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Bakalářská práce

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**Nâzım Hikmet Ran: A Study into the Life of Romantic Communist
through his Poems**

Nâzım Hikmet Ran: Báseň jakožto okno do života romantického komunisty

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Poděkování

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

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Abstrakt

Bakalářská práce je věnována dílu a životu Nâzima Hikmeta Rana (1902-1963), světoznámého tureckého básníka a aktivisty, jenž se narodil v tehdejší Osmanské říši, velkou část dospělého života prožil v exilu v Rusku a část i v Československu. Své dílo věnoval politickým a sociálním problémům a pro svou kritiku tureckého režimu a silný levicový postoj byl několikrát uvězněn. Tato práce se skrze metody kvalitativního výzkumu pokusí zodpovědět otázku, zda a do jaké míry lze zrekonstruovat konkrétní události Hikmetova života na základě analýzy jeho básní, a tedy do jaké míry lze v jeho poezii nalézt autobiografické prvky, vzhledem k tomu, že většina jeho děl je známa pro svůj ideologický charakter. Studentka nejprve nastíní výzvy, které se pojí s analýzou poezie samotné a poukáže na vývoj a proměnu Hikmetova poetického stylu. Následně je v rámci stanovených kapitol představena doba a život autora. V hlavní části práce studentka analyzuje básně samotné a hledá prvky, na základě nich je možné docílit již zmíněné rekonstrukce.

Klíčová slova

Nâzim Hikmet, romantický komunista, avantgarda, poezie, rekonstrukce

Abstract

The bachelor's thesis is dedicated to the work and life of Nâzım Hikmet Ran (1902-1963), a world famous Turkish poet and activist who was born in the then Ottoman Empire, spent a large part of his adult life in exile in Russia and a part of it in Czechoslovakia. He devoted his work to political and social issues and was imprisoned several times for his criticism of the Turkish regime and strong leftist stance. Through qualitative research methods, this thesis will try to answer the question whether and to what extent specific events of Hikmet's life can be reconstructed based on the analysis of his poems, and therefore to what extent autobiographical elements can be found in his poetry, given that most of his works are known for their ideological character. The student first outlines the challenges associated with the analysis of the poetry itself and points to the development and transformation of Hikmet's poetic style. Subsequently, the time and life of the author is presented within the defined chapters. In the main part of the thesis, the student analyzes the poems themselves and looks for elements, on the basis of which it is possible to achieve the reconstruction.

Keywords

Nâzım Hikmet, Romantic Communist, Avant-garde, Poetry, Reconstruction

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1 Introduction

Nâzım Hikmet Ran (1902-1963), commonly known as Nâzım Hikmet, a Turkish poet and playwright, is recognized as one of the most significant international writers of the 20th century, and his literary legacy, which has been embraced by a broader public, has been continuously chosen as the subject for literary analysis (Kazım, 2015: 103). His ability to discuss abstract political concepts in terms of highly personal concrete emotions played a significant role in establishing his renown (Duyan, 2018). He was born in Turkey, lived his life as an exile in Russia and a part of it in Czechoslovakia (Kučera, 2010: 5). He had a strong leftist opinion which was also reflected in his romantic poetry (Halman 1969: 59). He wrote extensively about political and social issues, including human rights violations. He was an outspoken critic of the Turkish government and was imprisoned multiple times for his political views. Though, a great number of artists and writers