love with Mehlika Sultan,  
Some said that they would not come back.

The seven young men disappeared and never came back to their hometown, to the realities of everyday life. Written in 1908, though only published in 1919 (Sesli 1963: 62) this poem indicates the general direction Yahya Kemal's verses would take throughout his literary career. Whether the world was on fire or his country in turmoil, the narrator in Yahya Kemal's love lyrics longed for a past that was full of fancy. Just like the seven, he too chose to migrate and take shelter away from contemporary reality.

### The beloved

The beloved in the poetry of Yahya Kemal is not an ordinary woman. Though Yahya Kemal had written an article for the newspaper *Tevhîd-i Efkâr* in 1922, in which he claimed that the term *housewife* was "the most prestigious attribute that could be ascribed to a woman" (Beyatlı 1990: 141), the beloved in his poetry does not appear to be a woman who cares for her family, who manages a household or does housework. It is only with the realism of *Bizarre* and socialist movements that the everyday occupations of ordinary people were to find their way into poetry. Yahya Kemal did not subscribe to the tenets of the realist revolution. The depiction of the love relationship in the context of Istanbul districts that were associated with the Ottoman ruling class is also indicative of the social standing of the beloved. Several verses show that the beloved grew up and lived in a villa on the shores of the Bosphorus, a privilege of the happy few.

Dün kahkalar yükseliyorken evinizden	While laughter emerged from your house,
Bendim geçen, ey sevgili, sandalla denizden	[yesterday
("Şarkı IV")	It was me, oh my beloved, who was passing on a
	[rowboat by the sea

She used to be lulled into sleep by the far away voices of fishermen:

Zambak gibi en güzel çağında	Like a lily, in her most beautiful age
serpildi, deniz nefesleriyle;	She grew with the breath of the sea;
Sâf uykusunun salıncağında	On the swing of innocent sleep
sallandı balıkçı sesleriyle.	She was rocked with the voices of fishermen.
("Mihriyâr")	

The fact that the beloved lives on the shores of the Bosphorus indicates a probable freedom of economic restraint which allows her to wander around freely. She has a great freedom of movement and is able to spend a lot of time with the narrator. They share a life ("İstanbul'un o Yerleri") (*Cânanla gezdiğim kıyılar, sürdüğüm hayat*; The shores I visited with the beloved, the life I led with her.). The beloved reciprocates the feelings of the narrator. She writes to him ("Eski Mektup") and is not afraid of showing her feelings towards him in public, even if only by smiling from a train window ("Aşk Hikâyesi"). The poem "Eski Mektup" is again indicative of the beloved's social standing, because she writes to the narrator from the Islands, a summer resort for rich Istanbul families. She is also able to have great parties at home ("Şarkı IV"). She drinks wine, at least when she is with her lover, like in the poem "Telâki" (The Meeting) and has a provocative attitude, having a red rose in her mouth:

Bir kanlı gül ağzında ve mey kâsesi elde,	A red rose in her mouth and a cup of wine in her hand
Bir sofrada içtik, ikimiz aynı emelde.	We drank at the same table sharing the same desire.

These verses are reminiscent of Yahya Kemal's Andalusian poem "Endülüs'te Raks", where the narrator describes his fascination for the sensuality of the movements of a Flamenco dancer. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar points out that the cup of wine in "Telâki" should be interpreted in a metaphorical manner. In the mystical *tasavvuf* tradition wine stands for divine love and this is also the case in some of Yahya Kemal's *Gazels* which were inspired by this particular tradition. In "Telâki" however, the wine is drunk by the two *with the same desire* and symbolises reciprocated human love (Tanpınar 1995: 148-149). Though this is still a metaphorical usage of wine, it does not indicate a loving relationship between a human being and God, but a relationship between two human beings and is characteristic of post-Tanzimat love poetry.

The red roses in "Endülüs'te Raks" and in "Telâki" symbolize female sensuality. In "Ric'at" (The Retreat) too, Yahya Kemal emphasises the sensuality expressed in the beloved's covetous eyes and her red nails:

Çini bir kâsede bir Çin çayı içmekteydi.	She was drinking Chinese tea in a china cup.
Bir güzel yırtıcı kuş gözleri gördüm. Baktım	I saw her beautiful preying eyes. I looked
Som mücevherler gibi kan kırmızı tırnaklarına.	At her nails, colour of blood, that were like pure [jewels

Yahya Kemal did not restrain himself from writing about the physical aspect of the relationship. The union with the beloved starts and ends on her lips ("Yârin dudaklarında bitip başlayan visâl" ("İstanbul'un o Yerleri.")). The kiss, ultimate goal of the mystical lover of the *divân* tradition, is not enough to quench the thirst of the lovers:

Kanmaz en uzun bûseye, öptükçe susuzdur.	Not even the longest kiss is satisfying, the more
Zîrâ susatan zevk o dudaklardaki tuzdur.	[you kiss the more you get thirsty for it.
İnsan ne yaratmışsa, yaratmıştır o tuzdan,	Because the thirst giving pleasure is the salt on the
Bir sır gibidir az çok ilâh olduğumuzdan.	[lips.
("Vuslat")	Whatever man created he created from this salt,
	This is like a secret because we are somehow gods.

The salt on the lips in the poem "Vuslat" stands for sexual desire and it is worth noting that the poet saw *the salt on the lips* as the source of every human creation (YKEM 1968:18). Yahya Kemal told the critic Nihad Sami Banarlı that desire (arzu) was the most basic human emotion and that union (vuslat) was the ultimate goal of every human being. In "Vuslat" Yahya Kemal acknowledges openly the central role played by sexuality in human behaviour. According to Yahya Kemal, "Vuslat" describes a young man and young woman whose souls and bodies are *"as tightened as a bow"* because of sexual desire. The poem focuses on the delight given to the lovers by the union (*vuslat*) (YKEM 1968:18). In "Vuslat", the poet writes about breathing in the perfume of the hair of the beloved, of embracing her and of feeling her hands on his

neck. It is true though that Yahya Kemal used the expression "*Uykuyu cânanla beraber uyuyanlar*" (Those who sleep with the beloved) in the poem and that he avoided any more explicit terminology to describe the sexual union. Nonetheless Yahya Kemal stressed that in this particular poem the verb "uyumak" (to sleep) was symbolic and should be interpreted accordingly (YKEM 1968: 18-20). The verses in "Vuslat" are still stylised when compared to later, more naturalistic depictions of sexual desire, yet the poem is important in the sense that it is about the desire and physical union of two human beings.

In Yahya Kemal's poetry, sexual union is seen as a natural part of a loving relationship. This is a novelty, for neither the Tanzimat poets nor the *Servet-i Fünûn* poets wrote about sexual longing for the loved one. Sexuality, however, was explored in the novels of the Tanzimat period. Sexuality outside marriage was condemned by authors like Namık Kemal who saw it as an obstacle to the aspirations of the revolutionary. Sexuality and eroticism were not ignored, but were used for didactical purposes. Yahya Kemal does not judge sexuality and he does not use it for educational purposes. It just stands for itself and is part of a loving relationship.

Surprisingly little emphasis is put on the physical features of the beloved. In "Mihriyâr", he mentions the blue colour of her eyes and in "Erenköyünde Bahar", he refers to her beauty and grace. This lack of interest is surprising because in poems such as "Bergama Heykeltraşları" (The Sculptors of Bergama) and "Sicilya Kızları", the poet praises physical beauty, not unlike the *Parnassian* poets of the *Servet-i Fünûn* journal. His relative disinterest for the physical features of the beloved enhances her main attribute: her freedom.

Yahya Kemal, focuses on the woman's freedom in his portrait of the beloved, which is expressed in her ability to meet, kiss and be alone with her lover without any apparent restrictions on her. Yahya Kemal attaches great importance to the liberty of women. In an article entitled "Conversations about new Womanhood: Life and Woman", where he expresses his regrets at the increased westernisation of women, he writes that:

"I believe that if her evolution had continued naturally, the Turkish woman would nevertheless have been as free she is nowadays. But she would not have been the European doll which she is today and she would have conserved her charm and grace. (...) The Turkish woman will be as beautiful in freedom as she was in the "Harem" (Beyatlı 1990: 138-139).

In "Moda'da Bahar", the active role of the woman in a love relationship is also underlined ("*Seven kadınla seven erkeğin visâli gibi*"; Like the union of a woman who loves and a man who loves). She is not mentioned as a beloved, or a loved one but as a



woman who loves. In the poem "Mahurdan Gazel", set during the era of Ahmet III (1703-1730), the poet again stresses the importance of freedom. In this particular poem, an Ottoman princess boards a boat in public. Her beauty and her grace is applauded by people who gathered on both sides of the Bosphorus in order to watch her. Tanpınar rightly remarks that an Ottoman woman, in particular an Ottoman princess would not have had this kind of freedom at the time of Ahmet III and admits his surprise at this anachronism in the work of an author who otherwise paid great attention to historical accuracy (Tanpınar 1995: 153-154).

The freedom advocated by Yahya Kemal is the freedom of an Ottoman princess or the freedom of an Ottoman bourgeois lady and not the freedom of an ordinary woman. The social roots of the beloved are again referred to in the way she speaks. In the poem "Bir Tepeden", the voice of the beloved evokes Istanbul. The language spoken by the ladies of the capital was of particular importance during the years this poem was composed. In the *Principle of Turkism* (1923), the catechism of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp did not only claim that "Ottoman was as artificial as Esperanto" (Gökalp 1963: 78), but also wrote that

" Turkish nationalists have agreed upon the following principle in order to suppress the duality of language: One ought to write like the people of Istanbul, more particularly, like the ladies of Istanbul (İstanbul hanımları) speak" (Gökalp 1963: 79).

These words were the results of the debate on the need to close the gap between the spoken and the written language, a debate that started during the Tanzimat period. The language of the "ladies of Istanbul" was not the tongue of ordinary people. It was, according to Jean Deny, the author of several standard works on Turkish grammar:

"the tongue of the former Turkish capital that continues to give the tone all over Anatolia, much like Paris in France. It is a common language spoken by cultivated people, who may well live outside Istanbul, but who model their speech on the language spoken in that city" (Deny 1955: 11).

It is not only the speech of the beloved that evokes Istanbul. In "Mihriyâr", the dark blue eyes of the beloved arouse images of the past centuries:

Hâlâ görünür geçen asırlar  
Bir bir, koyu mâvî gözlerinde

The past centuries can still be seen  
One by one, in her dark blue eyes

In the poem "Bir Tepeden", it is the face of the beloved which reflects the history of her people ("*Târihini aks ettirebilirsin diye, çehren* "). Moreover in the opening quatrain, the hills of the country reflect the face of the beloved ("*Sîmânı veren memleketin her tepesinde*"). In a second version of the poem, Yahya Kemal suppressed

this verse and replaced it by "*Çok benzediğin memleketin her tepesinde*" (In every hill of your country that you resemble), which also showed the parallelism existing between the beloved and her motherland. The two poems mentioned above well synthesise Yahya Kemal's theory of national identity; *Canân*, the beloved, is an incarnation of the nation. She is the product of the history of the country and her features make continuous references to this very history. Moreover she is free.

The hills reflected on the beloved's face may be more than the seven hills on which Istanbul was founded and may represent three hills which symbolised different phases of literary and political developments of the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic. In "Üç Tepe" (Three Hills), an article the poet wrote on literature during the liberation war, he explained that three hills symbolised three phases in the modernising process of Turkish literature. The first was Çamlıca, which he associated with the likes of Namık Kemal, Abdülhak Hamit and Samipaşazade Sezâi, a generation of writers, who, though firmly committed to both political and literary reform, were still linked to the classical tradition. The following generation, that of the westernising poets of the *Servet-i Fünûn* journal, was connected to Tepebaşı hill. Finally Mount Metris, significantly a mount of strategic importance in the victory İsmet İnönü and the Kemalist troops gained against the Greeks in the Battle of İnönü symbolised the literature of the Republic, a literature which found its inspiration in the Anatolian mainland (Beyatlı 1993:316-322). The fact that the hills are all reflected in the face of *Canân* could be seen as an attempt to reconcile his own conception of Turkishness with that of the Kemalist regime.

The beloved, the national bride, was the antithesis of the official line on Turkish culture of the new state. While the newly founded Turkish republic stressed the *Anatolianness* of the new state, a move symbolised by the new capital Ankara, Yahya Kemal's beloved was a noble woman deeply rooted in Istanbul's Ottoman past. She was active, proud and free. She was very different from the innocent Anatolian village girl, this Turkish version of the *bon sauvage*, that the proponents of national literature were depicting. *Canân*, as a literary creation, was clashing with the new cultural doctrine and as an incarnation of the nation, she was conflicting with the definition of the Turkish nation that the new state was advocating.

### **Seasons and times of love**

The clash between Yahya Kemal's definition of national identity and that of the new state accounts for the general melancholy and the hopelessness of his poems dealing with the theme of love. Yahya Kemal longed for a lost paradise that could not be recovered. This is corroborated by the fact that the preponderant season in Yahya Kemal's poetical works, more particularly in his later works, is autumn (Sesli 1963:66).

The season of love is, like in the classical tradition, spring or summer, but the point in time from which the narrator makes his reminiscence is usually autumn. In "Şarkı III" he says:

Gördüm ki yazın bastığımız otları solmuş.	I saw that the grass we once walked on
Son demde bu mevsim gibi benzim de kül olmuş.	[withered.
	My face has become ash-grey like this dying
	[season

This is a never ending autumn and the cycle of seasons is never mentioned. This excessive pessimism is confirmed by the continuous use of the past tense when referring to the love relationship. With the exception of "Eski Mektup" and "Vuslat" all of the poems dealing with the theme of love are written in the past tense. In the fairy tale-like "Nazar" (Evil Eye), telling the story of a young girl being ravished by the moon, the story is reported in the past tense:

Aranırken ayın ölgün sesini	While she was looking for its withered voice,
Soğuk ay <b>öptü</b> beyaz ensesini.	The cold moon kissed the back of her white neck.
<b>Sardı</b> her uzvunu bir ince sızı;	A faint pain enveloped her whole body;
Bu öpüş gül gibi <b>soldurdu</b> kızı.	This kiss caused the girl to fade like a rose.
<b>Soldu soldu</b> gündün güne sessiz, <b>soldu!</b>	She faded and faded, quietly day to day she faded!
<b>Dediler</b> hep: "Kıza bir hâl oldu!	All said: "The girl has grown so strange."

"Mehlika Sultan" too is written in the past tense:

Mehlika Sultan'a âşık yedi genç,	Seven young men who were in love with Mehlika Sultan,
Gece şehrin kapısından <b>çıktı</b> ;	Left at night through the gates of the city:
Mehlika Sultan'a aşık yedi genç,	Seven young men who were in love with Mehlika Sultan,
Kara sevdâlı birer aşıktı .	Were passionately in love.

One might have expected the usage of the "-miş past tense", which is usually used in fairy stories and legends. The "-di past tense" is used in order to relate events that are positively known to the narrator, and as such is not suited to the telling of fairy tales. The necessity to follow the strict meter patterns of the *aruz* and the greater facility to find rhymes on the personal suffixes of the past tense might be a possible explanation for this deviation from the norm.

However the use of the -di past tense in his more personal poems has a different dimension. Indeed it is striking that verses depicting the sentimental life of the poet are always written in the "-di past tense." There is no love in the present tense.<sup>22</sup>

Poems dealing with the love theme are based on reminiscences of a better time. Whether the narrator addresses the beloved directly or writes about her, the tense used is the past tense:

<sup>22</sup> "Eski Mektup" is the exception. In this poem the narrator does not describe a current relationship but refers to an impending relationship. Though he mentions no exact date, Cemil Sena Ongun says that this poem, written in the present tense, is one of Yahya Kemal's early works (Ongun 1947: 36).

*Cânân* aramızda bir adındı.  
Şîrin gibi hüsn ü âna unvan,  
Bir sâhile hem şerefti hem şan,  
Çok kerre hayâlimizde cânân  
Bir şi'ri hatırlatan kadındı.  
("Erenköy'ünde Bahar")

*Canân* was one of the names we used to call you.  
Like *şîrin* it was defining beauty and grace.  
It was a cause of pride and honour for the shores.  
Mostly *Canân* in our imagination  
Was the woman that brought poetry to mind.

Rû'ya gibi bir yazdı. Yarattın hevesinle,  
Her ânını, her rengini her şi'irini hazdan.  
("Geçmiş Yaz")

It was a summer like a dream. With your enthusiasm  
You created every moment, colour and poem with pleasure

The usage of the past tense emphasises the idea that the days of felicity are over. The felicity is defined in "Vuslat" where Yahya Kemal does not describe a past experience, but the state of a lover who is uniting with the beloved in the spiritual and the physical sense. In this "theoretical" poem, the tenses most used are the conditional and the aorist tenses:

Bir rûh o derin bahçede bir defa yaşarsa  
Boynunda onun kolları, koynunda o varsa,  
**Dalmışsa**, onun saçlarının râyihasıyla  
sevmekteki efsûnu **duyar** her nefesiyle.

If a soul just once can live in that deep garden,  
If her hands are around his neck and she is in  
[his arms,  
If he is intoxicated with the perfume of her hair,  
Then he feels the magic spell of love with every  
[breath

Not only the grammatical tenses pointed to the fact that love is now part of the past but also the times at which the lovers meet: either at sunset ("Bir Tepeden", "Aşk Hikâyesi") or at night ("Şarkı II"). Together they watch the setting sun or the starlit skies. The lovers take refuge in the night because a new country will be born with the rising sun, a country in which *Cânân*, the Ottoman princess and the narrator in love with the past will be condemned to wander in the spheres of reminiscences and illusions.

The study of the past was a central part of Yahya Kemal's quest for the definition of Turkish national identity. On 17 October 1913, Yahya Kemal published in the newspaper *Peyâm* (News) an article entitled "Çamlar Altında Musahabe" (Conversation under the Pine Trees) that was quite unrepresentative of the main bulk of his work. It was a projection into the future. In this short piece of writing, neither really a short-story nor an essay, the poet described how on one day he felt "as bored as a Roman emperor", he slipped into bed with H.G. Wells' *Time Machine* and slowly drifted off to sleep while reading it. Unexpectedly he woke up in a time machine. After realising the perils he was facing, he decided to stop the machine on 15th June 2187.

The empire had been saved by educational reforms. Evidence of these reforms could be seen in form of buildings in every part of Istanbul, such as the building of the *Society of Physical Education*, the *Music Palace*, the huge building of the *Society of Teachers* and the *Science Academy*. It was an Istanbul that was proud of its past and several monuments celebrating national heroes and the great victories of the Empire

were scattered throughout the city. Interestingly, none of those victories were twentieth or 21st century victories. More relevantly even, Yahya Kemal mentioned the fact that historical buildings, those buildings that gave its particular identity to the city on the shores of the Bosphorus, were still in place, such as Topkapı Palace or the more recent *Yeni Cami* mosque. Though he mentioned new ports, huge roads and people flying home by plane, it is revealing that Yahya Kemal felt the need to mention the high places of Ottoman culture and architecture (Beyatlı 1992: 97-102). In this very rare projection into the future, his continuous concern for the past emerges again and again.

*Permanence of the past* might be a more suitable turn of phrase. Yahya Kemal shared with the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), whose public lectures he might have attended in Paris, an interest in the definition of time. While Henri Bergson developed the concept of "durée" (duration), Yahya Kemal defined a similar concept "imtidad" (continuity). In the second part of the article "Türk İstanbul" (Turkish Istanbul), he tried to bring some clarity to this notion:

"It is conventional to divide time into three parts: past, present and future. You may divide a fixed thing into three, but how can you divide something that is continuously flowing. What we call "present" today will be "past" tomorrow. Those days to come we call "future" will in the flowing of time become "present" and then merge into the "past". Truly there are no such things as present, past or future. There is only "continuity".

We live in the middle, in the "present" of this line of continuity. We cannot see its future part. On the other hand, we only know the past in the way the historians have reported it to us, or through the remaining works of those periods. The sum of the past eras is all that remains in our imagination of our national existence" (Beyatlı 1992: 64-65).

Bergson claimed that duration was heterogeneous, ever changing and did never repeat itself. It could not be divided into instants. Duration was time as experienced by consciousness. Human consciousness did not experience time moment by moment but in a continuous fashion.<sup>23</sup> The resemblance between the two concepts is striking and one wonders if Yahya Kemal, while in Paris, was in the audience to the lectures of Henri Bergson at the Collège de France.

### **Yahya Kemal, lover and exile**

In Yahya Kemal's verses about love, the break with the *divân* tradition becomes obvious. Though he still uses the metrical prosody, certain genres and the vocabulary of the classical tradition, the longing of the narrator in his poems is now turned towards the past: the *visâl* has taken place and cannot be repeated. Though melancholy and disillusionment in Yahya Kemal's love poetry may seem a continuation of the

<sup>23</sup>Moore 1996 is a good introduction to the thought of the French philosopher.

conventions of the classical *divân* tradition, the cause of these feelings are indicative of the break. The setting of love poems in Istanbul is another novelty, a clear break with both Ottoman and post-Tanzimat conventions. Proletarian Istanbul is ignored in Yahya Kemal's verses since the poet focuses on an Ottoman Istanbul that has much in common with the city chanted in the poems and novels of western, usually French Orientalists. The solitary and melancholic narrator in Yahya Kemal's love verses dwells on reminiscences of the past. The past was a period of happiness for the narrator, because he was together with his beloved. The union, that the *divân* poets craved for has been consummated. It is striking that the narrator avoids any mention of the surrounding world as he remembers his relationship with the beloved.

The beloved, Canân, is an Istanbul lady with aristocratic tastes, who is free from economical and social constraints. She enjoys a great freedom of movement and can freely meet her lover. She drinks wine, acts provocatively, and is intimate with her lover. She is different from the divine beloved of the classical tradition. Metaphorically she is an incarnation of Yahya Kemal's vision of the nation, a free nation well rooted in the Ottoman past.

The melancholic account by the narrator of his love relationship with Cânân emphasises Yahya Kemal Beyatlı's feeling of loss. The political reality of the Kemalist revolution made the definition of Turkishness, incarnated by Cânân, obsolete. The narrator in the poems emphasises the dream-like atmosphere of the relationship, for Yahya Kemal was probably aware that his ideas had no real chance to impose themselves. His love verses tell the story of a lost union and indeed Yahya Kemal used the union of two lovers in order to describe perfect felicity ("Moda'da Bahar"). The death of Ottomanness meant the end of felicity for Yahya Kemal.

Yahya Kemal was not an ideologue of Ottomanness. Neither was he a utopian. In none of his writings did he advocate the creation of an Ottoman Arcadia. Ottomanness was something personal for him, an oriental, even orientalist *art de vivre*. The loss he depicts is not the loss of paradise on earth but the loss of his very own paradise:

When Yahya Kemal left Skopje, the city of his childhood, it was still living at the time of Mehmet the Conqueror. The abundance of mosques, of minarets, of tombs of Ottoman saints and of *medreses* gave the city a particular atmosphere (Uyguner 1992: 11). It is natural that when the young Yahya Kemal emigrated to Istanbul in order to complete his studies in 1902, he clung to those sites that reminded him of the town in which he had grown up. This feeling was probably strengthened when after the First World War, the territories west to Istanbul were lost. All that remained of his motherland were a remembrance of this past and maybe glimpses of an atmosphere he could sometimes feel when he walked in Istanbul's historical districts.

Yahya Kemal Beyatlı was part of a generation of poets, of Ottoman bourgeois origin, who were to lose their motherland a second time. Indeed, with the westernising reforms of the new state many felt estranged in their own country. The alphabet reform, in particular, hit them badly. It was with these very letters, now condemned to the rubbish bin of history, that they had been exorcising their *mal de vivre*. Many sank into alcohol and drugs (Ayvazoğlu 1998: 95-98). But Yahya Kemal did not, though he too took refuge in an artificial paradise. That paradise however was not the product of mind altering substances, but of his linguistic abilities. Cânân was less a question of ideological choice than a question of survival.

There is a discrepancy between Yahya Kemal's elitist *Ottomanist* discourse in his poetry and his support for Mustafa Kemal's *Anatolianist* populism which he expresses in his prose writing. This apparent contradiction points to the complexity of the character and of the intellectual and care should be taken when labelling him as many critics do as *Milli Şair* (the National Poet).

Yahya Kemal's poetry is certainly modern because it bridges the nationalist quest with literary innovation - mainly the introduction of linear narration and of worldly themes into classical Ottoman forms. His conception of poetry was to have a limited appeal to the following generation of poets. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, who is generally considered his literary heir, was an advocate of the use of the syllabic meter and his narrator met the beloved in Bursa, a former capital of the Ottoman Empire in western Anatolia. Politically too, the label of *Milli Şair* is misleading. His poems do not chant the *millet* in the modern sense i.e. the Turkish nation. Neither do they chant the Islamic millet.

Yahya Kemal's poetic escape in an imagined Ottoman Istanbul had much in common with the disappearance of the seven lovers of Mehlika Sultan in a fanciful universe. Yet it is striking that the very year the poem "Mehlika Sultan" was published, Faruk Nafiz (Çamlıbel) and Orhan Ziyâ (Orhon) published their first collections of poems written with the syllabic meter. The poems focused on folk culture and on life in Anatolia. Faruk Nafiz and Orhan Ziyâ were two of the members of the group that would be known as the *Five Syllabists*. Their romantic patriotism and populism was not without resemblance to the romantic nationalism of the early nineteenth century in Europe. However, their depiction of life in the Anatolian mainland, sometimes realistic, sometimes more idyllic, was not a romantic hangover. They did not try to express a generalised relationship between man and nature, but rather a relationship between a particular group of people and a particular geographical area. The identity of the people and of the geographical area in their poems dealing with the love theme was to be of an entirely different nature than Yahya Kemal's Cânân and Ottoman Istanbul.

## Chapter II

### Love spelled, syllable by syllable: The Five Syllabists and the theme of love

#### Versions of *National Literature*

The era of *National Literature* (*Millî Edebiyat*) covers the period between 1908, year of the establishment of the second constitution and 1923, the year the republic was officially founded. It is a transitional phase in Turkish literature during which writers and poets of various ideological convictions have emphasised the need to produce a literature that was national in matters of language, form and content and accessible to all strands of society.

Determining the boundaries of the era of *National Literature* according to the political evolution of the country may be convenient but is problematic. The attempts by certain *Tanzimat* authors such as İbrahim Şinasi (1826-1871), who wrote a few quatrains with the meter of folk poetry<sup>1</sup> and collected and published Ottoman proverbs<sup>2</sup> could be considered as an alternative starting point. Together with other authors of the same generation, namely Ziya Paşa and the younger Namık Kemal and Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844-1912), İbrahim Şinasi was conscious of the need to bridge the existing gap between folk and classical culture.

Moreover, the project of *National Literature* was by no means complete in 1923 but arguably extended well into the seventies. The fusion of modernist, classical and folk elements in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet and Attilâ İlhan or the occasional use by Murathan Mungan (b.1955) of the metrical prosody in his first collection of poems *Osmanlı'ya Dâir Hikâyât* (Stories about the Ottomans, 1980) represented new discourses on *National Literature* which explored the largely denigrated Ottoman literary heritage and were not focusing exclusively on the contribution of folk literature.

The term *National Literature* itself attracts controversy. Conservative critics such as Seyit Kemal Karaalioğlu use *National Literature* as a generic term that covers a wide range of authors and poets who unite in their wish to create a literature that addresses the people and reflects national concerns and realities. These writers usually agree on the need to simplify the language in order to bridge the gap between the spoken and the written language, but they do greatly differ in their definition of the "national". Mehmet Emin Yurdakul (1869-1944) emphasises the importance of the Anatolian mainland in his poetry, Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), of the Central Asian roots

<sup>1</sup> İbrahim Şinasi published some *hece* poems in *Müntahabat-ı Eş'âr* (Selected Poems, 1861).

<sup>2</sup> They were published in 1863 with the title *Durûb-ı Emsâl-i Osmaniye* (A Collection of Ottoman Proverbs).

of the Turks, Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873-1936), of the Islamic origins of Turkish culture and Yahya Kemal (1884-1958) stresses the continuity of Ottoman and modern Turkish culture. Whereas Ziya Gökalp and Mehmet Emin Yurdakul use the syllabic meter of folk poetry, Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Yahya Kemal Beyatlı use the *aruz* metrical prosody of the classical tradition (Karaaliölu 1978: 499-559).

Others, such as Şükran Kurdakul, the Marxist poet and critic, have a narrower but much more systematic definition of the concept of *National Literature*. The definition is based on the following criteria: The authors have to advocate the use of the spoken language in literature. They have to be opposed to the use of foreign grammatical structure in the written language. They have to focus on Turkish culture (mostly Anatolian) and also reflect the life of ordinary Turks. In poetry they have to use the syllabic meter. They represent a clear rupture with classical Ottoman literature. They have to try to find links with folk culture, for *divân* literature, the product of the Ottoman ruling class, is cosmopolitan while folk literature is truly national (Kurdakul 1994a: 115-119). Kurdakul's definition of *National Literature* puts the emphasis on the democratisation of literature, on literature being made accessible to the majority of the Turkish speaking population.

This was also one of the aims of the reformist authors of the second half of the 19th century, who embraced the role of educators of the nation. The nationalisation of literature was a quest for an audience. The major problem, however, remained that the intended audience was to a great extent illiterate. Some literati doubted the wisdom of producing a literature that would address ordinary people. Among them, Muallim Naci, a proponent of the elitist tradition, published an article in September 1905 in the journal *Çocuk Bahçesi* (Children's Garden) and asked:

"Before we write poetry (for peasants), we ought to teach them the alphabet, which is the basis of humanist enlightenment. So, am I right when I claim that poetry should be the poet's, philosophy the philosopher's and alphabet books the peasant's?" (in Uçman 1997:47)

### **Development of national poetry**

In 1899, Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul) (1869-1944) published a collection of poems entitled *Türkçe Şiirler* (Poems in Turkish). It was a well-chosen title that described the content of the book, since this was a collection of poems that were written in the vernacular of Istanbul, a language that was free of all the elaborate craftsmanship of the classical written language. Moreover it was written in the syllabic meter of the folk tradition and dealt with patriotic themes and the plight of Anatolian peasants. Vladimir Minorski, who translated Yurdakul's poems into Russian, argued that Yurdakul's language, his use of the syllabic meter and his focus on humanist themes were to be the

founding stones of national Turkish poetry (Kurdakul 1994a:135,136). The depiction of ordinary peasant folk was a revolutionary innovation in poetry. With the exception of *Tanzîr-i Telemak* (The Imitation of Télémaque, 1885), Mehmet Sadık's remarkable rhymed dialogue between a religious philosopher and a peasant, Ottoman poets had to a large extent ignored the life of ordinary people.<sup>3</sup> Yet it was not Yurdakul's bucolic realism that attracted the attention of the critics of the time but the language and the meter he chose. These formal issues were to be the beginning of a long-lasting debate among the Turkish intelligentsia.<sup>4</sup>

Other authors too, though less famous, followed in Mehmet Emin's footsteps, such as Tevfik Nevzat (1868-1906) and Mehmet Necip (Türkçü) (1871-1950), both minor poets, who became theoreticians of what was to become the *National Literature* movement. Their articles, published in newspapers and magazines such as the Izmir-based *Hizmet* (Service, 1897) and *Ahenk* (Harmony, 1898), provoked great uproar in intellectual circles. In Salonica too, various journals, but mainly *Mütalaa* (Opinion, 1896), *Asır* (The Century, 1897), *Çocuklara Rehber* (Guide for Children, 1897) and *Çocuk Bahçesi* (Children's Garden, 1904) promoted this new approach.

In order to bring some unity to this emerging movement, essayist Yusuf Akçura (1876-1925), novelist Ahmet Mithat Efendi, poets Rıza Tevfik (Bölükbaşı) (1869-1949) and Necip Asım founded *Türk Derneği* (The Turkish Society) and published a short-lived journal (7 issues between 1909-1910) with the same name. A new milestone in the development of *National Literature* was the publication in 1911 of the immensely influential journal *Genç Kalemler*<sup>5</sup> (Young Pens), that was edited by Ziya Gökalp, Ömer Seyfettin (1884-1920) and Ali Canip (Yöntem) (1887-1967). This journal transformed various individual and in certain cases individualistic attempts into a unified and structured literary movement. In matters of poetry, the journal battled on three fronts: language, meter and the depiction of national realities.

In his introductory essay for the first issue of the journal (11 April 1911), Ömer Seyfettin claimed that the old language of literature was "ill". Its illness was caused by the abundance of Arabic and Persian grammatical structures which was the source of the unintelligibility of the literary language. The presence of foreign elements in the language meant that the language was neither pure nor national. The language had to be nationalised (Çetin & Parlatur: 1999:75-81). Ziya Gökalp and Ali Canip (Yöntem)

<sup>3</sup>Sarıyerli Mehmet Sadık wrote this dialogue, inspired by the French essayist Fénelon's (1651-1715) *Télémaque*, while he was imprisoned in Acca because of his radical opposition to the sultan and westernisation. Mehmet Sadık's work celebrates the hard work of peasants and emphasises the importance of both urban intellectuals and country people (Kaplan 1994: 275-286).

<sup>4</sup>Abdullah Uçman has collected the various articles published on the occasion of the publication of *Türkçe Şiirler*. (Uçman 1997)

<sup>5</sup> See Çetin & Parlatur 1999 for a transcription of the complete series of the journal.

published a common article in the second issue of the journal in order to clarify their position on language:

"The new language is more than a mere literary issue for Turks. It is an issue of vital importance. Indeed rebellions are made with the sword. But the revolution brought about by the rebellion is made with the pen" (Çetin & Parlatır 1999:106).

The *Young Pens* advocated the use of a new literary language, a language that would be free of Arabic and Persian grammatical forms, of Arabic and Persian words other than those used in everyday language and of any other foreign words that had a Turkish equivalent. The aim was to unify the spoken and the written language. The spoken language was not a koine of Anatolian Turkish dialects, but it was the language spoken by the *İstanbul hanımları* (the ladies of Istanbul) as proposed by Ziya Gökalp<sup>6</sup> (Gökalp 1963: 77-82).

The stance of the *Young Pens* did not go unopposed. Most members of the *New Literature (Edebiyat-ı Cedide)* movement, a group of poets advocating art for art's sake, defended the classical language and the *aruz*. They did not do it on ideological grounds but rather because they believed that the classical language of poetry was more able to convey melody and beauty. Much more ideological was Şehabettin Süleyman's claim, in *Rûbap* (Strings, 1912), one of the major journals of the movement, that literature reflecting social reality, he used the term *avam iyi sanat* (art suitable for the populace), could not lead to anything but an impasse. He argued that literature could not have a social role and that true art had to be silent (Kurdakul 1994a:117). The poet Nigâr Hanım (1862-1918) too made some opinionated remarks to the journalist Ruşen Eşref on the democratisation of the literary language:

"I believe that Persian genitive and adjectival constructions should be kept. The elite should not be lowered to the level of ordinary people, ordinary people should be raised to the level of the elite. If this is not possible, then, let there be a literature for ordinary people, but this should not have any influence on the literature of the elite " (Eşref 1334AH:30,31).

In the same interview Nigâr Hanım expressed her dislike for the syllabic meter, which was another much disputed issue at the time. The *Young Pens*, Ziya Gökalp in particular, claimed that the meter of folk poetry was the only true national meter.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>The various approaches to the simplification of the Turkish language are introduced and discussed in Levend 1972. Lewis 1999, a more recent work, focuses more particularly on the linguistic reforms undertaken after the foundation of the republic.

<sup>7</sup>Poets of the Tanzimat period such as Ziyâ Paşa , Namık Kemal , İbrahim Şinasi and Recâizade Mahmut Ekrem made some timid attempts to use the syllabic meter. Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan, too, wrote plays with the syllabic meter.

Cenap Şehabettin, one of the last great masters of the *aruz* metrical prosody, argued, not unreasonably, that a metrical form used by Turkish poets for almost a thousand years could not be foreign and concluded, more controversially, that the *aruz* was the only real national verse (Tuncer 1994a:2). Yahya Kemal entered the debate with a conciliatory position and advocated their peaceful existence, side by side:

"The syllabic meter and the metrical prosody are two related streams. They flow in parallel like the Euphrates and the Tigris and finally they become one in national memory" (Beyatlı 1971: 110).

Beside historical and patriotic themes, the journal *Genç Kalemler* and the nationalists argued that poets should also reflect the life of ordinary people in poetry. They were conscious that ordinary people, still to a large extent illiterate, did not read their works. The depiction of the poverty and the harshness of life in Anatolia was preponderantly addressed to the literary circles based mainly in Istanbul and Salonica and to the ruling class. The bucolic realism of the nationalist movement shared certain features of post-colonial literature:

"The literature produced as part of a cultural nationalist project is a literature produced in opposition to the narratives and representations which deny dignity and autonomy to those who have been colonised. But this opposition is addressed not just to the colonising power, nor even primarily to it, but to the people of the emerging nation, and seeks to engage them in their own project of self-definition" (King 1996:120).

Even though the nationalists never went as far as defining the Ottoman Empire as a colonising force and never considered Anatolia to have been colonised, they had issues to consider that were similar to those dealt by post-colonial authors. In both cases the concept of *National Literature* had to be invented. In post-colonial societies the proponents of *National Literature* had to deal with the issue of literary continuity being interrupted by the arrival of colonial powers and the following imposition of foreign language and culture. In Ottoman Turkey, it was the Ottoman Turkish intellectuals who rejected the Ottoman literary heritage in the second half of the nineteenth century and had "to invent a discourse that represented Ottoman literature as foreign" (Holbrooke 1994:2).

The issue of inventing *National Literature* was dealt with in particular by Ziya Gökalp in *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (The Fundamentals of Turkism). This work, though only published in 1923, was a synthesis of ideas on culture he had started to articulate a decade earlier. He stressed that the *aruz* was chosen by court intellectuals and did not reflect the tastes of the people who used the syllabic meter. So contemporary poets too ought to use the syllabic meter (Gökalp 1963: 96, 97). Likewise he argued that

*National Literature* should have two sources of inspiration: Folk literature and, rather paradoxically, the great classics of western literature starting with Homer and Virgil. Nationalist writers should also read the European Romantics because they too had studied their native folk traditions and had tried to build literary bridges between intellectuals and ordinary people (Gökalp 1963: 97,98).

In the meantime other journals such as *Zekâ* (Intelligence, 1911), *Türk Derneği* (The Turkish Society, 1911), *Türk Yurdu* (The Turkish Homeland, 1912), *Halka Doğru* (Towards the People, 1913) and *Türk Sözü* (The Turkish Word, 1914) defended ideas close to those of the journal *Genç Kalemler*. Numerous poets abandoned the metrical prosody for the syllabic meter. The fact that Mehmet Fuat (Köprülü) (1890-1966), the historian (and a minor poet himself) who until recently had been hostile to *National Literature*, abandoned the *aruz* in favour of the *hece* is quite revealing of the trend at that time. In 1914 in *Turan*, a nationalist journal, Mehmet Fuat even argued that the *New Literature* group to whom he had once belonged, had remained foreign to the national soul, of which Mehmet Emin's poetry was the true expression. By now, *National Literature* and the syllabic meter were promoted by circles close to the *İttihad ve Terakki* (Union and Progress) government.

The National Liberation War offered a unique occasion for the proponents of *National Literature* to live by their ideals and many joined the Kemalist troops in Anatolia. After the establishment of the republic, *National Literature* and the syllabic meter became the major literary means of expression.

### **The Five Syllabists**

In 1914 Ziya Gökalp gave a series of influential lectures on the language and meter of national poetry at *Bilgi Derneği* (The Knowledge Society), a meeting point for the nationalist intelligentsia. A group of young poets who had attended the lectures or read reviews about them in the main cultural journals of the time decided to abandon the metrical prosody and their literary elitism in order to support the nationalist cause in literature. Among them were five poets, Orhan Seyfi (Orhon) (1890-1972), Halit Fahri (Ozansoy) (1891-1971), Enis Behiç (Koryürek) (1892-1949), Yusuf Ziya (Ortaç) (1895-1967) and Faruk Nafiz (Çamlıbel) (1898 -1973), for whom the critic İ. Habib Sevük later coined the term *Five Syllabists* (*Beş Hececi*) (Önal 1986:31). It is not clear on which literary criteria Sevük based himself when selecting these five poets in particular. During roughly the same period of time, other poets too such as Şükufe Nihal (1896-1973), Halide Nusret (Zorlutuna) (1901-1984), Ahmet Kutsi (Tecer) (1901-1967) and obviously Ziya Gökalp and Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul) were writing with the syllabic meter. A possible explanation is that the *Five Syllabists* constituted a suitable sample of the literary development of the period (1914-1930), in which they

were most prominent. Most critics and historians of literature share this view and deal with them collectively.<sup>8</sup> The *Five Syllabists* published their poems in the same journals, among others, *Yeni Mecmua* (The New Journal, 1917-18), *Nedim* (The Friend, 1919) and *Şair* (The Poet, 1919), the latter being edited by Yusuf Ziya. However it is doubtful that they considered themselves as a literary group. They had no common literary manifesto, issued no collective declarations and did not attempt to publish a collective collection of poems or their own journal. Their poetry shared a common concern for folk culture and for the people living in the Anatolian mainland. They wrote poetry in an unsophisticated straightforward language based on the Istanbul dialect and used motifs from folk poetry. They were inspired by folk tales and tried to describe life in Anatolia. They also wrote patriotic poems in order to support the National Liberation War (1919-1923). Even their more personal poems, either describing a relationship between the poet and nature or his fear of death, included patriotic motifs. Theirs was an engaged poetry, a poetry with a purpose. Their poetry, like the works of their forefathers in the *National Literature* movement, ought to be discussed under the general framework of post-colonial literature. Only a superficial reading of their poetry can lead to Turgut Uyar's claim that their poetry reminds of the French *Parnassian* poet Sully Prud'homme (1839-1907), whom he seems to know only through his nationalist verses (Uyar 1982:47). The context in which they write and the need to re-invent literature make their endeavours closer to nationalist literati in Asia and Africa than to Sully Prud'homme's jingoistic agenda.

However, the depiction of Anatolia in the works of the *Five Syllabists*, novel though it was, had little to do with Anatolian realities, since only Faruk Nafiz and Enis Behiç had a direct experience of Anatolian life. Faruk Nafiz had been sent to Anatolia by his newspaper *İleri* (Forward) in 1922, in order to cover the liberation war. Unsurprisingly his Anatolian verses were less romantic and much more naturalist than those of his fellow poets. He depicted the harsh reality of the peasant faced with a hostile environment, a reality that he had directly witnessed.

The lack of direct experience of Anatolia is not the only paradox of the syllabist group. Though they are remembered as the *Five Syllabists*, four of them continued to write poetry with the metrical prosody of the *divân* tradition. All of them but Yusuf Ziya regularly switched back to the *aruz*.<sup>9</sup> This was not due to a lack of ideological commitment however. By 1923 the nationalist view of literature had imposed itself. A relative realism, an emphasis on national identity and a straightforward poetic language

<sup>8</sup>See Gözler 1980, Tuncer 1994a and Fuat 1998.

<sup>9</sup>Enis Behiç too remained faithful to the syllabic meter. He stopped writing poetry after failing being elected into parliament. In 1949, however, he published a mystical work *Vâridât-ı Süleyman* (The Inspirations of Süleyman) that caused uproar in Turkey because it had, according to its author, been revealed during spiritualistic sessions by Çedikçi Süleyman Çelebi, a member of the Mevlevi order, who lived in Trebizonde in the 17th century. (Tuncer 1994a: 73,74)

had become the trademarks of the poetry of the period. Those who continued to use the *aruz* for purely political purposes were few. Politically, they were either silent or silenced: Cenap Şehabettin was completely discredited by his open support for the Sultan and the occupation forces and he naively tried to regain some credibility by writing lavish praises for Mustafa Kemal. Ahmet Haşim stopped publishing poetry after 1926 and was, in any case, the most a-political of all the poets of the period. Yahya Kemal (Beyatlı) praised the syllabic meter as one form of expression of the national soul, though he continued to write with the *aruz*. Mehmet Akif (Ersoy), for whom the *aruz* was not only a meter but the poetical expression of Islamic unity, became a *persona-non-grata* in the Turkish Republic because of his Islamic militancy and he went into exile in Egypt in 1925.

Moreover, Nazım Hikmet (Ran) (1901-1963) and Ercüment Behzat (Lav) (1903-1984) were attracting a lot of attention by publishing first instances of free verse. After the supremacy of the *aruz*, these poets were now questioning the supremacy of the *hece*. Yusuf Ziya was the only one of the *Five Syllabists* who continued to ardently support the exclusive use of the *hece*. He virulently attacked in the columns of his journal *Çmaraltı* (Under the Plane-Tree), a new generation of poets with socialist sympathies who dreamt of freeing both the working class and poetry from every form of oppression. In 1941, he wrote:

"Literature is in a crisis. For how many years has Turkish poetry convulsively been searching for novelty, difference and beauty? The meter has been cut into slices by the fingers of surgeons. Rhymes are grovelling on the floor like torn out hairs. And the meaning consists of delirious nonsense tainted by the redness of a bloody world" (Kurdakul 1994c: 44).

Despite Yusuf Ziya's persistence and the undeniable talents of a younger generation of syllabists, namely Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962), Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1905-1983), Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı (1910-1956) and Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca (b.1914), the syllabic meter lost much of its exclusiveness and became, just like the *aruz*, a possible, maybe obsolete, choice for the poet, since younger poets opted for the free verse. The *Five Syllabists* published not less than 43 collections of poems, but only two of them are easily available today in bookshops in Turkey.<sup>10</sup> These are anthologies of poems by Faruk Nafiz: *Han Duvarları* (The Walls of the Inn) and *Bir Ömür Böyle Geçti* (Thus a Life Passed). While a month rarely passes without at least a dozen new articles published about Yahya Kemal and Nazım Hikmet, both of them contemporaries of the *Five Syllabists*, the latter remain to a great extent ignored by

<sup>10</sup>The same is true for their plays and prose works, which are currently out of print. Most of their articles have not been collected or published and no proper bibliographical research has been written on any of the five poets.

writers and researchers. Few readers of poetry remember their poems, but everybody remembers the meter they used, for their message was in the meter they chose. The term *syllabist* (hececi) was a synopsis of their literary and political agenda.

### **The theme of love in the poetry of the *Five Syllabists***

Love is one of the major themes in the poetry of the *Five Syllabists*. This is not surprising because the theme of love is also central in the various genres of Turkish folk poetry. Love poetry or love songs were thus a suitable way to bridge the gap between the folk tradition and urban classical literature. Enis Behiç pointed to the links that exist between folk poetry, the syllabic meter and the theme of love in an article he published in *Varlık* in October 1933:

"Love is the origin and the source of poetry. Every work of art is the result of love. Well, imagine now the poor poet who cannot tell his beloved in a simple, straightforward manner without any artifice "I love you". It is not possible to say "I love you" with the *aruz*" (Tuncer 1994a: 89).

Enis Behiç was referring to the fact that "Seni seviyorum", the Turkish for "I love you", did not fit the strict metric requirements of the *aruz*. He mentioned several other phrases, expressing ordinary wishes, feelings and emotions that suffered a similar fate and concluded that a poet who wished to write emotional poetry and reach a large audience had to use the syllabic meter (Tuncer 1994a: 89). The article was subjective and the poet deliberately ignored the works of the late masters of the metrical prosody, namely Yahya Kemal, Mehmet Akif and Tevfik Fikret who integrated everyday language into the rigid metrical patterns of the *aruz*.

The poems discussed in this chapter were predominantly written with the syllabic meter from 1916 to the end of the twenties. These were the years when the syllabists were at the height of their productivity and were diligently applying the tenets of *National Literature*.<sup>11</sup> The love poems in these collections are usually straightforward and the "you" (*sen*), the "beloved" (*sevgili* or *canan*), is human and female. A metaphorical reading of the love poems would be wrong, because the

<sup>11</sup>The poetry collections are *Şarkın Sultanları* (The Sultans of the East, 1918), *Gönülden Gönüle* (From Heart to Heart, 1919), *Dinle Neyden* (Listen from the Flute, 1919), *Çoban Çeşmesi* (Shepherd's Fountain 1926) and *Suda Halkalar* (Rings in Water, 1928) by Faruk Nafiz; the posthumously published *Miras ve Güneşin Ölümü* (Heritage and the Death of the Sun, 1951) that includes all the syllabic poems by Enis Behiç; *Fırtına ve Kar* (Storm and Snow, 1919), *Peri Kızı ile Çoban Hikayesi* (The Story of the Fairy and the Shepherd, 1919) and *Gönülden Sesler* (Voices from the Heart, 1922) by Orhan Seyfi; *Akından Akına* (From Raid to Raid, 1916), *Cenk Ufukları* (Horizons of War, 1917), *Aşıklar Yolu* (The Path of the Lovers, 1919) and *Yanardağ* (The Volcano, 1928) by Yusuf Ziya and *Cenk Duyguları* (Emotions of War, 1917), *Efsaneler* (Legends, 1919), *Bulutlara Yakın* (Close to the Clouds, 1920), *Zakkum* (The Tree of Hell, 1920) *Gülistanlar ve Harabeler* (Rose-Gardens and Ruins, 1922) and *Paravan* (The Screen, 1929) by Halit Fahri.

nationalist poets, including the *Five Syllabists*, tended to avoid any form of implicit comparisons and other figures of speech that were not direct. There are, however, rare occurrences where the beloved stands for something else, among them Yusuf Ziya's poem "Benim Yârim" (My Darling), dedicated to the Turkish flag. In these verses the flag is addressed as the beloved and has all the features of a healthy village girl. She has red cheeks, her eyes are like stars and her eyebrows are like crescents. She is the ultimate source of inspiration for every poet. Ideologically, the poem is representative of the syllabist project. Whereas in the poetry of Yahya Kemal, the incarnation of the nation was an Ottoman upper class lady, the syllabist poet identifies the flag, symbol of national independence, with an Anatolian village girl.

Despite this exception, the non-metaphorical usage of love poetry exemplified the distance that had now been covered since the *Tanzimat* period regarding the break with the classical tradition. This break was further emphasised by the fact that the *Syllabists*, mainly Yusuf Ziya and Faruk Nafiz, made explicit contrasts between human and divine love. They acknowledged human love as a supreme value and not merely as a transitional state that would lead to divine love.

In "Aşk Yaratılırken" (When Love Was Created), a poem written in 1919, Yusuf Ziya describes the creation of love by God. Love was created after Adam and Eve. In the beginning of the poem, Yusuf Ziya remains inside the boundaries of the Abrahamic religions. Towards the end of the poem the Creator addresses mankind and equates the worship of a beautiful girl to the worship of his own beauty. In another poem entitled "Piç" (The Bastard) Yusuf Ziya too discusses the creation of love: In a world where love does not yet exist a man and a woman meet for the first time and make love. The poet devotes two stanzas to their flirting and making love. The woman then gives birth to an angel-like child. The whole tribe starts worshipping it, because this child is the personification of love. In these two poems, human love and human beauty are established as supreme values and are not merely reflections of divine attributes, which is the case in mystical literature. Mehmet Özgül, a conservative critic, is clearly unsettled by Yusuf Ziya's verses and denies him the title of *national poet*. He argues that a national poet should only be inspired by "national" sources, of which Islamic culture is the fundamental stone. Özgül startlingly maintains that the two poems were inspired by Greek mythology, but does not substantiate his claim (Özgül 1986: 34-35).

Although he did not deal with the religious issue, Konur Ertop was right when he claimed that the *Five Syllabists* were a turning point in Turkish love poetry. He stressed that love and lust were described in more realistic terms than ever before in their poetry (Ertop 1977:242). Cemal Süreya, on the other hand, emphasised the importance of the depiction of Anatolian peasants in the love verses of the *Five*

*Syllabists*, although unlike Konur Ertop he mostly focused on the poems set in a village context (Süreya 1991:8). This is not surprising, for the depiction of the village was novel, whereas love and lust in the city had been themes widely used by novelists in the *Tanzimat* era and afterwards.

More than half of the poems covered in this chapter deal with the theme of love in an urban context. Love poems set in a village context are fewer, although their importance cannot be underestimated, since they reveal the new concerns of the republican poets and are indicative of an important new trend: the focus on ordinary people in poetry.

Syllabist love poems will be explored under four headings: Poems studied under the heading *Love songs and playful variations on the theme of love* are the product of the poets' attempts to emulate folk poetry. They are important documents that exemplify the zeal with which the five poets used the syllabic meter and tried to popularise it among the reading public.

Poems under the heading *Love in an urban context* deal with the love theme in the city. Poems under the heading *Love in the Anatolian countryside* explore the love theme in the village context. Poems grouped under the heading *Love and war* discuss the destruction of the village idyll by war.

### **Folk songs and playful variations on the theme of love**

The choice of the syllabic meter was an ideological choice for the *Five Syllabists*. So was the choice of the Istanbul vernacular as the language of poetry and their renewed interest in genres and themes of folk poetry. Unlike the pioneers of the syllabic meter, the *Five Syllabists* did not disregard stylistic matters, even though they used poetry above all as a platform for their ideas. They wanted to find the right equilibrium between form and content, but ended up privileging form over content.<sup>12</sup>

The *aruz* prosody had been used by the literary establishment for centuries and young poets writing with the metrical prosody of the classical tradition did not lack in models. Yet with the *hece* meter, the nationalist poets who lived completely severed from Anatolian realities and culture, had to study and make use of a verse form that was new to their literary tradition. By using genres of the folk tradition the syllabists were fulfilling Ziya Gökalp's injunction to take inspiration from folk tradition, and by modelling their verses on folk poetry they were trying to develop their own syllabic skills.

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<sup>12</sup> Yusuf Ziya and Faruk Nafiz were aware of their shortcomings. Yusuf Ziya wrote in the introduction to his last collection of poems *Bir Rüzgar Esti* (A Wind Has Blown, 1962) that he did not have the necessary qualities to be a poet. He stressed that he was just somebody who *tried* to write poetry. Faruk Nafiz too expressed doubts at the literary quality of some of his works. In the poem "Yanarım" (I am burning with pain), he declared his distress at seeing "*his works die before him*."

Love was one of the major themes in *türkü* (song), *koşma* (short song), *mani* (sung quatrain), *destan* (epic) and several other folk literature genres and was thus a much favoured theme for the syllabists.<sup>13</sup> They were reflecting the inspiration they received from the oral literary tradition in their poems.

Most of the poems, discussed in this section are unpretentious and consciously unsophisticated. They lack the spontaneity and sincerity of folk poetry. The simple and limited vocabulary emphasises the poets' wish to write poetry that is easily accessible. These poems could be categorised as "neo-folk" poetry, since the syllabists titled their works with the genre names of folk literature.

Poems such as Orhan Seyfi's "Türküler" (Folksongs) are an attempt to copy the rhythms and motifs of folk poetry. The message conveyed in these verses is in the form, not in the meaning of the words. The following two quatrains from the above mentioned work well illustrate that the emphasis was on the language (Istanbul vernacular) and the meter (6+5):

Dünyada biricik sevdiğim sensin:	You are the only one I love in this world:
Güzelsin, incesin, tatlısın şensin!	You are pretty, delicate, sweet and joyful!
Nasıl başkasını gönlüm beğensin?	How could my heart love someone else?
Güzelsin, incesin, tatlısın, şensin!	You are pretty, delicate, sweet and joyful!

Arıyor gözlerim bugün seni.	Today my eyes are looking for you.
Gördüm geçiyorken yine dün seni.	I saw you when you passed yesterday.
Görüp de sevmemek, ne mümkün seni!	It is not possible to see you and not to love you.
Güzelsin, incesin, tatlısın, şensin!	You are pretty, delicate, sweet and joyful!

Ziya Gökalp had stressed that this particular meter was the most common one in folk poetry (Gökalp 1963: 96, 97). The content of the poem is of little importance. Nothing is said about the identity of the beloved, nor about the setting of the poem. The beloved is *pretty, delicate, sweet and joyful*, and the narrator is waiting for her to pass again so that he can catch a glimpse of her beauty, all of which are usual motifs and clichés of folk poetry.

In his "neo-folk" poems Orhan Seyfi recurs to rhyme patterns and motifs that are typical of folk poetry. In the following *mani*, the poet uses classical motifs (the rose and the bud) and the common rhyme *gonca-yonca*:

Sen gül dalında gonca.	You are a bud on a rose tree.
Ben dağ yolunda yonca.	I am a clover on a mountain path.
Sen açılır gülersin.	You bloom and smile,
Ben sararıp solunca.	When I grow pale and wither.

Orhan Seyfi, Yusuf Ziya and Halit Fahri tried to emulate sounds and rhythms of folk songs, whereas Faruk Nafiz made use of the same genres in order to introduce

<sup>13</sup> The genres of Turkish folk literature are discussed in Onay 1996. Boratav 1983 remains the standard introduction to Turkish folk literature.

elements of Anatolian traditions and culture. Thus in "Koşma", he mentions the Anatolian tradition that requires girls that have reached the age of marriage to put henna on their fingers and kohl around their eyelashes:

Kirpiğine sürme çek,  
Kına yak parmağına:  
Bu yıl yaşın girecek  
Kız gelinlik çağına.

Put kohl around your eyelashes,  
Put some henna on your fingers:  
This year you will reach,  
oh girl, the age of marriage.

Neo-folk poetry introduced Anatolian folk culture to Istanbul literary salons. The poet Turgut Uyar is very critical of those attempts and argues that they are primitively nationalistic and superficial (Uyar 1982: 43-50). Though critics nowadays tend to judge the quality of the poetry harshly, it is thanks to the syllabists' relentless endeavour that folk themes and genres imposed themselves in literature. Moreover, Faruk Nafiz and Enis Behiç managed to reach an undeniable intensity in form and content whenever they dared to distance themselves from the traditional requirements in motif and form of the folk genres.

In "Hatıra" (Remembrance), Enis Behiç avoids the classical motifs of folk poetry. In the first quatrain he makes a parallelism between the flowing of time and the flowing of water. In the second quatrain he echoes Yahya Kemal's belief in the permanence of the past. Time may pass but the beloved will have forever marked the senses of the narrator. Without being explicitly didactic, the poet, by the use of the syllabic meter, made his stance on national poetry clear.

Geçsin günler, haftalar,  
Aylar, mevsimler, yıllar.  
Zaman sanki bir rüzgâr.  
Ve bir su gibi aksın...

Let the days, the weeks pass  
The months, the seasons, the years.  
Time is like the breeze.  
Let it pour like water

Sen gözlerimde bir renk  
Kulaklarımda bir ses  
Ve içimde bir nefes  
Olarak kalacaksın...

You will remain a colour in my eyes  
A sound in my ears  
And a breath inside me...

Ziya Gökalp had stressed the importance of tales and epics in folk culture. He emphasised the necessity to write modern folk stories and he wrote didactic tales.<sup>14</sup> The *Five Syllabists* also worked towards the creation of a corpus of modern tales and epics. Orhan Seyfi's "Peri Kızıyla Çoban Hikâyesi" (The Story of the Fairy and the Shepherd), published in 1919, is one such attempt, where the theme of plays a central role. The setting of the story is Turan, the legendary homeland of the Turks, at the time of the Turkish chieftain Oğuz Han. Oğuz Han and a shepherd compete in order to win the heart of a beautiful fairy. The fairy tests them and suddenly realises that the shepherd is

<sup>14</sup> See Gökalp 1952.

her former lover, who treacherously abandoned her. The shepherd gives his reasons and Oğuz, moved by his account, tells them to forgive one another and get married. Orhan Seyfi makes use of typical motifs of folk stories: a playful fairy, mortals falling in love with her and a just and generous ruler. The mention of Oğuz Han is a reference to the myths of Turkish nationalism and situates the story culturally, thus emphasising its national character.

Neo-folk songs and neo-folk epics, written by the *Five Syllabists* were more than mere attempts to perfect their mastery of the syllabic meter. Likewise the poems were not merely artificial platforms allowing the poet to make use of folk motifs. Neo-folk literature was part of the wider project of inventing *National Literature*, by introducing literature to ordinary people, which was their avowed aim, and folk culture to the mainly urban intelligentsia.

### Love in an urban environment

The use of the genres of folk poetry, the references to Anatolian Turkish folk culture as well as the use of the syllabic meter were parts of the nationalist project to root literature in the folk tradition. In love poems set in an urban context, however, no reference is made to Anatolian or Turkish culture. The focus is on the uneasy relationship between two westernised lovers living in a city, their mindless sensuality and their consequent misery.

The urban environment is revealed by the mention of restaurants, theatres, balls and other forms of entertainment available in the city. In Enis Behiç's poem "Anahtar" (The Key), subtitled "Fantasy from Budapest", the narrator addresses his neighbour, a beautiful young woman, and invites her to go out in order to have a good time. The light tone of this humorous poem is exemplified in the following excerpt:

Dedim ki:"Güzel komşu, bu akşam, isterseniz, Beraber eğlenelim; bir yerde yemek yeriz...	I said: " Beautiful neighbour, this evening, if you [please, Let's have fun together, we will have dinner [somewhere...
Herkesin keyfi tamam!... Tiyatro, sinemalar... Opera... Falan, filân... Operet... Kabare... Bar...	Everybody is fine... The theatre, the cinemas, the Opera... and so on... the Operette, the cabaret [the bar....
Hepsi de hınca hınçtır... Yine siz bilirsiniz, Ama, sanki, birlikte çok eğlenebiliriz!"	All of them must be full of people... Though it's up [to you But, I think, we can have a good time together.

While in most of their works, the *Five Syllabists* stress, by various cultural references, the Turkishness of the protagonists, poems dealing with the theme of love in an urban environment are quite different. Unlike the village girls whose Turkishness is usually mentioned, the ethnic origin of the beloved is never referred to in urban poetry. Enis Behiç is the only poet to mention the nationality of some of the beloved women in

his poems.<sup>15</sup> "Romen Kadını" (Romanian Woman), written while he was working in the consulate in Bucharest and "Büsenin Sesi" (The Sound of the Kiss), a playful poem where the narrator yearns for a kiss from a Hungarian girl in the name of Turkish brotherhood.

The beloved in urban poems is characterised by her independence. Her family and friends are never mentioned. She usually lives on her own. In Yusuf Ziya's poem *Yıllardan Beri* (For Years) the room of the woman who has been abandoned by the narrator is like a *forsaken monastery*. The reference to a *forsaken monastery* and the fact that a woman could live on her own in a bachelor's room in the twenties in Turkey reveal a lot about the cultural and social identity of the narrator and the beloved. She is an independent young woman, who lives separated from her family. She has the tastes of a westernised young lady from a middle-class background. In the poem "Sadaka" (Charity), for instance, she wears a silk dressing gown, lies down in a disorderly, slightly provocative manner and reads Arsène Lupin translations. The reference to Maurice Leblanc's (1864-1941) fictional character and the indecent posture of the urban beloved bring to the fore two important characteristics of hers: Her interest for western, mainly popular, culture and her sensuality:

"Pakize", mavi ipek penüvarla,  
Şezlonga uzanmıştı açık saçık:  
Sînesi, yirmialtı ilkbaharla,  
İki pembe gül taşır yumuşacak.  
Elinde bir gazete tefrikası:  
En yeni "Arsen Lupen sergüzeşti!"  
Tüccardan Reşid Bey'in refikası  
Merakla okudukça pembeleşti

Pakize, in her blue silk dressing gown,  
Was lying indecently on her chaise longue:  
Aged twenty six springs, her bosoms  
Were softly carrying two pink roses.  
She was reading the latest instalment  
Of "Arsène Lupin's adventures."  
The wife of the merchant Reşid Bey,  
Turned pink, as she read on with interest.

The above excerpt exemplifies the general tone of the poem, which is humorous but not meant as an indictment of the westernised bourgeoisie. In urban poems, the narrator too is very westernised and expects western attitudes from his lovers. In the sonnet "Son Arzu" (Last Wish), the narrator asks his beloved to leave the white rose she carries on her bosom on his tomb. Önal points out that leaving a flower on the tomb of a loved one is foreign to Turkish culture, but was fashionable in westernised circles (Önal 1986: 42). The poet achieves an equilibrium between form and content, since a western attitude is narrated in a western poetic form - the sonnet.

<sup>15</sup>Enis Behiç spent a few years abroad, where he worked in Ottoman embassies. He was appointed as scribe in the Ottoman Embassy in Budapest in 1916 where he worked towards the furthering of Hungaro-Turkish friendship. He studied Hungarian and published translations of poems by Szador Petöfi (1823-1849) and Dalmady Gyözö. Some of his own poems were translated into Hungarian by the poet Vikar Béla.

The westernised lovers meet, but their relationship is not based on mutual love or respect. Both of them are extremely fickle. Yusuf Ziya writes that a woman is not a lofty place of worship, but that she is a tavern which intoxicates every traveller. The reference to *meyhane* subverts one of the traditional metaphors of *divân* poetry and the beloved ceases to be the doorway to mystical love:

Şâir, kadın, ulvî bir mâbed değil,  
Her yolcuyu sarhoş eden bir meyhânedir.

("Kadın Aşkı")

Poet, a woman is not a lofty temple.  
She is a tavern intoxicating every traveller.

Lovers can easily be replaced. We have already seen Yusuf Ziya's surprise at the fact that his former lover's room was abandoned. The same Yusuf Ziya writes in "İtiraf" (Confession), that he cheated and was cheated, that he has loved one day and abandoned the next. He both cried and caused tears. The emphasis is on both the man and the woman's free attitude towards love and sexuality. Faruk Nafiz, in the poem "Gönül" (The Soul), writes that women and girls "*picked up flowers from his garden.*" Often the narrators openly express their sensual desire in the poems. They invite women to their rooms, yearn for kisses and caresses. In "Bir Hasret Gecesi" (A Night of Longing), Enis Behiç describes his desire to embrace his beloved, to breathe in the scent of her breasts, her neck and her eyes and to caress her skin:

Ah eğer kollarımın arasında olsaydın...  
Ey taze demet, şimdi kucağıma dolsaydın...  
Koklasaydım göğsünü, boynunu, gözlerini...  
Titreye titreye, ah, okşasaydım derini.

("Bir Hasret Gecesi")

If only you were in my arms...  
Oh, fresh bunch, if you were in my lap...  
If I breathed in the scent of your breasts, your neck,  
[your eyes...  
Oh, if only I could caress your skin with a  
[trembling hand.

In his poems, Enis Behiç displays a predilection for petite women and focuses more particularly on their shoes, which are described as *two doves of love* :

Minimini iskarpinler  
Bir çift kadın iskarpini!  
Ne sevimli güvercinler,  
İki sevdâ güvercini.

("Bir çift iskarpin")

Very small shoes  
A pair of women's shoes!  
What nice doves,  
Two doves of love.

Sometimes though, the *doves of love* become tyrants who crush the narrator. Yet the latter cannot help and expresses his delight at being oppressed by *impudent feet*:

Geçtiler minimini ayaklar üzerimden...  
Ezdiler beni... Fakat ben yine o şair ben!  
Hem o şûh ayakların altında çiğnenirdim,  
Hem de o zalimleri ne kadar beğenirdim!...

("Ey Genç Kadın")

The small feet passed over me.  
They crushed me. Yet I am still the same poet!  
I was trod under those impudent feet.  
Yet at the same time, how much I loved them!

The *Five Syllabists* were the first to openly express sexual desire in their poetry. Although the place of eroticism in some of Yahya Kemal's verses cannot be belittled, carnal desire was first depicted in more realistic terms in syllabic poetry. Konur Ertop is quite right when he claims that the *Five Syllabists* did not only render the language of poetry more accessible, but that lust too was more openly depicted in their verses (Ertop 1977:243-245). Particularly the fetishism (feet, crushing) in Enis Behiç's verses is indicative of the new era that has started in Turkish literature with the syllabists. Indeed after the syllabists, most realms of human experience have become possible themes in poetry. The mystical love of *divân* poetry as well as the aesthetic delight of the *Servet-i Fünûn* poets were now obsolete approaches to the theme of love.

Despite the apparent playfulness of most of the urban lyrics, love in the city seems to bring its lot of pain and distress as well. The relationship brings no fulfilment and remains superficial since the lovers hurt one another. In the poem "Diyorlar" (They Say), Orhan Ziya sees love as the cause of ultimate misery and distress:

Saadet benziyor boş bir seraba,	Happiness is like an illusion,
Düşüyor her seven gönül azaba.	Every loving soul becomes miserable.
Gelmiyor çekilen dertler hesaba.	The misery cannot be accounted for.
Diyorum: sebep nedir bu ıztıraba?	I ask: What is the cause of our distress?

In "O Vefasızın Hicrânı" (The Pain Caused by that Treacherous Woman), Enis Behiç accuses his former lover of having poisoned his youth and of cheating him with foreign kisses. The mention of foreign kisses may have auto-biographical implications and be a reference to his first wife Gabi, a Hungarian teacher of French, whom he divorced apparently because of their disagreements on the Turkish liberation war (Tevetoğlu 1985:50). Nonetheless it is striking that he refers to hopelessness, foreignness, treachery and sinful behaviour in the same quatrain.

Ah ey benim gençliğime zehirler katan!	Oh you who poisoned my youth!
Ey yabancı bûselerle beni aldatan!	Oh you who betrayed me with foreign kisses!
En sevgili ümidimi öldürdün eyvah!	Oh misery, you killed my sweetest hope!
Bak, aşkın harâbesi: Bir yığın günah!	Look at the ruins of your love: A heap of sins!

The pain caused by separation or betrayal is mostly reported and viewed by a male narrator, but Faruk Nafiz also writes about the misery brought upon the lovers, from the point of view of a woman. In the poem "Dün bir Kadın Ağladı" (Yesterday a Woman Cried), the woman calls out to the narrator and breaks into tears in his arms. She invites him to her room and talks about her despair at being betrayed by so many different men. At the end of the poem the narrator, admitting his guilt, concedes that he too has been a source of misery to several women.

Free love in an urban context has only brought misery to men and women. Although the poets acknowledge the pain caused by free love, they do not exercise any

moral judgement on the issue. The relationships are depicted in very realistic terms: The lovers are westernised and independent. They have physical intimacy. They are unfaithful and miserable at the end. This approach is completely new for until now, free love, depicted only in novels, has always been used as a didactic tool in order to warn against the lack of morals in a westernised society. In themselves, urban love poems contain no condemnation of an urban way of life. However the contrast between the complexity and painfulness of urban love and the simplicity and innocence of village love makes a condemnation implicit.

### **Love in the Anatolian countryside**

The relationship between the narrator and his westernised urban beloved is a story of betrayal, distrust, uneasiness and pain. The theme of love in the Anatolian village is in complete contrast to the above. The Anatolian countryside is the place where the disillusioned urban lover finds peace of mind and where naive peasant girls and ingenious shepherds play innocent games of love.

Verses such as Halit Fahri's "Anadolu Akşamı" (Anatolian Evening) form an interesting point of departure from urban poetry. The poem is in the form of a letter, that the narrator addresses to his beloved. He describes the night falling on an Anatolian landscape. Though melancholic, the narrator seems to be at peace with himself, his surroundings and his beloved. A light wind is blowing as if nature was whispering a lullaby to Anatolia. When the sun finally disappears at the horizon, a nostalgic folk song from the region of Muğla, a town in south-western Turkey, can be heard from far away. Written with the syllabic meter and published in 1920 in the collection *Bulutlara Yakın* (Close to the Clouds), this poem expresses a deep tranquillity where the words written by the narrator, the light breeze and the folk song seem to become one and have a soothing effect on the reader. Anatolia is the place where the poet, tormented by treacherous lovers, the fear of death and despair, finds refuge. Similarly in "Anadolu Toprağı" (Anatolian Soil), Orhan Seyfi addresses Anatolia and expresses his wish to become one of the lucky people who live in the embrace of the motherland. Anatolia is not a sensual lover. Her embrace is the embrace of a loving mother. It is of a completely different nature from the sensual embrace of the urban beloved. The narrator finds serenity in the contemplation of Anatolia. In "Anadolu Toprağı", Orhan Seyfi writes that love, youth, glory and fame are futile endeavours. The worship of Anatolia, however, is the source of ultimate satisfaction.

Faruk Nafiz's poem "San'at" (Art) is another declaration of love to Anatolia and a manifesto for the nationalist literature movement. The poem is addressed to a westernised city-dweller. His occupations, which are mentioned in this poem, are those of the lovers in the urban love poems. The opposition between life in the city and life in

the countryside becomes clear in "San'at" and Faruk Nafiz underlines the superiority of the Anatolian countryside. The ordinary pleasures of a westernised young man in a city, such as walking in parks, going to ballrooms, listening to western classical music or visiting museums are nothing compared to the delights given by the contemplation of Anatolian nature. Faruk Nafiz claims that Anatolia, the motherland, is the ultimate work of art and that the true aim of every artist should be the reflection of her beauty. The poet praises the nature of Anatolia, a feature common in the literature of emerging nations. By expressing his love for nature, the poet actually underlines his attachment to the motherland. In "San'at" moreover, Faruk Nafiz contrasts the statue of a woman in a foreign city, which is a source of delight for the westernised man, and the straight back of a village girl. The poet not only argues that Anatolia is the ultimate work of art, but also that the people living on its soil can be the source of artistic delight as well.

One of the innovations of the nationalist literary movement in general, and of the *Five Syllabists* in particular, was to give a due place to ordinary peasants in literature. Yet, the narrator in "San'at" continues to observe the village and its inhabitants from a safe distance. In this particular poem, the village girl is the source of aesthetic pleasure for the poet and not of sensual pleasure. No poet dares to cross the invisible boundary between the city intellectual and the village girl. In Faruk Nafiz's poem "Kızıl Saçlar" (Red Hair), the impossibility of such a relationship is again emphasised. The poet encounters a lonely traveller with an ox-cart on an abandoned path, somewhere in Anatolia. Soon he sees that the traveller is a village girl. Though first he believes that, just like him, she has been struck by a cruel lover, he then realises that she has an extremely strong character. She is a fiery figure, both her skin and her hair are the colour of copper. Her beauty fascinates the poet, yet he soon understands that no stranger will ever be able to touch her. Nonetheless her very presence has soothed his wounds and he has forgotten *the thousand and one lovers* that have hurt him.

The situation is disturbing for the nationalist poet, because he is conscious that he is still a stranger, even though he has now turned his attention to Anatolia. This perception of his condition is shared by the Anatolian people and the poet himself. The distance between the Istanbul intellectual and the Anatolian peasant and landscape is a recurring theme in the literature published during and after the liberation war. In Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's utopian novel *Ankara*, published in 1934, Neşet Sabit, an idealist poet, describes the complex situation in which he, a progressive nationalist intellectual, found himself in Anatolia in the following terms:

"Anatolia too has a language, but we cannot understand it. Have you ever listened to real Anatolian folksongs attentively? They contain all the feverish passion of this

barren stream, of those thin trees and of those dry rocky hills" (Karaosmanoğlu 2000: 87).

Faruk Nafiz is undeniably the most conscious of this estrangement as he had personally experienced it while he travelled through Anatolia during the liberation war. "Han Duvarları" (Walls of the Inn), his most famous poem, was the product of this journey, during which he was struck by the unforgiving landscape and the misery of the people. He is the syllabist who writes most about Anatolia and several of his Anatolian poems stress that Anatolia is far from idyllic: It is a land where brigands live in the mountains ("Kız Hüseyin'i Vurdular", Girl, They Have Shot Hüseyin) and mutilated travellers roam the countryside ("Kolsuz", Without Arms).

Whenever the love theme appears in Anatolian verses, Faruk Nafiz and the other syllabists describe rural life in an idealised and conventionalised manner. It is pleasingly peaceful, innocent and idyllic, just as in Faruk Nafiz's poem "Memleket Türküleri" (Folk Songs), dedicated to Mehmet Emin Yurdakul in 1927. In it, the reader is urged to listen to the beautiful village girl who is singing on her way to the well and to the lonely shepherd who watches over his sheep in the pasture. The reader knows that it is only a matter of time until the two will meet. In "Ahmed'in Müjdesi" (Ahmet's Joyful News), another poem by Faruk Nafiz, this meeting has taken place and an enthusiastic young man comes home and tells his mother that he is in love and wants to marry his beloved. The girl is beautiful. Her ethnic identity is mentioned; she has a Turkish father and a Circassian mother. The tone of the poem is joyful and sprightly. Though the mother and son are poor, this is not seen as an obstacle to happiness. As they will not be able to afford a wedding feast, the boy intends to abduct the girl, which was common practice and a recurrent theme in folk poetry.

These verses portray an easy life in the countryside. The idyll is even more emphasised when compared to the spiritual and emotional hardships the poets experienced with their urban lovers. Though such verses share common elements with pastoral poems, these nationalist poems cannot really be considered pastoral. There are few examples of pastoral poetry properly speaking in Turkish literature. Recâizade Mahmut Ekrem and the *Servet-i Fünûn* group inspired both by him and by the *Parnasse* idealised shepherd life and created the image of a pure, uncorrupted existence in the countryside. Unlike the syllabists, the Turkish advocates of art for its own sake avoided any explicit cultural references. They wrote pastoral poetry at a time of political oppression and censorship. Their poetry was of an escapist nature and displayed a nostalgia for a hypothetical state of felicity that had somehow been lost.

Though, the syllabists' Anatolian village too is not a realistic depiction of life in the fields, any form of resemblance with pastoral poetry ends here. Syllabist poetry is

different from pastoral poetry in two fundamental aspects: The intended audience and the socio-political role of the poems.

In his study of pastoral literature, *Version of Pastorals*, William Empson claims that pastoral literature is not meant to be read by the people it was depicting (Empson 1995:13). This is not entirely true in the case of the *Five Syllabists*. Their choice of the syllabic meter and of a simplified literary language is partly in order to reach a wider audience. However the majority of people at the time were illiterate and thus their depiction of Anatolia ended up being read by city intellectuals.

Moreover the "nationalist pastoral" has not the conservative nature of traditional pastoral verses. Roger Sales believes that the pastoral emerged in English literature in order to prevent the questioning of the power structures that underpinned the complete social fabric (Gifford 1999:8). Similar interpretations of the pastoral phenomena are valid in other literary traditions too. But the *Five Syllabists* wrote nationalist pastorals precisely because they were rejecting current power structures. All of them embraced the Kemalist revolution and its egalitarian populist stance. Theirs was a politically engaged pastoral.

For the *Five Syllabists*, poetry is a way to address social and political issues. In an atypical shepherd-and-village girl-type of love poem, "Ayşe, sana!" (For You Ayşe), Faruk Nafiz directly addresses a village girl and warns her against the shepherd, whom she is in love with. The girl seems close to despair and the poet urges her to forget the vile shepherd, who has already broken the heart of two other girls of the village. By no means should she accept to meet him alone in the forest. It is already too late for such advice and the girl suddenly blushes and breaks into tears. The narrator expresses his distress at her passing without transition from childhood to motherhood. This didactic poem, still very actual with its stance on the risks of unprotected sex, though set in an Anatolian context, is probably more meant to be read by girls living in the city, the very girls that the readers met in the urban poems. Yet it shows an important evolution in Turkish literature. The village context could now also be used as a setting for discussing issues, that might not have been related only to village life.

Village love poetry emphasised the new trend amongst Kemalist literati to oppose Anatolia to Istanbul, the corrupt city. Republican authors attacked Istanbul, the city, as a place of treachery, corruption and of collaboration with the occupation forces during the National Liberation War. While Yakup Kadri Karaosmaoğlu's novel *Sodom ve Gomora* (Sodom and Gomorra) emphasised this view, more conservative authors such as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Yahya Kemal's student, tried to approach the whole issue in a more moderate way, focusing in his novels, short stories and articles on people in Istanbul who opposed foreign occupation. Yahya Kemal too tried to defend Istanbul in *Eğil Dağlar*, his essays about the liberation war. He wrote that, unlike what

some writers and politicians claimed, Istanbul was not the *treacherous Byzantium* (Beyatlı 1993:99).

In the case of the love poetry of the *Five Syllabist*, though no prose writing of theirs are at hand to confirm this, we have a similar critique of the city. Love in the city is a source of unhappiness, while love in the "national" countryside appears to be more harmonious. This harmony can only be destroyed by interventions of the outside world such as war.

### Love and war

War had to be a major theme for poets, who vowed to reflect the realities of their country. While the *Five Syllabists* were literary active, their country was involved in three major conflicts: The Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the First World War (1914-1918) and the National Liberation War (1919-1923). The First World War and the National Liberation War were fought on the national soil and occurred at a time when the *Five Syllabists* had converted to the tenets of national poetry. It is striking that the poems that combine the love and the war themes mainly deal with the First World War. Several poems were also written about the liberation war but the theme of love does not appear in them. It may be argued that the love of the soldier for his *yavuklu*, his beloved, is a longing for the past conditions whereas the liberation war embodies the struggle for political and social change. Hence poems about the First World War and liberation war poems are of a different nature.

War poems deal with the destruction of the idyll, that was discussed in the previous section. The intervention of foreign troops in the Anatolian heartland jeopardises the idyllic conditions and the innocent love of the shepherd and the village girl. The shepherd has to go to war and to fight, very probably to die for the motherland. His fiancée remains in the village and faithfully waits for his return. The poet recognises the costs of war, but depicts them as a necessary price to pay in the pursuit of the higher aim: the liberation of the motherland and the return to previous idyllic conditions.

Unlike the *War Poets* in English literature, none of the *Five Syllabists* express their anger or their disgust at war. The emphasis of the poems that deal with the love and the war theme is not on war itself but on the way individuals, here the soldier and the village girl, cope with the consequences of war. War is not vilified or de-glamorised: The soldier, even though he misses his beloved and is conscious of her longing, does not mind dying. In "Nöbetçi ve Yıldız" (The Guard and the Star), a poem written by Yusuf Ziya about the battle of the Dardanelles, the soldier asks a star about his fiancée, acknowledges both her and his longing, mentions the victory of the Ottoman troops and then confirms that he would not regret to die:

"Allah Allah" diye her gün titretip arşı,  
Süngümüzle durduk yedi düvele karşı!

Şimdiden sonra ölsem bile gam yemem asla!...

Every day we shook the skies with the cry  
["Allah, Allah."]

We stopped seven nations with our bayonets!  
Were I to die now, I would not be sorry.

The majority of war poems written in Western Europe in the twentieth century were actually anti-war poems (Silkin 1996:15-76). In the verses of Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) or Wilhelm Klemm (1881-1968) disgust, anger and disillusion are expressed at the slaughter which all of them were directly experiencing in the battlefields of the First World War. However Yusuf Ziya and Halit Fahri, none of whom directly experienced fighting, expressed patriotic and romantic feelings. There was no tradition of anti-war poetry they could have drawn sustenance on, though some of Tevfik Fikret's poems were an open attack on militarism and Abdülhak Hamit's plays contained scenes that emphasised the misery caused by war.

On the contrary, both Ottoman classical poetry and folk poetry had a well established tradition of panegyric poems and epics celebrating military might and heroic deeds in warfare. The ideal of the conquest of new territories was the central theme in those poems and epics (Kaplan 1994: 450-451). Quite crucially however, this idea of conquest is absent in the First World War poems dealing with the theme of love. Individual heroism is praised but it is somehow hopeless because the hero is always killed.

Nonetheless, the celebration, if not of war, at least of the sacrifice of the individual soldier should come as no surprise. The war poems by Yusuf Ziya and by Halit Fahri were officially commissioned by the Ministry of War (Kurdakul 1994a:118). Halit Fahri was invited in 1915, amongst other poets, to come and visit the troops in the Dardanelles. Their duty was to boost the morale of the army. The Ministry of War also affirmed that it would commission the publication of war poetry by patriotic poets. Yusuf Ziya was one of the rare poets for whom this promise came true (Özgül 1986:16). 10,000 copies of *Akımdan Akma* (From One Raid to Another) were published in 1916 and distributed amongst soldiers. The poet was paid the substantial sum of 220 liras for poems, that he now disliked (Ortaç 1966:41). In 1917, he published another collection of war poetry: *Cenk Ufukları* (Horizons of War). Halit Fahri, on the other hand, collected all his war poems and published them in the same year under a similar title *Cenk Duyguları* (Emotions of War). These two collections did not receive any financial support the government. They were nevertheless written with the same propaganda purpose in mind and were similar in form and content.

Poems that deal with both the theme of love and the theme of war in the poetry of the *Five Syllabists* focus on two major themes: They discuss how the separated lovers relate to one another and explore the particular relationship between the soldier

and the nature of the motherland. The latter is representative of nationalist literature in general, since the poets express that the people and the land, represented here by the nature of the motherland, belong to each other.

A great feeling of abandonment is felt amongst those who are left behind by the young men going to the front. The village, setting of the good life, suddenly becomes an isolated place of silent mourning. In Halit Fahri's poem "İstasyonda" (At the Station), the poet focuses on the families and friends who have come to bid farewell to the soldiers. Folk songs are sung. The train whistles and starts to move and family, lovers and friends are left behind, silent and insecure. The feeling of abandonment and of helplessness is again stressed in another poem by Halit Fahri, "Bekleyen Bakireler" (The Waiting Maidens). The title of the poem underlines the faithfulness of the village girls. The maidens meet in the gardens, where they used to meet secretly their lovers and remember them and the moment their lovers left. The gardens, that used to be a place of innocent love games have now become *the tomb of their last kiss*.

Village girls in the war poetry of the *Five Syllabists* easily break into tears. In "Bayram Mektubu" (Letter for the Festival) by Halit Fahri, a soldier writes to his grandmother, back in the village. He mentions that he has just received her latest letter and expresses his surprise at the fact that a Turkish girl may cry on the day of revenge.

It is remarkable that in all the Balkan War and First World War poems, a very passive image of village girls is given. They spend their time remembering their fiancé and they cry a lot. Their fidelity is never questioned. The village is as if paralysed. We do not see any women working in the fields, organising resistance against the invaders or even collecting food and clothes in order to send to the front. Yet novels and poems written about the liberation war emphasised the active role played by the women.

However for the *Five Syllabists* a more active role of women in the First World War context would lead to the utter destruction of the village idyll. Involvement by women in the war or in village affairs would make a return to the pre-war situation impossible. Relationships between men and women might change. The hard-working yet submissive and coy village girl might become the equal of the city girl, a source of torment for men. When the soldier returns from war, he expects to find the village as he left it. One should not forget that the poems were written with a propaganda purpose. Their audience were supposedly soldiers. The aim of the poems was to lift the morale of the troops, to remind them that there were people back at home who were patiently and lovingly waiting for them. For many of these young men, their village was all they knew of their country. In war poems, the attachment of the soldier to his village and his beloved represents his attachment to the motherland. A description of changing conditions at home may distress the soldier and have an adverse effect on his morale.

The conservative nature of these poems can be explained by the fact that the poems written about the First World War are about the defence of the motherland and not about the creation of a new state. In war poems dealing directly or in an allegorical way with the liberation war, women play a much more active part. "Kara Fatma" (Black Fatma), an epic published in 1938 in the collection *Akıncı Türküleri* (The Raiders' Songs), introduces a different kind of woman, the warrior.

In the poem, the Turkish army has been defeated and is moribund. The country is occupied by the enemy. Most people are discontent with the situation but they are nevertheless resigned. Suddenly a woman, *whose mother was either a lion or a leopard*, addresses widows, old people, children and fiancées and tells them to follow the example of the young men and to fight in order to free Erzurum, their town. The people follow Kara Fatma and although they have no weapons they defeat the enemy. In this particular poem, Fatma, the Anatolian woman, leads an army of women, old people and children to victory. The very people who were waiting for the return of the heroes in First World War poetry become heroes and a major theme in liberation war poetry. Syllabist liberation war poetry undeniably contributed to the *Image d'Epinal* of Kemalist propaganda after the liberation war, that put emphasis on the heroic role played by women behind the frontlines. The love theme, however, is absent in poems that deal with the liberation war.

The other recurring theme in the First World War poetry of the *Five Syllabists* is the strong attachment existing between the soldier and the nature of the motherland which he is defending. In the poem "Kafkas'ta Kalanlar" (Those who died in the Caucasus), Yusuf Ziya addresses the soldiers who are fighting during the Sarıkamış campaign in 1914 against the Russians and asks them whether the wind has brought them news of their beloved. In the adverse weather conditions of the harsh Caucasian winter the wind blowing from Anatolia appears as a messenger between the soldier and his Anatolian village:

Neler diyor size vatan rüzgarı,  
Haber vermiyor mu sevgilinizden?  
Soğuk mu Kafkas'ın karlı dağları?  
Mektup bekleyenler var halâ sizden!

What is the wind of the motherland telling you,  
Has it not brought news from your beloved?  
Are the snowy mountains of the Caucasus cold?  
There are people who are still waiting for your letters!

In "Şehidin Kalbi" (The Heart of the Martyr), another poem by Yusuf Ziya, a dialogue occurs between a soldier and nature, this time symbolised by a crow. The soldier has been deadly wounded during the battle of the Dardanelles and addresses the crow, that is waiting for him to die in order to feed on his corpse. He wants him to go and inform his beloved of his death:

Karga... Biraz dinle beni son vasiyyetim:  
Bugün artık yuvam öksüz, evlâdım yetim!  
Şimdi belki pencereden gözleri yaşlı

O crow... Listen to me. These are my last wishes:  
Today my wife is a widow, my child an orphan!  
Maybe she is at the window now, with tearful eyes



Their depiction of love in an urban context was truly revolutionary however. They realistically wrote about free love without condemning it. Until then, only novelists had dealt in a realistic fashion with issues such as free love and lust, but only in order to condemn them. The syllabists, however, made no moral judgement on the issue and wrote about the desires of both men and women. Yusuf Ziya and Faruk Nafiz had in various poems dealing with the love theme rejected the mystical approach and written that human love was at least equal to divine love.

Nonetheless it is striking that love in the urban context lead to unhappiness, whereas love in the Anatolian countryside was easygoing and full of simple joys. Anatolia was the place where the urban poet took refuge and found peace of mind observing the life and love of naive village girls and enterprising shepherds. He only observed them and did not fall in love in the village. The syllabists were aware of the huge gap that existed between their urban persona and the idealised village people that they were depicting. This, however, formed a striking contrast with Yahya Kemal, whose persona had consummated the marriage with the national bride.

The idyllic conditions in the village could only be destroyed by war, that is, the interference of foreign elements. War poetry again emphasised the importance of Anatolia and its inhabitants. The young men went to fight and their fiancées faithfully waited for them to return. In liberation war poetry women played a more active role, but it was striking that the theme of love did not occur in liberation war poems. This reflected the new conditions during the liberation war which was exclusively fought on the immediate homeland and thus involved everyone. The liberation war poems played a propaganda role in the building of the new nation and thus reflected Kemalism's stance on women's rights.

The opposition of urban love and village love was remarkable in the verses of the syllabists and was a striking feature of several novels of the time too. This conflict should not be interpreted as a rejection of life in the city in favour of a simpler life in the countryside though. In literature of the liberation war period, the city was always Istanbul, occupied by foreign troops and the seat of the collaborationist government of the sultan. Istanbul was a place of corruption. Meanwhile, the village and village people symbolised the fight for independence and the resistance against the invading armies.

The focus on Anatolia was the other important feature of syllabist love poetry. When Halit Fahri wrote his famous poem "Aruz'a Veda" (Farewell to the *Aruz*), he may not have been only quitting a particular verse form, but also certain subjects: The use of the syllabic meter was intrinsically linked with the narration of Anatolia and its inhabitants. Whereas the *aruz* metrical prosody was used in order to describe highly stylised love relationships (from the *divân* period up to Yahya Kemal), the syllabic

meter was used in more realistic love poetry. The *Five Syllabists* transformed laborious peasants and the lascivious lovers into suitable poetry subjects.

The project of the *Five Syllabists* had a number of similarities with the invention of modern national literary projects in post-colonial societies. The obvious difference was that in post-colonial societies nationalist writers dealt with the issue that literary continuity had been interrupted by the arrival of colonial powers and the following imposition of foreign language and culture, whereas in the Ottoman - Turkish case, it was the urban intellectual who rejected his own Ottoman past in order to reinvent a new national literary identity. Despite this and even though the Ottoman Empire had never been colonised in the strict sense of the word, Ottoman literature did however share certain common features with post-colonial literature: the language of literature was distinct from the language actually spoken and it did not deal with the actual people inhabiting the land. Ottoman literature did not deny dignity and autonomy to the Anatolians, as would have been typical of colonial literature, it simply ignored them. Hence the syllabists, just like nationalist literati of the third world, dealt with the ordinary reality of the people in their works, which were primarily addressed to the people of the emerging nation, and sought to engage them in their own project of self-definition.

The realism in the urban poetry, the focus on ordinary people in the village poetry and the use of folk forms and motifs were to clear the stage for a more naturalist approach in poetry. The works and achievements of the *Five Syllabists* were soon to be overshadowed by the literary revolution engendered by Nazım Hikmet (Ran)'s revolutionary poetry. Nonetheless, the *Bizarre (Garip)* group and the socialist realist poets were much indebted to the *Five Syllabists*.

## Chapter III

### Humane Portraits of Love: The poetry of Nazım Hikmet

#### Nazım Hikmet: Life and poetry

Yahya Kemal and the *Five Syllabists* greatly influenced the development of Turkish poetry in the twentieth century. Nonetheless their impact on the course taken by Turkish poetry cannot be compared to the tremendous upheavals caused by Nazım Hikmet's literary and political fate. Although, several Turkish novelists such as Latife Tekin, Orhan Pamuk and Yaşar Kemal have gained wide international recognition, Nazım Hikmet is still the only Turkish language poet to have been extensively translated into foreign languages and to have become the subject of biographies published by mainstream publishers outside Turkey, notable among them, Saime Göksu and Edward Timms' *Romantic Communist* and Dietrich Gronau's monograph *Nâzım Hikmet*.<sup>1</sup> The mere mention of Nazım Hikmet's name still leads to passionate debates in Turkey between his admirers and his detractors, but not so much for literary as for political reasons. Nazım Hikmet did not only revolutionise Turkish poetry, but he was also a martyr of the Marxist cause, who spent most of his adult life in prison or in exile in the Soviet Union.

Nazım Hikmet was born in Salonica on 15 June 1902, descending from a typically cosmopolitan Ottoman ruling class family. He was of partly Huguenot, partly Polish descent on his mother's side. In January 1921, he joined the broad liberation front under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal in Anatolia and taught for some time in Bolu, a small town in south-west Anatolia. He wrote patriotic poetry inspired by the liberation war. His early verses written with the syllabic meter were still influenced by the works of the masters of syllabic poetry. It is during their journey through Anatolia, that Nazım Hikmet and his companion Vala Nurettin met Turkish students close to Karl Liebknecht's and Rosa Luxemburg's *Spartakus* group, who had just been deported from Germany, and were introduced to Marxism (Göksu & Timms 1999:17).

Marxism entered the Ottoman Empire at a relatively late stage and only became an influential ideology after the establishment of the second constitution in 1908. Several short-lived newspapers were published between 1908 and 1913 in Istanbul and Salonica, the two cities that dominated progressive Ottoman intellectual life. The papers mainly published translated articles and essays of leading Marxist thinkers as well as analysis of national events that affected the life of the working class and the peasants.

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<sup>1</sup> *Romantic Communist* was published by the London based editor *Hurst & Company* in 1999 (Göksu & Timms 1999) and *Nâzım Hikmet* was published by the German publisher *Rowohlt* in 1991 (Gronau 1991).

These were years of great social unrest. The Ottoman Socialist Party (Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası) was founded in September 1913 and campaigned on a broad scope of issues, ranging from the nationalisation of the railways to the abolition of the death penalty. Several socialist authors, both “utopian” and “scientific”, were translated into Turkish during those years.<sup>2</sup>

Two Salonica-based journals were particularly active on the literary front and published poems that were bridging the gap between the committed humanism of Tevfik Fikret and the more ideological poetry of the later years. Rasim Haşmet (1888-1919) published his poems in *Bahçe* (The Garden), whereas A.Rıfki and Muallim Cudi published their works in *İştirak* (Socialism). Yaşar Nezihe (1880-1935)<sup>3</sup> is a little known but remarkable figure that should be mentioned together with the pioneers of socialist poetry. A single mother from a working class background, she wrote committed poetry that was mainly published in the women’s magazine *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women’s World).

The assassination of the Prime Minister Mahmut Şevket Paşa (12 August 1913) led to a crackdown on every form of opposition. The left wing press was outlawed and unions and workers’ clubs were closed. After 1918, *Kurtuluş* (Liberation, 1919-1920) and *Aydınlık* (Enlightenment, 1921-1925) were published. The latter was the official organ of the newly founded Socialist Workers and Peasant’s Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Sosyalist Fırkası*), that firmly supported the Turkish liberation war and was edited by Şefik Hüsnü (Değmer) who would later become the general secretary of the party. Nazım Hikmet too became a collaborator of the newspaper after the liberation war.

Nazım Hikmet left Anatolia and travelled to the Soviet Union in 1922 and stayed there until 1924. He studied economics and sociology at the Communist University for the Workers of the East in Moscow, where he attended lectures, among others, of Leo Trotsky (1879-1940) and of Mirseyid Sultan-Ghaliev (1892-1940), the herald of Third World nationalism.

Nazım Hikmet also discovered the poetry of Vladimir Mayakovski (1893-1930) during those years and he wrote verses that were inspired by the futurist poems of the native of Bagdadi.<sup>4</sup> The poems were written with free verse. His inventiveness in form

<sup>2</sup> The development of Marxist and socialist ideology is the subject of a series of articles by Paul Dumont that were collected and published in Dumont 1997. Similarly Mete Tuncay and Erich Jan Zürcher have edited a collection of essays on the impact of socialist and nationalist thought in the final years of the Ottoman Empire (Tuncay & Zürcher 1994).

<sup>3</sup> A section is devoted to her in Tamsöz 1994: 104-109.

<sup>4</sup> Nazım Hikmet never liked to acknowledge his indebtedness to influential literary figures and made the following claim on the influence of Mayakovsky on his early works in an article published on 31. 12.1934, in the daily *Akşam* newspaper:

“ I learned a lot from Mayakovsky after studying Russian, reading his works and meeting him. I had learned a lot from the French poets after studying French and similarly, I learned a lot from Russian poets after studying Russian. Mayakovsky was amongst those poets. His works were the

and language attracted both applause and controversy. The working class, their language, condition and the struggle for their liberation became a central theme of his poetry, which reflected both urban and folk sources. In 1924 Nazım Hikmet returned to Turkey, but had to flee back to the Soviet Union after the subversive nature of his poems led to a condemnation by a tribunal. He went back to Turkey in 1928 and was arrested again. After his release he wrote for various journals and newspapers.

In 1929 he published *835 Satır* (835 Lines), a collection that included most of his poems, inspired by futurist techniques. He published an epic in free verse *Jokond ile Si-Ya-U* (Mona Lisa and Si-Ya-U) and unleashed a devastating attack on the literary establishment in a series of articles entitled *Putları Yıkıyoruz* (We're Destroying the Idols) in the monthly *Resimli Ay* (The Month in Pictures) in the same year. Ahmet Haşım wrote an article after the publication of *835 Satır*<sup>5</sup>, where he heralded, not without a certain melancholy, the coming of a new poetic age in Turkey. He wrote that "there was no doubt that Nazım Hikmet's poetry was superior to ancient poetry. Poetry used to be played on just one flute but Nazım Hikmet interprets poetry with a huge orchestra." Ahmet Haşım however also regretted that "this orchestra could only play marches" and was "unable to express the longings of the soul" (Haşım 1991:232).

Between 1930 and 1936 Nazım Hikmet published not less than eight collections of poetry, despite continuous police harassment.<sup>6</sup> The collections consisted of short poems and epics. Most reflected his own struggles and his tumultuous life but some dealt also with historical events. Others still were political and literary satires.

*Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedrettin Destanı*, published in 1936, was the beginning of a new phase in the literary development of Nazım Hikmet, during which he researched modern, folk and classical sources in order to lay the foundation of a new linguistic and formal synthesis for poetry. Free verse, syllabic meter and metrical prosody were used side by side. The poet regularly switched from poetry to prose throughout the epic, telling the story of the 14th century Shaykh Bedrettin who, at least in Hikmet's work, professed a multi-faith, anti authoritarian protosocialism. This constant switch between verse and prose echoed similar attempts by some of his contemporaries, such as Chaim Bialik (1873-1934), the Hebrew Zionist poet, who

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best examples I read, of the linguistic movement which was dominant after the war. Some of my writings were influenced by Futurism in general, but not by Mayakovsky in particular" (Çalışlar 1987: 250, 251).

<sup>5</sup> The article was published on 24.04.1929 in the daily *İkdam* (Effort) newspaper, where Ahmet Haşım had a regular column.

<sup>6</sup> The collections are *Varan 3* (Third Step, 1930), *1+1=1* (1930), *Sesini Kaybeden Şehir* (The City That Lost Its Voice, 1931), *Benerci Kendini Niye Öldürdü* (Why Did Benerci Commit Suicide, 1932), *Gece Gelen Telgraf* (The Telegraph That Came at Night, 1932), *Taranta Babu'ya Mektuplar* (Letters to Taranta Babu, 1935), *Portreler* (Portraits, 1935) and *Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedrettin Destanı* (The Epic of Shaykh Bedrettin, the Son of the Qadi of Simavne, 1936).

claimed that “it was a folly to differentiate between prose and poetry”<sup>7</sup> (MacDiarmid 1992:226).

This epic did not only present the new direction of Nazım Hikmet’s poetry, it was also his last poetry book to be published in Turkey during his life-time. In 1938, Nazım Hikmet Ran was condemned, on very dubious charges, to 35 years of imprisonment by the Tribunal of the War Academy and the Naval Command for incitement to communism. His works were forbidden by the Turkish State and he could not publish any of his new works in book form. However his art peaked during his prison years. He mixed the personal and the political with great dexterity in his shorter poems. Two further long epics, written during his years in imprisonment, *Kuva-yı Milliye Destanı* (The Epic of the Independence War) and *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*<sup>8</sup> (Human Landscapes From My Country) confirmed him as the major Turkish poet who had grasped and synthesised the essence of *divân* and folk literature and managed to blend them with the tenets of socialist realism in order to reflect even the most prosaic elements of Anatolian and Turkish reality.

In 1950 he was released from prison after an international campaign but he had to escape to the Soviet Union again in order to avoid further political persecution. Exile, love, death and world peace were the major themes of the poems of this period of his life.

The unavailability of his works during long years has certainly influenced the evolution of Turkish poetry.<sup>9</sup> Even today the debate still rages on whether and to what extent the classical literary tradition should be used as a source of inspiration for modern poets. It is one of those ironies of history that today Yahya Kemal and Nazım Hikmet, who both brought answers to this question, have become poetic standard-bearers of two politically irreconcilable strands of society.<sup>10</sup>

### Love in the life and poetry of Nazım Hikmet

<sup>7</sup> Bialik’s claim was later used by Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978), the Scottish socialist poet and nationalist activist, as an inspiration for his own experimentation in his major work *In Memoriam James Joyce* (1955).

<sup>8</sup> The long and complex creation process of *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*, considered by many as the peak of Nazım Hikmet’s art, is described in detail in Göksu & Timms 1999: 217-238. The work was written between 1939 and 1961. Several earlier drafts of the work got lost as they had been written while the poet was in prison.

<sup>9</sup> *Kuva-yı Milliye Destanı*, Nazım Hikmet’s great epic of the national liberation war, was only published in 1965 and *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* in 1966.

<sup>10</sup> The critic Fethi Naci explores this issue in an essay entitled “Eski şiirimizden yararlanmak ya da çözülmüş bir sorunu yeniden tartışmak” where he discusses in particular Yahya Kemal’s use of the classical tradition and the impact it had on, among others, Nazım Hikmet (Naci 1997:39-44). The recycling of the classical tradition in contemporary poetry is also a central concern of Metin Celâl’s articles on Turkish poetry after 1980 in Celâl 1999.

Nazım Hikmet's love life has been another area beside his literary achievements and his political activism that has attracted the attention of literati and laymen alike. The critic Emin Karaca dedicated a book to the poet's turbulent love life. The book entitled *Nazım Hikmet'in Aşkları* (The Loves of Nazım Hikmet) was published in 1999 and discusses Nazım Hikmet's relations with his four wives Nüzhet, Pirâye, Münevver and Vera Tulyakova and his numerous lovers. While imprisoned in Bursa, Nazım Hikmet explained in a letter to Vala Nurettin that he knew that his quest for an ideal love was hopeless and tried to give an explanation for his restlessness in love (Karaca 1999:124).

It is tempting to link a particular approach to the theme of love to a particular phase or a particular woman in Nazım Hikmet's love life: The rare love poems written before his encounter with Pirâye deal mostly with the relationship between love and political activism. Poems written during his marriage with Pirâye, that is mostly during years which he spent in prison in the late thirties and in the forties, depict the beloved as a friend and a comrade. The beloved is seen for the first time in Turkish poetry, as a real human being. Poems written for Münevver are mostly about the theme of exile. The motherland is identified with the figure of the beloved, which is not surprising since they were written after his exile in 1951. Finally, poems written about Vera Tulyakova are written with an almost adolescent passion by a man who is thirty years older than his wife. Those poems were mostly written in the late fifties and early sixties, just before the poet's death.

However it must be stressed that the various approaches to the theme overlap over their respective periods. The biographical identity of the beloved in the poems is certainly of great importance for biographers of the poet, but it is of little relevance when it comes to study his novel approach to the theme of love and his role in the literary evolution of his country. Actually, the biographical identity of the beloved is not obvious at all in several poems, which has led to the spilling of much ink.<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless there are interesting comments on Nazım Hikmet's conception of love in his private writings. They usually refer to particular events in his life and are important clues for the interpretation of his works. In 1947, he told Vala Nurettin in a letter, that "*life was not worth living unless one was in love with one person and also with millions of people*" (Hikmet 1970:57). The link between love of the beloved and human solidarity is a motive that appears in several of his poems. It is a motive he

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<sup>11</sup> In September 1995, Yalçın Küçük, a writer for the Kurdish nationalist newspaper *Özgür Politika* (Free politics), summarised the futility of the debate raging around the sentimental life of Nazım Hikmet:

"And now [ Turkish intellectuals] debate very seriously about Nazım Hikmet's love affairs and his women. I am following this incredible debate in *Söz* (Speech), a journal that has not much to say. The most substantial issues for the stupid (sic. *aptal*) Turkish left and intellectuals are Nazım Hikmet's love life and his hunger strike; as if there were no other hunger strikes and that love has ceased to exist" (Karaca 1999:220).

shared with contemporary socialist poets abroad, but it was rather unique in Turkey at the time. From a Turkish perspective, Nazım Hikmet's approach to the theme of love was novel in four major aspects: He explored the problematic relationship between political activism and love. He introduced everyday reality, even the most trivial aspects of it, into love poetry. He portrayed the beloved as an independent human being who was also a friend, a confidante and comrade. Finally he focused on the physical and sexual identity of the woman, which did not go without the perpetuation of sexist imagery.

Those particular aspects of the love poetry of Nazım Hikmet will be discussed under three headings. "Love and Political Engagement" will explore the poet's discourse on the relationship between love and activism. "The Beloved as Companion and the Poetics of Realism" will discuss Nazım Hikmet's revolutionary new depiction of the beloved as a friend and confidante and his introduction of the most prosaic elements of everyday life into love poetry. Finally under the heading "Portraits of Women", Nazım Hikmet's focus on male desire and physical features of ordinary women will be explored.

### **Love and political engagement**

"I am not a great writer like Gorky, but I love the people of Turkey and honest people throughout the world as much as I love you, your mother and my mother. It seems to me that if you do not love like this, you cannot really love your son, your wife, your daughter, your mother, your country, your people or mankind. Love is not something passive, it is an action" (Hikmet 1968:95).

The above paragraph, excerpted from a letter that Nazım Hikmet wrote to Mehmet Fuat<sup>12</sup>, Pirâye's son from her previous marriage, is indicative of one of Nazım Hikmet's main beliefs. The poet often underlined in his correspondence and in his theoretical writings, literary or else, that love felt for a fellow human being was of the same nature as love felt for mankind or for one's country. This claim was also discussed in some of his poems like *Münevver'e Mektup Yazdım Dedim Ki* (I Wrote a Letter to Münevver and Said). In those verses, written shortly after his arrival in Moscow in 1951, the poet expressed his longing for Münevver, his wife, and for their son Memed<sup>13</sup>. The poem poignantly finishes with the narrator identifying his wife and his son with the motherland:

Ağaçlar duruyor, eski sıralar ölmüş.

The trees are still in place, but the rows have gone.

<sup>12</sup> The letter is not dated, but it must have been written in the late forties.

<sup>13</sup> It is a general trait of Nazım Hikmet's most personal writings that he always mentioned his love for his children right next to his love for his wife. Years earlier he had written to his adoptive son Memet Fuat that: "*Your mother is one of the people in the world that I love most. And my love for you is just next to my love for her and cannot be separated from it.*" (Hikmet 1968:7)

"Park Boris" Hürriyet Parkı olmuş.  
Sade seni düşündüm kestanenin altında  
sade seni yani Memed'i  
sade seninle Memed'i yani memleketi...

"Boris Park" has become Freedom Park.  
I only thought of you under the chestnut tree,  
only you, that is, only Memed,  
only you and Memed, that is, the country...

Human solidarity as a natural extension of "private" love has been a theme used by other poets too, with whom Nazım Hikmet avowedly shared a common political, but not poetical sensitivity. The French socialist poet Louis Aragon (1897-1982) gained popular and literary success with several collections of poems that combined the themes of love and patriotism during the Second World War. The books clandestinely published in the south of France during the dark years of Nazi occupation celebrated both his love for Elsa, his wife and muse, and the occupied motherland, *la France aux yeux de tourterelle* (dove-eyed France) ("Je Te Salue Ma France" (I Salute You, My France) in *Le Musée Grévin*, 1943).<sup>14</sup> The rhythms and the unorthodox syntax of the poems still evoked Aragon's surrealist years, but the inspiration for the poems was well set in reality.

Nazım Hikmet too wrote poems that combined human love and patriotism. The identification mostly takes place in poems dedicated to Münevver after his exile to Moscow in 1951. The poems do not introduce any new element into Turkish love poetry. By the time Nazım Hikmet started writing both Yahya Kemal Beyatlı and the *Five Syllabists* had already written and/or published poems that identified the beloved in one way or another to the motherland.

In the poetry of Nazım Hikmet the combination of the themes of love and patriotism has a particular personal significance, since the poet spent most of his life either in prison or in exile. It is not really poetry about patriotism, but rather poetry about longing. In *Sen* (You), one of his last poems, Nazım Hikmet expressed his longing for his motherland with an erotic imagery and verve that could only be envied by the first generation of syllabists. The motherland is *like his burning flesh in a naked summer night*. The poet stressed that the presence of the motherland, personified as a beautiful woman with hazel eyes was as much a physical need as an intellectual one.

Sen esirliğim ve hürriyetimsin:  
Çıplak bir yaz gecesi gibi yanan etimsin.  
Sen memleketimsin.  
Sen, elâ gözlerinde yeşil hâreler,  
Sen büyük, güzel ve muzaffer  
Ve ulaşıldıkça ulaşılmaz olan  
Hasretimsin.

You are my captivity and my freedom:  
You are my flesh burning like a summer night.  
You are my country.  
You, with green shades in your hazel eyes,  
You are great, beautiful and triumphant  
Unreachable the more I reach for you  
You are my longing.

The erotic passion of these verses, very unlike Louis Aragon's prude celebration of France, are closer to some of Pablo Neruda (1904-1973)'s poems in his collection

<sup>14</sup> Those collections are *Cantique à Elsa* (Hymn For Elsa, 1942), *Brocéliande* (1942), *Le Musée Grévin* (1943), *Je Te Salue, Ma France* (1944), *La Diane Française* (The French Diana, 1944).

*Los Versos del Capitán* (The captain's verses). The poems, published anonymously in 1952, were dedicated to Matilde Urrutia, who was later to marry him, and *related to a pair of lovers aware of their wider horizon* (Pring Mill 1975:L). In several poems of the collection, the Chilean poet linked his passion for the beloved to his love for his country and for humanity.

There are autobiographic and historical reasons that led Hikmet, Aragon and Neruda to write on the themes of love and patriotism: the Second World War for the French poet and political persecution and exile for his Turkish and Chilean counterparts. There are also instances where Nazım Hikmet combines the theme of love with the theme of all-encompassing human solidarity. Patriotic verses do also express a form of human solidarity, but that particular solidarity is limited to certain geographic or cultural boundaries. Such verses are usually the product of particular historical circumstances, whereas lines on the theme of love for mankind are passionate outbursts by humanist poets, that were not necessarily triggered by particular events.

Nazım Hikmet confirmed his belief that love and solidarity were the two sides of the same coin in a letter to Vala Nurettin. He wrote that *"life was not worth living unless one was in love with both one person and millions of people"* (Hikmet 1970:57). That is an important theme in the poetry of socialist poets in general. Paul Eluard (1895-1952), whose poetic sensitivity was shared by Nazım Hikmet (Çalışlar 1987:258), combined the theme of love to the theme of universal love in several of his poems that he dedicated to his three lovers and muses: Gala (1912-1929), Nush (1929-1946) and finally Dominique. Paul Eluard presented the loving couple in his poetry as the founding principle of a loving, peaceful and humane society. Individual love was strengthened by becoming universal. Thus there was a two-way relationship: Individual love lead to universal love and universal love strengthened individual love, mainly through an active common commitment of the lovers to a socialist ideal. Paul Eluard did not only celebrate universal human love and solidarity, but he also extolled the love of the whole universe, including space, nature and time, (Cf. poems such as "Anniversaire" (Birthday, written for Nush in 1944) or "Nous Deux" (Both of Us, written for Dominique in 1951), which was an approach that was not shared by the Turkish poet.

Nazım Hikmet mostly focused on the links between individual and universal human love. This point was illustrated in the poem "26 Eylül 1945" (26 September 1945)<sup>15</sup>, which was addressed to his second wife Pirâye while he was imprisoned in Bursa:

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<sup>15</sup> This poem is part of the collection *Pirâyem İçin Saat 21-22 Şiirleri*. This collection has an interesting history in itself. While imprisoned in Bursa the poet decided to spend one hour every evening writing poems about Pirâye; hence the title *Poems For My Pirâye Written Between 9 and 10 p.m.*

Bizi esir ettiler,  
bizi hapse attılar:

beni duvarların içinde  
seni duvarların dışında

Ufak iş bizimkisi  
Asıl en kötüsü:  
bilerek, bilmeyerek  
hapisaneyi insanın kendi içinde taşıması...  
İnsanların birçoğu bu hale düşürülmüş,  
namuslu, çalışkan, iyi insanlar  
ve seni sevdiğim kadar sevilmeğe lâyık.

They have taken us prisoner,  
they have locked us up:  
me inside the walls  
you outside the walls.

But that is nothing  
The worst is when man carries  
knowingly or not  
the prison inside him....  
Most people have been made to live like this;  
honest, hard-working, good-people  
and who deserve to be loved as much as I love you.

The poet does not deny the difficulties the couple face after his imprisonment. Nonetheless, he believes that their fate is less harsh than the fate of others who were forced to carry their own prison inside themselves. The loving couple has a strength that they do not have. The poet believes that their love should be directed towards those people who also deserve it. Individual love has led to social concern and by universalising that love the fate of other people can be transformed.

Though the combination of the theme of love with the themes of political action and human solidarity will remain a major approach to love during his whole life, Nazım Hikmet dealt with it more particularly during the first stage of his literary development (up to 1936). Nazım Hikmet published a poem entitled *Kerem Gibi* (Like Kerem) in the current affairs monthly *Resimli Ay* in June 1930.<sup>16</sup> The poem was a call to political commitment. It was written as a reaction to Vala Nurettin' s appeal to Nazım Hikmet to tone down his committed poems in order to avoid political persecution (Göksu & Timms 1999:86). The poem was remarkable in the sense that Nazım Hikmet was directly referring to the legendary lover Kerem in the folk tale *Kerem ile Aslı*<sup>17</sup>, who was consumed by fire because he was unable to unbutton the dress of his beloved Aslı in the allotted time. The combination of folk motives with futurist metrics was a precursor of the synthesis the poet started to develop after 1936.

-Kül olayım  
Kerem  
gibi  
yana  
yana.  
Ben yanmasam  
sen yanmasan  
biz yanmazsak  
nasıl  
çıkarmak  
karan-  
lıklar

-Let me turn into ashes  
like  
Kerem  
burning  
and burning.  
If I don't burn  
if you don't burn  
if we don't burn  
how  
will  
darkness  
turn  
into

<sup>16</sup> Fuat 1998 indicates the date as May 1930.

<sup>17</sup> Several editions of the folk tale are available:

R. Georgieva (editor), *Kerem ile Aslı*, Sofia: Narodna Prosveta, 1962.

Şükrü Elçin (editor), *Kerem ile Aslı*, Ankara: MEB, 1949.

aydın-  
-lığa

light

The plague of the lover Kerem becomes the plague of the politically engaged poet who must be consumed by the passion to serve the people.<sup>18</sup> It was part of Nazım Hikmet's literary project to use elements of folk and classical poetry and to re-interpret them in a way to serve his own political aims and in this poem love for an individual human is transformed into love for the whole of mankind.<sup>19</sup> Moreover the mystical dimension of the poem has also been subverted and the ultimate aim of the lover is not the union with God, but the union with the people.

*Jokond ile Si-Ya-U* (Mona Lisa and Si-Ya-U) was another poem, this time of an epic dimension, that celebrated the themes of love and political engagement side by side. In a critical article published in *Resimli Ay* in December 1929, Peyami Safa praised, among others, Nazım Hikmet's combination of the language of traditional folk tales with modern urban speech in the poem (Göze 1994:109-113). Although the language of the epic might have been a modernist adaptation of the language of folk tales, the content of the poem had not much in common with folk tales. Published in book form towards the end of 1929, the poem told the love story between Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting Mona Lisa and a Chinese socialist student Si-Ya-U.<sup>20</sup> He rightly identified the symbolic nature of the tale. Peyami Safa wrote that the love and the ideals of the characters were the love and the ideals of the poet (Göze 1994:109). In the poem, Mona Lisa is bored to death hanging on the walls of the Louvres museum in Paris. She falls in love with a Chinese student called Si-Ya-U who is also a socialist militant. Si-Ya-U is arrested during a political demonstration and is deported to China. Gioconda decides to follow him to China. She breaks out of the museum and manages after a long and eventful journey to reach Shanghai, where she witnesses the execution of her lover. Gioconda loses her smile at that very moment, but regains it when she is

<sup>18</sup> Nedim Gürsel studies the poem "Kerem Gibi" and explores its links with folk poetry, the divân tradition and Hikmet's earlier works (Gürsel 1992:19-83).

<sup>19</sup> This is again the theme of the play *Ferhad ile Şirin* written in 1948. Here Nazım Hikmet makes use of the famous folk tale *Ferhad ile Şirin*, which was also the base of Nizâmî's poem. Ferhad, madly in love with Şirin, is condemned by her jealous sister Mehmene Banu to pierce the mountain of iron so that water may reach the city. Only then will he be allowed to marry Şirin. Later, Mehmene Banu realises the cruelty of her judgement and changes her mind. Ferhad, however, continues to build the passage for the water because he is conscious of the need of the people. His aim has changed. To marry Şirin is not his main endeavour anymore. He wants to render a service to the people. Love for a human being has developed into love of mankind. Nazım Hikmet wrote in a letter to his wife Pirâye that was printed in the 1965 edition of the play that his aim was to show that *love felt towards an individual was not in opposition to love felt for the whole of mankind, that it was one and the same thing* (Çalışlar 1987: 168 & Hikmet 1976:260).

<sup>20</sup> The latter character was inspired by Emi Siao, a Chinese student Nazım Hikmet had befriended in Moscow. In 1924 Emi Siao went back to China and Nazım Hikmet believed him to have been killed in the same year after anti-Communist repression had reached its peak in China (Göksu & Timms 1999: 90).

condemned to death by burning by a French military court in China. Mona Lisa smiles during her barbaric execution because she is dying for the freedom of the Chinese people. Love that was once directed towards a particular human being has now been transformed into love for the whole Chinese people. Si-Ya-U's struggle has genuinely become hers.

The poem's particular importance comes to the fore when we take into consideration that Nazım Hikmet subverted an important motive of western colonial literature, where the woman of the colonised country falls in love and is possessed by the Western hero. The concept of colonisation is based on a sexualised discourse of rape, penetration and impregnation. The following relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is usually redolent of sexualised exoticism (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998:41).<sup>21</sup> Here, Mona Lisa, both a woman and a symbol of western culture is seduced by an Asian student and sacrifices her life for his people after following him to China. In a way, Mona Lisa goes native and is "*contaminated by absorption into native life*" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998:115).<sup>22</sup> Nazım Hikmet's *Gioconda* is an anti-thesis to Pierre Loti's *Aziyadé*. In his poem *Şark Garp* (East West) Nazım Hikmet accused the French *officer* to have forgotten his grape-eyed beloved faster than a prostitute. *Jokond ile Si-Ya-U* is *Aziyadé*'s revenge.

Although one may argue, like Saime Göksu and Edward Timms that *Jokond ile Si-Ya-U* *subverts traditional gender roles by emphasising the involvement of women in the revolutionary struggle* (Göksu & Timms 1999: 91), the political engagement of the *Gioconda* is only a consequence of her love for Si-Ya-U, perhaps nothing more than a reaction to his arrest and execution. From that point of view, and as will be shown further down, Nazım Hikmet is far from challenging patriarchal gender roles.

*Benerci kendini niye öldürdü* (Why did Benerci commit suicide), published for the first time in 1932, is another epic love story, where a western woman falls in love with an Asian revolutionary: Benerci, an Indian nationalist, falls in love with an English woman who turns out to be a police informer. The story takes place in colonial India. Several of Benerci's nationalist friends are arrested and Benerci is ostracised by his comrades. Finally Benerci realises that his lover is a spy. He kills her and later commits suicide. Love becomes an obstacle to political engagement in the epic. In another inversion of the usual pattern of colonial literature, Nazım Hikmet warns against associating with the women of the colonisers. Unlike colonial writers who saw a sexual liaison with the "native" as a major risk of contamination of the pure stock of the

<sup>21</sup> R.J.C. Young describes this discourse as *colonial desire* in his ground-breaking study of colonialist discourse in Young 1995.

<sup>22</sup> See Torgovnik 1990.

vigorous civilised race, Nazım Hikmet's caution is against the political consequences of such a relationship and does not have any racial or racist dimension.<sup>23</sup>

Misogyny, however, is a recurring feature in the love-poetry of Nazım Hikmet. The beloved woman is often seen as an obstacle to the realisation of the narrator's political project, just like in the above mentioned epic poem. In the play *Ferhad ile Şirin*, which aimed at showing that human love and political action went hand in hand, Şirin could hardly understand why Ferhad wished to continue to pierce the mountain after Mehmene Banu had changed her mind. Nazım Hikmet is in contradiction with his stance on love and human solidarity in several of his poems and depicts the beloved woman as an obstacle to the realisation of his political aim: In the poem *Yürüyen Adam* (The Walking Man), a fearless young man walks against the wind towards the enemy despite the calls of his beloved. The woman tries to stop the man from doing his duty and he disregards her distress. There is not one poem where the scheme is inverted and a man tries to stop a politically committed woman. In one of Nazım Hikmet's most famous poems *Mavi Gözlü Dev ile Minicik Kadın* (The Blue Eyed Giant and the Tiny Woman), the petty bourgeois aspirations of the woman are again seen as an obstacle to the idealism of the male partner:

O mavi gözlü bir devdi	He was a blue-eyed giant
Minnacık bir kadın sevdi	He loved a tiny woman
Miniminnacıktı kadın	The woman was really tiny
Rahata acıktı kadın	The woman was keen on comfort
yoruldu devin büyük yolunda	and got tired on the giant's great path
Ve elveda deyip mavi gözlü deve	She said farewell to the blue-eyed giant
girdi zengin bir çücenin kolunda	and taking a rich dwarf by the arm
Bahçesinde ebruliiii	she entered the house
hanmeli açan eve	in whose garden blossom carnations and
Şimdi anlıyor ki mavi gözlü dev	[honeysuckles
Dev gibi sevgilere mezar bile olamaz	And now the blue-eyed giant realises
bahçesinde ebruliiii	that the house in whose garden blossom
hanmeli	carnations
açan ev	and honeysuckles
	cannot even be the grave of giant loves

The poem was probably written for his first wife Nüzhet<sup>24</sup>, who in another poem *Gövdedeki Kurt* (The Worm in My Body) was compared to "a worm nibbling

<sup>23</sup> Abdülhak Hamit (Tarhan) also explores love relationships in a colonial background in four plays: *Duhter-i Hindû* (The Hindu Daughter, 1876), *Finten* (1912), *Cünûn-ı Aşk* (The Insanity of Love, 1925) and *Yabancı Dostlar* (Foreign Friends, 1925). The plays are set in India and in England. Abdülhak Hamit perpetuates western colonial stereotypes on Indians and depicts them as primitive and irrational, but English society too is criticised in his works. English social rules are seen as artificial and unnatural since they crush the individuals. Abdülhak Hamit is critical of British colonial rule, and depicts it as ruthless, racist and cruel. (For a summary and discussion of the four plays see Enginün 1986: 65-74. See also Nüket Esen's article on Abdülhak Hamit's occidentalist discourse: "Batu Hakkında bir Doğulunun Eseri Olarak Finten" in Enginün 1998: 21-27.)

<sup>24</sup> This remains a disputed issue, for Memet Fuat claims that it was written for his mother Piraye. For a detailed discussion of this issue that kept the Turkish left intelligentsia busy for weeks see Karaca 1999:28-36.

*his way into the poet's brain.*" Although in these two cases personal elements may be enough to explain the poems, it remains nevertheless the case that throughout Nazım Hikmet's later works too, the beloved woman is often seen as a threat to the idealism of the revolutionary. In the poem *Yirminci Asra Dair* (About the Twentieth Century), the poet and his beloved (his second wife Pirâye) discuss the meaning of living in the twentieth century. While the woman continuously expresses her wish to live in a century where things are easier, the poet stresses how happy he is to be part of the twentieth century. The beloved appears to try to divert the poet from his political duties here and now. Nazım Hikmet knew from experience about the difficulties of marrying revolutionary activism to an ordinary love life. He actually acknowledged that he should never have married because he was a professional revolutionary (Karaca 1999: 42-43). There is an opposition between love in theory and love in practice in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet. Love in theory leads to something bigger such as human solidarity or socialism, whereas love in practice, based on experience, is depicted as an obstacle to the aspirations of the poet and revolutionary.

It is to the credit of Nazım Hikmet that he always focused on individual tragedies as much as on great social issues in his works, rather than going for a word for word application of the cannons of socialist realism. In the definition of socialist realism given in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on 3 September 1934, the method demanded truthful depiction of reality as well as didactic elements in order to educate the masses in the socialist spirit (Rzhvesky 1998:196), a definition that left little place for the expression of more private concerns such as the depiction of the troubles of love, which is a very personal and individual experience. Nazım Hikmet's poetry was often criticised both at home and abroad by holders of a more dogmatic view of Marxism, such as Dr. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, who was the only Turkish communist leader at the time who came from a working-class background.<sup>25</sup> Nazım Hikmet did not believe that his definition of realism clashed with the one advocated in Moscow. He had defined realism in the following terms in February 1930:

"The misery of mankind cannot be seen independently of the personal tragedies of the individual. We, writers, have to deal with this problem in particular. Moreover, a person who lives through no personal tragedies, who does not suffer for personal reasons, or whom one gathers not to suffer for personal reasons cannot possibly suffer in the name of the misery of mankind. And as such a thing is not possible in the actual conditions of the world, it would be artificial to introduce such a character in a literary work" (Çalışlar 1987:65).

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<sup>25</sup> See for instance the comments written by Dr. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı about Nazım Hikmet in the first volume of *Marksizmin Kalpazanları* (Kıvılcımlı 1936).

Nazım Hikmet combined the theme of love with the theme of political engagement and he tried to give a balanced view of the issue. He wrote both romantic verses depicting political action as a natural consequence of human love and verses that explored the difficulty of combining both. In the latter he painted a negative picture of women, who were depicted as obstacles to men's political activities. Nonetheless it is to the credit of the poet that he did not try to give a rosy picture of the situation. By doing so, he faithfully applied the tenets of his own form of socialist realism, a realism that gave as much space to individual as to social concerns. Nazım Hikmet's ambiguous attitude toward women was also reflected in his epics that subverted colonial literature. Even though he questioned the racist scheme of colonial love stories, he did not try to reject the stance, common in colonial literature, that sees women as mere booty.

Nevertheless women are depicted as real human beings in most of his poems and the poet writes about personality clashes between the male narrator and the beloved. The woman has both a body and an independent mind in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet. This dual dimension did not really exist in the poetry of Yahya Kemal and the *Five Syllabists* and will be discussed in greater detail in the next two sections.

### **The beloved as companion and the poetics of realism**

"Before I met your mother I was somehow sectarian in matters of content. For instance, I never wrote about love relationships between human beings. I was saved from this attitude by the creative influence of your mother. I love and appreciate a love poem, but a true love poem, as much as I love and appreciate a politically engaged poem" (Hikmet 1968:88).

Throughout the correspondence exchanged during the years 1943 to 1950 between Nazım Hikmet, imprisoned in Bursa, and Memet Fuat, the poet emphasised the influential role of Pirâye in his literary development. In the above excerpt, he expresses his belief that love poetry was of equal importance as political poetry, even though this was an insight he had only after meeting her. The meeting with Pirâye and the poetry that was the product of their relationship brought profound changes to the theme of love in Turkish poetry. In his influential essay on Turkish love poetry, Cemal Süreya points to two important novelties in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet's treatment of the theme of love: He wrote love poems about and to his wife and the beloved was depicted as a friend and a solidary companion (Süreya 1991:9).

There had been poets before Nazım Hikmet who had written love poems for their wives, among others, *Makber* (The Tomb), Abdülhak Hamit's famous elegy written for his deceased wife, or the prose poems written by the little known Turkish

writing Armenian poet Garbis Fikri for his late wife.<sup>26</sup> Those poems were stylised elegies and did not have the confessional dimension of Nazım Hikmet's short poems. However Cemal Süreya does not acknowledge the third important aspect of Nazım Hikmet's love poetry. Nazım Hikmet introduces ordinary life into love poetry. The price of coal and sudden outbursts of sciatica are now new themes that are also dealt in poems about love. Those three aspects are the founding stones of a new realism in Turkish love poetry.

The relationship between Pirâye and Nazım Hikmet was the real life experience that triggered the development. A love poem, even if inspired by a particular experience, is never a literal record of a relationship; it is an imaginative reshaping of reality. Nazım Hikmet's poems for Pirâye are very particular because their primary audience was the beloved herself. The poems were love letters in verse. They were either included in letters sent to her or they were sent instead of letters.

The close intermingling of reality with Nazım Hikmet's love poetry is underlined by the following event: Towards the end of 1941, Nazım Hikmet wrote a letter to Pirâye in which he told her about his wish to versify and publish her letters to him (Hikmet 1976: 152-153). According to Memet Fuat, who collected and edited the letters, Pirâye did not accept his proposal. This did not hinder Nazım Hikmet to go on with the project between 1942 and 1943. He then sent the poems to her, as he usually did, in order to get her opinion (Hikmet 1976:153). We learn from a letter, written by the poet to Pirâye on 13 November 1943, that although she liked the poems, she was distressed that other people may have read them. She believed that some of the details were too personal and that others included references to difficulties and arguments she had had with some friends and relatives. She asked him not to publish them<sup>27</sup> (Hikmet 1976: 195). Nazım Hikmet accepted Pirâye's reservations. He later included them into the third volume of his famous epic *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* after considerably transforming them. The fact that Nazım Hikmet rewrote the poems, leaving out bits that upset Pirâye shows that despite the autobiographical content of the poems, the poems were certainly not simple depictions of aspects of their relationship. It is always necessary to differentiate between the poet and his persona in poems,

<sup>26</sup> I have come across two collections of prose poems by Garbis Fikri which were dedicated to *the soul of Ağavni*, his late wife. They are:

Garbis Fikri, *Yapraklar Dökülürken*, (When Leaves Are Falling), Istanbul: Edeb Matbuası, 1326h.

Garbis Fikri, *Aşkımız*, (Our Love), Istanbul: Edeb Matbuası, 1326h.

However I have found no information on this poet who, in the works I have seen, seems to have been profoundly influenced by the emotional lyrics of Abdülhak Hamit and Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem's conception of formal perfection in poetry. The fact that he wrote prose poems also shows his closeness to the westernising *Servet-i Fümûn* poets. Mahmut

<sup>27</sup> The poems were included in the edited version of Nazım Hikmet's letters to Pirâye (Hikmet 1976: 164-194).

especially in the case of the works of poets, such as Nazım Hikmet, where literary development and personal life are closely linked.

The relationship between Pirâye and Nazım Hikmet has always been mythical in circles close to the Turkish left (Karaca 1999:177). The myth has in great part been created by the poems Nazım Hikmet wrote for Pirâye while he was imprisoned in Bursa. Like all myths, it does not resist closer scrutiny. A serious blow was dealt to the concept of an ideal real-life relationship between the poet and his muse in the revelations made in Vera Tulyakova's , Nazım Hikmet's last wife, recollection of her life with the poet.<sup>28</sup> The book read in conjunction with Nazım Hikmet's letter showed that he was far from being the ideal partner, companion and friend and that he was indeed an ordinary man with whatever that includes of greatness and meanness.

After this initial consideration on the links and differences that exist between reality and poetry in that particular period of Nazım Hikmet's literary work, three novel aspects of his love poetry: a) the beloved as wife, b) the beloved as comrade, c) the realist context will be explored.

a)The beloved in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet is usually his wife. Several poems dedicated to Pirâye were directly sent to her, usually accompanied by a note: The poet wrote the poem entitled "1940 Temmuz 2, Çankırı" (Çankiri, 2nd July 1940), after Pirâye visited him in prison and put the following words over the poem "*My dear wife, this time, I will start the first letter that I write to you with a poem.*" From that day onwards, all the letters written by the poet from Çankırı Prison were to be preceded by a few notes for his wife starting with the words "My dear wife". Other love poems, written after his exile would again be directly addressed to his respective partners. However in several cases ambiguities subsist as to whether they are addressed to Münevver (his third wife) or to Vera Tulyakova (Karaca 1999:109), like in this very famous poem written in Paris on 8 May 1958:

<p>Sensiz Paris, gülüm, bir havayı fişeği bir kuru gürültü kederli bir ırmak. Yıktı mahvetti beni Paris'te durup dinlenmeden, gülüm, seni çağırmak.</p>	<p>Paris without you, my rose, is a fire work a meaningless noise a sorrowful river. Calling you in Paris without resting, my rose, has crushed me.</p>
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The poem is very representative for those love poems written after his exile because it stresses the feeling of longing and leaves very little space for depiction of reality as is the case in poems written for Pirâye. Reality is intolerable and meaningless without the beloved. Despite the fact that most of Nazım Hikmet's poems were written for his partners, usually wives, they should not be seen as exaltations of wedded life,

<sup>28</sup> Tulyakova 1997.

which would be considered as superior to free love. It is certain that, in his poems, Nazım Hikmet tried to bring a new definition to marriage as a partnership between two equals that were both friends and lovers.

b) Pirâye is depicted as more than a wife in his poems. She is a lover, a partner, a friend, a critic, to a certain extent a comrade but above all she is an independent human being with her own spiritual and material needs. In the first letter Nazım Hikmet wrote to Pirâye after he had been transferred to Bursa Prison, he added a poem "17.12.1940" in which he emphasised his closeness to her and expressed that she was more than his lover. She was a friend of indistinct age or sex who fought on his side. The following verses, excerpted from the poem, emphasise that particular feeling:

<p>Sen yaşı ve cinsiyeti olmayan arkadaşımın Büyük kavgamda beraber dövüştüğüm; bana nasihatların en doğrusunu veren ve tehlikelerde kanatlarını üstüme geren.</p>	<p>You are my ageless and sexless companion who fights on my side in my great struggle; the one who gives me the best advice and spreads her wings over me in dangerous times.</p>
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The love which is expressed here is not mere human love. The beloved has supernatural attributes and opens her wings in order to protect the narrator. This complete dependence and submission of the narrator to the beloved is a very rare occurrence in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet. Louis Aragon, on the other hand, always celebrated Elsa by writing that he would be nothing without her. Poems such as "Prose du Bonheur et d'Elsa" (Prose of happiness and of Elsa) or "Entre Assieds-toi Soleil" (Come in, sit down sun) are poems where the narrator acknowledges his debt to his muse and completely submits himself to her. This is a major difference between Aragon's and Hikmet's approach to the theme of love. Hikmet's narrator is usually the active partner, whereas Aragon's narrator is more submissive and dependent on the love of the beloved.

"17.12.1940" also deals with the beloved as a comrade who shares the poet's ideals, which was one of the great themes of socialist love poetry. Pablo Neruda, for instance, addresses his beloved in "El Monte y el Rio" (The Mountain and the River) and asks her to accompany him on his struggle:

<p>Oh tú, la que yo amo, pequeña , grano rojo de trigo,</p> <p>será dura la lucha la vida será dura pero vendrás conmigo.</p>	<p>O you that I love, dear little one, red grain of wheat,</p> <p>hard will be the struggle life will be hard but you will come with me.</p>
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It is a theme that is not restricted to poetry and that can also be found in socialist novel writing. Alexandra Kollontai's (1872-1952)<sup>29</sup> novel *Red Love* (1927),

<sup>29</sup> Alexandra Kollontai was a Russian socialist feminist and activist. She led the "Workers' Opposition" that opposed party and government control of trade unions against Lenin in 1921. Kollontai was the

describes Vasillissa's quest for both love and social justice in the early years of the socialist revolution in Russia. Just like Nazım Hikmet, Alexandra Kollontai dealt with the difficulties of combining political activism and private life in this novel. Throughout the novel the author insists that the spouse should be a friend and a comrade as well as a lover. Just like Nazım Hikmet, she wrote that a lover and a communist ought to share the same qualities. Nazım Hikmet too had written in a letter to Pirâye that his political belief and love for her were “*two loves, two beliefs, two realities that completed each another*” (Hikmet 1976:201). Unfortunately, we have no documents that would reveal whether Nazım Hikmet had actually read Kollontai or what he thought about her. Alexandra Kollontai's more daring writings were censored and probably unavailable at the time Nazım Hikmet was in Moscow. Her unorthodox stance on free love and on the supremacy of love to social conventions led to accusations of libertinage.<sup>30</sup>

c) In the poetry of Nazım Hikmet the friendship and the comradeship between husband and wife is also expressed through continuous references to ordinary life and through a genuine concern for the well-being of the beloved. The poet refers to the material needs of the beloved, just as in this poem entitled “14 Aralık 1945” (14 December 1945):

Hay aksi lanet, fena bastırđı kış...  
Sen ve namuslu İstanbul'um ne haldesiniz kim  
[bilir?  
Oduñ alabildin mi?  
Camların kıyısına gazete kaadı yapıştır.  
Gece erkenden yatađa gir.  
Evde de satılacak bir şey kalmamıştır.  
Yarı aç, yarı tok üşümek:  
dünyada, memleketimizde ve şehrimizde  
bu işte de çođunluk bizde...

Damned, the winter has hit us badly...  
Who knows how you and my honest Istanbul are?  
Were you able to buy firewood?  
Put some newspaper sheets around the window  
[panes.  
Go to bed early at night.  
There isn't anything left to sell at home, I guess.  
To freeze, half hungry and half fed:  
in the world, in our country and in our city  
we form the majority in these matters too...

The poet mentions a difficult winter and asks whether the beloved has been able to buy firewood. These are the ordinary troubles of an ordinary woman. Nazım Hikmet is the first poet to humanise the beloved. The language is striking by its simplicity. It is as if the poem consists of an excerpt taken from real-life dialogue. It expresses genuine concern. The poem ends with a generalisation where the narrator points to the larger context of the relationship. The fate of the cold and hungry lovers is shared by the majority of humanity.

The poet even evokes very personal events in his poems and mentions, among others, flannel underpants and an outburst of sciatica to his beloved:

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first woman to hold the rank of minister to Norway in 1923. She was known as a "libertine" or proponent of free love and wrote extensively on women's rights and other social issues.

<sup>30</sup> Bookmarks publications have published a pamphlet with three of her more controversial essays on gender and sexuality (Kollontai 1998). The Moscow based Progress Publishers have issued in 1984 an anthology of her more “acceptable” essays and speeches (Kollontai 1984).

Paran varsa eğer  
bana bir fanila don al,  
tuttu bacağımanın siyatik ağrısı!...  
Ve unutma ki daima iyi şeyler düşünmeli  
bir mahpusun karısı!...

If you have money  
buy me a pair of flannel underpants,  
the sciatic pains of my leg have started again!...  
And do not forget that a prisoner's wife  
should always think of good things!....

This excerpt from the poem "Karıma ikinci mektubumdur" (Second Letter to My Wife) ,dated 11 November 1933, was written after his first imprisonment in Bursa, when a death sentence against the poet was a serious threat. These verses express real intimacy between the lovers and it is as if the reader were intruding on the confessions of the two partners. It is also indicative of a new conception of love, drawn from everyday reality. The poet bases most of his verses on personal elements and it is possible to draw parallelisms between his poems and his correspondence or the recorded reminiscences of fellow inmates.

Sexuality is more prominent in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet as a direct result of the increased realism of his verses. Sexuality was still very stylised in the poetry of Yahya Kemal and he shared with the Turkish advocates of art for its own sake an interest for the aesthetic beauty of the female body. In the poetry of the Five Syllabists sexuality was part of the love game. Sexual desire in Nazım Hikmet's prison verses is not part of the love game, it is a physical craving that is often independent of love. In the poem "Lodos", written in Bursa prison, the narrator underlines his fate and the fate of fellow prisoners who are unable to satisfy their sexual cravings (Biz altı yüz adet kadınsız erkeğiz / We are six hundred men without women). On the other hand, he writes more tender verses directly addressed to the beloved where erotic desire and love are merged, like in the poem "Hatunumun gözleri elâdır da" (My Wife's Eyes Are Hazel) written in 1947:

Hatunumun gözleri elâdır da  
içinde hâreler var yeşil yeşil  
altın varak üstüne yeşil yeşil meneviş.  
Kardeşlerim, bu ne biçim iş  
şu dokuz yıldır eli elime değmeden  
ben burada ihtiyarladım.

The eyes of my wife are hazel  
with various shades of green,  
green silk on a golden leaf.  
Brothers, what's the meaning of all of this  
I have grown old in nine years  
without her hand touching mine.

In the above verses the narrator longs for the touch of her finger, for holding her hands. A similar theme is developed in one of his *rubâî* (quatrain), where the narrator opposed the remembrance of the beloved to her real presence. Her real material presence is referred to in erotic terms- her red lips, her submission like wild water and the whiteness of her skin:

Sarılıp yatmak mümkün değil bende  
[senden kalan hayale  
Halbuki sen orda, şehrimde gerçekten  
[ varsın etinle kemiğinle  
Ve balından mahrum edildiğim kırmızı ağzın  
[gözlerin gerçekten var

I cannot lie down and embrace your illusion inside  
[me  
But you exist with your flesh and bones, there, in  
[my city  
And your red mouth whose honey I am deprived of,  
[your eyes do really exist



did they not have sexual desires, which was understandable because of the ideological nature of the novels, but they did not even have a body.

The situation was similar in the poetry of the period. Canan, Yahya Kemal's beloved, too had no body. Her body was only suggested and the narrator occasionally focused on her red nails or on the swift hips of a flamenco dancer. Though sexuality was an issue in syllabist urban poetry, the body of the beloved too was rarely mentioned, except occasionally in the poetry of Enis Behiç Koryürek. The village poetry was an accumulation of clichés: a strain of hair that hung out of the headscarf or a rosy cheek. In any case, the body of women other than the beloved was certainly not mentioned. Nazım Hikmet, whose political and literary identity was formed in the years of the liberation war rejected this scheme. He aimed at creating a more holistic image of women, which was a necessity of the realism he advocated. He acknowledged the independent spiritual and material needs of the beloved in his poetry.

The beloved is not the only female presence in the poetry of Hikmet. In his epic poems, namely *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* and *Kuvâ-yı Milliye Destanı*, the reader encounters several female characters of major or minor importance. Most of them are ordinary women: peasants, workers and housewives. When writing about them, Nazım Hikmet focuses on female physical characteristics such as hips and breasts. His depiction of women is made with the eyes of a male narrator. He eroticises the body of ordinary women, who were mostly ignored in poetry. This is part of his project to give a holistic, realistic picture of women in poetry. He directs the attention of the reader to body parts that are attractive for men.

The image of the woman in literature was not an issue he was very concerned with in his theoretical writings. In a letter he wrote to Kemal Tahir from prison in January 1941, he recognised that Halide Edip, the founding mother of the liberation war novel, had dealt with the conflict of sexes in her novels (Hikmet 1968:23), but he did not make any further analysis.

*Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* and *Kuvâ-yı Milliye Destanı*, are not properly speaking love poems and the theme of love is rather marginal in them. Yet his depiction of women cannot be separated from issues such as male desire. In a much quoted excerpt of the *Kuvâ-yı Milliye Destanı*, Nazım Hikmet mentions the undulant heavy hips of Anatolian women. The focus on their hips could be seen as sexist, if quoted out of context. However the tragedy of the Anatolian woman is also vividly depicted in those verses. Women are mothers, wives and sweethearts. They are enslaved by both poverty and men. The poet also implies that women are quite able to take power in their own hands. By mentioning the *undulant heavy hips* of women the poet acknowledges the physical attraction exerted by women and thus gives a complete

picture of women and not just an ideologically correct image of working class women.<sup>32</sup>

<p>Ve kadınlar bizim kadınlarımız: korkunç ve mübarek elleri, ince, küçük çeneleri, kocaman gözleriyle anamız, avradımız, yârimiz ve sanki hiç yaşamamış gibi ölen ve soframızdaki yeri öküzümüzden sonra gelen ve dağlara kaçırıp uğruna hapis yattığımız ve ekinde, tütünde, odunda ve pazardaki ve karasapana koşulan ve ağıllarda ışığı altında yere saplı bıçakların oynak, ağır kalçaları ve zilleriyle bizim olan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">kadınlar bizim kadınlarımız</p>	<p>And women our women: with their frightening and sacred hands with their pointed little chins and huge eyes our mothers, our wives, our lovers who die as if they had never lived who are fed at our tables after the oxen whom we abduct to the hills and get imprisoned for who harvest grain and tobacco, who chop wood and [work in the markets whom we harness to our ploughs, who in sheepfolds become ours with their playful, heavy hips and bells in the gleam of knives stuck in the ground</p> <p style="text-align: right;">women our women</p>
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This mention of physically distinctive features of women can again be seen throughout one of his major works *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*. In the third volume, for instance, we see 12 year old Hamdi being stunned by the discovery that women had breasts:

<p>932'de kızlar sırtüstü yatırıp el atırlar uçkuruna Bağırdı. Kızların memeleri vardı.</p>	<p>In 1932 girls made him lay down on his back and undid his waist string He screamed. Girls had breasts.</p>
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In the fourth volume, when describing the third wife of one of the main characters of that volume Ali Çaviş, Nazım Hikmet refers to her large white hips. Incidentally she is a former prostitute.

<p>Kerhaneden alınmıştır Ali Çaviş'in üçüncü karısı geniş beyaz kalçaları taş gibi ve simsiyah kirpiklerinin gölgesi baygın elâ gözlerinde ve som altın bilezikler: yumuk bileklerinden dirseklerine kadar.</p>	<p>Ali Çaviş's third wife had been taken from the [brothel her broad white hips were firm as stone and the shadow of her black eyelashes was on [her languid hazel eyes and solid golden bracelets: from her plump wrists up to her elbow.</p>
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The reference to female physical features, and implicitly to male desire, in Nazım Hikmet's depiction of women is not unproblematic though. Indeed Saime Göksu and Edward Timms point to such problematic issues in one of Nazım Hikmet's earlier poems "İstihsal Aletleri ve Biz Yahut Merihe Uçacak Zafer" (The Means of Production

<sup>32</sup> On the ideologically correct discourse on women propounded by Communist parties throughout Europe see Pasti 1979. Pasti studies the various discourses on love held by Marxists from the founding fathers up to the reforms in the seventies made by the Italian Communist Party.

and Us or the Conquest of Mars) where the poet compares the control of nature to “*a healthy peasant bride wriggling with her firm breasts under her husband's broad hairy chest.*” Nazım Hikmet seems to associate man's power over nature with sexually possessing a woman (Göksu & Timms 1999:42). This sexist imagery points to the issue as to whether by acknowledging the sexual attraction exerted by women he is not simply transforming them into sexual objects.

Sexual attraction is one aspect of male-female relationships and thus must be acknowledged in poetry. Nazım Hikmet, moreover, never isolates sexuality as a theme on its own in his poetry. It is just there among other themes in some of his poems. By separating love and sensual desire, Nazım Hikmet introduces a new dimension to love poetry. Sensual desire can be directed to women other than the beloved. That is an important development in Turkish poetry. This approach to the theme of desire was going to be developed at the same time and independently by the *Bizarre* (Garip) trio during the forties.

### **Humane portraits of love**

Nazım Hikmet's name is mentioned together with Paul Eluard, Vladimir Mayakovski, Eugenio Montale (1895-1981) and Pablo Neruda as one of the important poets who left their mark on twentieth century literature. He shared with them the same political engagement and the same belief that literature, poetry in particular, could play an important role in furthering the socialist cause. Hugh MacDiarmid acknowledged the place of Nazım Hikmet in the pantheon of world literature in an article that was part of an important literary debate in Scotland.<sup>33</sup> Pablo Neruda, too, wrote in 1974 that Nazım Hikmet had been one of those rare and special poets who managed to address the whole world (Gronau 1991: 150).

The overall praise for Hikmet's achievements is more concerned with his political martyrdom than with his literary endeavours. Whenever dealing with literary matters, the appraisal of Hikmet's works is based on the impact that his poetry and life has on world literature, not on Turkish literature itself. The main reason is that Turkish poetry is still little known outside Turkey and that researches on and translations of Nazım Hikmet's contemporaries are few. Even Turkish critics have problems when they try to assess to what extent Nazım Hikmet was influential in an immediate future since his most memorable works were censored during his life-time and were published in Turkey only in the sixties.

<sup>33</sup> The article was entitled “The Key to World Literature” and was published in the Christmas 1952 edition of the *Scottish Journal*. MacDiarmid argued that it was possible to appreciate good poetry in translation in response to the journalist and broadcaster Moray MacLaren who had questioned MacDiarmid's ability to assess the literary merits of poets that he could not read in the original (MacDiarmid 1992:187-190).

It is certain, though, that Nazım Hikmet revolutionised the conception of poetry in Turkey, a fact which is reflected in the way he approaches the theme of love. Nazım Hikmet's revolution in love poetry could be summarised as follows: He humanised love and the beloved. The humanisation process of love and the beloved is explored in three different stages: The psychological or spiritual dimension of the beloved and of the love relationship is discussed in poems that combine the theme of love and the theme of human solidarity (or political activism). In those poems the poet does not have a clear cut message, but seems to oppose love in theory to love in practice. He writes poems that portray activism as a natural extension of love and others where love and the beloved clash with political engagement. The unflattering portrait of the beloved in poems that question the compatibility of love and political activism is confirmed in those epics that subvert the racial role distribution of colonial literature. Even though Nazım Hikmet questions this central device of colonial literature, he perpetuates the paternalist and sexist equation at its heart, namely that sexual conquest equals political conquest.<sup>34</sup>

Both the physical and the psychological dimension of love are discussed in the poems written for Piraye. The beloved is a real woman with her own physical, material and psychological needs. She is a wife, a friend, a confidante, a lover and a comrade for the narrator. Even the most trivial details of everyday life are discussed in those poems.

Finally the purely physical dimension of love is explored in the portraits of women in his epics. In such poems Hikmet focuses on distinctly female physical characteristics. By doing so he rejects the asexual portrayals of women in liberation war literature and acknowledges the existence of desire independently of love.

The real world and love merge for the first time in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet. A parallel evolution was taking place in the poetry of the *Bizarre* trio too, but Hikmet's particularity resides in the fact that he took his inspiration directly from the experiences of his tumultuous life. Nazım Hikmet's love poems are *humane portraits of his own life*. Both the advocates of subjective realism (*Bizarre*) and the socialist realists were indebted to his pioneering endeavours. Unlike the socialists who claimed their literary lineage from Hikmet, *Bizarre* denied that there were any similarities between their own exploration of ordinary life and Nazım Hikmet's, whose poetry, they believed, was serving an ideology and not adapted to the tastes of ordinary people. While Nazım Hikmet's works after 1936 displayed a combination of classical, folk and modernist features, the *Bizarre* movement stripped language to its bare essentials. Ordinary life,

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<sup>34</sup> Nazım Hikmet's subversion of colonial literature is a major feature of his works in the late twenties and throughout the thirties. *Taranta Babu'ya Mektuplar* (Letters to Taranta Babu), published in 1935, condemns Italian fascism and its imperialist policies from the point of the view of an Ethiopian studying in Rome. A European society is being criticised by an African, who is the positive hero of this long poem.

ordinary feelings became central in their down-to-earth poetry which strove to describe subjective experiences rather than objective realities. Their approach to love too was to be truly novel and as revolutionary as Nazım Hikmet's.

## Chapter IV

### The *Bizarre* (*Garip*) group and the theme of love

#### History of the *Bizarre* movement

*Bizarre* was the first Turkish literary group with a manifesto and a clear literary agenda that made a lasting impact on republican Turkish literature.<sup>1</sup> Their trademark was the radical rejection of all poetic conventions. Ordinary life and ordinary feelings were central in their down-to-earth poetry which strove to describe subjective experiences and not objective realities. They imposed the free verse as the meter of Turkish modernity and brought the reign of the syllabic meter to an end.

On 15 September 1937, Orhan Veli, Oktay Rifat and Mehmet Ali Sel, the latter turning out to be a pseudonym of Orhan Veli, published a few poems in the influential literary journal *Varlık* (Existence). By dedicating their poems to Melih Cevdet Anday, the third member of the group who had not published any poems in that particular issue of the journal, the poets showed that they wanted to be seen as a collective. After that, they published their poems together and issued common declarations and articles. The name "*Garip*" (strange, bizarre) was coined by Cavit Yamaç, a friend of Orhan Veli's and a minor author himself, because it was the adjective most commonly used by people who tried to describe their poems.

In the early days of the movement, they put more emphasis on the publication of poems than on theoretical writings. Hakan Sazyek, author of a well documented history and analysis of the movement<sup>2</sup>, argues that they tried to distance themselves from other young poets who were critical of the literary tradition but did not produce anything novel themselves (Sazyek 1999:37, 38). The *Bizarre* group were suspicious of theory and criticism - in other words, of the literary establishment - and took the unusual step of producing examples of what poetry should be before attacking the tradition and setting out the principles of their new poetics.

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<sup>1</sup>The *Seven Torch Holders* (Yedi Meşaleciler) were the first literary movement of the republican era, but they had no impact on the development of Turkish literature. In 1928, six poets Muammer Lütfi Bahşi (1903-1947), Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil (1906-1968), Vasfi Mahir Kocatürk (1907-1961), Cevdet Kudret Solok (1907-1992), Yaşar Nabi Nayır (1908-1981) and Ziya Osman Saba (1907-1957) and a short story writer Kenan Hulûsi Koray (1906-1943) published a collection of their work named *Yedi Meş'âle* (Seven Torches.) Even though they were still using the syllabic meter, they were reacting against what they believed to be the dryness, monotony and clichés of the first generation of syllabists. Theirs was a quest for novelty in both theme and form. In the pages of their short-lived journal *Meş'âle* (The Torch; 8 issues published fortnightly between 1 July 1928 and 15 October 1928), they defended art for art's sake against the politically engaged poetry and prose of the first generation of syllabists. Their themes did not differ from those of the literary groupings associated with the *Servet-i Fünûn* journal. Their main achievement was the use of daring new metaphors and images. On the *Yedi Meşaleciler* see Tuncer 1994b.

<sup>2</sup>Sazyek 1999.

Among their rare theoretical writings were two texts that were announcing the content of the future *Bizarre* manifesto. The first important text was an answer given by Orhan Veli and Melih Cevdet, in the name of the three, to a literary enquiry. The daily newspaper *Ulus* (The Nation) asked major literati whether poetry was dying. On 30 December 1937, the two poets answered in the name of the collective that "*poetry could not possibly be dying since it did not yet exist*" (Sazyek 1999:36). The second text was a series of four articles published again by Orhan Veli between December 1939 and January 1940 in *Varlık*. They were published under the heading *Edebiyata Dair* (On Literature) and spelled out the trio's goals in a polemical yet clear language. The major points of the four heralding articles and of the 1941 manifesto were as follows:

Orhan Veli stressed that *Bizarre* was against everything that they considered as old. Tradition induced poetic stagnation and was the main obstacle to the natural development of poetry. Rhyme and meter as well as the fact that poets did not express themselves in the language really spoken by the people caused the artificiality of the poetic language. Even contemporary poetry was artificial. Until now poetry had been addressing the tastes of the ruling class. This had to change and Orhan Veli, in the name of the trio, advocated the scratching of the literary tradition, of rhyme and meter and of the poetic language. Their aim was to strip the language to its bare essentials and to focus on ordinary subjective experiences (Sazyek 1999:38-41 and Veli 1999:23-36).

Their call for a new definition of poetry reminded of similar movements in France in the first quarter of the twentieth century such as *Dadaism* and *Surrealism*. *Bizarre's* own literary output and their theoretical writings led some critics such as Şükran Kurdakul and Suut Kemal Yetkin to associate them with French Surrealism, particularly after the publication of the small volume entitled *Garip: Şiir Hakkında Düşünceler ve Melih Cevdet, Oktay Rifat, Orhan Veli'den Seçilmiş Şiirler* (*Bizarre: Reflections on Poetry and Selected Poems by Melih Cevdet, Oktay Rifat, Orhan Veli.*) in 1941. But the trio fiercely denied any association, even in spirit, with surrealism and in the second edition of the volume Orhan Veli directly addressed the issue in a footnote:

"Some people call us surrealists when they write about us. This is probably because I talked a few time with appreciation of Surrealism or maybe because they did not read the surrealists or our poems. However apart from a few shared views we have absolutely nothing in common with the surrealists and we are certainly not linked to any literary school" (Veli 1999:33)

It is certain that the trio's open appreciation for figures associated with surrealism had an impact on the way that they were perceived. They were delighted when they met

Philippe Soupault (1897-1990), one of the founders of surrealism<sup>3</sup>, in Ankara in 1949 in the context of a Unesco conference. The interest between *Bizarre* and Soupault was reciprocal, according to Orhan Veli who recalled the French poet saying that *Bizarre* wrote *first class poetry* of international standard (Sazyek 1999:210). Some of the group's devices too reminded of surrealism. They experimented with automatic writing and gave importance to the free flowing of ideas without attempting to reorganise them logically. Even though Orhan Veli had expressed some doubts on automatic writing in the *Bizarre* manifesto (Veli 1999:33), he acknowledged the role of the subconscious in the creative process. Şükran Kurdakul believes that the focus on the subconscious and on sexuality especially in the poetry of Orhan Veli before 1945 is a proof of the influence of surrealism. The critic gives "Eski Karım" (My Former Wife) and "Dedikodu" (Gossip) as examples of surrealist influence (Kurdakul 1994c:189-190). Kurdakul's division of Orhan Veli's work into a pre-1945 surrealist and a post -1945 populist part is questionable, since he wrote and published "populist" poems such as "Hicret" (Exile) before 1945 and more surrealist poems such as "Sere serpe" (Nonchalantly) after 1945. Moreover it is doubtful that *Bizarre's* interest in the relationship between the subconscious and sexuality should be ascribed to French surrealist influence alone, since this is a subject that was also explored in Abdülhak Hamit's play *Finten* at the turn of the century. Freudian psychoanalysis as well as Bergson's work on time and consciousness had also its impact on the works of authors such as James Joyce and Marcel Proust, who were known and appreciated by the trio. Thus the interest in and emphasis on free association and sexuality might be more the result of the general intellectual atmosphere of the period than a particular surrealist influence.

The political engagement of literary surrealism was a central difference from *Bizarre's* political silence. In an essay that he read out at the Surrealist Exhibition in London on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1936, Paul Eluard claimed that

"the invention of the radio, the successes of the Cheliuskine, the revolution in Asturias and the strikes in France and Belgium were true poetry. But the cold and necessary quest for knowledge, for decent food as well as the love of the marvellous are also true poetry" (Eluard 1986:17).

Paul Eluard elaborated an understanding of poetry that incorporated all aspects of life and thus had to be politically committed. The form that the commitment would take was open to discussion, but the poet could not be silent on social and political issues.

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<sup>3</sup>He was the actual founder of the surrealist movement and co-authored with André Breton "Les Champs Magnétiques" (The Magnetic Fields), the first ever surrealist text. He was expelled from the surrealist group in 1929, because of his growing uneasiness with the group's close association with the communist party.

*Bizarre*, however, argued against political verse and their celebration of the individual is a reaction to more social depictions in poetry. They had the support of Nurullah Ataç, the cultural *éminence grise* of the İnönü regime. Ataç's and *Bizarre's* agendas overlapped. *Bizarre* was developing a poetry that had no obvious forefather and was certainly not rooted in folk and *divân* poetry, and Nurullah Ataç was working on a radical definition of a new cultural project for the new Turkish state, cutting all its links with a past that was deemed too oriental. The unusual situation in which the state gave support to a literary group with a subversive agenda did not go unnoticed: Attila İlhan was particularly vocal in his attacks against *Bizarre*. In an article about the trio published in 1992, entitled "What a shame for Turkish poetry", he repeated the claim that *Bizarre* poetry was the "official" poetry of the İnönü regime. According to İlhan, *Bizarre* made Turkish poetry sound like a poor translation of western poetry, since it was uprooted from its traditional sources of inspiration (İlhan 1993:261). He repeated the usual accusation regarding *Bizarre's* plagiarism of French surrealism in the same article. He did not however (none of the critics actually did) substantiate his claim.

Actually, the trio were much closer in spirit to Jacques Prévert (1900-1977), who remained on the fringe of the surrealist movement. Like Prévert, the *Bizarre* trio used colloquialisms, showed a great sensitivity to the emotional life of ordinary people and described ordinary experiences with a bare language infused with poetic spirit. Prévert, however, unlike *Bizarre*, never renounced his anarchistic spirit and his poetry was full of open attacks against militarism, religion, capitalism and the establishment.

*Bizarre* poetry had not only similarities with poets and writers of previous generations. Their opposition to what is generally accepted as poetry reminded of the similar stance of Günter Eich (1907-1972) and the advocates of the *Trümmerliteratur*, the literature of wreckage, which developed after the end of the Second World War in Germany. Even though *Bizarre* did not share Eich's discourse on language contaminated by its misuse by the fascists, the trio too tried to create a new poetic language that was distinct from its predecessors. The political engagement of Günter Eich gave a particular resonance to his poetry and as such the similarities were mainly superficial in the form, the language and the focus on daily aspects of life. Nonetheless both Eich and *Bizarre* were writing at a time when their countries were re-defining themselves in cultural matters.

Talat Sait Halman has discussed similarities in approach between *Bizarre* poetry and the works of Langston Hughes (1902-1967), one of the figureheads of the *Harlem Renaissance*.<sup>4</sup> Langston Hughes, admittedly Whitman's darker brother, sang the joys, troubles and hopes of ordinary black people. The adventures (in prose) of Jess B Semple, a simple minded resident of Harlem who speaks out his mind on every possible

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<sup>4</sup> Talat Sait Halman, *Langston Hughes: Hayatı Sanatı*, İstanbul: Yeditepe, 1971.

subject remind of some of Orhan Veli's personas (Özsoy 2001:283-284). Hughes' focus on black life had a subversive political dimension that the works of the *Bizarre* trio did not have. *Bizarre*'s subversion was limited to the literary ground and was well rooted in the mainstream of officially advocated cultural policies.

The book *Garip* included an introductory essay "Garip" that had been written by Orhan Veli and sixteen poems by Melih Cevdet Anday, twenty by Oktay Rifat, twenty four by Orhan Veli and two poems which were co-authored by Orhan Veli and Oktay Rifat. Most of the poems had already been published in various journals: *Varlık*, *İnsan* (Mankind), *Oluş* (Genesis), *Ses* (The Voice), *Sokak* (The Street) and *Yenilik* (Novelty). The poems were characterised by the simplicity of their themes and the directness of the language.

The foreword, that was later to be accepted as a form of manifesto, was the cause of the first frictions between the three poets. Without expressing himself clearly, Melih Cevdet Anday explained that he did not subscribe to all the tenets of the manifesto, which had been spelled out by Orhan Veli (Sazyek 1999: 42). After the publication of the collection the trio produced little new material, mainly because they were conscripted. Their military duties ended towards the end of 1944 and the trio resumed their literary activities.

Although previously they used to insist on appearing together in journals and to publish common declarations, they now started to publish independently from one another. In February 1945 Orhan Veli published a poetry collection called *Vazgeçemediğim* (Those that I could not give up). Two months later in April he published the second edition of *Garip* in his own name. He made minor modifications to the introduction. The collection consisted only of his own poems to which he had added eleven new works. In a short foreword he referred to his own solitude and indirectly to the distance that now existed between him and his companions. Although the veiled criticism of his friends could have been the beginning of an interesting literary debate, neither Oktay Rifat nor Melih Cevdet Anday published any reply and the group kept, at least for the outside world, a form of unity.

In 1945 Oktay Rifat too published a collection of poems. It was entitled *Yaşayıp Ölmek Aşk ve Avarelik Üzerine Şiirler* (To Die Having Lived: Poems on Love and Vagabondage). The collection did not only consist of *Bizarre* poems but also of some of his earlier works written with the syllabic meter. This was obviously in clear contradiction to the radical approach of *Bizarre*, who rejected any form of literary tradition. Moreover Oktay Rifat started to publish poems that directly or indirectly evoked folk poetry. These poems were published in June 1945 in a collection entitled *Güzelleme* (Ode). In 1946 Melih Cevdet Anday published a collection of *Bizarre* poems entitled *Rahatı Kaçan Ağaç* (The Restless Tree). In the same year Orhan Veli published

*Destan Gibi* (Like an Epic), in 1947 *Yenisi* (The New One) and finally in 1949 *Karşı* (Against). In his theoretical writings Orhan Veli emphasised the importance of individualism, a view that was not completely shared by the other two.

In 1949, the trio was again reunited in the magazine *Yaprak* (The Leaf).<sup>5</sup> The *Bizarre* trio formed the core of the magazine, but other figures who were to leave their mark on Turkish literary history such as the painter and poet Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu (1913-1975), the poet Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı (1910-1956) and the short story writers Necati Cumalı (b.1921) and Sait Faik Abasıyanık (1906-1954) were regular contributors. They made no attempt at displaying any form of unity on literary or political matters. The journal disappeared one month after the death of Orhan Veli on 14.11.1950. After that date, *Bizarre* ceased to exist. It had lost its theoretician and its most strict and faithful adherent. In the following years Orhan Veli's unpublished poems were published in various periodicals.<sup>6</sup> In 1952, Oktay Rifat published *Aşağı Yukarı* (More or less), a collection of poems that still bore the essential marks of the *Bizarre* era. In the same year Melih Cevdet Anday similarly published *Telgrafhane* (The Telegraph Office).

By its focus on ordinary life, its language stripped to bare essentials and its fundamental opposition to rhyme and meter, *Bizarre* had completely transformed ordinary people's idea of poetry. Sarcasm and irony which were usually banned from the belles-lettres were now acceptable forms of humour in poetry. Their poems encompassed all elements of ordinary life. They wrote about love and marriage, childhood and death, about the joys of life and the beauty of nature. While in the early years of the movement, they focused on individual fates, their later poems had a more socio-critical content. Their aim was to paint a subjective picture of all aspects of human experience.

### ***Bizarre* and the theme of love**

Even though the theme of love is one of the major themes in the poetry of the *Bizarre* movement, relatively few *Bizarre* poems are included in the numerous anthologies of modern Turkish love poetry. This is because they did not write straightforward love poems that qualify easily for selection in works such as Süreya 1991, Asena 1997 or Celal 2001. *Bizarre* changed the approach to the theme of love to the same extent that they changed the face of twentieth century Turkish poetry by branding lyricism an anathema.

<sup>5</sup> *Yaprak* was published in Ankara over two periods. There were 12 issues published between January and June 1949 and then 16 issues between 1 September 1949 and 15 June 1950.

<sup>6</sup> Beside the above mentioned works, it should be noted that Orhan Veli also published a Turkish adaptation into rhyming prose of La Fontaine's *Fables* (*La Fontaine'in Masalları*) in 1948. In 1949, he rewrote, again in rhyming prose, some Nasreddin Hoca jokes and published them in book form (*Nasreddin Hoca Hikâyeleri*).

The poets studied in the first chapters had firmly set the theme of love in a greater communal context. Yahya Kemal represented the beloved as an incarnation of his understanding of Turkish national identity. The *Five Syllabists* espoused the ideal of Anatolian Turkish nationalism. They set the theme of love in the village in order to glorify Anatolian peasants or in the city where they focused on the superficial existence of cosmopolitan middle-class urban dwellers. Nazım Hikmet had varying approaches to the theme of love. However he always included expressions of solidarity with mankind as a whole. The reader read even Hikmet's most personal poems with the background information that poetry and politics were very closely linked in his works.

The *Bizarre* group, on the other hand, chose to focus on individual fates and discarded the larger social and cultural context. *Bizarre*'s individualism should not be confused with Ahmet Haşim's self-centred poetry. Haşim's evocation of an highly illusive beloved was always in an imagined, unreal world, whereas the *Bizarre* trio wrote about love in the real world. Their real world was not society or the city at large. It consisted of elements of everyday life that directly concerned the relevant individuals. *Bizarre* was a reaction against the literary atmosphere of the late thirties. It was above all focused against the various versions of syllabism, yet *Bizarre* also reacted against the growing socialist movement in literature. The rejection of both literary tradition and contemporary trends had an undeniable impact on the way *Bizarre* were to tackle the theme of love. Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem and Nazım Hikmet, even though they were at extreme poles both in time and literary approach, acknowledged the power of love. Love was an overwhelming feeling that could lead to grasp the meaning of true beauty or that could develop into a feeling of universal solidarity and brotherhood. *Bizarre*, Orhan Veli in particular, were the first literary grouping to question this approach, just like they had questioned the commonly accepted definition of poetry. For them love was not only a theme among others, but it was a very ordinary one. They emphasised that love was only a feeling, sometimes only a passion among others. Particular conditions gave rise to the feeling of love; hence love did not exist independently from the circumstances that brought it about.

The previously mentioned similarities and differences to Jacques Prévert's approach to poetry also come to the fore in their treatment of the theme of love. The French poet and the *Bizarre* group have a predilection for listing things beside love. Whereas Orhan Veli and Melih Cevdet Anday tend to list trivial elements of ordinary life, Oktay Rifat and Jacques Prévert list love together with joyful aspects of life such as laughters, spring, the sun and youth. All of them focus more on the side effects of love or of various aspects of love than on love itself. Prévert, unlike Orhan Veli and Melih Cevdet Anday, makes no distinction between love and sexuality. But, Prévert

celebrates love as a source of enlightenment and love usually serves to explore other, more political, issues such as freedom, religion and war.<sup>7</sup>

*Bizarre* remained much more down-to-earth in their approach and wrote about love in clearly defined contexts of urban life. Urban life, urban attitudes to life, love and sexuality were defining their approach to the theme of love. The urban setting and the social identities of the lovers ought to be seen as reactions to the contemporary literary context. The syllabists had focused on an Anatolia that was more the product of their imagination than of observation. By setting the theme of love in the city, *Bizarre* wrote about surroundings that they really knew. *Bizarre's* ordinary man was a city-dweller from a modest social background.<sup>8</sup> Though they were not the first to turn their attention to those strata of society, they were nevertheless focusing on people who had only recently become the subject of poetry.

Love was a theme because it was a reality of life and this affected their approach to the theme. *Bizarre* wrote more about the effects of love than about love itself. The interest of the group lay in how love affected ordinary life.

Orhan Veli, in particular, launched occasional ironic attacks on the very concept of "love poetry". In the poem "İş Olsun Diye" (To Pass the Time), he ironically claims to have written all his love poems *just to pass the time*. Veli's characteristic blend of sarcasm and melancholy was used here to undermine the commonly held belief that love and poetry were closely linked. In "Ben Orhan Veli" (I'm Orhan Veli), he challenges the historians of literature to find out the real name of his beloved. The irony in those two poems reflect Orhan Veli's wish to subvert traditional conceptions of poetry in which love is celebrated.

Nonetheless the theme of love is central in *Bizarre's* works. The novelty and the originality of their approach is best brought to the fore by a study of the social and material context as well as of the protagonists of the love poem and a discussion of the definition of love given by the three poets. The discussion will be based on a detailed study of nine representative poems with references to other poems of the period.<sup>9</sup> The poems by Orhan Veli will outline the particularity of *Bizarre's* approach which will be further exemplified in Melih Cevdet Anday's and Okaty Rifat's poetry. However in their case, the analysis is based on more traditional love poems and shows to what extent they nevertheless managed to integrate their own vision into the poems. The

<sup>7</sup> Love in the poetry of Jacques Prévert is discussed in two sections of Danièle Gasiglia-Laster's study of Jacques Prévert's major work *Paroles* (Words) (Gasiglia-Laster 1993:83-89).

<sup>8</sup> A criticism addressed at *Bizarre* was that their focus on the city was in contradiction with their wish to focus on ordinary people, since only 18.1 percent of the population of Turkey was living in cities and towns in 1940 (Danielson & Keleş 1985:28). Hence the city-dweller was hardly representative of the ordinary man.

<sup>9</sup> The poems that will be referred to were written between 1937 and 1950.

major characteristics which are representative of *Bizarre's* approach to the theme of love in each poem are underlined and studied by referring to other poems of the trio.

### Orhan Veli Kanık

Orhan Veli's works exemplify *Bizarre's* novel approach to the theme of love and will be explored in three representative poems: "Dedikodu" (Gossip), "Şoförün Karısı" (The Wife of the Taxi Driver) and "Sere Serpe" (Nonchalantly).

### Dedikodu

"Dedikodu" is a poem that was published for the first time in the second edition of the collection *Garip* (April 1945). The poem consists of exclamatory lines expressing the pretended anger of the narrator concerning rumours about his presumed amorous exploits in the streets of Istanbul. It introduces three major aspects of *Bizarre's* treatment of the theme of love that signal a completely new approach. Orhan Veli's approach to the theme is irreverent: Love is discussed in a satirical context. The context of the relationship(s) is urban, without any ideological connotation to the choice of Istanbul. The third issue is the identity of the lovers who are free-thinking bohemians.

### Dedikodu

Kim söylemiş beni  
Süheylâ'yla vurulmuşum diye?  
Kim görmüş, ama kim,  
Eleni'yi öptüğümü,  
Yüksekkaldırım'da, güpegündüz?  
Melâhât'ı almışım da sonra  
Alemdara gitmişim, öyle mi?  
Onu sonra anlatırım, fakat  
Kimin bacağını sıkışım tramvayda?  
Gûya bir de Galata'ya dadanmışız;  
Kafaları çekip çekip  
Orada ahyormuşuz soluğu;  
Geç bunları, anam babam, geç;  
Geç bunları bir kalem;  
Bilirim ben yaptığımı.

Ya o, Muâlla'yı sandala atıp,  
*Ruhumda hicranın*ı söyletme hikâyesi?

### Gossip

Who said that  
I was madly in love with Süheylâ?  
Who saw, tell me, who saw  
That I kissed Eleni  
In the red-light district during daytime?  
Then I supposedly took Melâhât  
And we went to Alemdar, is that so?  
I'll tell more about it later on but,  
Whose leg did I squeeze on the tramway?  
Allegedly we keep on going to Galata:  
After we drink, they say,  
That is where we go everyday;  
Forget about it, mate;  
Forget about it;  
I know what I'm doing.

And what about the story of getting  
Mualla on a rowboat and make her sing *Sorrow*  
*[in my soul]*

The choice of characters has a direct impact on the language used by the narrator, which is the language spoken in Istanbul. Yahya Kemal and the syllabists too had claimed that they were using the language of Istanbul, but their tongue was the language of educated circles. Orhan Veli and his two colleagues deliberately chose to write in the vernacular of the streets. The use of the language of the people in dialogues and slogans was also a characteristic of Nazım Hikmet's poetry, but it remains unclear

to what extent his poetry was available in the late thirties and forties. It might well be the case that *Bizarre* was developing their narrative style independently and in parallel to the communist poet.

The language of "Dedikodu" incorporates colloquialisms and the natural rhythms of speech. The gossip atmosphere is conveyed by the use of the /-miş/ reported past tense. The narrator pretends to be offended by the slandering of his love life. His anger is only feigned and he relishes in the oral repetition of his amorous exploits. The poem is satirical. The mild and tender cavilling at human nature is representative of *Bizarre's* poetry and underlines that their use of humour is never cheap, despite the arguments of socially minded literati such as Mehmet Çınarlı, Attilâ İlhan and Sezai Karakoç.<sup>10</sup>

The combination of satire and love is unusual in Turkish literature and reflects Orhan Veli's wish to reinvent the concept of love poetry at a time when contemporary poets still wrote hymns to love. Poems such as "Aşk İlahileri" (The Hymns of Love) by Faruk Nafiz, "Vuslat" (The Union) by Yahya Kemal and most of the poems by Nazım Hikmet were celebrations of various aspects of love. *Bizarre*, however, emphasised the ordinariness of love. Irreverence, particularly dear to Orhan Veli, was one way of doing it. In "Dedikodu", four women have allegedly had a relationship with the narrator. One of them (Eleni) is a prostitute since he meets her in *Yüksekkaldırım*, the red-light district of Istanbul. The emphasis on free love rather than conventional monogamous love is indicative of *Bizarre's* new conception of love. Characteristically in *Bizarre* poetry (with the exception of Oktay Rifat), the theme of love is rarely evoked without references to sexual desire, whereas sexuality is often discussed without any reference to love.

The colloquial tone of the poem, which imitates the rhythms of everyday speech is another blow to the usual lofty lyricism of love poetry: In line fifteen the narrator enjoins his addressee(s) to leave him alone since "he knows what he is doing." The reader rightly expects the poem to end on this self-righteous note but the poet brings in a new interjection (lines sixteen and seventeen) after leaving a blank line. In this way, Orhan Veli reproduces the abruptness and irregularity of natural speech.

These two lines introduce a new humorous note. The narrator allegedly forced a woman on a rowboat and made her sing a popular song. The verses are an obvious parody of one of Yahya Kemal's songs of the divine islands.<sup>11</sup> This added a new dimension to the poem. It was a call for the scratching of tradition and for a new narration of love. Orhan Veli tackles "Havuz" (The Pond), a poem by Ahmet Haşım

<sup>10</sup> For a summary of the critiques addressed at *Bizarre* see Sazyek 1999:331-343.

<sup>11</sup> The parody is not directed at Yahya Kemal himself, but rather at the clichés used in the poems.

with the same spirit in a posthumously published couplet entitled "Canân" (The Beloved):

Canan ki Degüstasyon'a gelmez  
Balıkpazarı'na hiç gelmez

The beloved who doesn't come to Degustation  
Never comes to Balıkpazarı

Haşim's illusive lover has been transferred from the sphere of his introspection to the fancy places frequented by Istanbul bohemians. Even though the poem is probably nothing more than a joke and not meant for publication, it is interesting because it shows that Orhan Veli was still irreconcilable with the classics of Turkish poetry towards the end of his life.<sup>12</sup> For the critic though, the couplet is more than a mere joke because it represents the changes in approach to the theme that occurred in a quarter of a century: love was now experienced in the real world.

Yet humour was not the only weapon in their effort to trivialise the theme of love. *Bizarre* always mentioned love among other emotions. Orhan Veli lists love songs beside walks at night, warming oneself in the sun and contemplating the sea in the opening verses of "Yaşamak" (Life)<sup>13</sup>, a poem written by him on his deathbed, and thus stresses that love is just one among several joys in life. He explores the same argument in "Ölüme Yakın" (Close to Death)<sup>14</sup>, where the narrator argues that women are just a passion among others, beside fame and money. In "Hicret" (Exile)<sup>15</sup>, love is listed together with the sound of the bells of the church and a room with a view of the port, all of which are unable to stop a man from emigrating from a town. The lists emphasise that love is not something special that deserves to be celebrated. Love is neither a unique feeling nor a unique theme in literature.

Another way of downgrading the importance of love is by stressing that love is always the product of particular circumstances. It is never the beloved that is the source of passion, but outside circumstances, usually a certain atmosphere. In the poem "Edith Almera", published in *Varlık* in September 1937, by Orhan Veli, under his pseudonym Mehmet Ali Sel, the reader is told that one may fall in love with girls playing the violin in *Café Chantants*. It is not Edith Almera that gives rise to the feeling of love, but the general atmosphere of the *Café Chantant*. In "Güzel Havalara" (Good Weather)<sup>16</sup>, it is the weather that makes the narrator fall in love. The ordinariness of love is again underlined by the mention of other events that happened to the narrator because of the influence of the weather: He resigned from his job as a state employee, he started to

<sup>12</sup>Orhan Veli disliked Ahmet Haşim. In an interview published in *Edebiyat Alemi* (The World of Literature) on 28 July 1949, he compared Ahmet Haşim to *Hacivat*, a character in traditional Turkish shadow theater, who was fond of elaborate language.

<sup>13</sup> Published after his death in *Aile* (April 1951).

<sup>14</sup> From the collection *Yenisi*.

<sup>15</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

<sup>16</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

tobacco, forgot to buy basic food and last but not least, his illness called poetry relapsed. The impact of the weather on love is again the major theme in the poem "Derdim Başka" (I Have Other Problems), another poem from the collection *Garip*. The narrator claims to fall in love every spring. In one of the subsections of the poem "İstanbul İçin" (For Istanbul)<sup>17</sup>, entitled "Davet" (Invitation), the narrator enjoins his beloved to come in such a weather that "*it will be impossible to give up.*"

Orhan Veli and to a certain extent Melih Cevdet Anday use various devices in order to subordinate love: Humour, the listing of love among other passions and the focus on the atmosphere that gives rise to the feeling, not the feeling itself or the beloved. This is how they reconcile the rejection of tradition with the need to discuss love as a reality of everyday life. It should be noted that Oktay Rifat does not subscribe to the above approach. Unlike them, he focuses on the power and the joys brought by love in his poems dedicated to his wife Türkan and in some of his later poems, namely "Eski Zaman Aşığı" (Old-fashioned Lover) , "İçim Yâr İle Dolu" (I Am Full of the Beloved), "Bir Şarkı İcat Etsem" (If I Composed a Song) and "Mor Kalem" (The Purple Pen).<sup>18</sup> Oktay Rifat's poems underline the particular place that love has in human relationships, just like generations of poets had done before him.

The second important aspect of the poem "Dedikodu" is its setting in Istanbul. Three neighbourhoods of Istanbul are mentioned in the poem - *Yüksekkaldırım*, *Alemdar* and *Galata*. In October 1950, Orhan Veli reiterated his views on poetry in the magazine *Yeni İstanbul* (New İstanbul) and he wrote that ordinary people should be the audience and the major theme of poetry (Sazyek 1999:73). Yet the focus in *Bizarre* poetry is on people living in large urban agglomerations, even though the great majority of the inhabitants of Turkey were living in the countryside, deprived of the basic comfort available to urban dwellers. This fact did not go unnoticed by *Bizarre's* numerous opponents, who argued that this was due to *Bizarre's* superficiality and lack of depth when analysing the workings of society. Sezai Karakoç was particularly unforgiving. He condemned the absence of Anatolia in Orhan Veli's poetry and wrote that Veli's depiction of impoverished milk- and *simit*-sellers was artificial and lacked sensitivity. The poet added that Veli's characters were the products of the fantasies and fancies of a *bourgeois* youngster (Karakoç 1986:51). Karakoç's criticism of Veli's characters completely missed the point. Orhan Veli and his two partners attacked the idea of objective realism and advocated subjective realism. Hence their characters were meant to be products of their perception. Regarding Anatolia, it should be said to the trio's defence that their switch of focus from the countryside to the city was a cultural reaction because Anatolia had been the central theme of most literary writings of the

<sup>17</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

<sup>18</sup> These three poems are from his 1945 collection *Güzelleme*.

period. It represented a clear cut from the early syllabist approach and various contemporary forms of *Anatolianism* in poetry, either cultural (Bedri Rahmi Eyüpoğlu) or political (the first generation of socialist realists and the graduates of the *Village Institutes*). Moreover the kind of subjective realism that they advocated required first hand knowledge of what they were writing about and they did not subscribe to the pretence of several syllabists who wrote about an Anatolian reality that they had never really experienced.

The urban setting of the poems can either be a city mentioned by name or an undefined town. In such cases, the city context is apparent through the mention of apartments, balconies, cars, taxis, telephones and telegraphs that were not to be found in Anatolian villages during the thirties and forties. Poems are usually set in Istanbul. Oktay Rifat mentions various districts of Istanbul by name, such as Üsküdar, Beşiktaş, Ortaköy, Kadıköy and Kuzguncuk, in autobiographical poems dedicated to his ill wife Türkân. Ankara is named in Orhan Veli's poem "Altındağ"<sup>19</sup>, in which Orhan Veli refers to a poor neighbourhood of the same name. Even Brussels has one mention as the setting of love in Orhan Veli's poem "Edith Almera".<sup>20</sup>

The *Bizarre* trio usually focus on ordinary people in their poetry. But the representativeness of certain woman portraits is questionable, since they seem to be archetypes of the women of the bohemian circles that they relished. In "Dedikodu", the reader is struck by the freedom of the women who seem to be able to accompany and act freely with the narrator, allegedly a libertine. Taking into consideration that the poem was written in the early forties, it is hard to believe that it aims at representing ordinary women. The same is true of several other poems by Orhan Veli. In "Aşk Resmi Geçidi" (The Love Parade), an unfinished poem, women go to bars, drink brandy, get drunk, speak indecently and undress with a stunning rapidity. In "Altın Dişlim" (The One with a Golden Tooth) the beloved is dressed like a western fashion icon. She wears make-up, a zoot-suit and shoes with high cork heels, when she accompanies the narrator to a concert. In "Şanolu Şiir" (Love on a Stage)<sup>21</sup>, Orhan Veli focuses on lovers whose traits are unusual for Turkish women of the period. The narrator has two lovers in the poem. One of them drinks and eats with the narrator, while the other sings on the stage. In "Benim Yârim" (My Darling), by Oktay Rifat, the narrator introduces the reader to an westernised *alafranga* lover too. Even though these women may not be representative of urban women in the late thirties and forties, they nevertheless represent the circles that the three poets frequented. Hence their presence is a necessity of *Bizarre*'s subjective realism.

<sup>19</sup> From the collection *Yenisi*

<sup>20</sup> Published in *Varlık* (1 September 1937) under his usual pseudonym Mehmet Ali Sel.

<sup>21</sup> Originally published in *Yenisi*.

### Şoförün Karısı

Ordinary people from the lower echelons of the social divide are the main characters of the next poem "Şoförün Karısı". It was originally published in the magazine *İşte* (15 June 1944) and was later included in the second edition of *Garip*. The poem is about a young man who implores a woman not to seduce him.

#### Şoförün Karısı

Şoförün karısı kıyma bana;  
El etme öyle pencereden,  
Soyunup dökünüp;  
Senin eniştede gözün var;  
Benimse gençliğim var;  
Mapuslarda çürüyemem;  
Başımı belâya sokma benim;  
Kıyma bana.

#### The Wife of the Taxi Driver

Have pity on me me, taxi driver's wife;  
Don't wave like this from the window,  
Taking off your clothes;  
You fancy your brother-in-law;  
But I am young;  
I cannot rot in prison;  
Don't get me into trouble;  
Have pity on me.

The poem is a short monologue addressed to a flirtatious woman. The language of the poem is particularly suited to the depiction of a relationship between ordinary people. Each verse is a straightforward exclamation with colloquialisms (Kıyma bana/Başımı belaya sokma). The only stylistic device used is a pun on the possessive construction with the particle "var", which is difficult to convey in translation (Lines four and five). The parallelism divides the poem into two parts. The first part (lines one to four) focuses on the woman, whereas the second part (lines five to eight) reveals the weakness of character and helplessness of the narrator.

The woman is the taxi driver's wife. Standing at her window, she invites the narrator to come and join her. Though it is not explicitly written, it is suggested that she dresses and undresses in front of the window. The flirtatious nature of the woman is not only revealed by her attitude towards the narrator. She also fancies her brother-in-law. The narrator is afraid of starting an affair, since this would probably end up with a prison sentence, which was the usual legal punishment for adultery at the time. The narrator puts forward his youth for not wishing to go to prison and continuously implores the woman to leave him alone. The requests of the narrator ("Have pity on me" and "don't get me into trouble") are revealing of his personality. By imploring the woman, the narrator admits that he is unable to resist his desire for her. Nobody forces him to look at her when she waves at him. He does not seem to be in love with her but he desires her. An important aspect of *Bizarre* love poetry is that sexual desire is shown as existing independently from love, but that love is rarely evoked without an implicit or explicit reference to sexual desire.

The narrator in "Şoförün Karısı" is representative of the ordinary man in Orhan Veli's poetry, who is always the victim, sometimes consenting, of outside circumstances. Orhan Veli usually depicts the ordinary man as unable to cope with his

sexual desire. His depiction is both realistic and novel in a society where sexuality and desire were still a taboo.

Ordinary individuals are central in several poems that deal with the theme of love. In "Quantitatif", a poem published in *Varlık* in 1940, the narrator claims that he loves beautiful women and that he loves working class women too, but that he loves above all beautiful working class women. Here too, the poet combines love and humour and parodies socialist love poetry.

In various poems, mostly by Orhan Veli, the social background of the lovers is a source of concern. In the poem "Altındağ", a young girl from a poor district of Ankara dreams of marrying a polite, well-educated man "who earns about 100 Turkish liras." She does not want to marry him out of love but in order to enjoy all the advantages of an ordinary middle-class family. In "Pazar Akşamları" (Sunday Evenings)<sup>22</sup>, another poem by Orhan Veli, the poet writes about an indebted man who is being ignored by the woman he loves. The man claims that it might be that she will still love him after he has paid his debts and dressed properly, but that he too, having become richer, will not pay her that much attention anymore.

The lovers are usually people with material difficulties. Even in one of Melih Cevdet Anday's more autobiographical poems such as "36.7"<sup>23</sup>, the poet reminds the beloved that he was born *a poor poet*. The joys of the lovers in Oktay Rifat's poems, dedicated to his wife Türkan, are the ordinary joys of ordinary people who have no money to spend on luxury goods. The lovers eat bread with cheese, a basic cheap snack ("Kuş Gibi", Like a Bird)<sup>24</sup> they look at flowers or hold each other's hands ("Anış", Remembrance).<sup>25</sup> In "Senden Utanıyorum" (I Am Ashamed of You)<sup>26</sup>, a poem by Melih Cevdet Anday, the narrator addresses the seaside and admits his shame at being without work and money. Yet he continues by saying that he is about to be given an official duty and that he will probably marry afterwards. The same link between love and financial means is again the theme of Orhan Veli's "magical realistic" poem "Deniz Kızı" (The Mermaid).<sup>27</sup> A beautiful mermaid sings songs of love into the narrator's ear. The narrator is conscious of her poverty and believes that she had had to fish and to clean fishing boats during her life in the sea. In a world where even mermaids are submitted to the harsh realities of life it is not surprising that ordinary people cannot help but mention their financial difficulties when talking about love.

The concerns of the lovers are the concerns of ordinary people, which makes an identification between the reader and the characters easier than in the poetry of Nazım

<sup>22</sup> Written in August 1937 and published in *Varlık*. (15 September 1937).

<sup>23</sup> From the collection *Rahatı Kaçan Ağaç*.

<sup>24</sup> From the collection *Yaşayıp Ölmek ve Aşk Üzerine Şiirler*

<sup>25</sup> From the collection *Yaşayıp Ölmek ve Aşk Üzerine Şiirler*

<sup>26</sup> From the collection *Rahatı Kaçan Ağaç*

<sup>27</sup> Written in 1943 but published by the poet in *Yaprak* (15 June 1950).

Hikmet, where the political subtext of epics such as *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* usually have a negative impact on the reception by ordinary readers. *Bizarre* too painted human landscapes of their country, but they focused on individual, not general fates.

*Bizarre*'s poetry did not ignore social criticism altogether, even though their critics disregarded those poems. In several poems the *Bizarre* trio study the relationship between love and class. In "Aşk Resmigeçidi", Orhan Veli writes that *love was for the rich, for those who had no job*. A possible interpretation of this line would be that the condition of working people is so bad that they have no time for love. Such a socially committed reading is rendered void by Orhan Veli's putting, with characteristic irony, the rich and those without work on the same level as people who have time for love. Similarly Melih Cevdet Anday claims in "Islık Çalmak" (To Whistle)<sup>28</sup> that one has *to be without work in order to love*. In "Kuyruklu Şiir" (Poem with a Tail)<sup>29</sup>, a poem by Orhan Veli, a stray cat dreams of bones while the butcher's cat dreams of love. The *Bizarre* trio try to develop a new form of love poetry that can convey the above reality. The love of people that fight to survive in the urban jungle cannot be sung in traditional ways. This is why love has to be removed from its pedestal and sung as an ordinary feeling among others.

### Sere Serpe

Sexual desire - the other novel aspect of *Bizarre* poetry- is central in the poem "Sere Serpe". The narrator observes a woman and is unable to cope with his growing desire for her. Rather than looking away, he prefers to blame her, with the characteristic passivity of Orhan Veli's ordinary man. The poem was originally published in *Varlık* (1 September 1946) and included in the collection *Yenisi*.

#### Sere Serpe

Uzanıp yatıvermiş, sere serpe;  
Entarisi sıyrılmış, hafiften;  
Kolunu kaldırmış, koltuğu görünüyor;  
Bir eliyle de göğsünü de tutmuş.  
İçinde kötülüğü yok, biliyorum;  
Yok, benim de yok ama...  
Olmaz ki!  
Böyle de yatılmaz ki!

#### Nonchalantly

She is lying down, nonchalantly;  
Her dress is pulled up, slightly;  
She raises her arm and her armpit shows;  
With one hand she's holding her breast.  
She has no bad intentions, I know:  
No, neither I, but...  
This is intolerable!  
One shouldn't lie like this!

The poem is about a man who observes a woman lying down in a nonchalant manner. Nothing is said about the setting. It could be in a room but it could be in the countryside as well. Nothing is said about the relationship between the two characters either. The encounter between a man and a woman, about whom we do not know

<sup>28</sup> From the collection *Rahatı Kaçan Ağaç*.

<sup>29</sup> Published posthumously on 1 January 1951 in *Son Yaprak*.

anything, in a place, about which we know nothing, enhances the erotic atmosphere of the poem and permits the reader to focus on the central theme of the poem which is desire.

The poem is divided into two parts. The first is descriptive (lines one to four). In the first four lines, the focus is on a woman lying in a very suggestive manner. Her dress is pulled and she is holding her breast. The attitude of the woman is ambiguous and the narrator feels the need to underline that she has no bad intentions. The second part of the poem (lines five to eight) consists of the exclamation of the narrator, who tries to cope with the surge of desire. He claims that he has no bad intentions either, yet he continues to look at her. The narrator's inability to cope with his desire ends with him expressing his anger at the nonchalance of the woman (lines seven and eight). His passivity is revealed by his anger directed against the woman. Orhan Veli does not want us to judge the characters of the poem. He simply introduces us to bare facts of everyday life.

Indeed *Bizarre* poems that deal with sexual desire cannot be read without taking into consideration the general attitude towards sexuality during the forties, years when sexuality could not be freely lived. This is why Orhan Veli likes to focus on even more taboo sexual issues that arose because of sexual oppression. The possibility of masturbation is evoked in two of Orhan Veli's poems. It is veiled in the third part of the controversial poem "Kitabe-i Seng-i Mezar" (Epitaph)<sup>30</sup>, the epitaph of an ordinary man. In the poem it is claimed that all traces of Süleyman Efendi have disappeared, including the marks left by his lips on the mattress of his bed. The theme is openly discussed in a poem that includes an I-narrator- "Yatağım" (My Bed)<sup>31</sup>, in which the narrator claims that he thinks of the beloved every evening. Then he continues by saying that he will love his bed as long as he loves her. In the poem "Eski Karım", Orhan Veli chooses another taboo subject and writes about wet dreams. The narrator openly admits that he is still fantasising about his former wife. She enters his dreams every night, "when he yields to temptation on white sheets." The shock of the admission is softened by the hopelessness of his love. The openness and straightforwardness of the language of these three poems suggest that the subjective realism of *Bizarre* knows no frontier and enters even the more secret and personal spheres of human existence. The hidden aspects of desire, until now unmentioned in Turkish poetry, are an aspect of the reinvention of love poetry. Beside sarcasm, humour and the lack of glamour of the lovers, the focus on sexual desire in all its forms (i.e. on what was still considered the lower aspects of love) gives a more down-to-earth, realistic image of love in poetry.

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<sup>30</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

<sup>31</sup> Written on 30 January.1938 and published in *İnsan* (1 October 1938).

## Melih Cevdet Anday

Melih Cevdet Anday's approach to the theme of love too adheres closely to the aspirations of the *Bizarre* manifesto. "Sevda Rüzgarı" (Wind of Love), "Mutluluk Şiirleri" (Poems about Happiness) and "36.7" are three poems that introduce the various facets of his approach to the theme of love.

### Sevda Rüzgarı

"Sevda Rüzgarı" is a poem from the collection *Telgrafhane* which explores the emotions of a lover in a metaphorical language. It is as if the narrator is swept away by wind.

#### Sevda Rüzgarı

Amanın bana bir hal oldu  
Bir hal oldu a dostlar  
Amanın beni bir rüzgar aldı  
A dostlar bir rüzgar aldı  
Bu rüzgar ne rüzgarı  
Amanın sevda rüzgarı  
Sevda rüzgarı a dostlar

#### Wind of love

Oh dear I feel so strange  
I feel so strange o friends  
Oh dear a wind took me away  
O friends a wind took me away  
What wind is this wind  
O dear it is the wind of love  
The wind of love o friends

Typical for much of Melih Cevdet Anday's poetry of the *Bizarre* period, the poem expresses the deep surprise of a man facing a new emotion. Narrators in love poems by the trio are never intellectuals, but ordinary men who try to express their surprise in a simple, straightforward language. The poetry of *Bizarre* is the poetry of the encounter between the individual and a world of ever growing emotions and material changes.

In "Sevda Rüzgarı", Melih Cevdet Anday does not try to describe love, but he focuses on the state of mind of the man experiencing the emotion. His state of mind is expressed with the language of an ordinary man who addresses friends. Love is seen as a wind that sweeps away the lover. The very fact that he is swept away is indicative of the narrator's helplessness in face of developments. It is also striking that the object of his love is not mentioned. The construction of the poem, despite the clarity and straightforwardness of the language, is much more lyrical than Orhan Veli's poems studied above. The narrator is addressing his friends, but his speech is not natural. There are too many repetitions. The poem could be a song and is indicative of the later works of Melih Cevdet Anday, where he would emphasise the importance of the lyrical qualities of his poems.

### Mutluluk Şiirleri

"Mutluluk Şiirleri", just like "Sevda Rüzgarı", deals with the effects of love and not love itself. "Mutluluk Şiirleri" is part of the collection *Rahatı Kaçan Ağaç*. The

poem is organised in four sections of unequal length and is directly addressed to the beloved.

### Mutluluk Şiirleri

#### I.

Şiirlerimde sen olmadığın zaman  
Onları niçin bitiremiyorum

#### II.

Balkonunun altında  
Düş kurarak uyuduğunu düşünmek  
Bana bu gece yalnızlığımı  
Ve mutluluğumu hatırlatıyor

#### III.

Bir şiiri yazmak isterdim  
'Eski zamanlardaki gibi güzel'  
Adlı  
Eğer mutlu olsaydım

#### IV.

Gece yarısı onu balkonda görünce  
Neden sokak sokak dolaşıp  
Mutlu insanları arıyorum  
Sevgilim sen olmasaydın  
Ben de ağaçlardan, kuşlardan  
Söz edebilirdim.

### Poems About Happiness

#### I.

Why can I not finish my poems  
When you are not in them

#### II.

Thinking that you sleep and dream  
Under your balcony  
Reminds me of my solitude tonight  
And of my happiness

#### III.

I would like to write a poem  
Entitled  
"Beautiful as in times bygone"  
If I were happy

#### IV.

Why do I stroll along the streets  
And look for happy people  
When I see her on the balcony at midnight  
If you were my beloved  
Me too, I would talk about  
Trees and birds.

The focus of the first section of the poem is on the relationship between love and poetry. The narrator says that he is unable to finish his poems when the beloved is not in them. The same theme of the relation between love and poetry is again picked up in the third section and in the final three verses of the poem. Yet the claim in the first two lines that love is necessary in order to finish a poem is contradicted by Orhan Veli. In "İstanbul İçin" (For Istanbul)<sup>32</sup>, the narrator clearly expresses the impossibility to write poetry when in love. Orhan Veli elaborates a similar theme in the poem "Anlatamıyorum" (I Can't Tell)<sup>33</sup>, where the narrator claims that "before being troubled" (*derde düşmeden önce*), probably by love, he did not realise the beauty of songs and the uselessness of words. The narrator concludes by confiding his inability to communicate when in love. In "Şaheserim" (My Masterpiece), the narrator again underlines that he is not used to writing poetry when in love. Yet he adds that he wrote his masterpiece after he had understood how much he was in love. The poem is not a love poem and the narrator does not show us his great work. He cunningly claims that he would first read it to the beloved. Orhan Veli's poems about his inability to write love poetry is an attack against both the literary tradition and much of contemporary syllabic poetry written by

<sup>32</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

<sup>33</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

apprentice poets, for whom poetry was just a way to express their emotions in an archaic poetic language full of clichés.

Okday Rifat is closer to Melih Cevdet Anday for he too claims that he writes poetry when he is in love. In "Kuş Gibi" (Like a Bird), in a twist at the end of the poem, the narrator interrupts the passionate and lyrical flow of love verses in order to claim that "*he wrote this poem at dawn and read it to her.*" The aim of those reflections on the relationship between love and poetry is in line with *Bizarre's* general approach, since the focus is again on the impact that love has on the existence of the narrator, who is or is not able to write because of the new emotion.

The third part of the poem and the last three lines of the fourth part are central in order to understand the *Bizarre* approach to love poetry. The third part makes it clear that any traditional form of love poetry cannot exist anymore. The narrator wishes to write poetry like past poets but he cannot as he is not happy. The unhappiness is the result of the involvement of the poet with the real world. Writing about real people means writing about their troubles and to a certain extent sharing them. *Bizarre's* individualist approach leads them to pessimism.

The final three lines are both a celebration of the beloved, source of love poetry, and a humanist manifesto. It is love that leads the narrator to write about human beings. Had it not been for love, he too would have switched his attention away from individual fates and celebrated the beauty of nature and the singing of the nightingale. Those lines are an ironic indictment of the flowery language of the classical tradition, the superficiality of the poets grouped around the *Servet-i Fünûn* journal and the artificiality of the *Seven Torch Holders*, who all chose nature as a source of inspiration for their images and metaphors.

The second part and the opening three lines of the fourth part introduce another important aspect of *Bizarre's* approach to the theme of love. Since *Bizarre* were fighting against all forms of literary clichés, such as the glorification of love, in both *divân* and much of modern day poetry, they had to approach the theme of love in a new light. Rather than trying to define the feeling of love, they preferred to explore the effect it had on the life of ordinary people.

Melih Cevdet Anday writes about the contradictory feelings of the lover for whom the closeness of the beloved is a source of happiness and solitude, since she is not with him in lines three to six. Lines eleven to thirteen describe the confusion and exhilaration of the lover walking in search of other people and trying to see reflections of his own happiness in the outside world.

The effects of love are discussed by the three poets. Orhan Veli describes them in "Sevdaya Mı Tutuldum" (Have I Fallen in Love).<sup>34</sup> The lover wonders whether he is

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<sup>34</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

falling in love since he has become pensive, he is sleepless and more prosaically he does not eat his much loved salad anymore. Humour is obviously one of the trademarks of the group and an important component of their poems. Oktay Rifat too in "Name" (The Letter)<sup>35</sup> focuses on the confusion of constantly thinking about the beloved. He behaves in an unusual way, loses his way in the streets and spills his coffee all over the place. In "Rahatı Kaçan Ağaç" (The Restless Tree), a poem by Melih Cevdet Anday, the poet is stunned by the tranquillity and impassivity of a tree, to whom he intends to give a book so that it may learn about love and become restless. Restlessness caused by love may lead to alcoholism, like in Orhan Veli's poem "Meyhane" (The Tavern)<sup>36</sup> or to physical violence like in Orhan Veli's "Tahattur" (Reminiscence).<sup>37</sup>

Oktay Rifat focuses mostly on the positive effects of love. In "Kuş Gibi", he flies like birds when he takes his wife's arm and in "Karıma" (To My Wife) "*halls are cool and rooms are spacious*" thanks to her. The difference between Orhan Veli's and Oktay Rifat's approaches is also reflected in the way they cope with the aftermath of love. In Orhan Veli's "Illusion"<sup>38</sup>, the narrator feels much better after having *got rid of an old flame*. In the poem he mixes both personal, political and natural developments. He has washed and got shaved. He perceives all women as beautiful and believes all the people to feel good just as he does. It is a personal interpretation of reality. Yet the elements and history are on his side. It is a sunny spring day and the war has ended. Yet for Oktay Rifat, the end of love is the source of torment. In "Türkan'a Ağıt" (Elegy for Türkan), the poet focuses on his solitude and on the meaninglessness of life, now that his beloved has died.

### 36.7

Love, illness and real life are also the themes of a much-loved poem by Melih Cevdet Anday "36.7". The poem is part of the collection *Rahatı Kaçan Ağaç*. It is a poem that deals with the aftermath of a serious illness, suffered by the beloved. The narrator reiterates his declaration of love.

### 36.7

Madem otuz altı yediye düşmüş ateşin  
Demek çıkışın yakın hastaneden  
Benim dal gibi zayıfım, güzelim  
Ne dilerseñ dile benden

Esiri aşkın olmuşum cânâ  
Kafamın ve kolumun gücü senden  
Ben fakir şâir doğmuşum

### 36.7

Your fever fell to 36.7  
So you will leave the hospital soon  
You, as thin as a bough, my beautiful one  
I'll do whatever you want

I have become the prisoner of your love  
You are the source of the power of my mind and my arm

<sup>35</sup> From the collection *Yaşayıp Ölmek ve Aşk Üzerine Şiirler*

<sup>36</sup> Published by Mehmet Ali Sel in *Vartık* (1 November 1937)

<sup>37</sup> From the collection *Yenisi*.

<sup>38</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

Ne dilersen dile benden

I was born a poor poet  
I'll do whatever you want

Even though the content of the poem is traditional for a love poem, the title already indicates that it is not going to be ordinary. The indication of the temperature of the beloved is a surprising title for a love poem. The title together with the first two lines form a unit that is separate from the remaining six lines. We are told that the temperature of the beloved has gone down to 36.7. The reference to her possibly leaving the hospital indicates that her illness was quite serious. Nothing else is said about the illness and from the third line onwards the narrator celebrates his beloved. There is no organic link between the first two lines and the rest of the poem. It is the reader who creates the link. There is no logical development of an argument and in order to have a coherent dialogue between the poet and the reader, the latter has to project his own experiences in order to understand the poem.

The praise of the beloved starts with a classical image, the beloved is as *thin as a bough*. Lines four and eight are the refrain of the poem. The narrator promises the beloved to do whatever she wants from him. In line four, those words express the relief of the narrator at the recovery of the beloved, whereas in line eight it has an ironic twist, because in line seven the narrator tells her that he is nothing but a poor poet. Line five refers again to the classical tradition. *Esiri aşkın* has two possible meanings on which Melih Cevdet Anday plays. It could be read as an *izafet* construction and mean "prisoner of your love" or it could be an inverted genitive construction meaning "prisoner of love." In both cases we have an indication that Melih Cevdet Anday was less focused on the use of conversational language and that he made excursions into more literary language. The poem is a mixture of the prosaic and the poetical. It is an ode to the beloved, source of the energy of the lover (line eight), but it is constructed in such a way that it is a characteristic *Bizarre* poem. Humour, everyday life and love are blended in order to paint a panorama of a complex modern life.

### **Oktay Rifat**

Oktay Rifat is the poet who adhered the least to the *Bizarre* manifesto. After the publication of *Garip* in 1941, he published two collections of poems in 1945 that included poems that were not completely compatible with the radical modernist agenda of *Bizarre*. *Yaşayıp Ölmek Aşk ve Avarelik Üzerine Şiirler* consisted of two parts. The second part was a selection of fifteen of his earlier poems written with the syllabic meter. The same year in June he published the collection *Güzelleme* in which the poems evoked folk poetry in both form and matter. In "Eski Zaman Aşığı", one of the poems of the collection, the narrator revealingly claimed to be a *lover of former times*. The verse is a suitable introduction to Oktay Rifat's approach to the theme of love. While

Orhan Veli and Melih Cevdet Anday worked towards the vulgarisation of love, Oktay Rifat once again emphasised its greatness.

The poems "Anış" (Remembrance), "Uykusuzluk" (Sleeplessness) and "Karıma" (To my wife) are representative for his approach.

### Anış

"Anış" is part of the collection *Yaşayıp Ölmek Aşk ve Avarelik Üzerine Şiirler* and was written after the death of his wife Türkan Aksoy. Unlike Orhan Veli and Melih Cevdet Anday, Oktay Rifat reflected his love life in poems that were often of a confessional nature. His relationship with Türkan Aksoy was the central source of inspiration for several of his poems. Hakan Sazyek confirms that it is possible to discuss the emotional intensity of those works in the general context of Oktay Rifat's real life (Sazyek 1999: 149).

#### Anış

Her dakikasını ayrı hatırlarım  
Erenköy'de geçen zamanımın  
Rüyama girer bir arada  
İstanbul bahar ve Türkan'ım

Bir odamız vardı etrafı sarmaşık  
Bostanlara bakan pencereimiz  
O güller kadar taze  
Ben ona deli gibi aşık

Bir yastıkta dinlenir başlarımız  
Saçlarım saçlarına karışırdı  
Güzel bir kızdı ince alımlı  
Ne giyse yaraşırdı

Yeter ki gönüller şen olsun  
Şarkılar söyledik yolda  
Hep karşıma otururdu ellerini tutardım  
Akşamüstü eve dönerken paraşolda

Ağaçlar çiçekteydi  
Türkan'ım sağ beraberimde  
Kalbim sevda içindeydi  
İstanbul bahar içindeydi

#### Remembrance

I remember each minute of the time  
We spent in Erenköy  
Istanbul spring and my Türkan  
Enter my dreams together

We used to have a room its walls covered in vines  
Our window had a view on the orchards  
She - fresh as roses  
I - madly in love with her

We rested our heads on one pillow  
My hair mixed with hers  
She was a beautiful girl delicate attractive  
Everything she wore suited her

Just to entertain ourselves  
We used to sing on the way  
She would always sit opposite me and I would hold her  
[hands  
When in the evening we returned home in the carriage

The trees were in bloom  
Türkan was alive by my side  
My heart was in love  
Istanbul was in spring

The poem celebrates the life the narrator had with his beloved. It was a life of simple pleasures. In the first quatrain the poet sets the poem in Erenköy, a neighbourhood of Istanbul, which has been mentioned as a setting of love by several poets, but most prominently by Yahya Kemal Beyatlı in "Erenköyü'nde Bahar" (Spring

in Erenköy).<sup>39</sup> The narrator says that he remembers every single minute that he has spent in Erenköy. Even though no mention of the beloved is made in the two opening verses, the reference to Türkan in the fourth line allows the reader to reinterpret the opening lines and to understand them as a reference to time spent together with the beloved in that particular setting. The evocation of the beloved, spring and Istanbul side by side and the reference to dreams remind of Yahya Kemal's above mentioned poem.

However the reference to the beloved by name as well as the following quatrains are revealing of the great changes that *Bizarre* introduced to Turkish poetry. It is not only the geographic setting that is mentioned in the poem. The reader enters the room where the lovers lived (lines five and six). The theme of love in the poetry of Yahya Kemal was never evoked in closed spaces such as rooms or houses. This switch from the city to the room announces the much more intimate (and opaque) poetry of the *Second Renewal*.

Erenköy as a setting is significant. It is both set in Istanbul and it has large green areas. Even though the trio's definition of ordinary life does not include life in the village, nature and the countryside are referred to as places of recreation for city-dwellers. This is the case of "Şehir Haricinde" (Outside the City), a poem written by Orhan Veli in May 1939 but never published during the author's lifetime. In the poem a woman is lying in a field and feels the coming of spring on her breast and belly. The erotic imagery of the whole poem is emphasised by the mention of buds that are about to burst and the promise of beautiful days to come.

Nature is one of those simple pleasures available to ordinary lovers in the poetry of the *Bizarre* trio. Throughout the poem reference is made to simple joys and pleasures such as a window looking out to the vegetable gardens (line six), the singing of songs (line fourteen) or the holding of hands (line fifteen).

Oktay Rifat's more traditional approach to the theme of love can be seen in references to the unity of the lovers, which is emphasised in the third quatrain. Rifat refers to the unity of the bodies of the lovers. Here, it is their hair that mingle together. The unity of the lovers is a theme that will be further developed in "Uykusuzluk".

Even though the union with the beloved as the ultimate goal of love is traditional, the general context in the poem is indicative of the groundbreaking changes brought about by *Bizarre*. Love is evoked in an ordinary everyday context (references to the room, window and carriage). The focus is not on the emotion itself but on its effects. The lovers lie on the same pillow, they sing songs together and hold hands. The reader is invited to understand the intensity of the emotion by becoming a witness of the acts of the lovers. In *Bizarre* love poetry, it is not love that is the centre, but human beings. With *Bizarre*, love poetry is a form of humanism.

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<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that Yahya Kemal wrote this poem during the fifties. (Banarlı 1968:48)

## Uykusuzluk

“Uykusuzluk” (Sleeplessness) is also part of the collection *Yaşayıp Ölmek Aşk ve Avarelik Üzerinde Şiirler* and was the first *Bizarre* poem to deal with the theme of sexual desire (Sazyek 1999:150). Oktay Rifat approaches the theme of sexual desire and love-making in a very different fashion from his colleagues. Although his colleagues try to approach sexuality in a down-to-earth, non-lyrical manner, Oktay Rifat celebrates sexuality and desire in “Uykusuzluk”.

### Uykusuzluk

Gecenin kapısını hiçbir el kapayamaz  
Demek yarı aydınlık kalacağım  
Ve küçük dalgalar  
Getirdiği vakit cesetlerimizi yan yana  
Vücudumda başlayan kan devranı  
Vücudumu dolaşıp yine sana dönecek  
Artık bize gece yoktur

### Sleeplessness

No hand can close the door of the night  
This means I will stay in half light  
And when small waves  
Bring our corpses side by side  
The circulation of the blood starting in my body  
Will travel through my body and return to you  
From now on there will be no night for us

The reader is not aware of anybody's presence, except the narrator's in the first two lines of the poem. The first line metaphorically introduces the theme of sleeplessness. The second line elaborates the metaphor. Since the doors of the night cannot be closed, he will remain in half light or half darkness. It is in lines three and four, which form a syntactic unit, that we become aware of the presence of the beloved. Foreplay is evoked metaphorically (small waves that bring the bodies together). The bodies are called corpses. It is the act of love-making that will give life to the bodies, that are united by a unique circulation of the blood. The last verse indicates that the night is going to be long and spent making love. The poem by its metaphors and unexpected references to “corpse” and “circulation of blood” reminds of the conceits used by English metaphysical poets.<sup>40</sup>

The poem is clearly out of line with the typical approach to the theme of sexuality in *Bizarre* poetry. Nonetheless, the humorous metaphor on sleeplessness as well as the unexpected physiological vocabulary are indicative for Oktay Rifat's striving for a different poetic narration of the act of love. As seen, in *Bizarre* poetry the sexual desire arises unexpectedly and can be independent from love. The poem "Sere Serpe"<sup>41</sup>, by Orhan Veli expresses the surprise and birth of desire of a man observing suggestive gestures made by an indefinite woman. Sexual desire or at least the thought of it can arise anywhere. In "Günlerimiz" (Our Days)<sup>42</sup>, a poem by Melih Cevdet Anday, the narrator mentions women's underclothes that he sees hanging on balconies in backstreets, which makes him think of his soap-smelling beloved. In Orhan Veli's "Şoförün

<sup>40</sup>There are no references to metaphysical poetry in Rifat's works.

<sup>41</sup> From the collection *Yenisı*.

<sup>42</sup> From the collection *Rahatı Kaçan Ağaç*.

Karısı"<sup>43</sup>, the narrator fancies a woman who waves at him from a window. Nothing is said about the relationship between narrator and the woman. In this poem too, it is not love that leads to desire but the body of a woman. Social conventions are not seen as an obstacle to desire, for the narrator openly talks about a married woman, who herself is unfaithful. This is characteristic for the realism of *Bizarre*, which is always descriptive and never critical.

Sexual intercourse can be either with the beloved, like in Oktay Rifat's poem "Uykusuzluk" or with any woman. Not surprisingly sex is much more prosaic in Orhan Veli's poetry. In the unfinished poem "Aşk Resmigeçidi", the narrator's fourth lover talks dirty and undresses unceremoniously and the lover called Ayten sleeps with everybody when she leaves the bar. In the poem "Söz" (Word), it is the narrator's turn to be haughty when he claims that a woman's beauty is different in bed from what it is in the mirror. With *Bizarre* the theme of sexuality becomes a theme on its own.

### **Karım**

The poem "Karım", part of the collection *Aşağı Yukarı* is again a passionate declaration of love to his wife, that focuses on the details of ordinary life and reflects on the meaning of love.

#### **Karım**

Sofalar seninle serin  
Odalar seninle ferah  
Günüm sevinçle uzun  
Yatağında kalktığım zaman

Elmanın yarısı sen yarısı ben  
Günümüz gecemiz evimiz barkımız bir  
Mutluluk bir çimendir bastığın yerde biter  
Yalnızlık gittiğin yoldan gelir

#### **To my wife**

With you halls are fresh  
With you rooms are spacious  
My day is long with joy  
When I wake up in your bed

You are one half of the apple I am the other  
Our day night home house are one  
Happiness is grass that sprouts where you walk  
Solitude comes from the road where you go

The first quatrain describes in a simple language how the beloved has affected the way the narrator perceives the world. Halls are cool, rooms are spacious and days are full of joy. The spouses sleep in the bed of the wife which indicates that the narrator probably moved in. The aim of the four lines is to re-create the atmosphere of love. Once again Oktay Rifat does not try to define his emotion, he simply describes its effect on him, on his perceptions.

Line five expresses the feeling of complete unity with the beloved. Rifat's obsession with the idea of unity should not be interpreted as some form of hidden mysticism. Rifat yearns for and realises the union in the real world, which was not the

<sup>43</sup> From the collection *Garip*.

case of the *divân* poets, nor of later incarnations such as Ahmet Haşim, who achieved the *visal* with his illusive beloved only in an imagined, unreal world.

Line six is a reiteration of the desire for a complete union between the lovers and their little world. Line seven and eight finally form a powerful aphorism on love and could stand as such on their own.

The poem, though uncharacteristic for the general *Bizarre* approach to love that aimed at trivialising the theme and subvert its centrality and uniqueness in human experience, is a mixture of both traditional and *Bizarre* love poetry. It is traditional because it sees love as the centre of one individual existence and no other experience or emotion is mentioned alongside it. It is nevertheless a *Bizarre* poem because of the references to more prosaic elements such as the hall, the room or the bed of the beloved.

### **Love, life and the people**

The *Bizarre* trio made a groundbreaking contribution to the treatment of the theme of love in Turkish literature by exploring it in the general framework of their subjective realism. Their importance is similar to Nazım Hikmet's, but their influence was probably far greater among their contemporaries. Nazım Hikmet's works were forbidden, whereas *Bizarre*'s poetic endeavours had the endorsement of Nurullah Ataç, the critic who was influential in government circles. *Bizarre* and Nazım Hikmet in the thirties and forties shared a very similar conception of realism, that was based on subjective observations of their own experiences.

In the case of *Bizarre*, love poetry was usually set in the city. The urban setting of the relationship is a consequence of the subjective realism that they advocated. They needed first-hand knowledge of their subject matter and did not subscribe to the pretence of most syllabists who wrote about an Anatolian reality that they had never really experienced. It was also a cultural reaction against the nationalist syllabists and various contemporary forms of *Anatolianism* in poetry. *Bizarre* did not celebrate the city either. Their choice of the city was not ideologically motivated. Even though districts of Istanbul were mentioned in some of the poems, the poems should not be read as Istanbul poems, but rather as poems about love that happen to be set in the former capital of the empire. The non-ideological motivation of the choice of the setting was an important novelty.

*Bizarre* introduced a social class to poetry, that had until now been to a large extent excluded from literature. The lovers were usually from lower middle class background. They were *memurs*, shopkeepers, housewives and a whole range of colourful bohemian characters. None of them were glamorous and it is their ordinariness that made them attractive to the reader and distinct from the stylised lovers

of Yahya Kemal and the *Five Syllabists*. The rapid cultural and social changes taking place in the city were also reflected in love poetry. Women became more independent and a westernised life-style became the norm in larger cities. Women in *Bizarre* poetry had both a body and soul, just like the beloved in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet. Sexuality, although still a taboo, was mentioned and it was not there for any aesthetic or didactic reasons. It was a reflection of reality.

*Bizarre*'s major novelty was their down to earth approach to the theme. Since poetry had to be reinvented, it was necessary to develop new ways to write about love. They aimed at reflecting all aspects of human existence and wrote about love in the general context of individual human lives. Love was always evoked among other emotions. *Bizarre* tried to trivialise the theme of love. Various forms of humour (mainly sarcasm and irony) were a novel element in their irreverent approach. Above all, they avoided any celebration of the theme. They did not try to define love, but preferred to focus on how love affected the material and emotional life of the characters in the poems. They avoided any metaphysical meditations on the nature of love. Even though Oktay Rifat was more traditional in his approach to love, he too firmly focused on more prosaic elements in the relationship. The approach to sexuality in their works was also unusual. Sexual desire was evoked independently from the theme of love for the first time.

*Bizarre* broke most conventions of the theme. Thanks to their irreverence to the tradition, the Turkish poet won his war of independence from both tradition and ideology. But the question that many put to *Bizarre* was whether the poet, the intellectual, had a right to such an independence at a time when other literati were persecuted by the state.

## Chapter V

### The Social Reality of Love

#### Socialist poets and the theme of love

Socialism as a political practice and as a philosophical programme has numerous definitions (Bold 1970:339). "Socialist Poetry" or "Socialist Literature" are controversial literary classifications, because none of the founding fathers of socialism had a clear idea on the role of socialist literature. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had not developed any comprehensive system of literary theory. Their scattered writings on literature and the arts were only collected and published in 1933 by M. Lifshitz and F.P. Schiller. Unfortunately, this collection became widely known only after the Second World War (Bottomore 1998: 317). There have been ever since great divergences among leading Marxist thinkers on the role of literature in the revolutionary struggle.<sup>1</sup> It could be argued that the literary works of any socialist who reflects his political views in his writings could be categorised under the heading of "Socialist literature".

In Turkey four generations of poets can be classified under the heading of "Socialist (*Toplumcu*) Poetry". The affinity between the poets categorised as such is not literary but political. Historically, Marxism as an ideology gained influence among the intelligentsia of Salonica and Istanbul during the first quarter of the twentieth century and it rapidly became a major political force. Despite the young Turkish republic's initially good relations with the Soviet Union and Mustafa Kemal's ambivalent attitude to socialist ideology, the socialist movement was given little freedom to develop in Atatürk's time and was later persecuted by the authoritarian regime of İsmet İnönü.<sup>2</sup>

In this particular context the aim of socialist poetry was, in the words of Rifat İlgaz, one of its major proponents, "to analyse the circumstances of the period in which we live with Marxist methodology, to share our findings with society and to find solutions in the framework of the constitution of the Turkish Republic" (Cengiz 2000:13). In other words, literature is not conceived as just a propaganda tool, but as a possible way to analyse the workings of society. Nazım Hikmet can rightly be seen as the father of socialist literature in Turkey, even though some minor literary figures like Yaşar Nezihe or Rasim Haşmet wrote socialist poetry before him. It is under the influence of Nazım Hikmet that a whole generation started to write socially committed verses. They were to be known as the *Generation of 1940* (*1940 Kuşağı*). Attilâ İlhan

<sup>1</sup> On the development of Marxist literary criticism see: Demetz 1967 and Baxandall 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Zihni T. Anadol deals with the suppression of socialists in Turkey during the Second World War in his book, mainly based on his own recollections *Truva Atında İlk Akşam* (Anadol 1988).

referred to them “*as a squad of self sacrificing soldiers*” (İlhan 1993:45), by which he pointed to the ruthless suppression of socialist activism during the forties. Their poetry was characterised by an active socialist engagement and a radical rejection of the tradition and of contemporary literary currents (Kurdakul 1994c:50). It should be noted that the rejection of the classical and syllabist tradition took place the same time as Nazım Hikmet worked on a synthesis of modernist, traditional and divân poetry. The members of the *Generation of 1940* could not be completely aware of Hikmet’s new endeavours because his works were forbidden. Instead, they were mainly acquainted with his early futurist experiments. Nazım Hikmet’s influence was more political and spiritual than literary. The influence was thematic, not formal.

The poetry of the *Generation of 1940* led to a greater realism and to a thematic development in Turkish poetry. While critics agree that the poetry in itself is more of documentary than literary interest (Cengiz 2000: 41), they also point to the difficult circumstances in which the poets wrote (Cengiz 2000:39). Socialist poets, whose ideas were outlawed, had to work under the constant gaze of the authorities and suffered continuous harassment, a fate that was also shared by their İslamist counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Those particular circumstances had an undeniable negative effect on the artistic development of the poets. Nevertheless the poetry of the *Generation of 1940* does certainly not compare unfavourably with the poetry of the *Seven Torch Holders*, or of other contemporary trends inspired by nationalistic syllabism or *Bizarre*. They have produced two major poets, Hasan İzzettin Dinamo (1909-1989) and İlhan Berk (b.1919), who left their marks on Turkish literature, but who were remarkably ostracised by their companions, probably because of their originality, which did not fit the narrow framework of *Zhdanovist* literature. It is also notable that the first wave of socialist poets has widely been ignored in mainstream literary criticism. Hasan İzzettin Dinamo gives one plausible explanation in a letter written to Attilâ İlhan:

"We have to create Turkish literature and we also have to take our place in Turkish literary history. There is no room for us in literary histories written by reactionaries such as Ahmet Kabaklı; and there will be no room for us in those written or imposed by the *Bizarre* group, who have degenerated Turkish literature and then were enthroned as its sultans" (İlhan 1999:80).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Dr Çetin Yetkin deals with various aspects of the persecution of the left-wing intelligentsia in his classic work *Siyasal İktidar Sanata Karşı* (Political Power against the Arts) (Yetkin 1979). He does not only focus on the harassment of the literati. He devotes separate chapters to playwrights and theatre actors, cinema artists, the *beaux-arts* and caricaturists. The work covers the whole period of time between the thirties and the seventies. However it is regrettable that he does not include in his study the suppression of Islamist artists, which would deserve a similar detailed and impartial study.

<sup>4</sup> The same is true for (most) left-wing authors who do not mention Conservative or Islamic poets. Yet since the nineties a change of attitude should be noted. This change probably has its roots in the dialogue that took place between the likes of Cemal Süreya and Sezai Karakoc in the literary supplement of the weekly *Pazar Postası* (The Sunday Post), which was published by Cemil Sait Barlas and in *Diriliş* (Rebirth), the publication edited by Karakoç. In the late eighties and in the beginning of

A new wave of socialist poetry developed during the sixties after the legalisation of Nazım Hikmet's work, which was the result of the *leftish* military coup of 1960.<sup>5</sup> A whole new generation of young poets, among them Ataul Behramoglu (b.1942) and İsmet Özel (b.1944), was introduced to the poetry of the *blue-eyed giant*.

There has never been a single socialist approach to the theme of love. Cemal Süreya's claim that socialist poets focused on love in a working class background or on love during social unrest can nevertheless be accepted as a basic definition of socialist love poetry (Süreya 1991:9-11). It is certainly true that in the forties the approach was much in vogue since, in Atillâ İlhan's words, "*in those years the socialist approach was basically Stalinist*" (İlhan 1998:129). Love was only a minor concern for most poets of the period because love poetry epitomised the poetry of the establishment which they were struggling against. Moreover love was seen as a personal theme that did not deserve the attention of the socially committed poet. During the Second World War, Dinamo summarised this attitude in a couple of verses of his poem "Bağımsızlık Marşı" (Independence March), written in 1942 to protest against the threat of a German invasion:

Kesin aşk şarkılarını  
Marş okuyalım

Stop the love songs  
Let's sing marches

Nevertheless there were socialist poets, among them, who approached the theme of love in a novel way and made important contributions to the development of the theme and of Turkish poetry in general. This chapter will explore the theme of love in the poetry of Hasan İzzettin Dinamo (1909-1989), Atillâ İlhan (b.1925) and Ataul Behramoğlu (b.1942). They are the major representatives of three generations of socialist poets.

Hasan İzzettin Dinamo was born in Ahanda, a village of the western Black Sea region in 1909. His father and his elder brother were killed during the First World War and his mother died in hospital when he was eight years old. He grew up in an orphanage and later became a primary school teacher. In 1935, he was arrested because of his socialist activism and was released in 1939. He started to work as a journalist until he was conscripted in 1942 and had to make a prolonged military service until 1949. He then worked as a translator and as a private tutor. He was again arrested in 1955 and later released in the same year. His early literary attempts were influenced by the *Five Syllabists*. Yet he switched to free verse after reading the poetry of Nazım

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the nineties the dialogue between the left and Islamic circles continued in magazines such as *Defter* (Notebook), *Üç Çiçek* (Three Flowers) and *Şiir Atı* (The Poetry Horse) (Atabaş, Şimşek & Dirlikyapan 1998:301). It came to an end in the aftermath of the Sivas "auto-da-fé" (2 June 1993), where 37 left-wing intellectuals, among them many initiators of the dialogue, were burned to death by a blood-thirsty mob during a conference. The silence of Islamic intellectuals about the "incident" made a continuation of the dialogue difficult.

<sup>5</sup>The development of the socialist movement in those years in Turkey is the focus of Lipovsky 1992.

Hikmet and started to focus on social issues. During the forties he outgrew the influence of Nazım Hikmet and developed an original style, nourished by both soviet socialist literature and western classicism. He mixed natural impressionism with social realism in a highly original experiment.<sup>6</sup>

Attilâ İlhan's background is quite different from Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's. He was born in 1925 in Menemen, the son of a well-off family. During the first period of his literary development (until 1950) Attilâ İlhan propounded a classical understanding of socialist realism and an optimistic vision for the future of mankind. Under the influence of Nazım Hikmet, he studied folk poetry and started to integrate the rhythms and themes of folk poetry into his own poems. His collection *Sisler Bulvarı* (The Boulevard of Mists, 1954) became a turning point and he introduced new themes into Turkish poetry. The thematic development was accompanied by a new advocacy of lyricism, which had been branded an anathema by the *Bizarre* group. Attilâ İlhan became an influential figure for both socialist and individualist poets. He broke many taboos on sexuality in poetry and with the benefit of hindsight, we can say that his more personal verses cleared the way for the introspective poetry of the *Second Renewal* group.

Ataol Behramoğlu was born in Çatalca in 1942. He studied Russian literature at university. He was an active publicist and promoted socialist realism in his poetry and critical writings. During the seventies his literary stance became more moderate and he opened up to more personal concerns in his poetry.

### **Hasan İzzettin Dinamo**

Love is a theme on the margin of the works of Hasan İzzettin Dinamo. In 1929, the poetical world of the twenty year old Hasan İzzettin Dinamo was completely shattered when he read Nazım Hikmet's *835 Satır*. In the following years, the young poet decided to follow in the footsteps of the *man walking against the wind*. Dinamo's early poetical attempts had been influenced by the poetry of the masters of the syllabic verse, namely Enis Behiç Koryürek and Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel. The preponderant theme in his early works had been, not surprisingly, love, since this very topic was much favoured by the syllabists too (Altınkaynak 1977:118). In 1929 he threw aside

“the empire of Faruk Nafiz's love poems and the era of poems written for imaginary lovers became a relic of a dreamlike past. Throughout his life he never forgot that revolutionary poetry was extremely serious” (Altınkaynak 1977:119).

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<sup>6</sup>Hasan İzzettin Dinamo has been largely ignored by critics and very little critical material is available about him. Ömer Asan published in 2000 a biography of the poet and novelist by basing himself on the auto-biographical writings of Hasan İzzettin (Asan 2000). The work certainly fills an important gap, but it does not deal with the literary aspect of Dinamo's works and focuses almost exclusively on his life.

After his first acquaintance with the works of Nazım Hikmet and the poet himself, Hasan İzzettin Dinamo avoided the theme of love in his poems. His rejection of love was both a reaction against the poetry of the establishment, of which the syllabist movement had by then become the major expression, and a logical product of an understanding that saw love as a theme that was not serious enough for revolutionary poetry, which was the characteristic attitude of the poets of the *Generation of 1940*.

The severe psychological and physical stress that he endured during three terms in prison, his internal exile and his extended national service, during which he was continuously victimised had an impact on his poetry. During those years of hardship, Hasan İzzettin Dinamo developed new themes in his poetry, blending the theme of love with the theme of nature, in a fashion reminiscent of pastoral poetry in order to avoid censorship and to protect his mental health (Altınkaynak 1977:120). Attilâ İlhan describes the poetry resulting from the change as a poetry in "*which was spread the brilliance and light of ancient rural poets such as Ovid and Virgil*" (İlhan 1993:19). Not everybody was as overwhelmed as Atillâ İlhan by Dinamo's sudden focus on pastoral themes. Some believed that he ought to have criticised the system that crushed him rather than write poetry, which could superficially be characterised as escapist (Altınkaynak 1977:119). Hasan İzzettin Dinamo also complained about the lack of interest that his poetry was shown in the Soviet Union (Cengiz 2000:37). His poetry was advocating the peaceful co-habitation of mankind and nature, despite difficult social circumstances. He explained that throughout his years of hardship nature seemed the only possible refuge against a system that wanted to destroy him (Altınkaynak 1977:119, 120). These comments are the closest to an elucidation of his poems that he offers and they are the subtext to his "pastoral" poems.

### Mapusaneden Aşk Sonnet'i

In order to illustrate Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's approach to the theme of love I will focus on the second sonnet of the sequence "Mapusaneden Aşk Sonnet'leri" (Love Sonnets from Prison) which is part of his 1971 collection *Özgürlük Türküsü* (Song of Freedom).

Anarım Yeşilırmağı aklıma düştükçe sen  
O misket elmalarıyla yüklü bahçelerde  
Ak yüzün, kumral saçın, apak elbisen  
Açılıp görünür sisler içinde perde perde

I remember the Yeşilırmak river when I think of you  
In those gardens full of scented apples  
Your fair face, brown hair and immaculate dress  
Progressively appear in the mist

Yürürken kıyıda ki ince patıkada  
Yüzerdi durgun suda nilüfer gibi gölgen.  
Ben, bir dal altında gizli karşı yakada  
Geçip giderdin anan, kardeşlerinle sen.

As you walked on the thin path along the bank  
Your shadow would swim on the still water like a lily.  
I would hide under a branch on the other bank  
Your mother, siblings and you used to pass by.

Keşfettin mi düş kurmayı sen o çağında?  
Dönerken bir yığın elma çiçeği kucağında

Did you discover dreams at that age?  
When you returned, with apple flowers in

En aşağı bencileyin dalgın görünürdün.

[your arms

You would seem to be daydreaming as much as I did.

Yeşil çağılıtlarıyla akarken Yeşilirmak  
Gelirdi tutsağın gibi içimden haykırmak  
Sense akarsu gibi, rüzgâr gibi hürdün.

While the Yeşilirmak was flowed with green splashes  
I would feel like screaming as if I had been your  
[prisoner

You however, were free like flowing water, like the  
[wind.

The themes of the sonnet are love, nature and freedom, themes that were also central in the poetry of Walt Whitman (1819-1892). Hasan İzzettin Dinamo claimed that his two major influences had been Nazım Hikmet and Walt Whitman (Altınkaynak 1977:121). These two poets had deeply upset the landscapes of their respective literary traditions. In this context, it is interesting to note that Nazım Hikmet too acknowledged Walt Whitman's influence on his works (Çalışlar 1987:222). The latter had been a major influence for other socialist poets as well. Pablo Neruda called him his "*comrade from Manhattan*" (Neruda 1978:262) and stated that "*even though he wrote poetry in Spanish, he had learned more from Whitman than from Cervantes*" (Nolan 1994:4). Federico Garcia Lorca also endorsed Whitman as a major influence and dedicated an ode to the American poet in his 1929-1930 collection *Poeta en Nueva York* (Poet in New York).<sup>7</sup>

Whitman's influence on Hasan İzzettin Dinamo was more theoretical than in matters of form or content, even though it is undeniable that a collection of poems such as *Sürgün Şiirleri* (Poems of Exile) do sometimes evoke Whitman's verve in their passionate celebration of nature. Whitman's influence is usually not discernible in most of Dinamo's works and it is unfortunate that Hasan İzzettin Dinamo never felt the need to articulate the nature of the influence in more detail. But even Walt Whitman scholars, such as Mark Van Doren admit that "*Whitman's art as a poet is a matter of some mystery*" (Van Doren 1977:xxiii). Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's knowledge of the works of Whitman must have been limited, because he admittedly only read him from a French translation that he found in the personal library of his friend Hüsamettin Bozok in the early forties (Dinamo 1984:123). It is more than probable that Hasan İzzettin Dinamo was influenced not so much by Whitman's poetry than by the spirit of Whitman, by Whitman's very belief that in order to be able to encompass all the realities of life the "*poet's expression had to be transcendent and new*":

"Poetry is to be indirect and not direct or descriptive or epic. Its qualities go through these to much more. Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted and their eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse. Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista. Here comes one among the well beloved stonecutters and plans with decisions and sees the solid

<sup>7</sup> "Oda a Walt Whitman" (García Lorca 1998: 182-187).

and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms. " (From the preface of *Leaves of Grass* in Van Doren 1977:8-9)

Walt Whitman's manifesto put as much emphasis on the freedom of the world as on the freedom of the verse and was certainly an attractive idea for a young socialist poet for whom *freedom, peace and poetry were synonyms* (Kurdakul 1994c:135). Just like Whitman, Hasan İzzettin Dinamo discarded traditional metrical patterns in order to celebrate the liberation of the human being.

Hence it is surprising that Hasan İzzettin Dinamo should favour the sonnet, a form that is traditionally assumed to be fixed and static, even if it has changed and adapted throughout history. Apart from the curtal sonnet or short sonnet, the sonnet consists of 14 lines that have been organised in various ways across cultures and time. The meter too may differ and so does the rhyming scheme. The sonnet was "imported" into Turkish literature by the poets who grouped around the *Servet-i Fünûn* journal and a new page of the history of the sonnet started to be written. The Turkish *Parnassians* combined the originally latin form with the Ottoman *aruz* metrical prosody. The syllabists too developed a new version of the sonnet that was less static than its western counterpart.

The static and fixed nature of the sonnet as well as its use in Turkey by poets advocating art for art's sake should have discouraged Hasan İzzettin Dinamo from using it. This is why, his use of the sonnet must have a particular significance. It might be that by the use of a constraining form like the sonnet, the poet was trying to reconstruct in poetic form the constraints he suffered as a socialist poet in real life.

In the poem, Hasan İzzettin Dinamo fulfils the only real requirement of the true sonnet, namely the 14 lines, which are organised here in two quatrains and two tercets. The rhyming pattern is changing (abab, cdcd, cce, ffe) and the meter is a combination of free verse and of syllabic meter. This combination of free verse and syllabic meter echoes Nazım Hikmet's similar attempts to integrate elements of folk and classical literature into modernist poetry.

The poem is addressed to the beloved. Whenever the narrator remembers the beloved, he thinks of the Yeşilırmak, a major stream in north-eastern Turkey. In this way the poet associates love with nature and the beloved with Anatolia. Nothing is revealed about the narrator in the first quatrain. He addresses the beloved by the informal personal pronoun "you". The beloved is very stylised: She has a fair face, brown hair and an immaculate white dress. She appears through the mists of reminiscence in gardens full of scented apples. The dreamlike figure of the beloved has more in common with the village girls of the syllabists or with Ahmet Haşım's illusive lover than with the lovers in the realist poetry of Nazım Hikmet and *Bizarre*. Nature and the beloved are the centre of the idyllic world painted in the first quatrain.

In the second quatrain the narrator focuses on one particular episode of the past: In his youth, he would hide and observe the beloved walking on a small path along

the river together with her mother and siblings. The shadow of the beloved is compared to a water-lily which again shows that the beloved is part of nature. The fact that the narrator hides in order to observe the beloved points to the youth of the characters in the poem. There might also be a platonic dimension to their love. The depicted episode is still very idyllic.

In the third part of the poem the narrator focuses on the similarities between him and the beloved. Both seem to be prone to daydreaming. The link between the beloved and nature is again stressed by her carrying blossoms from apple-trees.

The fourth part of the poem destroys the pastoral illusion. The thoughts of the narrator flow with the green splashes of the stream. This parallelism between the dynamics of nature and those of the human mind evoke Walt Whitman's poetic world and are incompatible with the usual placid nature of pastoral poetry. The last two lines give the key to the poem. The narrator felt like screaming because he felt as if he was the beloved's prisoner while she was free like flowing water and the wind. The word "prisoner" has obviously a particular resonance when it is used by a poet who was imprisoned for his political beliefs. The beloved is equated with the freedom of water; she represents that particular freedom. If an uninformed reading of the poem could have led to a pastoral interpretation of the poem, the last two lines ask for a new reading of the poem in the light of Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's experiences. A re-reading makes it clear that the poem is by no means an attempt to preserve the political and social status quo, which is what pastoral poets implicitly aim at. The nostalgic evocation of the beloved and nature, of innocent games of love in idyllic conditions, is the expression of a deep craving for freedom.

Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's approach to the theme of love is unusual for a poet of the *Generation of 1940*. He does not follow the general trend towards increasing realism that we have seen until now. His destiny is unique in Turkish poetry of the twentieth century. He rejected love poetry in order to fight against a political and economical system that he judged to be oppressive, yet later he switched back to this very theme in order to survive psychologically and physically. Attilâ İlhan was very careful not to use the term "pastoral" when writing about Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's poetry and preferred to call it "rural" (*kırsal*) poetry (İlhan 1993:19). Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's "rural" poems, inspired maybe by works such as Theocritus's (c.316-260 BC) *Idylls* or Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*, could be read in parallel to the works of writers such as Halikarnas Balıkcısı (1886-1973) and Azra Erhat (b.1915) who focused on the heritage of the great Mediterranean civilisations in Anatolia. Hasan İzzettin Dinamo was known to be extremely critical of both socialist and what he called "bourgeois", by which he meant *Bizarre*, realism and he looked for other ways in order to advance socialist literature. His treatment of the theme of love is unexpected for a socialist poet, but it is not really new. However it is utilitarian: His craving for an idyllic past love set in an idealised nature serves to express his deep longing for freedom. This longing is

intensely political because it is expressed by a poet who was ruthlessly persecuted for his views. Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's contribution to Turkish love poetry lies mainly in his use of nature at a time where most poets focused on the city or on the village.

### Attilâ İlhan

In an essay on the modernist dimension of the poetry of Attilâ İlhan, the critic Hasan Bülent Kahraman argues that the poet shared with Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), a desire to embrace all aspects of modern life in his poetry (Ankara 1996:256). In the notes added to his second collection *Sisler Bulvarı* (Boulevard of Mists), Attilâ İlhan explained that he had to integrate "*port prostitutes, smugglers and motels*" in order to give as wide a panorama of life in the twentieth century as possible. His occasional focus on marginal lifestyle led to accusations of betrayal by proponents of a more orthodox socialist realism. His poetry was said to be in clear contradiction with his ideals (Ankara 1996: 253). His critics certainly have a point. The socialist realism that he advocated in his essays collected in *Gerçekçilik Savaşı* (The War for Realism)<sup>8</sup>, had little in common with his own practice. İlhan argued that literature ought to reflect social reality and he is extremely critical towards modernist trends. He denied them the ability to depict aspects of reality, which can be seen in his attacks on *Bizarre* and later on the *Second Renewal*. However his own literary output did certainly not conform to his conception of socialist literature.<sup>9</sup>

Attilâ İlhan also wrote more orthodox verses like "Grev Oylaması" (Strike Ballot) or "Fabrika Durağı" (Factory Stop), which he used, according to Kahraman, as a way to legitimise his poems on marginal themes (Ankara 1996:255). Homosexuality, prostitution and gender relations were not only themes in his poems, he also wrote some ground-breaking theoretical works on those issues in Turkey, namely *Hangi Seks* (What Sexuality, 1976), *Yanlış Kadımlar Yanlış Erkekler* (Wrong Women Wrong Men, 1985) and *Kadımlar Savaşı* (Women's War, 1992). His novels had a new focus on sexuality such as *Zenciler Birbirine Benzemez* (Blacks Do Not All Look the Same, 1957) which was judged obscene and censored the year of its publication or *Fena Halde Leman* (Leman to the Bone, 1980) which dealt with the the lesbian experimentations of a woman.

It would be wrong to consider marginal life-styles and sexuality as the central concern of Attilâ İlhan's works. However they represent novel concerns in the development of Turkish literature and are aspects of modern life that the poet wants to portray. In the poetry of Attilâ İlhan, the personal and social sphere cohabit in an

<sup>8</sup> *Gerçekçilik Savaşı* was published for the first time in 1980. It consists of essays and columns on various aspects of literature that were published between January 1952 and July 1955 mainly in the journal *Mavi* (Blue) that he was publishing and editing (İlhan 2000b).

<sup>9</sup> See İlhan 1993 and İlhan 2000b for examples of his criticism.

uneasy manner and are usually approached in separate poems. This issue has led certain critics, like Şükran Kurdakul, to argue that the poems in Attilâ İlhan's collections sometimes seem to have been written by two different persons (Kurdakul 1994c: 292).

Various aspects of love are explored in the poetry of Attilâ İlhan. Love in a more personal and confessional context is the focus in the poem "Ben Sana Mecburum" (I Need You). Love and desire leading to betrayal is the theme of the poem "Karantina'lı Despina" (Despina) and prostitution and male fantasies are discussed in the poem "Porno". These poems are also representative of the form and language in İlhan's poetry. The verses stand most of the time independently from one another. This reflects both the influence of the *divân* tradition, for which Attilâ İlhan has much respect and interest and the impact of French surrealism and of the stream of consciousness approach. The link between the verses can be read in between the lines. The reader has to try and follow the workings of the mind of the narrator in order to construct a meaningful discourse. There is a certain interactivity between the poet and the reader. They write and read the poem together, which is another combination of the personal and the social. The language in the poems is typical of Attilâ İlhan's syncretic approach freely mixing spoken language and slang with more elaborate rhetorics, powerful imagery and metaphors. The poems share visual similarities with Apollinaire's poems: he uses no punctuation and no capital letters.<sup>10</sup> I have not found any information on why Attilâ İlhan chose to discard punctuation, but I do not think that it is merely imitation. The lack of punctuation and of capital letters allows him to build a visual bridge between modernist writing and classical Ottoman writing.<sup>11</sup> Until the nineteenth century Ottoman poets and writers too made no use of punctuation.

### **Ben Sana Mecburum**

The poem is part of the collection "Ben Sana Mecburum" that was first published in 1960. The two aspects of Attilâ İlhan's works – the social and the personal – are expressed with a maturity and serenity that was absent from preceding works (Kurdakul 1994c:292). Attilâ İlhan claims that he wrote the poem "Ben sana mecburum" after a passionate affair (İlhan 2000:169). The poem is of an autobiographical, personal nature and illustrates an important aspect of his work.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Apollinaire decided to suppress the punctuation in all his poems while he was editing the final edition of his major work *Alcools* (1913) (Hamon & Vasselín 2000:25).

<sup>11</sup> İlhan has always emphasised in his theoretical writings the need for literary and cultural continuity between the various periods of Turkish history.

<sup>12</sup> "Ben sana mecburum" is one of Attilâ İlhan's most popular poems and has been put to music by three different artists, who represent very different genres of contemporary Turkish music: Hümeýra, Erol Sayan and Kerem Güney. İlhan also adds in his notes to the poem that ethnic Turks in former Yugoslavia have produced a play based on the poem (İlhan 2000:169).

**ben sana mecburum**

ben sana mecburum bilemezsin  
adını mih gibi aklımda tutuyorum  
büyüdükçe büyüyor gözlerin  
ben sana mecburum bilemezsin  
içimi seninle ısıtıyorum

ağaçlar sonbahara hazırlanıyor  
bu şehir o eski istanbul mudur  
karanlıkta bulutlar parçalanıyor  
sokak lambaları birden yanıyor  
kaldırımlarda yağmur kokusu  
ben sana mecburum sen yoksun

sevmek kimi zaman rezilce korkuludur  
insan bir akşam üstü ansızın yorulur  
tutsak ustura ağzında yaşamaktan  
kimi zaman ellerini kırar tutkusu  
birkaç hayat çıkarır yaşamasından  
hangi kapıyı çalsa kimi zaman  
arkasında yalnızlığın hınzır uğultusu

fatih'te yoksul bir gramofon çalıyor  
eski zamanlardan bir cuma çalıyor  
durup köşe başında delik dinlesem  
sana kullanılmamış bir gök getirsem  
haftalar ellerimde ufalanıyor  
ne yapsam ne tutsam nereye gitsem  
ben sana mecburum sen yoksun

belki haziran'da mavi benekli çocuksun  
ah seni bilmiyor kimseler bilmiyor  
bir şilep sızıyor ıssız gözlerinden  
belki yeşilköy'de uçağa biniyorsun  
bütün ıslanmışsın tüylerin ürperiyor  
belki körsün kırılmışsın telaş içinde  
kötü rüzgar saçlarını götürüyor

ne vakit bir yaşamak düşünsem  
bu kurtlar sofrasında belki zor  
ayıpsız fakat ellerimizi kirletmeden  
ne vakit bir yaşamak düşünsem  
sus deyip adınla başlıyorum  
içimsıra kımıldıyor gizli denizlerin  
hayır başka türlü olmayacak  
ben sana mecburum bilemezsin

**I need you**

you don't know how much I need you  
your name is stuck in my mind like a nail  
your eyes grow larger and larger  
you don't know how much I need you  
I warm up my soul with you

the trees get ready for autumn  
is this city that old istanbul  
clouds break up in the darkness  
suddenly the street lights are on  
the smell of rain on the pavements  
I need you and you are not here

sometimes love is disgracefully frightening  
all of a sudden one evening one grows tired  
of living imprisoned on the edge of a razor  
sometimes passion breaks your hands  
a few lives are won out of living  
sometimes whatever door you knock  
there is the damned ringing of solitude behind it

a miserable gramophone is playing in fatih  
a Friday from past times resounds  
should I stop here and listen  
should I bring you an unused firmament  
weeks crumble in my hands  
whatever I do whatever I hold wherever I go  
I need you and you are not here

maybe you are a blue spotted child in june  
nobody knows you nobody  
a cargo leaks from your desolate eyes  
maybe you are boarding a plane in yeşilköy  
you are completely wet and you shiver  
maybe you are blind broken distressed  
bad wind upsets your hair

whenever I think about living  
it might be difficult in this banquet of wolves  
but whenever I imagine life  
without shame yet without soiling one's hand  
I say hush and start by your name  
your secret seas stir in me  
no it won't work in any other way  
you don't know how much I need you

The poem introduces a new dimension to the theme of love in twentieth century Turkish poetry, by focusing on love as the source of torment and distress. In the (urban) poetry of the *Five Syllabists*, it was the beloved that tortured emotionally the narrator. In the poetry of Yahya Kemal and Oktay Rifat it was the loss of the beloved that was a source of melancholy. The focus of love poetry was on the beloved, not on the emotion

of love. “Ben Sana Mecburum” is different: Love is “*disgracefully frightening*” (line twelve). It is true that the poem is addressed to the beloved, but almost no information about her is conveyed in the poem.

The poem is organised in six stanzas of different length and of verses of uneven length. Stanzas one, three, five and six are introverted whereas stanza two and four are centred on the outer world.

The poem starts with a passionate declaration of love in the first line of the first stanza. The narrator stresses his need for the beloved. This complete submission to the beloved, which is reminiscent of some of Aragon’s verses for Elsa, is rather rare in Turkish love poetry. Usually the male narrator has a more active role in the love relationship, whereas here he is passive and dependent on his lover. This is one of İlhan’s ways of challenging traditional gender role. The beloved is “like a nail in the mind” of the narrator. The image of the nail is powerful and indicative of pain. A certain dose of masochism too is expressed in the second verse, since it is the narrator himself who keeps the beloved “like a nail” in his mind. Straight from the beginning of the poem, love is seen as a source of pain and disruption.

In line three, he focuses on the eyes of the beloved which relentlessly grow. It is worth noting that throughout the poem there is no reference to sexuality. The poem is about an emotional passion and the physical aspect of love is ignored. The poem dates from 1960, that is a few years before Atilla İlhan started to work and publish on what he calls *the dialectics of gender relationships and of sexuality*. Even though his reflections were mainly expressed in essays, they would also find, in later years, their way into his novels and poems, as will be seen further down with the poem “Porno”. In lines four and five the narrator re-emphasises his longing for the beloved – first by repeating the title-giving line, then by declaring that she is the source of warmth in his life.

There is a switch of focus in the second stanza. From the inner universe of the narrator, we are projected into the surrounding world. The poem is set during the last days of summer in Istanbul at evening time after a rainy day. İlhan personalises the “*trees that get ready for autumn*”. With a few rapid strokes the poet creates a particular melancholic yet realist atmosphere. The reader is together with the narrator on the pavements and shares his emotional turmoil. Istanbul is not the same without the loved one. Wind separates the clouds in the dark sky. Suddenly the streetlights are lit. The pavements smell of rain while the narrator expresses his need for the beloved and acknowledges her absence. The atmosphere of the setting is melancholic and in harmony with the state of mind of the narrator. In a note to the poem, Atilla İlhan explains that he wrote the poem during autumn in Istanbul and that he created the

verses while regularly walking between Şişli and Mecidiyeköy. He recited the lines aloud during his long walks, which is his usual way of working (İlhan 2000:169).

The third stanza is again introspective. The poet reflects on the effects of love. The poet tries to understand the reasons that make people break up a love relationship. The romantic passion expressed in the first stanza makes way for a frightening description of love. It is like the edge of a razor blade and one may grow tired of the continuous threat. The imagery is powerful and unexpected (*“disgracefully frightening”*, *“prisoner on the edge of a razor blade”*). Yet at the same time solitude, the absence of the beloved and of love, is unbearable. Atillâ İlhan’s poetic universe is a universe of complexities and contradictions to which he does not bring any solutions or synthesis.

The fourth stanza leads us back to the outside world. The first two lines of the stanza introduce us to different worlds side by side in Fatih, a rather conservative neighbourhood of Istanbul: Music from an old gramophone and the call to prayer. Yet again the narrator expresses his confusion, not knowing whether to listen or not. Through association he goes from the call to prayer to the desire to offer a brand new firmament to the beloved. The stanza ends by the narrator expressing his helplessness and loneliness.

The fifth stanza finally introduces us to the beloved and her whereabouts. The six lines of the stanza stand on their own and there is no link between them. All of them are hypothetical statements about the present condition and the whereabouts of the beloved. The statements are sometimes metaphorical and personal (hence difficult to interpret like *“blue spotted child”*) and sometimes straightforward (*“you are boarding a plane in Yeşilköy”*). The beloved seems to be an active woman and she is travelling (reference to cargoes and planes). The picture given of her is that of a distressed woman in adverse conditions: She is crying and cold. She is distressed. There is wind and rain, both of which may have metaphorical meanings and express the turmoil she is in. The second line of the stanza probably holds the key to the interpretation of the figure of the beloved. The narrator claims that nobody knows the beloved. This could be a reference to the difficulties of communication between two human beings. Nobody can truly know one another. It could also be that İlhan plays a game with the reader since he gives no biographical clues about her. She is only evoked in hypothesis and only present by her absence. Her true identity remains veiled. Thus the reader is invited not to focus on her identity but rather on the theme of love itself.

Finally the last stanza brings a new dimension to the poem since the narrator talks about his wish to live an honourable life despite the cruelty of the world. The narrator expresses a desire for a shameless life. At the same time, he stresses that a shameless life is usually brought about by soiling one’s hands. This line probably

expresses the difficulty of marrying the social and personal in the real world. This marriage is indeed the subtext of several of his poems. Yet very revealingly those philosophical meditations, that by nature have a general character, are interrupted by the narrator's switch to his personal distress and his longing for the beloved now gone. This abrupt switch is really representative of the way how İlhan, in his works too, tries to combine both the social and the personal and is not afraid of pessimistically showing that their marriage is difficult, maybe impossible to achieve, which is why love is a source of distress.

The pessimistic considerations about the nature of love that are evoked in the poem go against the optimistic spirit of most of socialist love poetry. Contrary to Nazım Hikmet and Paul Eluard, Atilla İlhan does not express the belief that individual love is the basis of a solidary society. His personal distress is stronger than his social duties in the above poem. İlhan's approach is also different from Apollinaire's treatment of the theme of love. Apollinaire, to whom he is close in matters of form, mainly approaches the theme of love with the theme of regret and desire, two emotions that are absent from "Ben Sana Mecburum". The frightening and obsessive dimension of love is not evoked in Apollinaire's poetry (Hamon & Vasselin 2000:15-16).

### **Karantina'lı Despina**

The next two poems are closer to traditional socialist poetry, because of their utilitarian treatment of love and desire. "Karantina'lı Despina" is the third section of the narrative poem "Bir Özge Muammer Bey" (A Peculiar Mister Muammer), which consists of five sections. It was published in Atilla İlhan's 1968 collection *Yasak Sevişmek* (Forbidden Love) and is based on reminiscences of the poet's mother about the Greek occupation of Izmir. It is a poem where he tries to show "*that the world is a struggle and the struggle is life*" (İlhan 1999:132, 133). The main character of the poem Muammer Bey is an Ottoman "aristocrat" deeply disconcerted by the occupation of Izmir. Even though he is a mystic, he feels attracted to the pleasures in the Greek neighbourhoods of Izmir, where he meets a woman, to whom we are introduced in "Karantina'lı Despina". The sexual desire of Muammer Bey for Despina represents the corruption and the contradictions of the Ottoman ruling class. The theme of love is used to convey a political message.

#### **Karantina'lı Despina**

bir gül takıp da sevdalı her gece saçlarına  
çıktı mı deprem sanırdın 'kara kız' kantosuna  
titreşir kadehler camlar kırılır alkışlardan  
muammer bey'in gözdesi karantinalı despina  
çapkın gülüşü şöyle faytona binişi kordelia'dan  
ne kadar başkaydı her kadından her bakımdan

#### **Despina**

passionate every night she put a rose in her hair  
when she sang "the black girl" canto it was as if  
[there was an earthquake  
the goblets vibrated the glass broke because of  
[the applause  
despina of the quarantine muammer bey's  
[favourite

sınırsız bir mutlulukta uyuturdu muammer bey'i  
ustalıkla damıttığı o tantanalı aşklarından

işgal altüst etti nasıl da izmir'de her şeyi  
öğrendi kullanmasını despina bu yanlış geceyi  
körfez'de parıldayan yunan zırhlılarına karşı  
miralay zafiru'yla ispilandit palas'ta sevişmeyi

gemî sinyallerinin gece bahçelere yansıması  
havuzda samanyolunun hisarbuselik şarkısı  
demlendikçe yalnızlığı aydınlanıyor muammer  
[bey  
olmayacak şey bir insanın bir insanı anlaması

her lustful smile her way of getting on the coach  
[in Kordelia

she was really different from other women  
she made Muammer Bey sleep in an endless bliss  
with her pompous love distilled with mastery

the occupation turned everything upside down in  
[izmir  
despina learned how to use this erroneous night  
how to make love with admiral zafiru in ispilandit  
[palace  
opposite the glittering greek battleships in the  
[gulf

the reflection of the signals of the ships in the  
[gardens at night  
the elaborate song of the milky way in the basins  
imbibing solitude muammer bey becomes  
[enlightened  
it is impossible for a human being to understand  
[another human being

The poem is organised in four stanzas of four verses of uneven length with the following rhyming pattern: aaba-bbcb-ccdc-dded. The melodiousness of the poem was the reason why Timur Selçuk, a popular singer, wrote music for the poem and recorded it. However its broadcast was censored by the state television TRT (İlhan 1999:133).

The first stanza introduces the reader to the beloved. She had only been evoked in the previous poem of the sequence (and no information had been conveyed about her "Muammer Bey'in Karanlığı", The Darkness of Muammer Bey). She is a much appreciated canto singer in a cabaret. The description of the atmosphere in the cabaret is in complete contrast to the mystical and melancholic character of the first poem of the sequence ("O Nihavent Bahçe", This *Nihavent* Garden). The beloved is a singer answering to the name of "Karantina'li Despina". She is the mistress of Muammer Bey, an Ottoman aristocrat, during the Greek occupation of İzmir. Atillâ İlhan perpetuates one of the usual approaches in liberation war literature that shows the Ottoman ruling class as corrupt and treacherous. The relationship between the Ottoman aristocrat and the Greek cabaret singer symbolises the collaboration between the Ottoman elite and the occupiers. Atillâ İlhan also focuses on the contradictions of Muammer Bey. He is attracted to secular cabaret music, which is the complete antithesis of the mystical music he listens to at home.

The second stanza focuses on the figure of Despina. Despina, the beloved, is a stereotype for the Greek woman in liberation war literature. She smiles lustfully, walks provocatively and lulls Muammer Bey into an endless bliss and finally she betrays him. Greek (Rum) and Armenian women are usually portrayed as loose women in the writings of Atillâ İlhan, even though other non-Turkish women are approached in an

unbiased way (for instance, the poems “Hannelise”, “Margot”, “Tombul Magda”). Herkül Millas notes that Atillâ İlhan stereotypes minorities in general but Greeks in particular. In his novels the sexual conquest is the equivalent of a military conquest (Millas 2000: 65-66). The male is always Turkish and the female Greek, which is the usual sexist approach that can be found in liberation war literature. The conquering Asian male is also the fundamental element of Aziyade’s revenge in the works of Nazım Hikmet. Although the equation “Sexual conquest = military conquest” is central in nationalist and colonial literature, an inversion of the gender roles might have been expected in the poetry of Atillâ İlhan. He stresses the need for complete equality between men and women in his essays and in his novels. His slogan is “Equality in the kitchen, equality in the street and equality in bed” (Ankara 1996: 49). However this equality is not bestowed on women from ethnic and religious minorities in his nationalist writings. In any case, nationalism and women rights, non-national women’s rights have always had an uneasy relationship.<sup>13</sup>

In the third stanza Despina betrays Muammer Bey. She makes love to the Greek admiral in the Ispilandit palace hotel which was facing the glittering Greek battleships. In the last stanza Muammer Bey is alone again but his universe has been shattered. His garden, which used to be a peaceful place and a setting for mystical meditation, is full of the reflections of the signals of the battleships. Muammer Bey reflects on his misadventure but he is unable to make a proper analysis of it. He cannot grasp the greater context of the liberation war and interprets Despina’s behaviour in the light of the difficulties to communicate between human beings. The political choice of Despina to side with the occupying force is merely interpreted as a personal one.

The poem is a representative example of the way socialist poets use the theme of love in order to explore a particular historical situation. The aim of the poem is to underline the state of corruption of the Ottoman ruling class. Muammer Bey is a typical Tanzimat intellectual. He is mystical but he is also attracted towards an *alafiranga* way of life. He is the prisoner of his class prejudices. He has a liaison with a Greek singer while his native Izmir is occupied by the Greek army. He finds a personal and psychological explanation for the beloved’s betrayal, whereas her betrayal is a political choice. The poem is didactic and warns against the ruling class and the dubious loyalty of the minorities, which are both important themes in İlhan’s essays. However his approach to the Christian (mainly Greek and Armenian) and Jewish minorities is not

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<sup>13</sup> Jayawardena 1986 explores the role of women and women’s rights in the liberation struggles and modernisation movements in the third world. However Jayawardena does not discuss the issues regarding the perception of the woman of the oppressor (ruling class or coloniser) and her depiction in literature. The stereotyping of non-Muslim women could also be studied under the heading of *Occidentalism*, and the perception of the West, or of that which is perceived as western, by non-western intellectuals.

racially motivated and he generally discusses them under the general heading of *comprador* (komprador),

“a relatively privileged, wealthy and educated elite who maintain a more highly developed capacity to engage in the international communicative practices introduced by colonial domination, and who may therefore be less inclined to struggle for local, cultural and political independence” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998:55).

### Porno

The poem “Porno” is part of the 1977 collection *Böyle Bir Sevmek* (Such a Love). It is one of five poems in the section “Jilet Yiyen Kız” (The Girl Who Ate Razor Blades), in which Attilâ İlhan explores various aspects of sexuality. The poems in “Jilet Yiyen Kız” are an attempt to reflect the complexity of gender relationships in general, and of sexuality in particular. İlhan explains that in “Porno”, he tried to study the contrast between sexuality and emotion and the need for their coming together. He believes that the conditions of professional prostitutes in brothels is a good setting for this approach (İlhan 1998:131).

#### Porno

boy bos tamam ağızı bütün diş  
tevatür bir kadın bol memeli  
hayli genç kız dudağı çiğnemiş  
çok erkek ağzına girmiş dili  
yüksekkaldırım’da fahişeymiş  
şaşı mustafa’nın yalancısıyım

hüneri dört kişiyle sevişmekmiş  
ikisi kadın olacak ince belli  
yok canım yoksulluktan düşmemiş  
yaradılışı kahpe ruhu işveli  
galiba hiç kimse baş edememiş  
şaşı mustafa’nın yalancısıyım

gözlüklü bir velet aklını çelmiş  
şiir meraklısı biraz fakülteli  
artık sabah akşam yolunu gözlemiş  
mübarek kadın değil gözyaşı seli  
gelince sanki oğlunu severmiş  
şaşı mustafa’nın yalancısıyım

anlayamadım gitti bu ne biçim iş  
bre bunlardan hangisi deli  
hangisi hangisinin kanına girmiş  
kim kimin neresine kilitli  
bu filmi kim yazmış kim çevirmiş  
şaşı mustafa’nın yalancısıyım

#### Porno

she is tall and good-looking she always smiles  
she is a legend and has large breasts  
she has chewed the lips of several young girls  
her tongue has entered the mouth of lots of men  
she is a prostitute in yüksekkaldırım  
I am just repeating the words of crosseyed mustafa

making love to four people is her speciality  
of whom two should be women with thin waists  
what do you think it’s not poverty that led her to prostitution  
she is a bitch by birth her soul is flirtatious  
Apparently no one has been able to stop her  
I am just repeating the words of crosseyed mustafa

she has fallen in love with a youth with glasses  
he likes poetry he studies at university  
now she is waiting for him day and night  
she is not a woman but a flood of tears  
when he comes she loves him as if he were her son  
I am just repeating the words of crosseyed mustafa

I cannot understand how strange all this is  
who is the mad one amongst them  
who seduced whom  
who is chained to whom  
who wrote who directed this film  
I am just repeating the words of crosseyed mustafa

Prostitutes have been depicted before in Turkish poetry. The poem “Kaldırımlar”(Pavements) by Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and some of the portraits in Nazım Hikmet’s *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (Human Landscapes from my Country) dealt with emotional and physical attraction felt for a prostitute. “Porno” is different and focuses exclusively on sexuality in the first two stanzas. The next two stanzas evoke a love-story between the prostitute and a university student. The tone of the poem is remarkable. The narrator repeats at the end of every stanza that he is doing nothing but repeating what he heard from crosseyed Mustafa. The language of the poem echoes the language of the coffee-shops. The use of the /-miş/ dubitative past tense confirms the particular conversational and secretive atmosphere of the poem. In the first two stanzas the prostitute is described as a beautiful woman and a ferocious bisexual lover with large breasts. She was not forced into prostitution by economic hardship, but she chose it. The first two stanzas are an accumulation of clichés, which are the product of the fantasies of the male narrator.

Although the first two stanzas only deal with sexuality, a more emotional dimension is introduced in the next two stanzas. This new and unexpected dimension in the poem gives a more humane portrait of the prostitute. She is passionately in love with a young student and poet. She is older than him and there might be a oedipal dimension to their love. Popular literature and oral coffee-shop literature are rich in stories of young innocent men falling in love with prostitutes. Attilâ İlhan avoids the clichés of the genre and inverts the traditional gender distribution of this kind of love stories: It is the prostitute who falls in love with the young man. The oedipal dimension of their love underlines the distress of the prostitute. Her quest for filial tenderness is in complete contrast to her portrait in the first two stanzas. The last stanza focuses on the inability of the narrator to grasp the nature of the relationship. The reference to films might be a reference to the boom in pornographic films in large Turkish cities during the seventies.

Attilâ İlhan humanises the prostitute and makes a clear contrast between her emotional life and the way she is perceived by the narrators (men). The human approach to prostitutes is not new: Ahmet Mithat Efendi’s ground-breaking novel *Henüz Onyedî Yaşında* (Only Seventeen, 1881) dealt humanely with the reasons that lead a young girl into prostitution. Nobody indicted male perceptions of prostitutes in poetry before Attilâ İlhan. The reference to lesbian relationships (line three) and orgies (line seven) are also new elements that enter poetry with Attilâ İlhan.

Attilâ İlhan’s poetry aims at reflecting all aspects of modern life, including the most marginal. His goal is reflected in his approaches to the theme of love. “Ben Sana Mecburum” represents the more personal and confessional dimension of his poetry. Love is seen as something terrible and frightening. It is a source of fear and torment.

This approach is in complete contradiction to the usual socialist approach to love. On the other hand, "Karantina'lı Despina" is a typical example of the use made of the theme of love by politically committed poets. The theme of love is used in order to explore a particular historical situation. "Porno" is a poem that challenges the male perception of prostitutes. By introducing such taboo themes as marginal sexuality, İlhan clears the way for later poets such as Murathan Mungan and Küçük İskender.

### **Ataol Behramoğlu**

Unlike Hasan İzzettin Dinamo and Atilla İlhan, Ataol Behramoğlu advocates and practices a more orthodox socialist realism. He is, however, a fierce critic of what he calls "mechanic socialist literature" (Mekanik toplumculuk) and has devoted several articles to its ills. As one of the founders and the editor of the monthly *Halkın Dostları* (Friends of the People) magazine, he criticised poets who equated socialist realism with merely focusing on the problems of the working class. In an article, dating from 1970, he made a harsh assessment of the works of contemporary socialist poets:

"It seems that most of our fellow poets believe that socialist poetry consists of writing about the oppression and the poverty of the people. This is a grave mistake. This attitude reflects a populist approach and a tendency to satisfy petty bourgeois cravings. There is no doubt that it is very noble to wish to write about the oppression of the people and about poverty. But socialist poetry cannot only be the poetry of complaint" (Behramoğlu 1993b:19).

Behramoğlu believes that true socialist realism should be a poetry of resistance and revolt. It should not be a mere glorification of the people, but ought to reflect all the contradictions that can be found in the attitude of the working class (Behramoğlu 1993b: 19,20). Behramoğlu favours a critical realism that comprises every realm of human experience. He advocates what he calls "organic poetry" (*organik şiir*) and defines it in opposition to "synthetic", "artificial" and "mechanic" poetry. Organic poetry is personal (*kisisel*) but not individualistic (*bireyci*). It is not constrained by extreme formalism and evolves like a living organism in contact with the real world (Behramoğlu 1993b: 104-106).

Love is an important theme in the poetry of Ataol Behramoğlu because he believes in the need to reflect all the realms of the real world in poetry. He rarely approaches the theme of love on its own. The theme is always discussed in a larger social context. The real world, a world of social struggles, injustices and individual tragedies, is the setting of love. Love in the poetic universe of Ataol Behramoğlu is less an emotion than an action. The act of lovemaking is very important in his poetry. The poem "Bir Gün Mutlaka" (One Day Certainly), which was written in 1965, starts revealingly with the following verse:

Bugün seviştim yürüyüşe katıldım sonra

I made love today and then I went on a march

There is no contradiction between the act of love and the protest march. They are both expressions of the same need. Behramoğlu sees a link between love and political activism.

Ataol Behramoğlu's approach is illustrated with two poems from different periods. "Bu Aşk Burada Biter" (This Love Ends Here) is taken from his first poetry collection *Bir Ermeni General* (An Armenian General) which was published in 1965. The poem "Sevgilimsin" (You Are My Darling) was originally written in 1990 and was later included in the collection of the same name, which was published in 1993.

### Bu aşk burada biter

#### Bu aşk burada biter

Bu aşk burada biter ve ben çekip giderim  
Yüreğimde bir çocuk cebimde bir revolver  
Bu aşk burada biter iyi günler sevgilim  
Ve ben çekip giderim bir nehir akıp gider

Bir hatıradır şimdi dalgın uyuyan şehir  
Solarken albümlerde çocuklar ve askerler  
Yüzün bir kır çiçeği gibi usulca söner  
Uyku ve unutkanlık gittikçe derinleşir

Yan yana uzanırdık ve ıslaktı çimenler  
Ne kadar güzeldin sen! nasıl eşsiz bir yazdı!  
Bunu anlattılar hep, yani yiten bir aşkı  
Geçerek bu dünyadan bütün ölü şairler

Bu aşk burada biter ve ben çekip giderim  
Yüreğimde bir çocuk cebimde bir revolver  
Bu aşk burada biter iyi günler sevgilim  
Ve ben çekip giderim bir nehir akıp gider

#### This love ends here

This love ends here and I will go away  
A child in my heart and a revolver in my pocket  
This love ends here good bye my darling  
And I will go a river flows away

The sleeping city is a memory now while  
Children and soldiers wilt in the albums  
Your face fades away like a wild flower  
Sleep and oblivion slowly deepen

We used to lie side by side and the grass was wet  
How beautiful you were! what a rare summer it was!  
They always talked about it, you know lost lost  
All the dead poets who passed through this world

This love ends here and I will go away  
A child in my heart and a revolver in my pocket  
This love ends here good bye my darling  
And I will go a river flows away

"Bu aşk burada biter" is a lyrical poem that deals with the separation of two lovers. Ataol Behramoğlu deals with a theme that is dear to "dead poets" - the "fading away of love" (lines eleven and twelve). The narrator announces the end of love in the opening line of the poem. However no reason is given. He decides to leave with "a child in his heart and a weapon in his pocket". The contrast between the child, a symbol of innocence, and the weapon is striking. Childhood is an ever occurring theme in Behramoğlu's poetry and symbolises a craving for lost innocence. The narrator may still be a child in his heart but his acts are those of a grown man. The fact that the narrator carries a weapon, means that he may have to lose his innocence. Little is said about the reasons for the narrator's departure. There is however a parallelism between

the departure of the narrator and the flowing of the river. The departure is as necessary and as unavoidable as the flowing of the river.

The second stanza focuses on forgetfulness. The city which is deep asleep is now only a memory for the narrator. The photographs in the albums too are fading. Just like in the preceding stanza, there is a juxtaposition of the image of the soldier and of the child. The soldier and the child could be friends or family members of the narrator. The reference to a child and a revolver in the first stanza indicate that those pictures might be pictures of himself wilting in the album of the beloved. The soldier and the child are two aspects of the narrator. In the next line the narrator evokes his own forgetfulness: the face of the beloved fades away. The last line of the stanza summarises the situation: Slowly but surely oblivion and sleep overcome everyone. The separation seems to be painless. The poem is melancholic but lyrical, yet the reference to weapons and soldiers are like a threat to the harmony of the poem.

The third stanza starts with a flashback. The narrator evokes memories of a beautiful past summer with the beloved. Yet he does not fall into the trap of easy sentimentalism and with a healthy dose of romantic irony, that reminds of certain literary devices dear to the *Bizarre* trio, he claims that the fading of love was a theme that had been dear to all dead poets. In a way, the narrator tells the reader that as a poet he has no other choice than to deal with the theme of love. There are two reasons for him to do so. The feeling of love is experienced by everyone in one fashion or the other and yet it is extremely complex. It is part of everyday experience and it is universal. Moreover for Behramoğlu writing about love is a way to express his link to the universal community of poets and it is his duty as a realist poet to deal with it since it is an aspect of life. He must however bring a new approach to the theme. In his case he always evokes the theme of love in a more general social context. In "Bu Aşk Burada Biter" the reference to the revolver, the soldiers and indeed death (in line seven) illustrate his approach. Reference to childhood (i.e. loss of innocence) too clearly shows that the poem is not a mere variation on the theme of love lost.

The lyricism of the poem (regular rhyming scheme, inner rhymes, repetitions) is in complete contradiction to the continuous evocation of threats in all three stanzas. The fourth stanza is a repetition of the first stanza and strengthens the inevitability of the departure of the narrator. Moreover it adds to the overall harmony of the poem and thus strengthens the clash between the lyricism of the poem and the message conveyed. The most common rhyme in the poem is on "-er". This is not fortuitous in such a lyrical, political poem. Er means soldier in Turkish and the narrator is a soldier of the revolution who has to leave childhood and love behind.

## Sevgilimsin

### Sevgilimsin

Sevgilimsin, kim olduğunu düşünmeye vaktin yok,  
[yapacak işleri düşünmekten  
Kalabalığın içinde kalabalıktan biri  
Gecenin içinde bir yıldız, yitip gitmiş çocukluk gibi  
Sevgilimsin, ak dişlerini öpüyorum,  
[aralarında bir mısra gizli  
Dün geceki tamamlanmamış sevişmeden

Sevgilimsin, boğuk aşkım kanayan gençliğim  
Uçuruyorum seni çocukluğuna doğru  
Kanatların yoruluyor, ter içinde kalıyorsun  
Gece yanıbaşımda bağırarak uyanıyorsun  
Her sabah el sallıyorum metalle karışmana

Sevgilimsin, arasına bir kağıt koyup erteliyoruz aşkı  
Otobüslerde ve trenlerde kaçamak yaşanan  
Ve bedenlerimiz kana kana kanayamadan yan yana

### You are my darling

You are my beloved, you have no time to think  
[who you are because you are thinking about  
[the work to be done  
You are one among the crowd  
A star in the night passed away like childhood  
You are my love, I kiss your white teeth  
[there is a verse hidden between them  
That remained from our unfinished lovemaking  
[yesterday evening

You are my love, my hoarse love, my  
[bleeding youth  
I am making you fly towards your childhood  
Your wings get tired and you sweat  
At night you wake up screaming on my side  
Every morning I salute your mixing with metal  
You are my love, we dog ear love  
lived elusively in buses and trains  
our bodies unable to bleed side by side to our  
[heart's content

“Sevgilimsin”, one of Ataul Behramoğlu’s latest poems, is a poem of a very different style. It is written with *vers libres* and the focus is not on the form of the poem but on the content. The real world is not only in a subtextual background like in the preceding poem. The poem is well set in the real world. “Sevgilimsin” is a poem that is much closer in spirit and approach to the poetry of the *Generation of 1940*. The beloved is an ordinary woman, probably a working woman, yet she is also a free woman. The poem does not have the lyrical quality of the previous poem. The artistry of “Bu Aşk Burada Biter” is in the contrast between the lyrical narration and the evocation of potential violence. “Sevgilimsin” is a much more down-to-earth narration of a love story, even though it contains strong metaphors .

The reader is introduced to the beloved in the first stanza. She is a woman who has so much work to do that she has no time for existentialist questions. The first line is quite long and the language is prose-like. The inversion at the end of the verse reminds of the rhythm of the spoken language. The beloved is one among others in the crowd. She is an ordinary, hard-working woman. The language in the following three verses is much more metaphorical however. A star has passed away like childhood. The narrator kissed the white teeth of the beloved between whom a verse is hidden. It is a verse about their unfinished lovemaking. Sexuality was not mentioned at all in the previous poem, but here the narrator and his beloved are lovers.

In the second stanza the narrator focuses on lovemaking. The beloved is a hoarse love, she is his bleeding childhood. He makes her fly towards childhood; she is exhausted and sweats. In "Sevgilimsin" too a threat is continuously evoked. In the first stanza the reader was told that the lovemaking had been interrupted. In the second stanza the beloved wakes up and screams. In both cases the reasons are not mentioned. Nonetheless, the reference to a bleeding youth calls forth memories of violence and social unrest. In the last verse of the second stanza, however, we are back in the real world when the beloved metaphorically mixes with metal, meaning that she boards a bus or a train. The narrator stays behind and waves his hand.

In the last stanza the nature of the relationship is defined. It is important to note that we have an inversion of traditional gender roles. The woman goes to work and seems to be the one earning the money. The narrator might be living with beloved and hiding from somebody, maybe the police. In the final line a new reference to bleeding, to the inability of the bodies of the lovers to bleed side by side, refers again to the ever present spectre of violence in Behramoğlu's poetry.

"Sevgilimsin" is a poem that summarises well the distance covered in Turkish love poetry since its rebirth in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The beloved is a real woman. She is working, she may even be the major earner. Her background is modest, but she enjoys a freedom that is only constrained by material circumstances (the need to earn her living). Sexuality is a part of her life and indeed in Behramoğlu's poetry it is a way to express love. Behramoğlu's personality surfaces also in the reference to a dangerous past (Bleeding youth, the beloved screaming in her dreams and the inability to bleed side by side). Ataoğlu Behramoğlu's poetical universe is an uneasy one. In his poems the suffering of three generations of socialist poets is always referred to. Behramoğlu is a poet of the real world. For him art in general and poetry in particular ought to continuously unsettle the reader and make him think. His poetry is a call to social activism. This call is not based on mere slogans, it is written in the subtext of his poems.

### **Love in a social context**

Socialist literature is a controversial literary classification. It would be difficult to find common points between the works of Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930) and William Morris (1834-1896) by basing oneself purely on literary criteria even though both would qualify for classification under the heading "Socialist Poetry". This great variety of approaches is also illustrated in the way socialist poets have explored the theme of love in Turkey.

However in the first stage of the development of socialist poetry in Turkey, the *Generation of 1940* approached the theme in a homogeneous way. Socialist poetry

started to develop in parallel to *Bizarre* poetry. While *Bizarre* focused on individual fates, the socialist poets discussed the general social or historical context in which the individuals evolved. The theme of love was rare in their writings, because it was judged to be an individualistic theme, that was not in line with the mainly propagandistic purpose of their poetry. Whenever treated, the theme of love was only a pretext in order to explore a particular socio-historical situation. This utilitarian approach is exemplified here in the works of two poets who did not belong to the *Generation of 1940*, namely Attilâ İlhan's "Karantina'lı Despina" and Atıol Behramoğlu's "Sevgilimsin". This is a testimony for the survival in literature of the ideals of the *Generation of 1940*. Socialist poets, walking in the footsteps of Nazım Hikmet, also changed the image of the beloved. She was now an independent working woman with her own desires and needs. She was both a lover and a comrade for the militant narrator of the poems. On the other hand, there was also a very occasional focus on the additional oppression of the female worker, due to her being a woman. This particular theme was however mainly explored in novels and short-stories, by socialist novelists such as Orhan Kemal and Sabahattin Ali. The real legacy of the *Generation of 1940* in matters of love poetry is the thematic development: The realisation that love and the lovers are acting in particular social and historical circumstances that influence and constrain their behaviour and the new image of the beloved

There were socialist poets who approached the theme of love in quite a different way. Poems such as Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's sonnet or Atıol Behramoğlu's "Bu Aşk Burada Biter" would with a formalist reading, considering the poet to be of negligible importance, not qualify for categorisation as "socialist poetry." Behramoğlu, Dinamo or İlhan do not only write militant poetry but also ask for an engaged and informed reading of their poems from their readership. Hence the categorisation of "Socialist Poetry" is above all addressed to the reader, who ought to interpret the poems accordingly.

Hasan İzzettin Dinamo and Attilâ İlhan have defended a critical stance towards the understanding of literature advocated in Moscow. Their own poems have not only reflected the workings of society but have also explored more personal issues. The personal sphere is one of the aspects of modern life that these two socialist poets aim to analyse with the help of their readers.

It is ironic that Attilâ İlhan, who advocated his own brand of socialist realism in his magazine *Mavi*, should have been the one poet who wrote poems that were openly in conflict with the political commitment in literature that he championed. He has never tried to explain himself on this issue. His ultra-personal poems are perhaps a poetic testimony to his belief in a socialism with a human face, discussed in several of his collection of essays. Atıllâ İlhan is also the Marxist poet who has made the greatest

contribution to the treatment of the theme of love in twentieth century Turkish poetry after Nazım Hikmet. By exploring marginal sexuality in some of his poems, he broke several taboos and introduced new themes on which the following generation of poets would build. Prostitution and homosexuality were themes that were shunned by most socialist poets because they were not considered to be representative of the concerns of the working-class and the peasants. As can be understood from his pioneering works on sexuality in Turkey, İlhan disagreed with this view and decided to put those themes into the limelight.

The major achievement of the socialist poets was to stress by their thematic approach that love, being basically a relationship between two human beings, could not be sung without taking into consideration both the personal and the socio-historical spheres of experience. The *Second Renewal* was to introduce the psycho-analytical dimension to the theme of love since all other spheres of experience had been explored. They focused on sexuality and on the impact it had on human relationships. Love did not bind human beings anymore and became a very personal, self-centered experience, that could not be shared, not even by the beloved.

## Chapter VI

### Beyond Love: The *Second Renewal* and the theme of love

#### Towards the definition of a trend in Turkish literature: *The Second Renewal*

*The Second Renewal* (*İkinci Yeni*) was a literary designation coined by the poet and critic Muzaffer İlhan Erdost (b.1930) in an article in 1956 after the first examples of poetry of the *Second Renewal* had been published (Perinçek & Duruel 1995:121). However, the poets who were to be known as the poets of the *Second Renewal*, namely Turgut Uyar (1927-1985), Edip Cansever (1928-1996), Cemal Süreya (1931-1990), Sezai Karakoç (b.1933), Ece Ayhan (b.1931-2002), Özdemir İnce (b.1936), Hilmi Yavuz (b. 1936), Ahmet Oktay (b.1933), Gülten Akın (b.1933), Ülkü Tamer (b.1937) and Ercüment Uçarı (1928-1996), were not bound by a manifesto that defined their literary agenda. In a programme on Turkish state television in 1988, Cemal Süreya described the advent of the *Second Renewal* in the following terms:

“In the years between 1953 and 1957, a group of young poets started to publish poems of a new type in magazines and they influenced each other. In those days poetry was too rationalist. The new poets brought an irrational element into poetry. Linear story-telling was excluded from poetry. Emphasis was put on sound and a search for internal harmony started. The horizons of poetry had to be broadened” (Süreya 1997:174).

In the beginning the *Second Renewal* was a reaction against the general literary atmosphere in Turkey. The designation *Second Renewal* is misleading though. At the time when the term was coined, critics had started to write about the *Bizarre* group as being the first renewal. Hence one could erroneously conclude that the *Second Renewal* was the continuation of *Bizarre*. Quite to the contrary, they were a reaction against the trio and rejected what they saw as the superficiality and the lack of depth of *Bizarre* poetry and of those who walked in their footsteps. The *Second Renewal* also took a critical stance against the politically engaged poetry of the *Generation of the Forties* and later socialist poets. Muzaffer İlhan Erdost, who edited the literary supplement of the Cemil Sait Barlas' Sunday newspaper *Pazar Postası* (Sunday Post, 1951-1954), which acted as a forum for the avant-garde, rationalised their position in the following terms:

“The war declared by poetry on the few governments that rule the planet looks like a war declared on the world by a ladybird. Poetry has lost its political utility in an era where technology developed so much. I am surprised that, despite the division of the atom, despite the *Sputnik*, there are still people who expect that poetry can

guide mankind as did the light of the *Qur'ân* or the light of the Gospels" (İlhan 1983:43).

This was an attitude that attracted, not surprisingly, sharp criticism from Attilâ İlhan and other left-wingers. Attilâ İlhan even wrote that the *Second Renewal* was the "official" poetry of the Menderes dictatorship, just like *Bizarre* had been the poetry of the İnönü dictatorship (İlhan 1996:7-11).<sup>1</sup>

Finding a proper translation for *İkinci Yeni* is difficult since the word *yeni* has different associations such as new, novel or modern. Feyyaz Kayacan Fergar, editor of an anthology of modern Turkish poetry in English, translated the term as *Second Renewal*, which reflects the importance of the movement and the role it played in the transformation and renewal of Turkish poetry (Fergar 1992:41). To talk about them as a movement wrongly gives the impression that they were a structured body with a clearly outlined manifesto. The occasional articles and essays written by the major players of the period have little in common and are insufficient to define their aims, even though such writings may help when trying to understand individual works.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than a movement the *Second Renewal* was a trend during the late fifties and early sixties in Turkish literature. It was constituted by poets who were all born well after the establishment of the republic. They were the first generation of republican poets who have had their links completely severed from the Ottoman past. In literary matters, they advocated the primacy of form over content.

The idea that modern poetry was based on words was the central argument in Cemal Süreya's influential critical essay *Folklor Şiire Düşman* (Folklore is the Enemy of Poetry), published in October 1956 in the journal *a* (Süreya 2000b:192-194). He argued that folk culture must be rejected because the meaning of words was limited in folk literature. He maintained that modern poetry was about enriching or subverting those very meanings. As shown by Mehmet Rifat, he based his argumentation on Stéphane Mallarmé's claim that it was not ideas but words that formed the basis of poetry (Rifat 1994:37). Consequently meaning in poetry was only a result of the use of certain words and could only be secondary. Süreya argued further that the generation of the *Second Renewal* should not only reject folk culture, but all kinds of literary constraints (Süreya 2000b:194). Sezai Karakoç too argued that meaning in poetry might sometimes be suspended (Karatuş 1998:239). Hence the poetry of the *Second Renewal* was characterised by the rejection of linear narration and a focus on individual verses, not on

<sup>1</sup> Attilâ İlhan is right to criticise the links existing between Nurullah Ataç's cultural project and the poetry of the *Bizarre* group, but the claim that the *Second Renewal* was supported by the Democratic Party government is too far-fetched. Most poets of the trend had left-wing credentials (Süreya 1997:201). Moreover, the *Second Renewal* continued to develop in the sixties, that is after the 1960 military coup and the arrest of several Democratic Party MPs and the execution of Adnan Menderes and two of his senior ministers.

<sup>2</sup> A full list of those articles is given in Perinçek & Duruel 1995:125.

the wholeness of the poem. Everything could be the subject of poetry. Language was not considered as a tool for the poet, but it was the context in which he or she worked. The focus was on the meanings of words.

This led to harsh criticism from the left and the right of the literary spectrum who advocated the social engagement of literature. Attilâ İlhan attacked in several articles what he called the “*circus of meaninglessness*” (Perinçek & Duruel 1995:128), referring to the opaqueness and abstraction of their verses. Years later, Rasım Özdenören, an influential Islamic critic and short-story writer, similarly criticised the *Second Renewal* and argued that they eluded the universal themes of poetry. He concluded that they had remained totally estranged to their own civilisation and their own people (Karataş 1998:240).

But Turan Karataş, though from a similar ideological background, strongly disagrees with him and claims that eternal themes such as love, death and time are indeed explored in the poetry of the *Second Renewal* and that their works have seen a renewed interest after 1980 (Karataş 1998:240).<sup>3</sup> Other critics, like Atilla Özkırmılı, have argued that the poets of the *Second Renewal* have made a rational and responsible use of surrealism in their works. However, this claim is completely rejected by Cemal Süreya who has responded that “*the poets who were at the origin of the Second Renewal and those who later joined them were not aware of surrealism, but it was possible to encounter surrealist elements in their poetry*” (Süreya 2000b:419). Süreya stresses that it is necessary to differentiate between Surrealism as a movement and the surrealism that has always existed and will always exist in poetry. He believes that it is the second type of surrealism that can be encountered in the poetry of the *Second Renewal* (Süreya 2000b:419).

In order to illustrate the love poetry of the *Second Renewal*, the works of Edip Cansever and Cemal Süreya will be discussed, since both of them, unlike their fellow poets, gave considerable attention to the theme of love. Moreover the two of them, together with Turgut Uyar, have in general been seen as the least opaque poets of their generation (Perinçek & Duruel 1995:129). Cemal Süreya’s poetry is characterised by an original use of language, the invention of new combinations of words and expressions. When asked to define his poetry he said that his poetry was erotic (Süreya 1997:27),

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<sup>3</sup>In a collection of essays devoted to contemporary Turkish poetry, Metin Celâl argues that the criticism attracted by poetic trends after 1980 is exactly the same as the criticism directed to the *Second Renewal*. He blames the lack of archives of literary journals and magazines and the impoverished state of libraries in Turkey for the situation (Celâl 1999:5-6). In both cases the criticism focuses on the obscurity and opaqueness of the relevant poetry. In both cases too, one can hardly speak of a movement, but much more of a grouping of people writing during the same period of time and sharing similarities in their approach to literature. Neither of the groupings have a particular agenda or a literary and political manifesto.

which shows the importance of the theme of love in his works.<sup>4</sup> Edip Cansever's early works, putting an emphasis on individualism, dealt with the experiences of a young bourgeois living in the city. His later works, much influenced by existentialism, explored the place of the human being in the universe. His creative use of language as well as the themes of his poems became important features of the *Second Renewal* of Turkish poetry.

### Love and the *Second Renewal*

Love, though not a major theme of the poetry of the *Second Renewal*, is an occasional occurrence in the verses of all poets associated with the trend. The difficulty to identify love in their poetry, just like any other theme, is best explained by Cemal Süreya's stance that *poetry is written with words, not with emotions* (Süreya 1997:87). Süreya's claim is a paraphrasing Stéphane Mallarmé's (1842-1898) influential words saying that poetry was written with words, not with ideas. The quote is attributed to Mallarmé by Paul Valéry (1871-1945) in his book entitled *Degas, Danse, Dessin*, (Degas, Dance, Drawing) which was published in Paris in 1938.<sup>5</sup> According to Valéry, Edgar Degas (1834-1917), the impressionist painter, had decided to write poetry and after a day-long failure, he consulted Mallarmé. He told him that he could not write a single line, although he had several ideas. Mallarmé replied that poetry was written with words not with ideas. But Süreya probably borrowed the idea from the poet Behçet Necatigil (1916-1979) who unwillingly misquoted Mallarmé in an essay on art that he published originally in 1961: "*Mallarmé is quite right when he says that words, not feelings give birth to poetry*" (Rifat 1997:37-42).

The stress on form and on the subversive use of words shifts the poet's (and the reader's) focus from content to form. In a love poem of the *Second Renewal*, the focus is not on the feeling of love but on its expression in words, which has lead some critics to argue that poems are not about any themes in particular, but about poetic technique. The latter point, however, is not representative of the poetry of Cemal Süreya and Edip Cansever, the two poets that are discussed in this chapter. Both of them have straightforwardly devoted a large portion of their work to the theme of love.<sup>6</sup> This is exemplified by the fact that Cemal Süreya's complete poems were published in 1990 with the title *Sevda Sözleri* (Words of Passion) and that Edip Cansever published, among others, a collection of poems in 1976 that was entitled *Sevda ile Sevgi* (Passion

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that Cemal Süreya made this claim in 1973 in an interview for the monthly *Milliyet Sanat* (*Milliyet Art*) and that much of his later poetry would be more political.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Valéry, *Degas, Danse, Dessin*, Paris: Gallimard, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> İnci Asena included five poems by Edip Cansever and six poems by Cemal Süreya in her very popular anthology of modern Turkish love poetry (Asena 1997). This is as much as all the other poets of the *Second Renewal* put together (Turgut Uyar, Ercüment Uçarı, Gülten Akın, Özdemir İnce, Hilmi Yavuz).

and Love). Cemal Süreya also acknowledged the importance of love as a much favoured theme in poetry when he said that the ten first poems of a “*most beautiful poems anthology*” would certainly be love poems (Asiltürk 1999:25). Süreya himself edited an anthology of modern Turkish love poetry in 1967<sup>7</sup> and devoted several articles and essays to love and sexuality. Love is undeniably the major concern of Süreya’s poetry and an important theme in Cansever’s works too.

A remarkable switch of focus from emotional to sexual love can be observed in their poetry. The beloved was given a body, probably for the first time, in Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem’s very stylised verses. However erotic poetry and the theme of physical love remained more the exception than the rule until well into the second half of the twentieth century. They were mentioned yet rarely focused upon. Nazım Hikmet, the *Bizarre* trio and Attilâ İlhan were influential in bringing a change of attitude towards sexuality in poetry, but sexuality and eroticism in themselves remained rather marginal aspects of their poetical works.

Konur Ertop argues that sexuality is one of the major concerns of the *Second Renewal* poets. The poets tend to discuss more the physical than the emotional aspect of love. They do not focus on the theme of sexuality for its own sake. Sexuality is seen as a way to explore the crisis of modern man (Ertop 1977: 279-288).

Cemal Süreya defines love as “*a combination of irresistible mutual desire felt by two humans or the desire by one human being towards another with the need to be loved*” (Süreya 1997:83). Süreya acknowledges both the emotional and the physical aspect of a relationship, but focuses almost exclusively on the sensual dimension of love in his poems. He believes that erotic writing has an important role to fulfil in society. He wrote in a review of Attilâ İlhan’s critical work on sexual behaviour *Hangi Seks* (What Sexuality)<sup>8</sup>, that “*erotic books were a source of wisdom, of knowledge and even of a behavioural culture*” (Süreya 1982:174). Unfortunately he did not develop his argument and rebuffed any possible criticism by saying “*that this is what he thought even if some people might get snagged on his conclusion*” (Süreya 1982:174). With pride, he reminded an interviewer in October 1985, that he was responsible for the showing of the erotic cult film *Emanuelle*. The distribution of the film in Turkey had been forbidden by the Ministry of the Interior. The issue was raised at the Council of State. At the time, Cemal Süreya was occasionally consulted on cultural matters by the Council, in which he was an expert (*bilirkişi*) (Süreya 1997:84). Nonetheless he is not insensitive to feminist criticism of eroticism and pornography<sup>9</sup> (that he also condones), regarding the exploitative nature of erotic and pornographic books and films. He goes

<sup>7</sup> Cemal Süreya (ed.), *100 Aşk Şiiri*, İstanbul:Gerçek, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> Attilâ İlhan, *Hangi Seks*, İstanbul: Bilgi, 1976.

<sup>9</sup> Süreya considers pornography as failed erotica. Erotica is an art for Süreya, but pornography is not. His judgement is not made on moral but on aesthetic grounds (Süreya 1982:40).

as far as agreeing that his poems were written from a male point of view and that he wished to be able to write from a female point of view (Süreya 1998:65). He claims that he was able to make such a switch in the mid-seventies (Süreya 1998: 201).

Cemal Süreya says that his poetry should be defined as "erotic" (Süreya 1997:27). He sincerely believes that erotica in itself is a progressive (in political terms) form of artistic expression. Erotica is an attempt to change the world (Süreya 1997:96). Unfortunately, he remains vague on what exactly it is changing, but he hints at the attitude of unease towards sexuality in Turkish society (Süreya 1997:96). Süreya's belief in the power of erotica for social change contradicts the *Second Renewal's* central tenet that poetry and politics should be kept apart. One should take into consideration that Süreya's comments on erotica and social change were all made in the seventies and afterwards. Süreya admitted that he had always felt ill at ease with his a-political poetry, because he was a committed socialist<sup>10</sup> (Süreya 1997:93). One can assume that his reflection on eroticism and pornography is meant as a re-reading of his own works in order to give them a more politically engaged outlook. It is in this context that Süreya's claim in 1985 that "both poetry and love were by nature illegal" should be read (Süreya 1997:87).

The claim emphasises once again Süreya's belief that love and poetry are strongly linked together. Love's illegality is reflected in the emphasis on sexuality in his works, whereas poetry's illegality is a constant theme of his theoretical writings in the seventies and eighties. Love is like poetry, according to him. It dies as soon as it is legal (1997:83). Süreya stresses that from Plato to Rousseau, poetry has always been looked upon with suspicion by prophets, philosophers and thinkers (Süreya 1997:34).

Süreya's use of the theme of love will be discussed in three poems that illustrate different approaches to the theme: "Elma" (The Apple) is an ambiguous poem that deals with an ordinary man's perception of sexuality, women and art. "Sayım" (Enumeration) focuses on various stages of an affair and "Striptiz" (Striptease) is a humorous poem about a stripper. Even though the three poems approach the theme of love from different perspectives and belong to different periods of Süreya's poetical development, they are formally united by the use of the free verse and the absence of punctuation which give the poems a modernist aspect in form.

Unlike Cemal Süreya, Edip Cansever wrote little about love and his critical output cannot be compared to Cemal Süreya's, which covered all aspects of cultural life. He did not express himself on the meaning of love or on the place of sexuality in literature. Edip Cansever shares with Cemal Süreya the particularity that there is no clear distinction between love and sexuality in his poems dealing with the theme of love

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<sup>10</sup> He was a columnist for the Maoist weekly paper *Aydınlık* in the seventies and also wrote for the leftist *Politika*.

(Asiltürk 1997:62). He was certainly much more at ease with his approach to poetry than Cemal Süreya, which is probably why he did not feel the need to theorise on the pre-eminence of certain themes in his poetry. Even though Cansever is a poet whose thematic approach has seen major changes, the theme of love remained a constant concern of his poetry.<sup>11</sup>

Each of the selected poems will discuss a different approach to the theme of love in the works of Edip Cansever: "Yerçekimli Karanfil" (The Gravitational Carnation) explores the personal, social, spiritual and physical dimensions of love. "Bir Genelev Kadını Ve" (A Woman from the Brothel and) deals with sexual love and self-delusion and "Her Sevda" (Each Love) denies the emotional dimension of love and focuses exclusively on its physical and intellectual aspects.

## Cemal Süreya

### Elma

The *Second Renewal*'s exploration of ways to abolish linear narration in poetry and their controversial stance - at the time and in Turkey at least - on the subversion of the meanings of words as well as their use of modernist literary techniques such as *free association* can make any reader's attempt at making sense of particular poems a challenging experience. The *Second Renewal* questions the very idea that poetry ought to have a meaning and thus it could or should make sense. The first poem that will be discussed in this chapter is a representative example. "Elma" (The Apple) deals with a variety of themes: solitude, sexuality and art, but none of them is explored in a particular way. Moreover the poem is full of precise autobiographical references that cannot be identified by an outsider. According to the information provided by the poet, "Elma" was originally published in 1956 (Süreya 2000a:25). It was included in Süreya's first poetry collection *Üvercinka* in 1958.

The naked narrator addresses what seems to be the reproduction of a painting of a naked woman in a poem that has a sexual subtext. The poem is organised in three stanzas and an independent verse. The language is colloquial in order to convey the inner monologue of the narrator. The repetition of certain verses and images throughout the poem gives the poem a unity, that the otherwise very confusing content does not.

### Elma

Şimdi sen çırtlıçplak elma yiyorsun  
Elma da elma ha allahlık

### The apple

Now you are naked and eating an apple  
What an apple

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that Konur Ertop's comments on the treatment of sexuality in the works of Edip Cansever in his groundbreaking study *Türk Edebiyatında Seks* (Sex in Turkish Literature) is dated. He writes that Edip Cansever "narrates lovemaking in a simple straightforward way" (Ertop 1977:282). This is true of the poet's earlier works, but the approach changed during the seventies. The publication date of Ertop's book (1977), which consists of essays previously published in the monthly cultural magazine *Milliyet Sanat*, explains the cause of this omission.

Bir yarısı kırmızı bir yarısı yine kırmızı  
 Kuşlar uçuyor üstünde  
 Gökyüzü var üstünde  
 Hatırlanacak olursa tüm üç gün önce soyunmuşsun  
 Bir duvarın üstünde  
 Bir yandan elma yiyorsun kırmızı  
 Bir yandan sevgilerini sebil ediyorsun sıcak  
 İstanbul'da bir duvar

Ben de çıplığım ama elma yemiyorum  
 Benim öyle elmalara karnım tok  
 Ben öyle elmaları çok gördüm ohoo  
 Kuşlar uçuyor üstümde bunlar senin elmaların  
 [kuşları  
 Gökyüzü var üstümde bu senin elmandaki gökyüzü  
 Hatırlanacak olursa seninle beraber soyunmuşum  
 Bir kilisenin üstünde  
 Bir yandan çan çalıyorum büyük yaşamaklara  
 Bir yandan yoldan insanlar geçiyor çoğul olarak  
 Duvarda bir kilise

İstanbulda bir duvar duvarda bir kilise  
 Sen çıplı çıplak elma yiyorsun  
 Denizin ortasına kadar elma yiyorsun  
 Yüreğimin ortasına kadar elma yiyorsun.  
 Bir yandan esaslı kederler içinde gençliğimiz  
 Bir yandan Sirkeci'nin tiren dolu kadınları  
 Âdettir sadece ağızlarını öptürürler  
 Ayaküstü işlerini görmek yerine

Adımın bir harfini atıyorum

One half is red and so is the other  
 Birds are flying over it  
 The sky is over it  
 It will be remembered that you undressed  
 [three days ago  
 On a wall  
 You are eating a red apple and at the same  
 [time  
 You are distributing your warm love  
 A wall in Istanbul

I am naked too but I am not eating an apple  
 I cannot be deceived by such apples  
 I have seen many such apples  
 Birds are flying over me they are your apples'  
 [birds  
 The sky is over me this is the sky over your  
 [apple  
 It will be remembered that I undressed  
 [together with you  
 Over a church  
 I am celebrating extraordinary lives  
 [tolling the bells  
 While a multitude of people are passing on the  
 [road  
 A church on the wall

A wall in Istanbul a church on the wall  
 You are naked and eating an apple  
 You are eating the apple up to the middle of  
 [the sea  
 You are eating the apple up to the middle of  
 [my heart  
 Our youth is full of grief while  
 There are trainloads of women in Sirkeci  
 Their habit is to let only their mouth be kissed  
 Rather than doing the thing while on their feet

I throw away a letter from my name

The title of the poem "The Apple" is the first issue that needs to be explored, since it is mentioned six times in the poem. The apple is a symbol of temptation in western art but does not have the same connotation in Islamic culture. The *Qur'ân* -just like the Hebrew bible - does not refer to an apple, but mentions the fruit of a forbidden which Adam and Eve should not eat.<sup>12</sup> However the context of Süreya's poem dictates the interpretation of the apple as a symbol of temptation. Later mentions of a church and bells are important cultural reference points that induce such an interpretation.

The first stanza of the poem starts with the narrator addressing the beloved and, at the same time, describing her for the reader. She is naked and eating an apple. The combination of nakedness and of the apple evokes the Renaissance depictions of the biblical Eve and encourages the interpretation of the apple as a symbol of temptation.

<sup>12</sup> The tree is mentioned in the third and fourth verses of the second sûrah and the eighteenth verse of the seventh sûrah of the *Qur'ân*.

The scene could take place in the countryside, since the narrator refers to the birds and the sky over her head (lines four and five). The seventh line of the poem carries the key to the interpretation of this highly unusual scene. Since the beloved is undressed on a wall, we can gather that the narrator is actually describing a picture hanging on a wall somewhere in Istanbul (line ten ). The beloved however distributes her warm love (line nine) which introduces the sexual aspect of the poem, which are developed in the next two stanzas. The information gathered at the present stage of the poem leads the reader to conclude that the narrator is standing in front of a picture - possibly of a naked Eve eating an apple - and that he is addressing the woman represented on the picture. The reference to warm love could mean that the narrator considers her nakedness as a source of attraction.

The focus switches from the beloved to the narrator in the second stanza. The narrator too is naked and his world (the real world) and the universe depicted in the picture seem to be mingling (line fourteen and fifteen). The new references to apples are confusing. His stress on the fact that he is not eating an apple (line eleven) could be interpreted as a refusal to yield to temptation. Indeed, the narrator admits that he undressed together with the beloved, which means that he undressed in order to watch the painting. Line seventeen and twenty are again difficult to interpret. It could be that the narrator is in a room over an old church, from which he can observe the busy life of the city, on which he will focus in the final lines of the next stanza.

The first four lines of the last stanza deal with the relationship between the narrator and the picture. The last four lines enlarge the context of the poem and deal with a subject which is important for Cemal Süreya, that of the relationship between ordinary people and sexuality. The reference to the women of Sirkeci is obscure in the general context of the poem. The trainloads of women most probably refer to women going to work by train. The fact that the narrator regrets that they only kiss and refuse to have sex in a fast and informal way points once again to the possible sexual frustration of the narrator.

The poem deals many taboos a blow: Women are openly depicted as sexual objects and art is used by the narrator in order to arouse his sexual desire. The importance of sexuality in this early poem of Süreya is indicative of the direction his later works would take. It is obvious that the narrator is only one of Süreya's literary personas: Süreya, the writer, is very much concerned with women rights. In this poem he depicts the way in which an ordinary man perceives the world and how he is obsessed with his sexuality that he is unable to live.

Such an interpretation could be too far-fetched and goes against the fundamental opposition of the *Second Renewal* to meaning in poetry. Indeed the last verse increases the ambiguity of the poem. Literary gossip has it that Cemal Süreya

offered one “y” of his name to a woman whom he had an affair with, which explains why his pen-name is spelled in that unusual way (Süreya instead of the usual Süreyya). This autobiographic reference could indicate that the poem is full of insider jokes and that any attempt to make sense of it is useless. The reader cannot be sure whether the narrator is addressing a woman or a picture. This ambiguity does in fact emphasise the loneliness of the narrator, for this poem is, I believe, not only about sexual desire, but also about loneliness.

### Sayım

“Sayım” (Enumeration) is a poem of a different nature. Although “Elma” dealt with the sexual frustration of the narrator, “Sayım” enumerates the different stages of a love relationship. Each level of the relationship is symbolised by a particular kiss. The choice of the kiss in order to measure the development of the relationship is very important and indicates the ground covered by poets in Turkey in 150 years. For the *divân* poet, the kiss was the ultimate object of his hopeless yearning. Even Yahya Kemal celebrated the thirst-giving pleasure on the lips of the beloved and mourned its passing. Years after Yahya Kemal - who, it should not be forgotten, lived on a poetic planet of its own, untouched by the tumultuous developments in poetry in the first half of the century- Cemal Süreya uses the kiss as a mere unit of measurement for the development of a relationship.

“Sayım” is part of the section “Üçbin Yaprak Yüzbin İpekböceği” (Three Thousand Leaves A Hundred Thousand Silkworms) of Cemal Süreya’s 1973 collection *Beni Öp Sonra Doğur Beni* (Kiss Me and Then Give Birth to Me). The poem consists of seven couplets. The rhymes are blank, but the poem is not without melodiousness, mainly because of the repetition of “öptüm seni” (I kissed you) at the end of each couplet.

Sayım	Enumeration
Ayışığında oturuyorduk Bileğinden öptüm seni	We were sitting in the moonlight I kissed your wrist
Sonra ayakta öptüm Dudağından öptüm seni	Then I kissed you while standing I kissed your lips
Kapı aralağında öptüm Soluğundan öptüm seni	I kissed you in the doorway I kissed your breath
Bahçede çocuklar vardı Çocuğundan öptüm seni	There were children in the garden I kissed your child
Evime götürdüm yatağında Kasığından öptüm seni	I took you home to my bed I kissed your groin
Başka evlerde karşılaştık İliğinden öptüm seni	We met in other houses I kissed your marrow

En sonunda caddelere çıkardım  
Kaynağından öptüm seni

Finally I took you out to the streets  
I kissed your origin

The first couplet describes the beginning of the relationship. The narrator and the beloved sit under the moonlight and he kisses her wrists. The first kiss can be interpreted as the awkward gestures of a shy and inexperienced lover. The next couplet shows the evolution of the relationship: The lovers have grown in confidence and kiss on the lips. The third stage of the relationship is symbolised by a deep kiss: The narrator kisses the breath of the beloved. The setting is also mentioned: The doorway, probably the entrance to a house or a room.

The setting of the fourth kiss is completely different: A garden where there are children. The fourth kiss is of a different nature, since the narrator kisses the child in order to reach the mother. It is not clear whether he is the father of the children. He refers to it as “your child” which implies that he is not. The beloved is often a married woman in Cemal Süreya’s poetry, which is why he has been characterised as a libertine (*çapkın*) poet. He is not pleased with this categorisation, because he believes it to be the male equivalent of “fahişe” (Süreya 1997:196). In the context of his interview, “fahişe” should not simply be understood as “prostitute” but rather as “tart”, which has both the meanings of prostitute and promiscuous woman. Süreya’s reaction is astonishing since he continuously emphasises the need to subvert the meanings of words and it could have been expected from him to redefine the word and chant the merits of the tart and the libertine.

The mention of the child indicates the new closeness between the lovers. The beloved has introduced the narrator to her child. In the fifth couplet, the sexual dimension of the relationship is mentioned. The narrator takes the beloved back to his home and kisses her groin in bed. The “kasık” is the region between the abdomen and the thigh on either side of the body. The kiss suggests the possibility of oral sex. The suggestive power of the kiss is in line with Süreya’s claim that his poetry is erotic. However once the union is physically consummated, the lovers seem to part their ways: In the sixth couplet, they meet casually in other people’s houses, which indicates that they have separated. The narrator kisses her bone marrow and this could symbolise the new dimension of their relationship, which is not physical anymore. From lovers they have become friends. The final couplet indicates that the streets are the origin of the beloved. This brings a little bit more light on the identity of the beloved. However she is not a prostitute since the information gathered in the poem (the closeness of the narrator to her child, meeting her in other people’s houses) does not allow such an interpretation. The reference to the streets is rather an indication that she is a woman from the real world and not an idealised beloved. The kiss of the street would then be a kiss of the real world and a celebration of the origin of the beloved.

Each kiss in the poem does not only depict a stage of the loving relationship, but also symbolises a different aspect of human experience. Physical kisses and metaphorical kisses are mentioned. There are erotic kisses, fatherly kisses and friendly kisses. Süreya underlines that love is a human experience and as such should be explored in the general context of human life. Unlike Orhan Veli and the *Bizarre* group, who were more interested in the material aspect of love, Süreya and the *Second Renewal* as a whole discuss the psychological dimension of love. This preference is obvious in both the matter and the form and explains Süreya's use of techniques reminding of free association and of the stream of consciousness.

### Striptiz

The poem "Elma" dealt primarily with the issue of desire. "Sayım" depicted the different stages of a relationship, which were symbolised by a kiss. There is another important aspect of Süreya's treatment of the theme of love that needs to be explored: the humorous approach of the theme of desire. "Elma" was not devoid of humour and it dealt nevertheless with difficult issues such as the satisfaction of one's sexual urges. The poem "Striptiz" on the other hand is a poem written purely for entertainment purposes and has no depth at all. As such, it reminds of the "fantasies" of Enis Behiç such as "Büsenin Sesi" (The Sound of the Kiss) or "Romen Kadını" (The Romanian Woman). "Striptiz" was published in the opening section "Üzerinden Sevişmek" (To Make Love Over It) of his 1984 collection *Uçurumda Açan* (Opening in the Abyss). The poem aims at depicting the various gestures of a stripper accompanied by the sound of piano.

### Striptiz

Kaç nota var  
Do re mi fa sol la si  
Onun da üstünde  
O kadar giysi

Etekliği fa  
Sütyeni sol  
Pabuçları la  
Şapkası si

Sevmektedir onları  
Kendi bedeni gibi

Usul usul giyinir  
Sabahları evinde  
İşte do, sonra sırasıyla

re  
mi  
fa  
sol  
la  
Sonunda şapkası si

### Striptease

She wears as many clothes  
As there are notes  
C d e f g a b

Her skirt is f  
Her bra is g  
Her shoes are a  
Her hat is b

She loves them  
As much as her own body

She dresses slowly  
At home in the morning  
Here is c and then

d  
e  
f  
g  
a  
Finally her hat b

Püsküren bir çiçek gibi  
Çıkar kapıdan

Like an erupting flower  
She leaves through the door

Gel ki geceleri sahnede  
Müzik başlamaya görsün  
Herşey hızlanır birden  
Açılıp kapanmaya başlar  
Burun delikleri

However at night on the stage  
As soon as the music starts  
Everything becomes faster  
Her nostrils  
Start to open and close

Hiç de uzakta olmayan  
Bir piyano eşliğinde  
Müthiş bir hışım  
Atı atı verir  
Üstündekileri  
Alın size si  
İşte la  
sol  
fa  
mi  
re  
doool

Accompanied by a piano  
Which is not far at all  
With extraordinary passion  
She throws away  
Whatever she is wearing  
Here you are b  
here a  
g  
f  
e  
d  
c!

The narrator introduces a person who is wearing as many clothes as musical notes. Nothing else is known about the person and it is only the title of the poem that leads the reader to assume that the narrator is speaking of a stripper. In the second stanza each clothing item is associated with a note: The shirt is associated with f (fa), the bra is associated with g (sol), shoes are associated with a (la) and the hat with (b) si. But the absence with c (do), (d) re and (e) mi is striking and the reader is left to associate other clothes to the remaining notes. The third stanza consists of a couplet. The stripper is said to love those items as much as her own body. However the use of the verb "to love" in this context is ambiguous and could refer either to the attachment of the woman to her clothing or to her using them in the simulation of a sexual act during her performance. In the fourth stanza the focus is switched to the stripper in her home and the striptease act is inverted. The narrator shows the woman when she is dressing. Each clothing item is again associated to a note. She starts by wearing her c (do), which is probably her knickers. Do, the name of the note in the latin notation system, is very close to the Turkish "don" which means knickers or underpants. Then she wears her d (re) and e (mi) that are left to the imagination of the reader and finally her skirt, her bras, her shoes and hat, which leaves her still relatively undressed.

In the next couplet a little bit is revealed about her personality: She is said to be leaving her home like an "erupting flower", which refers to her being passionate and beautiful. The reference to a flower could also be indicative of her fragility, but the general humorous context of the poem does not really allow such an interpretation. In the next two stanzas the narrator focuses on the stripper on the stage. Once the music starts her excitement grows. Her excitement is not directly mentioned, but the narrator

mentions the movement of her nostrils, which shows her accelerated breathing. Finally she starts to undress accompanied by the music of a piano and once again every clothing item is being symbolised by a note. The last note to be mentioned is c (do), which we know by now is associated with her knickers. In order to underline the effect, the fact that she is now naked, the narrator lengthens the "do" and uses an exclamation mark at the end of the poem, which is the only punctuation sign used.

From a technical point of view Süreya makes use of a device that reminds of Guillaume Apollinaire in his groundbreaking collection *Calligrammes*, published in 1918. The notes trickle down the page like tears or raindrops, just like in his famous "Il pleut" (It Rains). There is however no thematic similitude between the two poems and Cemal Süreya made use of this technique in order to enhance the visual effect of the poem.

The tone of the poem is light and one should not look for a deeper meaning in the poem. Nonetheless Süreya threads on dangerous ground. Stripping as a theme of poetry could lead to accusations of sexism. The humorous treatment of the theme permits a certain distance, which a truly erotic or pornographic depiction of the stripper would not have. It is known that Süreya believed that Turkish society needed a more sane approach to sexuality and the vulgarization of the issue of stripping might have been a way to do it. The absence of personality of the stripper too is striking but the beloved is usually very abstract in Cemal Süreya's poetry. Little information is provided about her identity or her occupation, even though the narrator does occasionally focus on her physical or psychological characteristics. The common characteristic of Süreya's women is that they are women who are denigrated by society: divorced women, single mothers or prostitutes. He is not trying to rehabilitate them in the eyes of society. By making them his partners in his erotic poetry, he is making use of male stereotyping and fantasising on women who are outside the traditional boundaries of family and society. Whether by doing so he is not merely perpetuating those stereotypes is a matter for the individual readers to decide. A reading of his journalistic writings and essays clearly show that he tries to subvert those traditional stereotypes. Erotic poetry is in his eyes positive and as such his characters are engaging in a positive and creative work, by challenging society's views on sexuality. Such an interpretation too is questionable because Süreya and the *Second Renewal* deny any social or educational role to poetry.

### **Edip Cansever**

#### **Yerçekimli Karanfil**

The *Second Renewal*'s understanding of poetry, their claim that meaning is accidental in poetry, has had consequences on the way the readers should approach their poems. Even though the *Second Renewal*'s stance on poetry - the belief that

poetry and politics are two areas that should be kept separate - has political consequences, their poetry is a-political and should be read accordingly. They mainly address an audience of poets and do not aim at conveying any particular message. Individual *Second Renewal* poems need to be studied independently. They should be seen as closed, finished works containing all the information needed for interpretation inside themselves. It is only after the study of those individual poems that a larger interpretation and political evaluation of the bulk of their works can be done.

In an essay on the poetics of Edip Cansever, Bâki Asiltürk argues that the poetic quality of Cansever's poems is not based on single verses but on the totality of verses in the poem. This situation makes the search for meaning in form secondary. According to Asiltürk, the poet's approach allows him to reflect the intensity of life, or of certain moments of life, in poetry (Asiltürk 1997:57). Like much criticism on the *Second Renewal*, Asiltürk's claim is almost as obscure as the poetry he is dealing with.

Nevertheless he points to an important aspect in Cansever's work. There is always a logical link between the different verses in his poems. Hence it would be wrong to take excerpts of certain poems in order to argue a point. Unfortunately, Asiltürk does not deal with the issue of meaning in Cansever's poetry. It is possible to understand individual verses in his poems, but the totality of lines often remains opaque and render the outlining of the central argument of the poem difficult. This is a central characteristic of *Second Renewal* poetry.

"Yerçekimli Karanfil", the first poem to be discussed in this section, is part of Edip Cansever's 1957 collection of the same name. The collection is generally accepted as a transitional work, leading from the poet's earlier works (collected in his 1954 collection *Dirlik Düzenlik* (Household Harmony), influenced by the *Bizarre* movement, to the more mature works that he wrote from the sixties onwards. Those works have the clear imprints of *Second Renewal* poetry. In "Yerçekimli Karanfil", Edip Cansever explores the impact of love as experienced by the individual. Unlike Orhan Veli who focuses almost exclusively on the material impact of love, Edip Cansever stipulates that love is a personal, a social, a spiritual and a physical act. His message is that love, as an act, brings relief from the pains and constraints of ordinary life, but is ineffective as an emotion.

#### Yerçekimli Karanfil

Biliyor musun az az yaşıyorsun içimde  
Oysaki seninle güzel olmak var  
Örneğin rakı içeriz , içimize bir karanfil düşüyor  
Bir ağaç işliyor tıkır tıkır yanımızda  
Midemdi aklımdı şu kadarlık kalıyor.

Sen o karanfile eğilimlisin, alıp sana veriyorum işte

#### Gravitational Carnation

Do you know you live a little inside me  
Whereas together we could be well  
For instance we drink raki, a carnation falls  
[into us  
A tree is working hard beside us  
My stomach, my mind, nothing is left

You are attracted to that carnation, I pick it  
[and give it to you

Sen de bir başkasına veriyorsun daha güzel  
O başkası yok mu bir yanındakine veriyor  
Derken karanfil elden ele.

Görüyorsun ya bir sevdayı büyütüyoruz  
Sana değiniyorum, sana ısınıyorum, bu o değil  
Bak nasıl, beyaza keser gibisine yedi renk  
Birleşiyoruz sessizce.

And you give it someone else, that is even  
[better  
And he, he gives it to someone beside him  
The carnation goes from hand to hand.

So you see we are growing a love  
I touch you, I become fond of you, that is not  
[the same  
Look, we unite in silence  
just as the seven colours become one in  
[whiteness

The poem is organised in three stanzas of uneven length. Each stanza develops a particular aspect of the poem: The first stanza of the poem emphasises the importance of love in the real world in opposition to psychological worries. Throughout the stanza a feeling of well-being is expressed. The second stanza is about the sharing of love, symbolised by the offering of the carnation. In the third stanza, the focus is again on the two lovers, who are on their own and unite. The poem is written with free verse, which throughout the fifties was the standard verse form, even though major poets such as Fazıl Hüsni Dağlarca were still using the syllabic meter. The use of the spoken language is an important element in the creation of the comfortable and cosy atmosphere of the poem.

In the first line of the poem, the narrator addresses his beloved and tells her that she lives inside him. He seems to express regret, because the stress of the verse is on the adverb *az az* which means “little by little”. The second line proposes an alternative. Instead of living “a little” inside him, they could feel well together. The narrator opposes passive platonic love (“love felt inside”) to active love, that is the lovers being together. The feeling of love is opposed to the actual action. In the third line the narrator exemplifies his understanding of the good life. He and the beloved are drinking and sharing rakı, and it is as if a carnation falls inside them. The carnation gives its name to the poem. Its falling explains its being “gravitational”. Such references to physics and other scientific concepts are abundant in *Second Renewal* poetry and emphasise the alienating effect of their works. The next line develops the image of a windy day. A tree is said to be working hard. This evokes the rattling of the leaves or maybe the falling of leaves. The atmosphere of the day is such that the narrator forgets about both his physical and psychological worries.

The second stanza too starts with an address to the beloved. The narrator offers the carnation to her because she feels attracted to it. At this point in the poem, the carnation becomes a symbol of love. In the next line, the beloved offers the carnation to a third person. The narrator is not jealous and approves of the act. It is also the first time that we are made aware of the presence of other people beside them. In the eighth line, the carnation is offered to a fourth person. The gender of the other people is not mentioned.

In the tenth line, the narrator addresses his beloved again and tells her that they are growing a love. The tenth line is an explanation of the previous stanza. From the eleventh line onwards, the two lovers are alone again. He touches her and becomes fond of her. The use of "ısınmak" here is a bit unusual and unexpected. Even if the first line of the poem indicates a previously platonic love relationship and the rest of the first stanza is about the first meeting of the lovers, the narrator cannot start to be fond of her only now. Maybe the reference to heat in "ısınmak" should be taken into consideration as indicative of a new sexual dimension to their meeting. After all, he *heats up* after touching her.<sup>13</sup> After the touch of the narrator both of them they unite silently like the seven colours which merge into whiteness (line eleven).

Each stanza of the poem is devoted to one particular aspect of love. The first stanza shows the superiority of "real" love to platonic love. The second stanza is about the sharing of love with other people. The third stanza is about intimacy. All of those aspects stress the importance of love as a social act. The poem is representative of Edip Cansever's major concerns during the fifties. In those years he dealt in particular with the experiences and existentialist crisis of young male urban dwellers. The poems usually have an existentialist core, that he would develop in later years. In "Yerçekimli Karanfil" we have a mixture of first hand experience with more general considerations on the nature of love. The reference to the drinking of rakı in an open space is an aspect of Cansever's daily life.

The meditation on love is divided into three part. Love as an act is seen superior to the emotion. Being together with the beloved is better than thinking about her. This togetherness is not a sexual togetherness. The narrator and the beloved drink rakı together and are surrounded by other people. The importance of social intercourse is stressed. The second part of the meditation is on the sharing of love. Love is an experience that can be shared. It is not the beloved who is important, it is love in itself. Throughout the poem little is said about her. All we know is that she belongs to the urban rakı drinking classes. Finally the third part is about intimacy. The two lovers are focused upon. The union between the lovers is evoked. However the nature of the union is kept ambiguous. It could be a physical (sexual) union or a spiritual union. Through the touching of the beloved, the physical aspect of the relationship is also mentioned.

The poem is bridging two eras in Edip Cansever's works and introduces the two central lines that will be encountered in most of his love poems: Love viewed as a way to escape from the *mal de vivre* of modern man and love mainly conceived as an act, that is as sexuality.

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<sup>13</sup> Yet the Turkish "ısınmak" does not have any such meaning.

### Bir Genelev Kadını ve...

The poem "Bir Genelev Kadını Ve" also focuses on love as an act. Unlike the previous poem which showed various facets of love, it exclusively focuses on the sexual aspect of love. The central theme of the poem is dear to Edip Cansever: the individual's misconception of his own acts. Writing about love is just one way of bringing those misconceptions to the fore. It is taken from the 1976 collection *Ben Ruhi Bey Nasılım* (I'm Ruhi What Do You Think of Me), a largely autobiographical work in which each of the 15 poems explore particular aspects of Cansever's persona Ruhi Bey's life. The work is mainly concerned with analysing Ruhi Bey's attitude towards sexuality and death.

The poem "Bir Genelev Kadını ve" has an important particularity. The narrator is a woman. This is a device that Cansever also uses in a later collection *Bezik Oynayan Kadınlar* (The Women Who Play Cards, 1982), in which he versifies the diaries of the women Seniha and Ester. However, as also noted by Bâki Asiltürk, the women remain sexual objects in those poems (Asiltürk 1997: 62) and lack a psychological dimension. Edip Cansever's works are quite self-centred and the various characters in his poems (women in particular) appear only in order to satisfy the needs of his various personas, or in order to emphasise aspects of the personality of his personas.

### Bir Genelev Kadını ve...

Girdi  
Sırtında eski bir ceket vardı  
Bir yerlerden sızmıştı sanki, gün ışığı gibiydi  
Sarışındı  
Önce bir süre kapının önünde durdu durdu  
Gölgelendi, inceldi, beni gördü  
Pek önemsemedim  
Zayıftı, kirliydi, içkiliydi  
Pek önemsemedim  
Baktı, hiç konuşmadı  
Oysa bir İsa tasviri gibi uçumluydu, güzeldi  
Yer gösterdim, oturmadı  
Bir sigara yaktım, ona da verdim  
Aldı  
Sigarasını ben yaktım  
Kısa bir gülümseme yürüdü dudaklarından  
Benim dudaklarıma da geçti  
Çocuklar gibi kızardım  
Öteki kızlar gülüştiler  
Ben kendimi sevdim, güvendim  
Saçlarımı düzelttim, göğsümü biraz kapadım  
Bana elini uzattı, ellerimiz birbirine değdi  
Sıcak, inceydi, kıskanırım anlatmaya bu eli  
Ağır, ağır odama çıktık

Girdi  
Açık pencereyi kapadım

### "A Woman From the Brothel and..."

He entered  
He was wearing an old jacket  
It is as if he had trickled into the place, he was like  
[the sunshine  
He was blond  
He stood in front of the door for some time  
He was in the shade, he became thinner, he saw me  
I did not care much about him  
He was thin, dirty, drunk  
I did not care much about him  
He looked, he did not talk  
But he was as beautiful as a picture of Christ  
I showed him a seat, he did not sit  
I lit a cigarette and gave one to him  
He took it  
I lit his cigarette  
A short smile appeared on his lips  
It passed on to mine  
I blushed like a child  
The other girls laughed  
I loved myself and felt confident  
I touched my hair and covered my bosom a little  
He extended his hand to me and our hands touched  
It was warm and thin, I am too jealous to tell you  
[about this hand  
We walked up slowly to my room

He entered  
I shut the open window

Perdeyi çektim	I drew the curtain
Arkamı döndüm, yavaş yavaş soyundum	I turned round and slowly undressed
Bileğimdeki saati çıkardım	I took off the watch on my wrist
Sigaramı söndürdüm	I put out my cigarette
Tam o zaman..	That is the moment...
Zaman da değildi belki	Well it might not have been the moment
Önce korkunç bir gözyaşı seli	First, a frightening flow of tears
Sonra alabildiğine bir kayalık	Then a huge rock
Kayaların üstünde bir kertenkele	A lizard on the rock
Ardından bir ormanın uğultusu	Then the howling of a forest
Binlerce kanat sesi	The sound of thousands of wings
Sağ elinde bir bıçak	A knife in his right hand
Yok, hayır, bıçak da değildi	No, it was not a knife
Vuran, ezen, öldüren bir el	A beating, crushing, killing hand
Ve eller,	And hands
Ve dişler	And teeth
Kendimden geçtim.	I lost consciousness
	He did not come back, no never
Bir daha gelmedi, hayır, bir daha hiç gelmedi	But
Ama onunla ben	I slept with him when I wanted to.
Ne zaman istedimse o zaman yattım.	

The poem is organised in three stanzas of uneven length. Each stanza introduces a different setting. The first stanza is set in the brothel, the second stanza is set in the room of the prostitute and the third stanza is in the mind of the prostitute. The poem is written in free verse. It should be noted that Cansever breaks with the *Second Renewal's* opposition to linear narration in this poem. There are no images or metaphors in the first part of the poem. The poet uses few conjunctions and prefers short clauses, separated by commas. This device emphasises both the speed of the actions and the distance between the two protagonists, whose acts are not even syntactically linked. However in the second part of the poem the narrator uses images and metaphors in order to describe the man's lovemaking (Lines thirty-three to thirty-seven). The use of conjugations in those lines, in contrast to the scarcity of conjunctions in the first stanza, emphasises the contact, violent and sexual, of the two protagonists. The whole poem is narrated from the perspective of a prostitute in a brothel:

A man enters the brothel wearing an old jacket. He seems to have trickled into the place like the sunlight. With this simile the narrator points to the fact that his entrance had been hardly perceived and that he was blond, which is confirmed in line four.

The man seems to be hesitant and waits in front of the door until he finally notices the narrator, who does not pay any attention to him. He is thin, dirty and drunk. In line eight the attitude of the narrator towards the man changes, because she says that she did not pay any attention to his being thin, dirty and drunk. "Önemsemedim" is used in both cases, which underlines the change. The man behaves rather coldly: He observes but does not speak. The narrator compares him to a picture of Christ, which could be indicative of her ethnic background. Women from Istanbul minorities are regular sexual

partners of Cansever's personas. The ice is broken once both the narrator and the client share a cigarette. They both smile and the narrator blushes like a child, while the other prostitutes laugh. The narrator gains confidence, feels beautiful and acts in a coquettish fashion. He takes her by the hand and they leave in order to go to her room. The narrator fondly mentions the warmth of his hand.

The second part of the poem starts with exactly the same words as the first part. "He entered". Now the narrator and her client are alone in her room. She closes the window and draws the curtain. Then she starts to undress. She removes her watch and puts out her cigarette. These are her last actions before the focus switches to the man. He cries and then suddenly becomes like a rock. On the rock there is a lizard. The buzzing of the forest can be heard and the sound of a thousand wings. Lines thirty four to thirty seven are a metaphorical depiction of love-making that stands in complete contrasts to the next lines that show the violence of the man. His hand is like a knife. The hand hits, crushes and kills. The man uses both his hands and teeth. Finally the narrator passes out.

In the third part of the poem, she says that he never came back but that she had slept with him at the moment she had chosen.

The poem, if read independently from the rest of the book, is about the relationship that exists between sex and violence and the erroneous perception we can have of our own acts. In the general context of the book, it does also introduce us to the physical appearance of Ruhi Bey and to violent aspects of his character. Poetry about sex, just like poetry about love, is poetry about human relationships. During the seventies Cansever studies how human relationships and how contacts with others affect our egos. In this particular poem he focuses on the attitude of a female prostitute. Throughout the poem she is depicted as very passive. It is true that she invites him, however she gains confidence and feels beautiful once he smiles at her. In the room too, she is not an active sexual partner, even though she seems to be fond of him. The violence of the client indicates that he raped her. Despite the rape, she feels that she has slept with him at the moment she has chosen. This might be sincere on her part, but the reader is conscious of the irony of the situation.

### **Her Sevda**

"Her Sevda" is the concluding poem of the 1977 collection *Sevda ile Sevgi* (Passion and Love). It is a short poem where love is depicted as both an intellectual and a physical experience. However the emotional aspect of love is ignored. Finally, love serves as an introduction to a deeper meditation on relationships between individuals.

#### **Her Sevda**

"Yeni aşk kelimeleri, yeni öğrenilen

#### **Every Love**

"New words of love, newly learned

incelikler öbür sevgiliye saklanıyor.”  
(F. Scott Fitzgerald)

subtleties are reserved for the other lover.”  
(F. Scott Fitzgerald)

Her sevda başlangıçtır bir yenisine  
Öteki başkaldırır daha bitmeden biri  
Biz isteyelim, istemeyelim sürüp gider böylece.

Every love is the beginning of a new one  
The next one rises before the other ends  
Whether we want it or not it goes on and on.

Baksak ki unutmamız günün birinde her şeyi  
Ne o sevdalar, ne ölümsüz sözler kalmış  
Toplasak, toplasak hepsini işte  
Onca sevda bir sevdayı yaratmış  
Döner durur başımızın üstünde  
Gözlerden ağızlardan saçlardan  
Ellerden omuzlardan yapılmış bir hâle.

We realise one day that we have forgotten  
[everything  
That those passions and eternal words have  
[disappeared  
If we add all of them  
All those loves have created one love  
It keeps on turning above our head  
It is a halo made of eyes mouths hair  
Hands and shoulders.

Ve çınlar her biri bir silahın yankısı gibi  
Bir yaşam boyu biz tetiği çektikçe.

Each of them resounds like the echo of a weapon  
As long as we pull the trigger all along our life.

The poem is organised in three stanzas of uneven length. Each of them brings in a new element. The poet seems to be arguing a thesis. The first stanza gives the general statement of the poem. The second one illustrates the claim and the final part brings in the human dimension. The poem is written with free verse. There is no particular rhyming pattern. However melodiousness is obtained through inner rhymes and the continuous occurrence of the sounds “e” and “i”.

The poem starts with a quote from Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940), the American novelist and short story writer.<sup>14</sup> Fitzgerald’s major novels were the largely autobiographical *This Side of Paradise* (1920), which was based on his life at Princeton University; *The Great Gatsby* (1925), a novel that deals with the excruciating experiences of a self-made millionaire in a soulless society and *Tender is the Night* (1934), based on his schizophrenic wife’s slow descent into mental illness. The quote is a suitable introduction to the poem and deals with its central theme: The experience gained from a love relationship will be used in the next one.

The first line of the poem has the nature of an aphorism. The narrator says that each love, each passion (*sevda* means both love and passion) is the beginning of a new love. The second explains the first line: The new love already starts before the current one ends. The third verse is fatalistic and explains that nothing can be done about this.

The narrator tries to illustrate the claim in the second part of the poem. He says that if we were to forget everything, including separate loves and eternal words, we would come to realise, when recollecting them, that all of them were just aspects of one great love. The great love is like a halo over our heads. The halo is constituted of the eyes, mouths, hair, hands and shoulders of various lovers.

<sup>14</sup> I have not been able to retrace the quote.

The final couplet of the poem brings a more human dimension to the poem. The sound of each of the lovers reverberates like the echo of a weapon, that we keep on firing throughout our life. The image of the weapon conjures up pictures of pain. The search for absolute love has a human price after all, since each individual lover is only seen as a step, as a tool, which leads to supreme love. The quest for love is inhuman and cruel.

The poem deals with the not uncommon theme of the lover who is in love with love. Cansever's humanist concerns and focus on the effect of human relationships result in his not constraining himself to a merely theoretical reflection on the nature of love. He also mentions the human price of libertinage, the love of love leads to. The remembrance of the lovers is compared to the sound of a weapon. This powerful comparison is indicative of the agony incurred by everyone involved. The central theme of all of Edip Cansever's works is the sense of disorientation of modern man. Love is one particular way to approach this issue. However Cansever does not attempt to find solutions. In 1985, in one of his last interviews, he confided that:

“I have never tried to find answers in my poems. I always try to put forward questions and to multiply them, but never to answer them” (Cansever 1998b:65).

### **Love and beyond**

There is no particular *Second Renewal* approach to the theme of love and there could not possibly be one, since they were not a structured group with a well defined manifesto. Nonetheless it is not as if there were no common concerns among the poets of that generation. All of them explored one dimension of love, that had until now been mostly ignored: the psychological dimension. Their interest lay mainly in the study of the psychological impact of love. *Bizarre* had done something similar regarding the effect of love on the material life of individuals. The *Second Renewal* crossed the last frontier that no poets had explored before them: the immaterial dimension of love.

Moreover they provided a new equation for love poetry by stipulating -not in theory but in practice- that love poetry was erotic poetry. The popular belief that it is necessary to distinguish between love poetry and erotic poetry is void in the poetry of the *Second Renewal*, since they do not conceive love without sexuality. The focus on the physical aspects of love may seem contradictory at first sight, because we have said that they dealt with the psychological dimension of love: However sexuality is the tool of the individual to reach a certain satisfaction and it allows the poet to study conflicts between individuals and genders.

Even though love in itself remains a tool, an important evolution has taken place: For the socialist and the syllabist poet, love was a way to analyse society and to make social commentaries. However the narrator or characters in the poems were truly in love. Love existed for them. This is a dimension that has gone lost in most of *Second*

*Renewal* poetry. The verb “to love” is now conjugated in the first person singular, not in the plural anymore and it might well be that this newly discovered egocentrism in poetry announces the death of the classical definition of love as a lofty feeling that is shared between two people. Love has become an individual experience. It is true though that in the poem “Yerçekimli Karanfil”, Edip Cansever writes about a shared relationship. However the poem is thematically a transitional work and it introduced the psychological dimension of love which he would further develop in his later work. Moreover he questioned the effectiveness of love as an emotion, a theme that we encounter again in “Her Sevda.”

Even though Süreya is famous for his love poems, several of his colleagues say that he ignored the true meaning of love. Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca claimed that Süreya had never truly been in love. Muzaffer İlhan Erdost confirmed Dağlarca’s claim and added that Süreya had never known the meaning of love. Atilla Özkırımlı wrote that Cemal Süreya had betrayed all the women he had been with (Perinçek & Duruel 1995:377). Even though the impact of his personal life on his poetry should not be overestimated, his emotional instability may nevertheless explain his conception of love in his poetry, as exemplified in the poems “Elma” and “Striptiz”. In both poems the emphasis is on sexuality and the focus is on one individual, the narrator in “Elma” and the stripper in “Striptiz”.

The focus on sexuality and individualism in the poetry of the *Second Renewal* is in complete contrast to the usual narrations of love in Turkish poetry. This approach would end up with the conclusion that individual lovers are alone. Love is lived separately by two individuals, who experience it in very different ways. Hence the *Second Renewal*’s call for a redefinition of love.

It might not be too daring to claim that the poetry of the *Second Renewal* is about the disappearance of love and impossibility of love. The theme of love in Turkish poetry had until now been very political but the lack of political ideals lead to the death of love. The American poet Adrienne Rich’s words gain a special relevance in this context: “we are unable to write love as we so much wish to do, without writing politics” (Rich 1995:23).

Sezai Karakoç, an important member of the *Second Renewal*, however, was to reintroduce politics into love poetry in his poems that assimilated the formal characteristics of the poetry of the *Second Renewal*. He and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek before him accepted the modern world and the possibilities offered by modern poetry in order to narrate the ageless quest of the mystical poet.

## Chapter VII

### From Salome to Allah: Neo-mystical love poetry

#### Islamist poetry in the republican era

The scarcity of Islamist poetry in the first half of the twentieth century is a striking feature of modern Turkish literature. There are, however, two important Islamist poets who marked the development of republican poetry: Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873-1936) and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1905-1983). Mehmet Akif and Necip Fazıl tried to combine traditional Islamic beliefs with a modern approach to content, language and form at a time when other poets from a similar ideological background produced verses anchored either in the derelict tradition of the Ottoman *divân* or in a didactic syllabism devoid of any imagination. The opposition of most Islamist poets of the era to the use of modernist literary devices is not astonishing in itself, because Turkish literary modernity was partly an attempt to uproot literature from its Ottoman Islamic past. This underlines the exceptionality and importance of Mehmet Akif and Necip Fazıl in the history of modern Turkish poetry in general and Islamist poetry in particular. However, neither Mehmet Akif nor Necip Fazıl were really influential as poets in the Islamist movement. Until the end of the fifties, Islamist poets ignored new developments in poetry - namely the adoption of the free verse and the focus on the individual. Rather than being inspired by the approach of the two above mentioned poets, younger Islamist poets were content with merely copying them and as a result Islamist poetry continued to be sidelined by the literary establishment.<sup>1</sup>

Kerim Yavuz, author of a study on the approach to Islam of modern Turkish authors<sup>2</sup>, explores possible reasons for the lack of Islamist authors and poets that left a mark on Turkish literature in the second quarter of the twentieth century. He believes that the major reason was that the ideology advocated by Islamist literati was too much in contradiction with the politics of the day (Yavuz 1974:11). Mehmed Akif, an ardent defender of the *shari'a* law but also a moderniser in matters of poetry, decided to leave the country- or perhaps was forced to- and preferred to live under British rule in Egypt rather than in secular Turkey, although it was his poem "İstiklal Marşı" (Independence March) which was chosen as the words of the country's national anthem. Necip Fazıl

<sup>1</sup> The works of Mehmet Çınarlı (1925-1999) are representative of the cul-de-sac in which Islamist literature was in those years. Even though his stubborn advocacy of the aruz is admirable, his treatment of the major themes in his poetry is devoid of originality. Cemil Meriç, one of the most critical writers among the nationalist-Islamist intelligentsia, acknowledges the lack of depth and originality of journals such as *Hisar* (The Fortress) and *Türk Edebiyatı* (Turkish Literature), that were during long years the mainstream proponents of Islamist literature (Açıkgöz 1993:248).

<sup>2</sup> Yavuz 1974.

partly abandoned poetry after his conversion to fundamentalist Islam in 1934.<sup>3</sup> At the time the political pressure exerted against Islamist ideology was not unlike the repression against socialists and yet socialist poetry flourished more easily, probably because they had models both at home and throughout the world. It can be argued that modern Islamist poets suffered from a lack of interest and commitment to literary modernisation in their sphere of writing.

In the sixties the situation radically changed in the wake of the publication of the first works of Sezai Karakoç (b.1933), who had been associated with the *Second Renewal*. He rediscovered the classical Islamic poetic heritage and reinterpreted it, taking into consideration the distance covered by Turkish poetry during the twentieth century. Younger poets, from the seventies onwards, such as Cahit Zarifoğlu (1940-1987), İsmet Özel (b.1944), Turan Koç (b.1952), Arif Ay (b.1953), Mevlut Ceylan (b.1958) and more recently Cevdet Karal and Ömer Erdem (b.1967) walked in his path and also worked towards a separation of the political and the poetical. It is only after the eighties that the importance of the Islamist movement in poetry started to be acknowledged. Metin Celal, one of Turkey's new critics and a poet himself, discusses the reasons for the lack of interest on the part of the literati towards Islamist poetry in an essay devoted to young Islamist poets.<sup>4</sup> He mentions the cold war raging in the Turkish literary world which has for a long time been dominated by secularists who usually ignored the works of Islamist poets. The latter, too, preferred to avoid any associations with secularists. It is indicative of the situation that both Necip Fazıl and Sezai Karakoç published their own journals: Necip Fazıl published the short-lived *Ağaç* (The Tree, 1936) and the influential *Büyük Doğu* (The Great East), irregularly issued between 1943-1978, and Sezai Karakoç produced *Diriliş* (Re-birth, 1960, 1966-1980 (monthly) & 1988-1992 (weekly)). They also founded their own publishing houses, mainly in order to publish their own works: *Büyük Doğu* in the case of Necip Fazıl and *Diriliş* for Sezai Karakoç. Moreover, notes Metin Celal, the lack of interest of Islamist circles for modern poetry in general is another important element for the late

<sup>3</sup> Yet, as stressed by Yavuz, Islam was certainly not absent from the considerations of the major authors of the period. Yavuz alleges that novelists with a positivist outlook such as Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Reşat Nuri Güntekin focused on the incompatibility of religion and modernity (Yavuz 1974). On the right of the literary spectrum, the nationalist poet Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver pleaded in favour of the incalcation of Islamic principles in order to counter communist influence (Yavuz 1974:457). The novelist Peyâmi Safa argued that Islam was perfectly compatible with rationalism and modernity (Yavuz 1974:469 / Safa 1938:243). He echoed the writings of Muhammad Abduh and Djamâlû'd-dîn Al-Afghâni, but he was far from advocating the implementation of a progressive shari'a law. For both Peyâmi Safa and Hamdullah Suphi, religion was a constitutive element of Turkish national identity and thus nothing but a means that could help cement the nation and counter Masonic and Marxist influences. It is surprising however that Kerim Yavuz does not mention Yahya Kemal Beyatlı and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar who also stressed the importance of Islam, albeit a romantic Islam, in Turkey, or the universalist mysticism of major poets such as Asaf Halet Çelebi and Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca, whose poetry also had roots in the mystical tradition of Islam.

<sup>4</sup> Celal 1999:44-52.

development of an Islamist poetry movement (Celâl 1999:44-52). The latter point is well illustrated by Necip Fazıl's turning away from poetry, which is an undeniable loss for Turkish literature.

### **Love in the works of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and Sezai Karakoç**

As seen, Mehmet Akif, Necip Fazıl and Sezai Karakoç were heralds of the Islamist movement in literature. They integrated their Islamic beliefs into modern poetry. Both a nationalist and an Islamic revivalist, Mehmet Akif tried to cover all possible aspects of life in his monumental poetical work - the seven volume *Safahat* (Leaves, published in irregular intervals between 1911 and 1933). The poems included in those volumes were either realistic, depicting ordinary life or more didactic, promoting nationalism, pan-Islamism and anti-imperialism. Together with others like Cenap Şehabettin, Ahmet Haşim and Tevfik Fikret, he developed a new meter-form based on the *müstezat*, the extended verse of the classical tradition: the free *müstezat*. The classical *müstezat* verse consisted of couplets in which the first was long (*Mef'ûlü mef'â'ilü mef'â'ilü fe'ûlün*) and was followed by a shorter second verse (*Mef'ûlü fe'ûlün*). The *free müstezat* however allowed the poet to use verses of various length in the same poem, making it a forefather of the free verse of the thirties. This allowed the poet to integrate everyday speech into the *aruz* metrical prosody and thus to give a new relevance to the *aruz* at a time when literature was being democratized and the metrical prosody sidelined. However, since the themes of love and mysticism remained marginal in his writings, his works do not fit the scope of our study.

It is true that love is not a major theme in the works of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek either. Mysticism and religious themes, death, social issues, solitude and estrangement are the major themes on which the poet focuses. However mystical poetry, always expressing a deep longing for God, who is sometimes depicted as a divine beloved, is often a variation on the theme of love.

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek defines poetry in itself as a search for truth. In February 1983, he told the monthly magazine *Erkekçe* (Manly) that he believed that real poetry was the search for absolute truth and that absolute truth was God (Kocahanoğlu 1983:502). With those words he was indeed paraphrasing the core of the argument in his manifesto -entitled *Poetika* - that he included at the end of his anthology *Çile* (The Ordeal, 1962). His definition of poetry was also to be his criteria of selection of the poems that he was to put in his anthology. After the publication of *Çile*, he stated that the anthology was his only work and that nobody had the right to claim that any other poems were written by him (Kocahanoğlu 1983:496). He even declared on several occasions that it should be known that he did not want and did not recognise his previous collections and that he had thrown them in the bin (Kısakürek 1969:11). The

decision had much to do with the fundamentalist Islamic approach that sees poets as idlers, an approach which is rooted in the *Qur'ân* which portrays poets as *wandering aimlessly in every valley and saying what they do not* (Qur'ân XXVI:225-226). He believed that some of his early poems were in contradiction with his newly discovered faith and he did not want to be associated with them anymore. His new aim was to be among those poets who *believe, work towards righteousness, engage in the remembrance of God and defend themselves only when attacked* (Qur'ân XXVI: 227) and thus escape divine wrath. The rare poems that he wrote after his conversion in 1934 reflected his search for absolute truth and had a religious content.<sup>5</sup> The poem "Kaldırımlar"(Pavements), despite its daring imagery was included in his later anthologies. This is surprising since among the poems that Necip Fazıl rejected together with his bohemian years were poems which could have a mystical reading but which he felt uneasy with, probably because of their unorthodox imagery and their rootedness in earthly life. The poem "Kaldırımlar" will be discussed as a representative example of neo-mystical love poetry.

Mystical *tasavvuf* literature - indeed the mystical literature of any religious tradition - aims at creating a discourse on the relationship between the natural (sensible) world and the supernatural world, that can only be perceived through insight. Mystical literature also tries to give a meaning to the existence of mankind in a cosmic context. According to this conception, the visible world is nothing but an imperfect reflection of the celestial world. The reflection is imperfect because it is perceived by the senses, which are the source of confusion and error. The real world is a metaphor of the true invisible world (Andrews 1985:65-74).

In this context the duty of the mystic is to look beyond external envelopes in order to find the inner meaning of the world and to fulfil the union with the divine beloved. Neo-mystical poets too are still in search for what is beyond the mere visible reality. The major difference between them and the traditional *tasavvuf* poets is in the depiction of exoteric reality. The setting of classical mystical poetry was a stylised nature. It could be either wilderness where disorder, ugliness and beauty mingled, or an actual garden which reflected true beauty but was actually corrupted by decay and regeneration. Even though the setting was a symbol for the real world, there were no traces of organised human life. The neo-mystical poet still uses a stylised setting as a starting point for his quest, but it is not set in an immemorial time and place but in modern times which are referred to in various ways. The new setting of mystical love is

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<sup>5</sup> Necip Fazıl published only two collections of verses after 1934: A versification of 101 Hadith (*101 Hadis*) in 1951 and a rhymed history of the life of the prophet (Esselam) in 1973. Beside those two works he published three anthologies of his earlier poems that he deemed to be acceptable: *Sonsuzluk Kervanı* (The Caravan of Eternity, 1955), *Çile* (The Ordeal, 1962) and *Şiirlerim* (My Poems, 1969), which included some new poems. The collections he rejected were *Örümcek Ağı* (The Spider's Net, 1925), *Kaldırımlar* (Pavements, 1928), *Ben ve Ötesi* (I and Beyond, 1932).

characteristic of the changes that took place in Turkish poetry in the twentieth century and is a direct product of the realist revolution. Even the search for that which is beyond the visible world is now set in the context of a harsh reality. This was an inevitable development, for once the mystical poet left the cosy surroundings of the court and the convent, he had to face the reality of everyday life.

Sezai Karakoç's definition of art is broadly the same as that of Necip Fazıl. He too believes that art (and poetry) is ultimately a search for the divine (Karakoç 1975:76). Yet since Sezai Karakoç did not go through a personal crisis similar to that of Necip Fazıl, he is much more at ease with his own literary output and does not reject any part of it, except for some poems that he discarded for their literary weakness and did not include in any of his collections. Unlike Necip Fazıl, Sezai Karakoç gives great importance to the theme of love in his works. The other themes which are central in his works are the human condition, death, estrangement as well as a continuous concern for the passing of time. He mixes traditional Islamic content with the aesthetic approach of the *Second Renewal*. His poetry is characterised by strong images and metaphors in modernist epics that are reminiscent of the traditional *kıssas*, tales and anecdotes which are usually of a religious nature.<sup>6</sup> Sezai Karakoç ceased to publish poetry and concentrated on politics in the early nineties. He has now retired from any form of public or social life.<sup>7</sup>

The theme of love is central in all the writings of Karakoç. Nowhere did he define his approach to the theme of love so well as in the following lines that he wrote in his study of the work of Djalâl'ud-dîn Rûmî<sup>8</sup>, the great thirteenth century mystical poet:

“All the variants of love are a step, a beginning, a preparation that leads to true love, to lasting love, to love that deserves eternity. Several souls tire and give up on those steps. Only the heart and soul that go beyond them reach absolute love, divine love and become dedicated to it. They understand that anything else is shed like leaves in autumn” (Karakoç 1996b:37).

Karakoç had roughly expressed the same idea in an article published 43 years earlier and explained that *love or the beloved was only a means leading to life itself, to that which was beyond, to the truth in every sense of the word* (Karataş 1998:321-322). In the same article he defined love as *the particular attraction felt for a person of the*

<sup>6</sup>His poetry collections are *Körfez* (The Gulf, 1959), *Şahdamar* (The Great Artery, 1962), *Hızır'la Kırk Saat* (Forty Hours with Hızır, 1967), *Sesler* (Voices, 1968), *Taha'nın Kitabı* (Taha's Book, 1968), *Kıyamet Aşısı* (The Scion of Doomsday, 1968), *Mağara ve Işık* (The Cavern and Light, 1969), *Gül Müştusu* (The Glad Tidings of the Rose, 1969), *Zamana Adanmış Sözler* (Words Dedicated to Time, 1970), *Ayinler* (Celebrations, 1977), *Leyla ile Mecnun* (1981), *Ateş Dansı* (Dance of Fire, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> However he has published two collections of his earlier poems *Monna Rosa* (1998) and *Alın Yazısı Saati* (Time of Destiny, 1999) as well as an edition of his complete poems *Bütün Şiirleri* (2000).

<sup>8</sup> Karakoç 1996b.

*opposite sex* (Karataş 1998:321). The difference between Sezai Karakoç's and Necip Fazıl's approach to the theme of love is obvious in the latter quote; Necip Fazıl would never have settled for such a matter-of-fact definition of love. Yet Karakoç's definition and his emphasis on desire felt for a person of the opposite sex, shows the closeness of his mystical verses to the *mesnevi* - the mystical love epic - in which, to the contrary of love in *divân* poetry, the female identity of the beloved is well established. Karakoç's approach finds its poetic expression for the first time in the poem "Monna Rosa", a poem that was published in 1952, one year before the above article. The poem reached a mythical status in the years after its publication (Karataş 1998:212), mainly because it was never included in any of his poetry collections until August 1998, when he published it with some of his earlier poems.<sup>9</sup> By November 1998 the collection went into its sixth edition. The poet however never gave any particular reason for not publishing "Monna Rosa" before.

To illustrate Sezai Karakoç's approach two poems that represent two different facets of his approach to the theme of love will be discussed: "Monna Rosa", a poem that was defined by its author as a modern adaptation of the mystical love epic *Leylâ and Mecnun* (Karataş 1998:214) and "Sürgün Ülkeden Başkentler Başkentine" (From the Country of Exile to the Capital of Capitals, 1974), which is a more political love poem, that combines Yahya Kemal's nostalgic *Ottomanism* with a call for the establishment of an Islamic state. Both poems are of epic length and are constituted of four parts: The focus of the discussion will be on the first part of the poem "Monna Rosa" and on the fourth and final section of the poem "Sürgün Ülkeden Başkentler Başkentine".

### **Necip Fazıl Kısakürek**

#### **Kaldırımlar**

"Kaldırımlar" (Pavements) is one of Necip Fazıl's most acclaimed poems. Part I of the poem is used as a representative sample of his authorised early works in most anthologies of twentieth century Turkish poetry. The poem was originally published in 1927 and was later included in his 1928 collection of poems of the same name. It is a remarkable poem based on the major themes of his works - estrangement and solitude, death and mystical cravings. Necip Fazıl's poems, written before his conversion, generally centre around the emotions and cravings of the narrator. They discuss individual issues, whereas the poems he wrote after his conversion, as well as his plays and novels, deal with social and political issues.

The major themes of Kısakürek reminded his early readers of the poetical universe of Charles Baudelaire. Ziya Osman Saba (1907-1957), a poet and founding

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<sup>9</sup>Karakoç 1998.

member of the *Seven Torch Holders*, wrote in a review of Necip Fazıl's collection *Ben ve Ötesi* in the magazine *Varlık* in 1933, that "it was always possible to perceive the perfume of the "Flowers of Evil" in the collection "Ben ve ötesi" (Kocahanoğlu 1983:35). Ziya Osman did not elaborate and his claim was probably, in his own eyes, nothing more than a well turned rhetoric figure. Vasfi Mahir Kocatürk too mentioned the possibility of Baudelairean influence on Necip Fazıl in an article in *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı* (Modern Turkish Literature) in 1936. Nonetheless he wrote that Kısakürek's metaphysical poetry was the answer to a need in Turkish literature at the time just like Baudelaire's verses had been a reaction against modern life in the nineteenth century (Kocahanoğlu 1983: 49-50). Vasfi Mahir's claim on Baudelaire was not too well illustrated in his argument, but it had the merit to underline the importance of Necip Fazıl and Charles Baudelaire in their respective literary traditions, without merely transforming Kısakürek into a Turkish Baudelaire.

Necip Fazıl's early poetry has much in common with that of the author of *Les Fleurs du Mal*: It is a poetry which is full of contradictions such as love and hatred, desire and rejection, sensuality and austerity, sin and remorse, desire for oblivion and the permanence of lucidity, a striving for the Ideal and yet a deeply rooted consciousness of one's own baseness.<sup>10</sup>

For both Baudelaire and Kısakürek the quest for the Ideal is symbolised by the love felt for a woman. In the case of Charles Baudelaire, the beloved in his mystical poems is Madame Sabatier, with whom he had a platonic relationship. The fact that the beloved has a biographical identity is a major difference between the spiritual love poems of Baudelaire and those of Kısakürek. Their conception of love is also quite different: Baudelaire does not mention the physical features of the beloved. He does not express any sensual desire towards her either. Sensuality is the source of sin in Baudelaire's eyes and an impediment to his mystical cravings.<sup>11</sup> The beloved is a guardian angel, a muse and the Madonna ("Que Diras-Tu Ce Soir", What Will You Say This Evening). She is a source of peacefulness and comfort. In other words, she is the complete antithesis to the earthly beloved of the mystical poets, who is a tyrannical tormentor and a source of unrest for the narrator. Sensuality and spirituality are kept apart and explored in different poems. Baudelaire does not offer a holistic picture of love that includes both a physical and psychological dimension that would ultimately lead to mystical longings.

<sup>10</sup> Rincé 1984 is a standard introduction to the poet and his impact on French poetry. The poets Philippe Soupault and Théophile Gautier too have written eye-opening studies of Baudelaire. Jean-Paul Sartre made a widely applauded, yet controversial, contribution to Baudelairean studies when he published his essay *Baudelaire* in 1947 and explored the poet and his work in the general framework of "existential psychoanalysis", a term coined by the philosopher (Hamon and Roger-Vasselin 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Baudelaire also wrote sensual love poems. In those poems sensuality is seen as a way to escape from reality, either through exoticism or through aesthetic delight. But it is also the origin of cruelty, perversity and despair.

In the poem “Kaldırımlar”, the first example of neo-mystical poetry, the beloved has attributes that are close to those of the traditional beloved of the *divân* poets, since she is a source of torment and remains untouchable. Her physical envelope however is very different from the beloved in the *divân* and in Baudelaire’s spiritual love poems: She has the traits of a prostitute.

The first part of the poem deals with the feeling of abandonment and estrangement of the narrator who is walking aimlessly along a dark street on a stormy night. The narrator expresses his desire to disappear in the darkness of the street. The first part ends with the narrator’s distinction between the physical world and the spiritual world. He wishes for the death of his body, while his soul, whose presence is implicitly known to us, craves for something beyond the palpable universe of the street. The split between the body and the soul is further explored in the second part of the poem, which ends with the mention of the inevitability of the death of physical beings. The third part of the poem introduces a new character: a mysterious woman who will guide the narrator towards the union with the divine beloved.

In his analysis of the first part of the poem, Mehmet Kaplan rightly stresses that “Kaldırımlar” is one of the first Turkish poems to deal with the theme of solitude of the individual in the city. “Sis” (Mist), Tevfik Fikret’s famous poem was another work that discussed the estrangement of the individual from the city. However the narrator in Fikret’s poem observes the scorned city from a safe distance, while Kısakürek’s narrator is abandoned in one of its streets (Kaplan 1998:69).

“Kaldırımlar” is organised in three sections of uneven length. Each section is numbered with a Latin numeral. Part I consists of eight quatrains of fourteen syllables. Part II consists of four quatrains of fourteen syllables and finally the last part is a sonnet written with the same metrical scheme. The rhyming pattern in the poem is varied.<sup>12</sup> The rhymes in themselves, however, lack the originality and distinctiveness found in most of his works, since most of the rhyming couplets end in similar suffixes. Kısakürek had an undeniable talent for finding new and original rhymes, which were not based exclusively on suffixes of the same nature but also on words of different grammatical categories. The weakness of the rhymes in the three parts of “Kaldırımlar” has generally been overlooked by critics such as Mehmet Kaplan (Kaplan 1998:68-73).<sup>13</sup> I believe that there are three reasons for this: The lack of variation of the rhymes was characteristic for most of the poetry of the time, which is precisely why the usual originality and richness of Kısakürek’s rhymes made such an impact and rejuvenated syllabic poetry. Moreover the combination of themes in the poem was so powerful and unusual that most critics and readers did not feel the need to address the issue of

<sup>12</sup> I: abab/cdcd/efef/ghgh/a'ba'b/ifif/jkjk/a"la"l - II: abab/a'ca'c/dede/fgfg - III: abab/a'ca'c/ dde/ fef.

<sup>13</sup> Mehmet Kaplan only discusses part I of the poem.

rhyning. It was certainly not the first time that Kısakürek discussed the themes of loneliness and estrangement. Neither was it the first time that his nihilism seemed to be cured by mystical cravings. But for the first time all of those elements were explored in one poem. Finally the perfect organisation of the poem in three parts reflected three stages of the mystical quest.

### Kaldırımlar I

Sokaktayım, kimsesiz bir sokak ortasında;  
Yürüyorum, arkama bakmadan yürüyorum,  
Yolumun karanlığa sapanan noktasında,  
Sanki beni bekleyen bir hayâl görüyorum.

Kara gökler kül rengi bulutlar kapanık;  
Evlerin bacasını kolluyor yıldırımlar.  
İn cin uykuda, yalnız iki yoldaş uyanık;  
Biri benim, biri de serseri kaldırımlar.

İçimde damla damla bir korku birikiyor;  
Sanıyorum, her sokak başını kesmiş devler...  
Üstüme camlarını, hep simsiyah, dikeyor;  
Gözüne mil çekilmiş bir âmâ gibi evler.

Kadırlımlar, çilekeş yalnızların annesi;  
Kadırlımlar, içimde yaşamış bir insandır.  
Kadırlımlar, duyulur, ses kesilince sesi;  
Kadırlımlar, içimde kıvrılan bir lisandır.

Bana düşmez can vermek, yumuşak bir kucakta;  
Ben bu kaldırımların emzirdiği çocuğum!  
Aman, sabah olmasın, bu karanlık sokakta;  
Bu karanlık sokakta bitmesin yolculuğum!

Ben gideyim, yol gitsin, ben gideyim, yol gitsin;  
İki yanımda aksın, bir sel gibi fenerler.  
Tak, tak, ayak sesimi aç köpekler işitsin;  
Yolumun zafer tâkı, gölgeden taş kemerler.

Ne sabahı göreyim, ne sabaha görüneyim;  
Gündüzler size kalsın, verin karanlıkları!  
Islak bir yorgan gibi simsıkı bürüneyim;  
Örtün, üstüme örtün, serin kaldırımları.

Uzanıverse gövdem, taşlara boydan boya;  
Alsa buz gibi taşlar alınımdan bu ateşi.  
Dalıp, sokaklar kadar esrarlı bir uykuya,  
Ölse, kaldırımların kara sevdalı eşi.

### Pavements I

I am in the middle of an abandoned street;  
I am walking without looking back,  
It is as if I see a ghost waiting for me,  
There where my road thrusts into darkness.

The dark skies are full of grey clouds;  
Lightnings search the houses' chimneys.  
Men and jinns are asleep, only two fellow travellers  
[are awake  
One of them is me, the other the vagrant pavements;  
Drops of fear are accumulating in me...  
I believe that giants stand at the end of each street...  
Houses, like blind men with burnt eyes  
Stare at me with their black windows.

The pavements are the mother of the enduring  
[solitaries;  
The pavements are someone who lived in me.  
The sound of the pavements is heard when all is  
[silent

The pavements are a twisted tongue inside me.  
I do not deserve to die in a soft embrace.  
I am the child breast-fed by these pavements.  
Let there be no morning in this dark street;  
Let my journey never end on this dark street!

Let me walk on and on, let the road go on and on;  
Let the streetlights flow on my sides like a flood.  
Let the hungry dogs hear the tapping of my feet;  
Shadowy stone arches are the triumphal arch of my  
[road

I shall not see the morning, nor shall the morning see  
[me;  
Let the daylight be yours, give me darkness!  
Let me wrap myself in it like in a wet quilt;  
Cover me with the cool pavements.

I wish my body lay down on the stones;  
I wish icy stones cool the fever on my forehead.  
I wish the melancholic spouse of the pavements  
Plunged into a sleep as mysterious as the streets  
[and died.

The first verse introduces the reader to the setting of the poem: the street, which will remain the only setting of this rather long poem. The narrator in the poem stresses

his isolation straight from the beginning. He walks without looking back (line two) A supernatural element is mentioned for the first time in the second couplet of the first stanza: The narrator believes that he sees a ghostly figure that is waiting for him at the point he is walking towards. All the major themes of the poem have been introduced in the first quatrain: the street, darkness, the solitude and abandonment of the narrator and the supernatural. The continuous repetition of the letter k throughout the first two stanzas imitates the sound of the footsteps of the walker.

The opening couplet of the second stanza has an atmospheric function: The darkness of the stormy night is stressed, which contributes to the gloomy and gothic atmosphere created in the first stanza. The next couplet mentions the existence of other human beings. However all of them are asleep, except the narrator and the pavements which are personified and described as vagrant. The personification of the pavements is an important element of the poem that will be repeated in the following stanzas too. The use by Necip Fazıl Kısakürek of the expression “*in ve cin*” (humans and jinns) is not merely rhetorical. The previous mention of a ghost in line four had introduced the supernatural dimension of the poem, which is confirmed in line seven by the mention of jinns.

Stormy darkness, solitude in the city and the possible presence of supernatural beings lead to fear, which is the central theme of the third stanza. The frightened narrator believes that giants are standing at the end of each street. Houses, just like the pavements, are personified and stare at him with the burnt eyes of a blind man. The giants and the personification of the houses, just like the spectre in the first stanza are the product of the narrator’s imagination. The use of the adverb *sanki* (as if) in line four or the verb *sanmak*, used here with the meaning of “to think” or “to believe” confirms this interpretation. Thus a distinction is made between that which really is (the street, the houses, the storm) and the perception of the narrator (the ghost, the jinns, the giants). It is a distinction between the real palpable world and the spiritual world.

The fourth stanza gives different definitions of the pavements. Each definition is related to the narrator. Pavements are the mother of the suffering solitaires, which is the first time the narrator intrinsically admits that his fate is shared by others too. The pavements are like a person living inside him. They are heard when there is silence all around. They are a particular language inside the lonely narrator. Each of those four definitions shows how close and related the narrator feels to the pavements. Those definitions symbolise the victory of matter over spirituality and are explored in the next three stanzas.

In the fifth, sixth and seventh stanza, the narrator, *a child nurtured by the pavements* (line eighteen), desires an endless journey in the darkness of the street (line nineteen and twenty). He wants to walk on and to be covered in cool darkness.

A new dimension is introduced in the final quatrain, where the narrator mentions his body for the first time. He wants his body to lie down on the pavement stones and those ice-cold stones to cool its fever (lines twenty-nine and thirty). The reference to the body re-introduces the distinction between the material and spiritual world. The narrator desires a physical death, he wants his body, defined as “*the tormented spouse of the pavements*”, to die (lines thirty-one and thirty-two). The narrator does not use the first person singular in order to express his desire for death. A split has occurred between the narrating voice and its body, which will be confirmed in the second part of the poem.

### Kaldırımlar II

Başını bir gayeye satmış kahraman gibi,  
Etinle, kemiğinle, sokakların malısın!  
Kurulup şiltesine bir tahtaravan gibi,  
Sonsuz mesafelerin üstünden aşmalısın!

Fahişe yataklardan kaçtığın günden beri,  
Erimiş ruhlarınız bir derdin potasında.  
Senin gölgeni içmiş, onun gözbebekleri;  
Onun taşı erimiş senin kafatasında.

İkinizde ne eş, ne arkadaşınız var;  
Sükût gibi münzevi, çılgık gibi hürsünüz.  
Dünyada taşınacak bir başınız var;  
Onu da, hangi diyara olsa götürürsünüz.

Yağız atlı süvari, koştur, atını, koştur!  
Sonunda kabre çıkar bu yolun kıvrımları.  
Ne kaldırımlar kadar seni anlayan olur,  
Ne senin anladığın kadar, kaldırımları...

### Pavements II

Like a hero dedicated to a unique quest,  
You belong to the streets with your flesh and bones.  
As if sitting on the cushions of a palanquin,  
You must travel endless distances.

Since the day you fled from harlot beds  
Your souls have melted in the crucible of pain.  
Its pupils drank your shadow;  
Its stones melted in your skull.

Neither of you have a partner nor a friend;  
You are solitary like silence, free like a scream.  
In this world all you have to carry around is your head;  
And you can carry it with you wherever you go.

O knight with the black horse, spur your horse!  
This twisted road leads to the tomb.  
Nobody understands you better than the pavements.  
Nobody understands the pavements better than you.

The narrative approach changes in the second part of the poem. The narrator in this part addresses the narrator of the first part. In the first part of the poem a distinction had been made between the strivings of the narrating-I and the strivings of his body. The spiritual narrator is now addressing his physical body as if it were a distinct character in the poem. Although the narrator in part one was the main actor of the poem, the narrator in part two is only an observer. The spiritual and the material aspects of the human being have been split. The body is like an obsessed hero that belongs with flesh and bones to the street. The reference to flesh and bones emphasises the materialist dimension of the addressed being. The reference to palanquin emphasises the idea that the body is only a material envelope (line three). The fourth line confirms the fate of the body, which has to walk endless distances.

The second quatrain introduces the reader to the cause of the wanderings of the addressed figure. The union between the body and the pavements was caused by the flight from *harlot* beds. The use of the noun *harlot* (fahişe) as an adjective is

syntactically wrong and probably due to the syllabic requirements of the fourteen feet meter. But the meaning is clear and we know that the narrator is referring to the former bohemian existence of the addressed being. This might be a verse where the poetical and the biographical overlap. During the twenties, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek is known to have been, together with the promising young novelist Peyami Safa and other poets and writers, fond of, in Beşir Ayvazoğlu's words, "*night-life, the pleasures of the flesh, alcohol and hashish*" (Ayvazoğlu 1998:96). The next three verses continue to explore the existing unity between the body and the pavement with powerful metaphors.

The following quatrain continues to discuss the parallels existing between the pavements and the body. Both are solitary and free. However their freedom is of no avail. They can only carry their head wherever they go. The absence of any psychological or spiritual dimension in the main character is striking in those verses.

The final quatrain re-introduces the theme of death, which is waiting at the end of the road. But death is not desired by the narrator anymore, it is seen as inevitable. This is indicative of the distance gained by the narrator, who is not concerned anymore by the torments of his own body. He is speaking with the eyes of an almost neutral observer. Yet he does not claim to understand the cravings of his body: In the final couplet he writes that only the body and the pavements can fully understand each other.

The split between the narrating I and the body has been further explored in the second part of the poem, which has the role of transition, leading to the actual expression of mystical cravings in the third and final part of the poem.

### Kaldırımlar III

Bir esmer kadın ki, kaldırımlarda gece,  
Vecd içinde başı dik, hayalini sürükler.  
Simsiyah gözlerine bir an gözüm değince,  
Yolumu bekleyen genç, haydi düş peşime der.

Ondan bir temas gibi rüzgâr beni bürür de,  
Tutmak, tutmak isterim, onu göğsüme alıp.  
Bir türlü yetişemem, fecre kadar yürür de,  
Heyhat, o bir ince ruh, bense etten bir kalıp.

Arkamdan bir kahkaha duysam yaralanırım;  
Onu bir başkasına ram oluyor sanırım,  
Görsem pencereelerde soyunan bir karaltı.

Varsın, bugün bir acı duymasın gözyaşımдан;  
Bana rahat bir döşek serince yerin altı,  
Bilirim, kalkmayacak, bir yar gibi başımdan...

### Pavements III

A dark woman, her upright head in ecstasy,  
Drags her spectre along the pavements at night.  
When my eyes suddenly meet hers, she says,  
Come on follow me young man who has been  
[waiting for me.

The wind wraps me as if she were touching me,  
I want to embrace and hold her.  
But I cannot reach her, even if I walk until dawn,  
Alas, she is a pure spirit and I am a form of flesh.

I feel hurt if I hear a laughter behind me;  
I think that she yields herself to someone else,  
If I see a shadow undressing at the windows

It doesn't matter, today she should not be hurt by  
[my tears today  
I know that, like a lover, she will not leave me  
When I will be given a comfortable bed under  
[the ground.

The narrating I is again an active character in the poem and not a mere observer anymore. A new character is introduced in the first two verses of the last part of the poem. An ecstatic dark-skinned woman is dragging her ghostly appearance on the pavements at night. The identity of the woman is mysterious: Her nightly walks on a pavement evoke the possibility that she might be a prostitute. On the other hand the reference to *vecd* (ecstasy) and *hayal* (illusion, dream, ghostly appearance) point to the possibility of a more metaphysical dimension of her character. The reference to *hayal* (line two) indicates that she might be the ghostly appearance witnessed by the narrator in the fourth line of the first part of the poem. The roles are inverted now. Whereas in the first part of the poem, it was the ghostly appearance who seemed to be waiting for the narrator, in the third part it is the narrator who is waiting for her and is invited to follow her.

The apparition of the ghostly woman brings to mind the ghost-like beloved in Recâizade Mahmut Ekrem's emotional poetic meditation on the themes of loss, love and death: "Yakacık'da Akşamdan Sonra Bir Mezarlık Alemi" (Contemplations at a Cemetery in Yakacık at Night)<sup>14</sup>. However the two women are described in very different ways. Kısakürek's beloved is a dark woman with black eyes. She is inviting the narrator and he wishes to hold her. Very little is known about her physical attributes. Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem's ghostly appearance is a frightening creature full of anger with fiery eyes and trembling lips. She is the opposite of the calm, introspective woman in Necip Fazıl's poem. The narrator in Ekrem's poem is both frightened and attracted towards her because he believes that the apparition is his dead lover. He desires the return of earthly love, whereas Necip Fazıl's narrator follows the ghostly woman in order to search for love beyond this world.<sup>15</sup>

The ambiguity in the identity of the woman in the opening stanza of "Kaldırımlar" can be eliminated by studying the image of women in Necip Fazıl's poetry as a whole. Women in his works (prose, drama and poetry) are either carrying glimpses of the divine or they are vain, immoral and ugly creatures (Kocahanoğlu 1983:208). While the narrators in his poems are always highly complex figures, with often contradictory traits and desires, women, in all of his works, are devoid of that complexity and are usually very linear characters, who are representative of a stereotype and have no real personality. In his authorised poems, however, women are exclusively spiritual beings that lead to the divine. In the opening verse of "Kadın" (Woman), one of his last poems, dating from 1983, he writes that women are not a form (kalıp), but that they are an idea (fikir). The opposition of the physical (form/kalıp) to the spiritual (idea/fikir) is obvious. The poem ends with a verse that states women are a symbol for

<sup>14</sup> The poem is included in the third part of his collection *Zemzeme* (Recitation), that was published in 1885 in Istanbul by the printing-house of A.K. Tuzlıyan.

<sup>15</sup> On "Yakacık'da Akşamdan Sonra bir Mezarlık Alemi" see Kaplan 1998:88-92.

the road leading to God. The purely spiritual dimension of women and their role as a metaphorical guide to the divine beloved is central in all of Kısakürek's poems dealing with the theme of love which are grouped in the section *Kadın* (Woman) of his various anthologies.

The spiritual dimension of the ghostly woman is confirmed in line eight. Her spiritual dimension is opposed to the narrator, who is nothing but a form of flesh. In the second stanza, the narrator follows the ghostly woman until daylight breaks, but cannot reach her. This is indicative of two major changes: The narrator is not walking aimlessly anymore, he is following a spiritual being in order to unite with her. Moreover the reference to *fecir* (dawn) indicates that the night is over and that light will vanquish darkness. The inability of the narrator to unite with the beloved, to take her in his arms, is reminiscent of the tribulations of the mystical poets in classical poetry. The beloved in *divân* poetry too was untouchable and was a metaphor for the divine beloved. However in Kısakürek's poem, the beloved is not a princess like *Leylâ* or *Şirin* anymore. She is walking the streets at night and calling out to young men, just like a harlot.

The first tercet of the poem deals with the jealousy of the narrator, who cannot bear the fact that the beloved might be giving herself up to somebody else. Even though this latter point again underlines the ambiguity of the figure of the beloved (is she a promiscuous woman?), it does also stress the despair of the narrator at not being able to reach her.

In the second tercet, a solution to the problem of the union and the true identity of the beloved is offered. The narrator will only be able to unite with the beloved, once he is dead, which indicates the supernatural dimension of the beloved. Physical cravings are an impediment to the realisation of the union. Death, the passage to a non-physical world, is thus the only way to fulfil it. The desire for death is not negative like at the end of the first part of the poem: The narrator does not want to escape his physical pains, but he wants his soul to be freed in order to unite with the divine beloved.

The depiction of the beloved as a harlot in a mystical poem is quite daring but reflects the new contexts and concerns in Turkish poetry in 1927. Mystical cravings too are now set in the dark streets of a city and not in idealised surroundings anymore. The same idea is expounded by the expression of mystical cravings in a sonnet in the third section of the poem. The sonnet, a western poetic form, represents the constraints of the modern world in which the mystical poet starts his quest. Even though the beloved is from a background different from that of the beloved of *divân* literature, she shares some of the characteristics of her earlier self, since she too is unreachable and a source of torment for the lover. It is also important to note that the beloved has not much in common with Charles Baudelaire's idealised beloved since the latter is a source of comfort and peace of mind for the narrator in his poems.

“Kaldırımlar” is an original creation and the first example of the type of poems that would be further developed by Sezai Karakoç: the “modern *mesnevi*”. Even though *mesnevis* are not necessarily mystical works, this particular genre of classical literature has gained notoriety as a mystical love epic, focusing on the passage from human to divine love. The “modern *mesnevi*” too is about the quest for divine love, but it is adapted to the needs of the time: The setting of love and the human envelope of the beloved mirror contemporary concerns. The strict formal organisation of the *mesnevi* too is discarded, which reflects the primacy of content over form in republican poetry.

Whether Necip Fazıl Kısakürek consciously worked towards such a project is debatable. The poem was written in 1927, before his conversion to fundamentalist Islam, at a time when he was torn by contradictory cravings and aspirations. But it can be safely assumed that by the time he included the poem, despite its daring subtext, in the corpus of his authorised works, he had submitted it to a mystical re-reading .

### Sezai Karakoç

Sezai Karakoç earned his place in the pantheon of Turkish poetry as a proponent of traditional mystical Islamic discourse developed in the frame of modernist literary techniques. In an article in *Gün Saati* (Daytime; 1986), a collection of his journalistic writings, he wrote that Necip Fazıl had been at the vanguard of modern Islamist poetry and he underlined that Kısakürek’s *works, words, activities and action should be seen as an indivisible whole* (Karakoç 1986: 251-254). This is a claim that could be used to define Sezai Karakoç too, since he also combines political activism with literary activities. Karakoç did actually contribute to *Büyük Doğu*, the cultural magazine published by Necip Fazıl.

Writing on mysticism in the works of Necip Fazıl, he claimed that there was an undeniable mystical dimension to the poem “Kaldırımlar”, as there was to his later works. He stressed that Necip Fazıl’s mysticism should not be seen as a passive retrieval from the world, but that it was an active search to uncover that which is beyond the universe (Karakoç 1986b:67). Even though he does not spell it out, Karakoç confirms that Necip Fazıl was his forerunner in the development of *modern mesnevis* and that “Kaldırımlar” was its first example.

Sezai Karakoç wrote various long poems in which he developed the theme of mystical love in a fashion reminiscent of Necip Fazıl. In poems and epics such as “Monna Rosa” (1952-1953), “Şehrazat” (Shehrazade, 1953) and “Köşe” (Corner, 1954-56), platonic love is expressed for a beloved with ambiguous characteristics: She could be human, divine or simply the product of the imagination of the narrator, which does recall other, though much shorter, poems by Necip Fazıl, namely “Dönemeç” (The Curve) and “Beklenen” (The Awaited). The uncertainty regarding the reality of the

beloved as well as occasional sensual features show that their poetry is rooted in both the classical tradition and in pre-modern poetry of Ahmet Haşim.

### Monna Rosa

Monna Rosa is an opaque poem that is organised in four parts and was published over nine months between March 1952 and June 1953. The poem was not included in any of Karakoç's poetry collections until 1998. The only explanation given by the author as to why he had never published the poem in book form (and thus avoided the publication of unauthorised versions and the appropriation of the poem by minor poets) is that he did not have the means to do it at the time (Karataş 1998:211). This is a plausible explanation but does not really explain why he did not do it in later years.

There are several questions that arise and remain to a large extent unanswered concerning Karakoç's mythical poem "Monna Rosa". The main one is probably regarding the title of the poem - Monna Rosa. This foreign name for the beloved in a poem with a mystical dimension and partly set in Anatolia is unexpected. Sezai Karakoç's aim is to re-appropriate the classical literary heritage and to give it a modernist rewriting. "Rosa" means rose in Latin. The rose is one of the central images in *divân* poetry. The rose is also a symbol of Ottoman culture (Karataş 1998:260). In a poetic meditation on Islamic civilisation entitled *Book of the Roses* (Ayvazoğlu 1992) the critic Beşir Ayvazoğlu continuously stresses that the rose in Islamic literature represents the characteristics of the ideal abode and civilisation that is longed for. In *Gül Muştusu* (The Glad Tidings of the Rose; 1969), a later poetical work, Sezai Karakoç celebrates the rose, "that chanted the ezan of love to the youth". The rose is a central image in his works. The choice of the Latin "rosa" rather than the Turkish "gül" could be explained by Sezai Karakoç's early taste for obscurity and opacity, that lead critics to associate him with the *Second Renewal*. The title "Monna Rosa", despite its unusual spelling also evokes Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) famous portrait of the *Gioconda* "Mona Lisa". However there are no references - neither open nor subtextual - to the great Renaissance artist and scientist's painting. Nonetheless it may be a hidden reference and answer to Nazım Hikmet's appropriation of the *Gioconda* in his epic *Jokond ile Si-Ya-U*. Sezai Karakoç's Monna Rosa is transformed into an object of mystical longing, whereas Nazım Hikmet's *Jokond* was converted to historical materialism after she had witnessed colonial terror in China. Such a political reading of the poem is not so far-fetched: In 1951, Nazım Hikmet had gone to the Soviet Union. The Cold War was at its height. Ideological fights between leftists, Islamists and nationalists were at times fought out in the streets of Istanbul and Ankara. In 1954, Karakoç wrote a couple of articles and a poem for the primitive anti-Communist short-

lived bimonthly *Komünizme Hücum* (Attack on Communism), which is indicative of Karakoç's stance against Marxism. Hence, the title could certainly be meant as a reply to Nazım Hikmet, with the consequence that an episode of the major ideological struggle that shaped the political evolution of Turkey was fought in front of a painting in the Louvres museum.

Karakoç would try to integrate the mystical tradition into modernist poetry in most of his poems. Very few poets beside Nazım Hikmet had tried to integrate elements of the *divân* tradition into modern poetry. Nazım Hikmet's aim was to strip those elements of their mystical content and to reinterpret them in the light of Marxist philosophy. Karakoç could be considered the Islamist answer to Nazım Hikmet and Monna Rosa the first stage of his response. Sezai Karakoç reveals that he intended Monna Rosa to be an attempt to write a modern version of the love epic *Leyla and Mecnun* (Karataş 1998: 214). But Monna Rosa has not much in common with the famous epic, even though the theme of unrequited love is shared by both works and human love becomes divine at the end of the poem. Karakoç actually wrote a modernist version of Leylâ and Mecnun (*Leylâ ve Mecnun*, 1980), which focuses on the mystical dimension of the story and in which the narrator reflects on the necessity of rewriting the epic.

Each part of "Monna Rosa" has a different title: "Aşk ve Çileler" (Love and Torments), "Ölüm ve Çerçeveler" (Death and Contexts), "Pişmanlık ve Çileler" (Regret and Torments) and finally "Ve Monna Rosa" (And Monna Rosa). Each part also indicates a change of the narrative point of view: In part I, the narrator is the lover. In part II, the narrator is a neutral observer. Part III is narrated from the point of view of the beloved girl. In the last part, the narrator is a Lover (with a capital l), speaking out for all lovers who long for the divine beloved. The first part deals with the theme of unrequited love, part two focuses on the suicide of the lover, part three on the consequent regrets and suicide of the beloved and the last part on the quest for divine love. The poet uses the syllabic meter in all but the third part of the poem. The use of free verse in the third part is explained by the narrative approach of the poet: This particular section consists of the thoughts and exclamations of the beloved and is close to the stream of consciousness narration which makes the use of the free meter a necessity. Use of the free verse was exceptional at the time for a poet from Karakoç's ideological background, because the promotion of free verse had until now been exclusively done by the left wing intelligentsia and by Nurullah Ataç and his protégés.

The discussion will be focused on the first part of the poem. The publication history of the poem reveals that the first part was originally intended as an independent poem. It was published for the first time on the 26th June 1952 in *Hisar* and then slightly modified and republished with the subtitle "Love and Torments" as part I of a

longer poem on 4th December 1952 in the journal *Mülkiye*. The analysis of the poem is based on this latter version. The poet himself gives no clues about the history of the creation of the poem. Turan Karataş, author of a biography of the poet, believes that the poem was written for a classmate of Sezai Karakoç's at the *Mülkiye* higher education institute, which is neither confirmed nor denied by the poet (Karataş 1998: 213). The original organisation of the verses in the poem revealed the following acrostic: Muazzez Akkaya. It is known that Muazzez Akkaya was a classmate of Karakoç's at the *Mülkiye*. Karakoç told his biographer that readers should not dwell on such details but it is interesting to note that he made a mystical re-reading of his own poem after its original publication, which reminds of Kısakürek's probable re-reading of *Kaldırımlar*. In a quatrain, without a title, dating from 1983, Karakoç actually wrote that nobody wrote poetry and that that poets too were only readers. Hence the act of writing too is an act of reading, of interpreting the universe and the written word, including one's own.

#### Monna Rosa

Monna Rosa, siyah güller,ak güller;  
Gülce'nin gülleri ve beyaz yatak  
Kanadı kırık kuş merhamet ister;  
Ah,Senin yüzünden kana batacak,  
Monna Rosa,siyah güller,ak güller!

Ulur aya karşı kirli çakallar,  
Bakar ürkek ürkek tavşanlar dağa.  
Monna Rosa,bu gün bende bir hal var,  
Yağmur iri iri düşer toprağa,  
Ulur aya karşı kirli çakallar.

Zeytin ağacının karanlığıdır.  
Elindeki elma ile başlayan...  
Bir yakut yüzükte aydınlanan sır,  
Sıcak ve minnacık yüzündeki kan,  
Zeytin ağacının karanlığıdır.

Zambaklar en ıssız yerlerde açar,  
Ve vardır her vahşi çiçekte gurur..  
Bir mumun ardında bekleyen rüzgar,  
Işıksız ruhumu sallar da durur,  
Zambaklar en ıssız yerlerde açar.

Ellerin,ellerin ve parmakların  
bir nar çiçeğini eziyor gibi..  
Ellerinden belli olur bir kadın.  
Denizin dibinde geziyor gibi  
Ellerin,ellerin ve parmakların.

Açma pencereni perdeleri çek:  
Monna Rosa seni görmemeliyim.  
Bir bakışın ölmem için yetecek;

#### Monna Rosa

Monna Rosa, black roses, white roses;  
The roses of Gülce and a white bed  
The bird with broken wings asks for mercy;  
Oh, it will be covered in blood because of you,  
Monna Rosa, black roses, white roses!

The jackals howl under the moon,  
Rabbits look at the mountain with fear.  
Monna Rosa, today I feel strange,  
The rain thickly falls on the ground,  
The jackals howl under the moon.

It is the darkness of the olive tree.  
The secret which starts with the apple in your hand,  
Is enlightened in a ruby ring...  
The blood in your warm and minuscule face,  
It is the darkness of the olive tree.

Lilies blossom in the most desolate places,  
There is pride in each and every wild flower.  
The wind waiting behind a candle,  
Keeps on shaking my dark soul.  
Lilies blossom in the most desolate places.

Your hands, your hands and fingers,  
It is as if as they crush a pomegranate blossom...  
A woman is revealed by her hands.  
It is as if they are wandering at the bottom of the sea,  
Your hands, your hands and fingers.

Don't open the window, draw the curtains:  
Monna Rosa I must not see you.  
I would die if you looked at me just once;

Anla Monna Rosa,ben öteliyim...  
Açma pencereni,perdeleri çek.

Do understand, Monna Rosa, I am from another world...  
Don't open the window, draw the curtains.

Zaman çabuk çabuk geçiyor Monna;  
Saat onikidir,söndü lambalar.  
Uyudu turnalar gelsin rüyana,  
Bakma tuhaf tuhaf göğe bu kadar;  
Zaman çabuk çabuk geçiyor Monna.

Monna, time passes quickly;  
It is twelve and the lights have been extinguished.  
The cranes are asleep, let them come into your dream,  
Don't look so strangely at the sky;  
Monna, time passes quickly.

Akşamları gelir incir kuşları,  
Konarlar bahçemin incirlerine;  
Kiminin rengi ak,kiminin sarı.  
Ah,beni bir vursalar kuş yerine!  
Akşamları gelir incir kuşları...

At night the tree pipits come,  
And settle on the fig trees in my garden;  
Some are white, some yellow.  
If only they shot me instead of the birds.  
At night the tree pipits come...

Ki ben,Monna Rosa,bulurum seni  
İncir kuşlarının bakışlarında.  
Hayatla doldurur bu boş yelkeni  
O mâsum bakışlar...su kenarında  
Ki ben,Monna Rosa,bulurum seni.

And I would find you Monna Rosa  
In the eyes of the tree pipits.  
Those innocent eyes fill this empty sail  
With life close to the water.  
And I would find you Monna Rosa.

Kırgın kırgın bakma yüzüme Rosa,  
Henüz dinlemedin benden türküler.  
Benim aşkı uymaz öyle her saza,  
En güzel şarkıyı bir kurşun söyler...  
Kırgın kırgın bakma yüzüme Rosa.

Don't look so angrily at me Rosa.  
You haven't listened to my songs yet..  
My love cannot be sung by anyone,  
The most beautiful song is sung by a bullet....  
Don't look so angrily at me Rosa.

Yağmurlardan sonra büyürmüş başak,  
Meyvalar sabırla olgunlaşmış.  
Bir gün gözlerimin ta içine bak:  
Anlarsın ölümler için yaşarmış.  
Yağmurlardan sonra büyürmüş başak.

Grain grows after the rain,  
Fruits ripen with patience.  
Look straight into my eyes, one day:  
You will understand why the dead live.  
Grain grows after the rain.

Artık inan bana muhacir kızı,  
Dinle ve kabul et itirafımı.  
Bir soğuk,bir garip,bir mavi sızı  
Alev alev sardı her tarafımı  
Artık inan bana muhacir kızı.

Believe me now migrant girl,  
Listen and accept my confession.  
A cold, a strange, a blue pain  
Has enflamed my body.  
Believe me now migrant girl.

Altın bilezikler o korkulu ten,  
Cevap versin,bu kanlı kuş tüyüne;  
Bir tüy ki,can verir gülümseyen,  
Bir tüy ki,kapalı geceye,güne;  
Altın bilezikler,o korkulu ten!

Let the golden bracelets, this frightened flesh,  
Answer the bloody feather of the bird;  
A feather that would die for your smile  
A feather that is not concerned with day or night  
The golden bracelets, this frightened flesh.

Monna Rosa,siyah güller,ak güller,  
Gülce'nin gülleri ve beyaz yatak.  
Kanadı kırık kuş,merhamet ister;  
Ah,senin yüzünden kana batacak,  
Monna Rosa siyah güller,ak güller!

Monna Rosa, black roses, white roses;  
The roses of Gülce and a white bed  
The bird with broken wings asks for mercy;  
Oh, it will be covered in blood because of you,  
Monna Rosa, black roses, white roses!

“Aşk ve Çileler” is a symbolic narration of unrequited love, full of references to *divân* literature, told by a young man. The narrator finally discovers true love, which is not earthly but mystical. The poem consists of fourteen stanzas of five lines. Karakoç

uses the eleven foot syllabic meter in this poem.<sup>16</sup> The first and the fifth verse of every stanza are the same, which enhances the song-like and slightly dream-like atmosphere of the poem.

The first stanza is addressed to the beloved and is meant to give the setting of the poem. It starts with the mention of the beloved Monna Rosa and the evocation of black and white roses. The opposition between black and white will be kept throughout the four parts of the poem. The beloved is white, and the lover black. No traditional moral values should be attached to the colours however. Indeed, in the third part of "Monna Rosa", Karakoç inverts the values attached to the colours: the beloved cries out that she is as white as sin, while her lover is as black as repentance (Karakoç 1999:29, 33, 36). By inverting the usual set of values associated with black and white, Karakoç simply wants to stress his rejection of clichés in literature, which recalls similar attempts by his friend Cemal Süreya. The second line sets the poem geographically in Gülce. Gülce is the native village of the beloved. In part three Ankara will be mentioned too (Karakoç 1999:31). Karakoç clearly chooses a particular, realistic geographic setting for the relationship. The third and the fourth lines already point to the forthcoming tragedy: the death of the two lovers (parts II and III). The narrator, whom we know to be the lover, says that a bird with broken wings wants mercy, but will drown in blood because of the beloved. At the end of the first stanza, two elements of classical poetry are mentioned: the rose (Monna **Rosa**, **Gülce** and roses) and a merciless beloved. The beloved is a rose and the lover is a bird, maybe a nightingale, with broken wings. Karakoç uses and subverts the imagery of *divân* literature, by setting it in the real world. The second stanza confirms the setting of the poem in the countryside with the mention of jackals, rabbits and mountains. The jackals are dirty and the rabbits are frightened. This creates a threatening atmosphere, which is emphasised by the night-time and the falling rain. The forthcoming tragedy is confirmed by the fact that the narrator feels distressed.

The third stanza consists of mysterious symbols. The darkness of the olive-tree has probably no semantic use in the stanza, but adds to the dark atmosphere of the poem. The fact that the beloved holds an apple is much more problematic however. In Christian mythology the apple is a symbol of temptation and sin. But those values are not attached to the apple in the Islamic scriptures and it would be surprising that Sezai Karakoç, a Muslim fundamentalist, makes use of a Christian symbol. Lines thirteen and fourteen bring a possible explanation as to why the beloved is unable to return the narrator's love. The mystery of the ruby ring could mean that she is engaged, whereas

<sup>16</sup>The rhyming scheme is as follows: ababa/cdcdc/ efefe/ cgcg/ hihih/ jkjkj/ lclcl/ mnmnm/ ololo/oaao/ bpbpb/m'm"m"m"m'/ qnqnq/ ababa.

the blood on her cheeks could be a reference to blushing. The physical features of the beloved are mentioned for the first time: Her face is warm and very small.

The symbolic narration continues in the fourth stanza adding an element of hope to the poem, since lilies blossom in the most abandoned places. But on the other hand, the lover's lightless soul is shattered by the wind waiting behind a candle. The universe of the poem is full of contrasts. In the fifth stanza, the hands and fingers of the beloved are mentioned. Her fingers crush a pomegranate blossom. The fine traits of the beloved and the pomegranate are referring to the *divân* tradition and to miniature painting. In line twenty three, the narrator says that women are revealed by their hands. Hands are the only body parts that can be seen (together with the face) in most miniatures.

In the sixth stanza the narrator implores his beloved not to show herself to him. He asks her to understand that he belongs to another world. It is the first time that the narrator refers to the mystical dimension of his quest. The beloved is only a tool that will lead him towards true love. The narrator is in an ambiguous situation since he makes use of earthly desire in order to reach divine love. His fear of seeing the earthly beloved could mean that he is worried that he may yield to temptation. The lack of interest on the part of the beloved is necessary for the success of his quest. This is the turning point of the poem. From now on love will not be earthly anymore but mystical.

The seventh stanza announces that it is midnight now and that there is complete darkness. It is interesting to notice that throughout the poem various birds are mentioned: Cranes, in the seventh stanza and tree pipits, in the eighth stanza. In the first stanza the lover defines himself as a bird with broken wings.

In the eighth stanza, the lover desires to be shot instead of the birds. The desire to die, just like in "Kaldırımlar", is a desire for the hereafter and lasting love. Indeed in the ninth stanza the lover finds the beloved in the eyes of the tree pipits and by the riverside. The presence of the beloved in nature should not be interpreted as a sign of the obsession of the lover, but rather as a feature that can be seen in several *münacats*, poems of praise written for God. In the *münacats*, God manifests himself in nature. The narrator does not need Monna Rosa anymore, since he has found her elsewhere. Similarly in *Ferhad and Şirin*, Ferhad too finds God when he was longing for Şirin and rejects her.

In the tenth stanza, the beloved, just like Şirin, is unable to understand the new dimension of the lover's desire. She directs him a reproachful look. He replies that his love is different and claims that the most beautiful song is sung by a bullet. Sezai Karakoç gave no authorised interpretation for the poem "Monna Rosa" and made no comments on the use and meaning of the symbols. Nonetheless, he felt the need to explain that the bullets were metaphorical and were symbols of pain and that they were directed towards the lover, not the beloved (Karataş 1998:217). Karakoç's explanation

confirms that the narrator views the pain of unrequited love as a necessity to fulfil his aim. Moreover it becomes clear by now that - unlike the beloved in classical poetry - Monna Rosa would return the love of the narrator: She wants to show herself to him and is displeased by his refusal. This stanza sets the poem in time, a time where weapons are easily available. The weapon is also a reference to the future suicide of the lover.

The eleventh stanza focuses on the religious virtue of patience. The beloved is told to look into the eyes of the lover in order to understand why the dead survive. The narrator invites her to understand the mystical dimension of his quest. He is now completely detached from the earthly beloved and writes about a higher form of love. The narrator tries to describe the new feeling of love in the twelfth stanza. The beloved is now described as a migrant girl. Migration is indeed a way to describe earthly life in mystical literature. It is also a way to stress his detachment towards her. She is not Monna Rosa anymore, but an ordinary woman.

In the thirteenth stanza, she is nothing but golden bracelets and flesh filled with fear. There is a certain ambiguity in this stanza, since the narrator wants her flesh to give an answer to his bloody feathers. Does he want to be tempted? But the feathers are only the corporal envelope of the narrator, which he has detached himself from. The mention of bloody feathers is a direct reference to the bird in the first stanza. The repetition of the first stanza at the end of the poem is a new beginning: the longing for the divine beloved.

“Aşk ve Çileler” is a poem about mystical love that combines references to the real world (the geographic setting and bullets) and to classical imagery (roses, birds and pomegranates). The modernity of the setting is confirmed in the next three parts of the poem with references to trains, photographs and cigarettes. The depiction of the beloved too has similarities with classical literature since only her hands and face are mentioned. But her behaviour is novel to a certain extent since she seems to be trying to tempt, or at least this is the perception of the narrator, the lover. The narrator is conscious that earthly love is not his real aim and shares this insider knowledge with the reader. “Aşk ve Çileler”, indeed Monna Rosa as a whole, is a work that follows Necip Fazıl’s approach in “Kaldırımlar” and sets the mystical quest in the real world.

### **Sürgün Ülkeden Başkentler Başkentine**

The theme of mystical love developed in “Kaldırımlar” and in “Monna Rosa” only concerned the individual. They were poems about the mystical quest of the narrator and did not have any direct political subtext. It is only the knowledge we have about the authors of the poems that allow us to have a more political reading of those poems. Sezai Karakoç also wrote poems where he combined the theme of mystical

love with political militancy. "Sürgün Ülkeden Başkentler Başkentine" (From the Exiled Country to the Capital of Capitals) exemplifies this latter approach.

"Sürgün Ülkeden Başkentler Başkentine" is part of Karakoç's 1975 collection *Zamana Adanmış Sözler* (Words Dedicated to Time). It consists of four parts of uneven length written with free verse. There is no linear development in the poem, which mainly consists of invocations and short prayers. The poet uses no punctuation, thus enhancing the modernist appearance of the poem. This too is politically motivated: Modernist literary techniques can be used to spread the Islamic message, which means that Islam is a modern ideology. The first three parts of the poem have a double function: They are both a celebration of the prophet of Islam as the creator of Islamic civilisation and an elegy for the disappearance, or the banishment, of Islamic civilisation in the modern world. The prophet is addressed as the beloved, which is characteristic of the *na't*, the eulogy of the prophet. The prophet is characterised as a "civilisation" that just lasted a lifetime, which is a reference to the *asr-ı saadet-i muhammediye*, the lifetime of the prophet Muhammed, which was, according to Islamic belief, a period of complete felicity. The narrator yearns for this period, beside which *Paris, New York, London, Moscow and Beijing mean nothing*, thus rejecting various versions of capitalism and socialism. The narrator also expresses his longing for Ottoman times referring to the Era of the Tulips and the poetry of Galip, Nefi and Şeyh Galip. Those symbols of the Ottoman era chosen by Karakoç are the very symbols which were explored by Yahya Kemal in his poetry and writings. Indeed Yahya Kemal is one of the rare republican poets for whom Sezai Karakoç openly expressed his admiration and consideration. In 1988 he wrote in his own magazine that:

"Yahya Kemal was not one of the leading figures of the Islamic ideal. His way of life was western. His ideology was a synthesis that was probably dominated by western ideology. He had no ideas that could lead to a rebirth of Islam. Nevertheless, it is obvious that he did not want our people to renounce their faith and morals. He wanted our people to continue to live as a Muslim people with mosques and various memories" (Karataş 1998: 493).

It is clear that Sezai Karakoç understood that Yahya Kemal's longing for Ottoman civilisation was purely nostalgic, whereas his own longing, expressed in the first three parts of the poem, was political.

In the first three parts of the poem the narrator speaks from the perspective of somebody living in a society that has lost its contact with Islamic civilisation and its ideal society - the *Capital of all capitals*. In part four, the focus changes and the narrator directly addresses the divine beloved. The new discourse is much more personal and less political, but it should be read with the above in mind. The "sen"

(you) is not the prophet anymore, but God. The focus is now on the estrangement of the individual and the distance between him and God in a modern society.

The fourth part is organised in five sections of uneven length, all of which end with an invocation to the beloved. The last line of the first four sections is the same: *Do not lengthen my earthly exile*, which is a prayer and desire for material death that could be addressed to nobody but God.

Senin kalbinden sürgün oldum ilkin  
 Bütün sürgünlüklerim bir bakıma bu sürgünün bir süreği  
 Bütün törenlerin şölenlerin ayinlerin yortuların dışında  
 Sana geldim ayaklarına kapanmaya geldim  
 Af dilemeye geldim affa layık olmasam da  
 Uzatma dünya sürgünümü benim  
 Güneşi bahardan koparıp  
 Aşkın bu en onulmazından koparıp  
 Bir tuz bulutu gibi  
 Savuran yüreğime  
 Ah uzatma dünya sürgünümü benim  
 Nice yorulduğum ayakkabılarımdan değil  
 Ayaklarımdan belli  
 Lambalar eğri  
 Aynalar akrep meleği  
 Zaman çarpılmış atın son hayali  
 Ev miras değil mirasın hayaleti  
 Ey gönlümün doğurduğu  
 Büyüttüğü emzirdiği  
 Kuş tüyünden  
 Ve kuş sütünden  
 Geceler ve gündüzlerde  
 İnsanlığa anıt gibi yükselttiği  
 Sevgili  
 En sevgili  
 Ey sevgili  
 Uzatma dünya sürgünümü benim

First I was exiled from your heart  
 All my exiles were somehow the  
 [continuation of this exile  
 Beyond all ceremonies and celebrations  
 I came to you to lay down at your feet  
 To ask for forgiveness even if I do not  
 [deserve it  
 Do not lengthen my earthly exile  
 That tore away the sun from the spring  
 From this most incurable love  
 Like a cloud of salt  
 Hurlled to my heart  
 Do not lengthen my earthly exile  
 My tiredness is not revealed by my shoes  
 But by my feet  
 The lamps are bent  
 Mirrors are a scorpion-like angel  
 Time is the spectre of the struck horse  
 The house is not the heritage  
 [it is the ghost of the heritage  
 O beloved  
 Borne and nourished  
 By my heart  
 With the feathers  
 And milk of birds  
 Erected like a monument to mankind  
 Most beloved  
 O beloved  
 Do not lengthen my earthly exile

Bütün şiirlerde söylediğim sensin  
 Suna dedimse sen Leyla dedimse sensin  
 Seni saklamak için görüntülerinden faydalandım  
 Salome'nin Belkus'ın  
 Boşunaydı saklamaya çalışmam öylesine aşıkarsın bellisin  
 Kuşlar uçar senin gönlünü taklit için  
 Ellerinden devşirir bahar çiçeklerini  
 Deniz gözlerinden alır sonsuzluğun haberini  
 Ey gönüllerin en yumuşağı en derini  
 Sevgili  
 En sevgili  
 Ey sevgili  
 Uzatma dünya sürgünümü benim

It is you that I sang about in all poems  
 Whether I say Suna or Leyla it is you  
 In order to hide you I used the images  
 of Salome and Belkis  
 It tried in vain to hide you  
 [you are so manifest and evident  
 Birds fly to imitate your heart  
 Spring collects its flowers from your hands  
 The sea receives the tidings of eternity  
 [ from your eyes  
 O beloved  
 The softest and deepest of hearts  
 Most beloved  
 O beloved  
 Do not extend my earthly exile

Yıllar geçti sapan olumsuz iz bıraktı toprakta  
 Yıldızlara uzanıp hep seni sordum gece yarılarında  
 Çatı katlarında bodrum katlarında  
 Gölğendi gecemi aydınlatan eşsiz lamba  
 Hep Kanlıca'da Emirgan'da  
 Kandilli'nin kurşuni şafaklarında  
 Seninle söyleşip durdum bir ömrün baharında yazında  
 Şimdi onun birdenbire gelen sonbaharında  
 Sana geldim ayaklarına kapanmaya geldim  
 Af dilemeye geldim affa layık olmasam da  
 Ey çağdaş Kudüs (Meryem)  
 Ey sırrını gönlünde taşıyan Mısır (Züleyha)  
 Ey ipeklere yumuşaklık başıslayan merhametin kalbi  
 Sevgili  
 En sevgili  
 Ey sevgili  
 Uzatma dünya sürgünümü benim

Dağların yıkılışını gördüm bir Venüs bardağında  
 Köle gibi satıldım pazarlar pazarında  
 Güneşin sarardığını gördüm Konstantin duvarında  
 Senin hayallerinle yandım düşlerin civarında  
 Gölğendi yansıyıp duran bengisu pınarında  
 Ölüm düşüncesinin beni sardığı şu anda  
 Verilmemiş hesapların korkusuyla  
 Sana geldim ayaklarına kapanmaya geldim  
 Af dilemeye geldim affa layık olmasam da  
 Sevgili  
 En sevgili  
 Ey sevgili  
 Uzatma dünya sürgünümü benim

Ülkedeki kuşlardan ne haber vardır  
 Mezarlardan bile yükselen bir bahar vardır  
 Aşk celladından ne çıkar madem ki yar vardır  
 Yoktan da vardan da ötede bir Var vardır  
 Hep suç bende değil beni yakıp yıkan bir nazar vardır  
 O şarkıya özenip söylenecek mısralar vardır  
 Sakın kader deme kaderin üstünde bir kader vardır  
 Ne yapsalar boş göklerden gelen bir karar vardır  
 Gün batsa ne olur geceyi onaran bir mimar vardır  
 Yanmışsam külümden yapılan bir hisar vardır  
 Yenilgi yenilgi büyüyen bir zafer vardır  
 Sırların sırrına ermek için sende anahtar vardır

Years have passed and the catapult left  
 [bad marks on the soil  
 Reaching for the stars I always asked  
 [about you at midnights  
 In attics and cellars  
 Your shadow was the unique light that  
 [that enlightened by night  
 In Kanlıca in Emirgan  
 In the leaden twilight of Kandilli  
 I kept on talking to you in the spring and  
 [and the summer of life  
 Now in its unexpected autumn  
 I came to you to lie down at your feet  
 To ask for forgiveness even if I do not  
 [deserve it  
 O modern Jerusalem (Mary)  
 O Egypt who carries its secret in its  
 [heart (Züleyha)  
 O heart of compassion who bestows  
 [softness to silk  
 Beloved  
 Most beloved  
 O beloved  
 Do not lengthen my earthly exile

I saw the collapse of the mountains in a  
 [glass of Venus  
 I was sold like a slave in the market of  
 [markets  
 I saw the sun turn yellow on the walls  
 [of Constantine  
 I burned with your apparitions in the  
 [vicinity of dreams  
 It was your shadow that was reflected in  
 [the source of eternal water  
 Now that the thought of death envelops me  
 With the fear of the unaccounted  
 I came to you to lie down at your feet  
 To ask for forgiveness even if I do not  
 [deserve it

Beloved  
 Most beloved  
 O beloved  
 Do not lengthen my earthly exile

There are news from the birds of your  
 [country  
 There is a spring that rises even from  
 [tombs  
 Who cares about the torments of love  
 [since there is the beloved  
 There is a Being beyond void and existence  
 It is not all my fault there is a curse that  
 [crushes me  
 There are verses to be read imitating that  
 [song  
 Do not say that it is fate there is a fate

Göğsünde sürgününü geri çağıran bir damar vardır  
Senden ümit kesmem kalbinde merhamet adlı bir çınar  
[vardır

Sevgili  
En sevgili  
Ey sevgili

[beyond fate  
There is a decision coming from the  
[heavens whatever they do  
The sun goes down so what there is an  
[architect who mends the night  
If I burn a fortress is built with my ashes  
There is a triumph that grows with defeats  
You have a key to the secret of secrets  
There is a vein in a your breast that calls  
[back your exile  
I don't cease hoping there is a plane-tree  
[called compassion in your heart  
Beloved  
Most beloved  
O beloved

The first stanza starts with a direct address to the beloved, where the narrator admits that he has been exiled from the heart of the beloved. This exile is the source of his predicament. He is conscious of his own guilt and wishes to be forgiven by offering complete submission to the divine beloved. He expresses his desire for material death and then his misery in a very symbolic language (lines six and seven). From line eighteen onwards, the narrator develops an important theme of the poem. His heart “*bore, bred and nourished*” the beloved with the feathers and milk of birds. The Turkish expression “*kuş tüyü, kuş sütü*” is a metaphor for rare and unobtainable things. Hence by nourishing the beloved with the feathers and milk of bird, the narrator may mean that he celebrated her with what is most precious to him. In fact, the mention of birds could also be reference a to one of the central metaphors of the *divân* tradition. In the classical tradition, the poet often represents himself in the form of nightingale longing for the divine beloved. This reference emphasises that the narrator is speaking in the name of all poets who sang the divine beloved.

This theme is further explored in the second stanza. Whenever he wrote about Suna, Leyla, Belkıs (the Queen of Sheba) or Salome, he was actually expressing his love for the divine beloved. In mystical love literature, human love is always a necessary step that will lead to divine love. The mention of Salome, a biblical character and an important figure in Western art, alongside Islamic names refers to Karakoç’s belief that every sincere artist is in search of God (Karakoç 1975:76).

In the third stanza, the narrator describes how the beloved was a source of enlightenment throughout his life. He explains how he felt close to her in Emirgan, Kandilli and Kanlıca, the very places where the lovers of Yahya Kemal used to meet. Ottoman history is a place where the narrator feels close to God, yet he feels guilty at the same time and asks for forgiveness. His guilt is the guilt of the likes of Yahya Kemal who celebrated Ottoman civilisation but did not fight for its survival. References to Jerusalem and Egypt are other hints at the guilt of Muslims who did not act to preserve Islamic civilisation.

In the fourth stanza the narrator explores his fear of death, his fear of leaving *unfinished business*. Nonetheless he trusts the mercy of the beloved and reiterates his prayer. Each section so far ended with a prayer for death.

Finally in the fifth stanza, the tone changes and the narrator celebrates the beloved and her power. Her presence can be felt in earthly life too and thus life should be accepted, which is why the narrator does not want to die anymore. The poem ends with an acceptance of earthly life and the narrator does not call for the end of his exile anymore, since he has understood that there is a divine design to everything, a triumph that is bred with defeats and an incommensurable divine compassion. The acceptance of earthly life is what characterises the political dimension of the poem: The ideal society should not only be longed for, it should be fought for. This is why Sezai Karakoç's literary activities (explicitly mentioned in the poem) are accompanied by intense political militancy (implicitly mentioned in the poem). Thus mystical love now becomes a way to express a political craving for the transformation of society.

"Monna Rosa" and "Sürgün Ülkeden Başkentler Başkentine" reflect the two aspects of this quest: The personal quest for God is explored in Monna Rosa and the social engagement of the mystic and his revolutionary endeavour are discussed in the second poem. These two aspects are represented by the narrator's attitude towards death. In "Monna Rosa" the narrator commits suicide in order to be detached from his earthly envelope and reach a higher sphere in order to perform the union with the divine beloved. In "Sürgün Ülkeden Başkentler Başkentine", death is rejected and life accepted. This poem does not represent a personal quest anymore but a political quest whose goal can only be reached by accepting life and the real world.

### **Neo-mystical love poetry**

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and Sezai Karakoç, the two heralds of modern Islamist poetry, bridged traditional Islamic beliefs and modern literary techniques. In their approach to the theme of mystical love too, they were truly innovative. Contrary to popular the belief that sees the mystical experience essentially as a renunciation of the material world, they developed a mystical love poetry that is anchored in this world. In their poetry, the palpable world was the starting point of their mystical quest that was to lead them from earthly love to divine love.

Their acceptance of the real world is reflected in two major aspects of their poetry: Reference to elements of life in the twentieth century (the *modern mesnevis* "Kaldırımlar" and "Monna Rosa") and active political engagement ("Sürgün Ülkeden Başkentler Başkentine"). Those elements are new in mystical love poetry and could not have been conceived in any form of classical Ottoman literature. The scenery of love is not a stylised garden or a desert anymore: It is a modern town. The beloved is not a

princess anymore, she is a girl of the streets and wants to seduce the lover. This new approach is not a rejection of the tradition. It is the product of a reflection that leads to the conclusion that the tradition must be reinterpreted in the light of modern life. It is the direct consequence of the realist revolution in Turkish literature which started with the experimentations in prose and poetry of the *Tanzimat* authors. It is also a political message pertaining to the relevance of their faith in the twentieth century. They do not reject the twentieth century but appropriate it and want to islamise it. Literature, as underlined by Sezai Karakoç, is one part of their project to transform society (Karakoç 1986:7).

It would be wrong to categorise Karakoç and Kısakürek alongside Mehmet Çınarlı and others as merely Islamist poets. "Islamist poetry" is not really a viable literary classification, even though it is a convenient one. Karakoç and Kısakürek's approach to the theme of mystical love calls for a new classification as "Neo-mystical poetry" or as "New Mystics". Mysticism, as a concept, is closely related to that of the religious experience, but they are not identical (Honderich 1995:599). It is even questionable that every mystical experience is inherently religious.

Neo-mystical poetry would include all mystical poets who have accepted the modern world. However it is a broad church -or at least *dergâh* - since it accommodates the Islamic mysticism of Kısakürek and Karakoç, the all-encompassing humanist mysticism of some of Dağlarca's works and the esoteric quest of Asaf Halet Çelebi. It excludes however the mimetic mystical works of Yahya Kemal and the late works of Enis Behiç Koryürek, who merely perpetuated the classical tradition.

## Conclusion

Mystical love was the central theme of classical Ottoman poetry. The *divân* poets explored divine love and were in search of the beauty that was beyond the natural, sensible world. During the years that followed the *Tanzimat* reforms, the modernising poets reacted against the classical understanding of literature. In the first stage of this development, *Tanzimat* poets rejected the theme of love because it was closely associated with the arguably antiquated literary tradition. *Tanzimat* intellectuals appropriated European literary forms and the theme of love was mainly explored in novels and plays, but not in poetry anymore. Increased political pressure in the era of Abdülhamit led to a re-evaluation of the role of literature, which had been conceived as a tool to enlighten the people after the *Tanzimat* reforms. Having adopted *Parnassian* principles, Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem and his followers re-introduced the theme of love into poetry. They aimed at depicting material and physical beauty, which was best represented by nature and the female body. Love, however, was only one theme among others and not the major theme of poetry. Love, as a theme in poetry, was representative of the literary evolution that had completely transformed Ottoman poetry in half a century. Most poets continued to write on the theme of love but it was not their unique concern anymore.

In the republican period, poetry has been characterised by its increased focus on ordinary life and people. The poetic exploration of everyday issues affecting society as a whole or the individual has had an impact on the language and the form of poetry. The language of poetry has become what the nineteenth century reformist writer İbrahim Şinasi called *lisân-ı avâm* (the language of ordinary people) in the introductory notes to his 1860 play *Şair Evlenmesi* (The Marriage of the Poet). In matters of form, poets have preferred the *hece* meter of the folk tradition and the free verse rather than the *aruz* prosody of the classical tradition which symbolised the elitist conception of the *divân* and the *Servet-i Fünûn* poets. Thus poetry has been made accessible, at least in theory, to a completely new audience: ordinary people. A century after the essayist Mustafa Sâmî Efendi dedicated his ground-breaking *Avrupa Risâlesi* (Essay on Europe, 1840) to the *avâm-ı millet* (the common people), ordinary people have become both the matter and the intended audience of poetry.

In modern poetry, love continues to be explored among other themes. Hence poems dealing with the theme of love provide a representative sample of the poetry produced during the modern era. A poet or a movement's approach to the theme reflects the literary evolution and the ideological conflicts in modern Turkey. Yahya Kemal Beyatlı mourns the passing of his love for an independent minded Ottoman lady, who incarnates his vision of the Turkish nation. The *Five Syllabists* contrast the

complexity and misery of love in the cosmopolitan city to the simplicity and joy of life in the Anatolian village in poems that reflect the Anatolianist discourse of liberation war literature. Nazım Hikmet makes a distinction between love as an abstract concept which is complementary to revolutionary aspirations and love in practice which is depicted as an obstacle to them. In poems written for Pirâye, he develops a novel and holistic image of the beloved who is represented both as a lover and a comrade. The *Bizarre* group reject lofty narrations of love and focus on the effects of love in the life of ordinary people. The novelty of their approach and their opposition to political poetry have been commended by the political establishment. Socialist poets approach love in different ways and develop an ideologically motivated social realism that does not crush individual forms of expression. Distinctions between higher and lower forms of love disappear in the poetry of the *Second Renewal*. The love relationship allows the poet to study conflicts between individuals and genders. The acceptance of the real world in the neo-mystical love poetry of the Islamic poets expresses their acceptance of modern Turkey as the framework in which they start their mystical and political quest. All those poets and movements express their ideology by the choice of the setting of love, by the image of the beloved and by their definition of love.

### Settings of love

In modern Turkish poetry, the setting of the love relationship has usually an ideological connotation. Modern poets desert the stylised nature and the idealised court of the *divân* tradition and set the love relationship in the real world, which is indicative of the leading role ascribed to literature by the intelligentsia after the Tanzimat reforms. Yahya Kemal Beyatlı's Ottomanist conception of Turkish national identity is expressed in his choice of Istanbul and more particularly of the districts that are associated with the Ottoman ruling class, such as Kanlıca, Kandilli, Göksu, Bebek and the Princes' Islands as the setting of love. This is a depiction of Istanbul that focuses on the Ottoman identity of the city. Yahya Kemal deliberately ignores working class districts and the social and economical changes that are affecting the young republic of Turkey. It is a vision of Istanbul that is stuck in an imagined past, an exotic vision shared by Orientalist artists. Yahya Kemal's vision of Ottoman Istanbul should be contrasted with the settings of love in the poetry of the *Five Syllabists*, the Anatolianist nationalists.

The *Five Syllabists* approach love in two distinct settings: The city and the Anatolian countryside. Love in the city is seen as a superficial experience that leads to dissatisfaction and unhappiness, while love in the Anatolian countryside is the source of peace of mind for the narrator. The opposition between the two settings is representative of the general trend in Turkish liberation war literature which contrasts Turkish Anatolia with corrupt cosmopolitan Istanbul.

Nazım Hikmet and the socialist poets advocate an ideology aiming at solving all the problems of the nation and the world through socialist revolution. Hence the countryside and the city are used as settings of love in their poetry, as they wish to depict the social reality of their country as a whole. From the prison cell in Nazım Hikmet's autobiographical poems to the bedroom in Atıf Behramoğlu's verses, various private and closed spheres of experience are also seen as settings of love. The internationalism of the socialist poets is expressed through the choices of settings outside Turkey, such as in Nazım Hikmet's epic poems and in some of Attilâ İlhan's and Atıf Behramoğlu's poems.

The *Bizarre* group, whose subjective realism was supported by Nurullah Ataç and the intelligentsia close to the İnönü regime, focus almost exclusively on the city, that is on modernity as a setting of love. They reject the focus on Anatolia of the nationalist generation and the interest in life in the countryside of the socialists. They also reject the latter's claim that it is possible to depict objective reality in poetry. The focus on subjective, individual experiences, rather than on social realities, is also expressed in the regular choice of private spheres as a setting of love.

The choice of private spheres in an urban context is also characteristic of the love poetry of the *Second Renewal* who take *Bizarre's* individualism one step further. They focus on the inner world of the narrating lover rather than on the interaction between human beings. In both cases the choice of the city and of private spheres is a rejection of social realism at a time when less than a quarter of the population of Turkey were living in the city.

In the case of the Islamic poets, love is experienced in the city and in the countryside. Various elements in the depiction of the setting of love indicate that it is contemporary and full of threats. The rejection of the stylised garden is particularly meaningful since their stance carries a message regarding the relevance of the mystical quest in the twentieth century. By giving clear indications about the geographical and temporal setting of the quest for divine love in their neo-mystical poetry, Islamic poets make the point that Islam is an ideology that can answer the needs of the individual and society in the twentieth century.

### **Images of the beloved**

The conflicting ideologies in republican Turkey come to the fore in the representation of the beloved. The preponderant role given by Ziya Gökalp to Turkish women in the modernisation of the country is also seen in the love poetry of Yahya Kemal. Yahya Kemal's beloved is a well-educated and independent-minded woman, who has several opportunities to be intimate with the narrator. She does not seem to be bound by social and economic constraints. However her Ottoman ruling class

background clashes with the egalitarian aspects of Kemalism. Nonetheless those two aspects, her independence and her Ottoman identity, are of great relevance since she is an incarnation of Yahya Kemal's conception of Turkish identity.

The urban beloved in the poetry of the *Five Syllabists* shares some similarities with Yahya Kemal's beloved. She too is free of any form of constraint, but unlike Kemal's beloved, she does not have any particular cultural identity and is a superficial woman, who torments the narrator. Her role is mainly to highlight the difference between the urban and the village woman. The village woman is hard-working and leads a meaningful life. Even though the narrator is unable to enter in a relationship with her, he finds peace of mind in a platonic relationship. It is worth noting that the image of the strong village woman, which suited Kemalist ideology, is not used in poetry about the First World War, where the beloved is a passive maiden who is waiting for the return of her sweetheart who fights on the front.

Nazım Hikmet is the first poet who gives a truly holistic picture of the beloved, who is still mainly a symbol in the poetry of Yahya Kemal and the *Five Syllabists*. Nazım Hikmet's beloved has both a mind and a body. However his attitude towards women is equivocal and two conflicting images of women can be found. The beloved is either seen as an impediment to the revolutionary aspirations of the narrator or she is a wife, a companion, a sister, a friend and a comrade for him. The first image is in line with the critical approach of socialist poets towards love poetry as a whole during the forties in Turkey. The second vision is shared by socialist poets in the west too. In general, socialist poets emphasise the independence of women and the equality of men and women in love poetry. Even though the focus is more on ordinary women, they paint varied portraits of women from the proletarian to the prostitute, a way to represent society as a whole.

The *Bizarre* group focus exclusively on urban women. They are either ordinary women from a lower middle-class background or bohemian types, such as singers, dancers or uninhibited women. They paint subjective and fragmented portraits of women in the city during the forties and fifties.

The *Second Renewal* movement, exemplified by Cemal Süreya and Edip Cansever in this study, bridge the social and the moral divide and discuss a whole range of different characters from bourgeois backgrounds to low-life backgrounds. All those women share some characteristics however: They are urban dwellers and are sexually available. For *Bizarre* and the *Second Renewal*, individual experience is of primary importance, not the depiction of social reality.

Islamic poets, however, use urban and village characters as the beloved, since they too, like the socialists, defend an ideology that addresses the ills of all strata of society. They adopt this realist stance in their neo-mystical poetry, but the earthly

beloved, whose love will be sublimated into divine love, comes from social strata that would have been inconceivable for the classical poets. The divine beloved takes the form of a prostitute or of a temptress, which shows the dangers and corruption of modern society.

### **Conceptions of love**

Yahya Kemal's portraiture of love is aestheticized and metaphorical. Even though his conception of love comprises both an emotional and a physical aspect, the emphasis is mainly on the emotional aspect of the relationship. Yahya Kemal's beloved is above all an incarnation of his conception of Turkish identity and he relates a past relationship that expresses his longing for Ottoman times, that he sees as an ideal society.

The *Five Syllabists* develop two separate discourses on love that are closely linked and show the two facets of their nationalist literary agenda: They despise the cosmopolitan city and celebrate Anatolia, the motherland. Love in the city is physical love and leads to the misery of the lovers, while love in the village, when experienced by the narrator, is platonic and a source of serenity. The *Five Syllabists* associate the higher feelings of love with the Anatolian village and the lower feelings of love with the corrupt city. Hence they split the emotional and physical aspects of love and attach moral values to them.

Both aspects are reunited in the poetry of Nazım Hikmet. He develops conflicting conceptions of the love relationship. In his early poems, he opposes love as a principle to love in practice. His political poems show that the love of an individual leads to the love of mankind, a central theme in socialist love poetry throughout the world. His early autobiographical poems, however, depict love as an obstacle to the revolutionary aspirations of the narrator. This contradiction is resolved in the poems written for *Pirâye* where love is defined as a relationship where the two partners, who are also spouses, are equal and share everything, including their political engagement. This holistic conception of love and partnership is a reflection of Nazım Hikmet's belief in the equality of all human beings, which is at the heart of the humanist socialism that he advocates.

The *Bizarre* movement explores the theme of love in the general framework of subjective realism. The theme is rarely discussed on its own, because the trio aim at depicting the great variety of emotions and concerns in the life of ordinary people. Love is only one of those emotions. Hence it can be argued that they work towards the trivialization of the theme of love at a time when contemporary poets were still writing hymns that glorified love as a supreme power. *Bizarre* also explores another dimension

of the human being by writing about sexual desire independently from the theme of love.

Socialist poets stress that love is always lived in a larger social and political context. The beloved woman is an active member of society. She works and is not dependent on her lover. Both of them are equally affected by the workings of society. Even though in socialist poetry love is above all used in order to bring to the fore social issues, strong individual voices such as Hasan İzzettin Dinamo and Attilâ İlhan have also developed personal conceptions of love, which focus on individual fates.

The *Second Renewal* movement, just like *Bizarre*, mainly focuses on the individual. Sexuality is central in their understanding of love which explores the relationship between two human beings. They examine the different perceptions that the lovers have of each other and conclude that love is an individual experience that cannot be shared with the partner.

Unlike the a-political stance of the *Second Renewal*, Islamic poets politicise the theme of mystical love. The aim of *visâl* (union with the divine beloved) is a traditional theme of *divân* poetry. The novelty introduced in neo-mystical poetry is the setting in the real world and the image of the beloved. The modern setting and the image of the beloved express the poets' belief that Islamic ideology, symbolised by the theme of mystical love, can answer the needs of the contemporary world.

The great diversity of discourses on love represents various facets of the fertile synthesis at the heart of modern Turkish poetry which embraces the folk and *divân* traditions, diverse, sometimes conflicting, western literary influences and the universal themes of the literatures of the world. The richness of influences and themes makes the labelling of literary movements an arduous task. The close relationships in Turkey between the literary and political worlds in a century of clashing ideologies has had an undeniable impact on the nomenclature and the reception of movements and trends in Turkish poetry.

### **Labelling of literary movements**

Yahya Kemal is usually labelled as *Millî Şair* (The National Poet) by the conservative literary establishment, even though his conception of the nation, as incarnated by the beloved in his love poetry, clashes with the populist and Anatolianist definition of the nation advocated by Kemalism. Discourses on Yahya Kemal are always ideologically motivated and reveal more about the critic than about the poet. Nonetheless, his place in Turkish literature is unique since he transforms the forms of classical poetry in order to explore and convey his conception of national identity. Though his conception of national identity is conservative, his approach to literature and its role is modern.

The *Five Syllabists*, however, wholeheartedly adopt Kemalist ideology in their poetry which could be studied under the heading of post-colonial literature. The *Five Syllabists'* literary aims have certain similarities with the invention of modern national literary projects in post-colonial societies. An important difference is that the literatures of post-colonial societies deal with the interruption of cultural continuity through colonial powers and with the consequent imposition of a foreign language and culture. In the Ottoman - Turkish case, it is the Ottoman-Turkish urban intellectual who rejects his own Ottoman past and invents a new national literary identity. The Ottoman Empire had never been colonised but the literature of the Empire shared certain common features with colonial literature: the language of literature was distinct from the language actually spoken and it did not deal with the actual people inhabiting the lands. Ottoman literature did not deny dignity and autonomy to the Anatolians, as would have been typical of colonial literature, but it simply ignored them. Hence the syllabists, just like nationalist literati of the third world, have to engage with the ordinary reality of the people in their works, which have an educational role and are addressed to the people of the emerging nation.

Two aspects of Nazım Hikmet's works are central in his poetry and are highlighted in his approach to the theme of love: His inversion of the clichés of colonial literature and his own brand of subjective realism that he develops in the poems dedicated to Pirâye, at roughly the same time as *Bizarre*. The actual impact of Nazım Hikmet's poetry on the development on Turkish poetry is much more difficult to assess. His futurist phase and his introduction of the free verse have been influential, but the outlawing of his works and his imprisonment have dealt a severe blow to their reception. It is questionable whether Mehmet Fuat's dedication of almost one third of the introduction of his anthology to his stepfather is representative of Nazım Hikmet's literary importance and impact before 1960 (Fuat 1998:10-47). His most important achievement, his original fusion of three literary traditions, remained unknown to the reading public until the sixties. Nazım Hikmet is an outstanding poet and it is unfortunate that the reaction of the political establishment has had a greater impact on the development of Turkish literature than Hikmet's actual work.

The poetry of *Bizarre* is still controversial today. Their radical rejection of the literary past, at a time when politically motivated attempts to reinterpret the literary tradition and to integrate it into modernist poetry were made by socialists such as Nazım Hikmet and Islamists such as Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, has led to accusations of towing the line of the İnönü regime. So have their a-political verses and their close association with Nurullah Ataç. Their works, however, deserve more than a mere political reading. Their subjective realism has enriched Turkish literature by introducing themes that were unknown in Turkish poetry before. Their questioning of the concept

of poetry too has brought about a rich reflection on poetics in the literary circles of the republic that were at the time mostly driven by ideological concerns.

*Socialist Poetry* is not a viable classification from a literary point of view, as shown by the varying approaches of individual socialist poets to the theme of love. However most socialist poets argue that their literary endeavours are politically motivated and mainly serve a cause. Hence it is necessary to hold on to such a classification, since it has an impact on the reading and interpretation of their works. The concept of *Socialist Poetry* asks for an engaged and informed reading of the poems from their readership and emphasises that the reading of poetry is as much a creative act as writing.

Unlike the socialists, the *Second Renewal* believes that the poetical and the political should be separated: The political opinions of the poet and the reader should have no bearing on the reading of the poem. The poets of the *Second Renewal* are not, strictly speaking, a movement since so-called *Second Renewal* poets do not have a particular agenda and they have no literary or political manifesto. It is an arbitrary classification which encompasses poets who started to write towards the end of the fifties, rejected linear narration and believed that language was the context in which they worked and played with the meaning of words, often emphasising that form was more important than content. This explains why after years of disdain, the *Second Renewal* has encountered a renewed interest in literary circles in the nineties. A-political self-centred poetry has found a new resonance in recent years because of the impact of post-modernism, consumerism and indeed the implementation of depoliticization policies.

*Islamic Poetry* is not really a suitable literary classification either, even though it is a convenient one. A study of the theme of love by Islamic poets calls for a new classification as *New Mystics*. Neo-mystical poetry includes all mystical poets who have accepted the modern world. This new classification allows to group mystical poets according to their treatment of the theme of mystical love and not only according to their political belief, hence the classification is literary and not purely ideological anymore.

It should not be forgotten that there is usually no linear evolution in literary history and Turkey is not an exception. Most of the poets examined have developed their theories and works in parallel: In 1950, Yahya Kemal, Nazım Hikmet, Orhan Veli and Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, who advocated conflicting conceptions of poetry and whose approaches to the theme of love were different, were all literarily active and producing works that were to influence later generations. The variety of their approaches to poetry, reflected in love poetry, exemplifies the richness of Turkish poetry in the twentieth century and underlines that the debate on the labelling of various trends and movements is far from over.

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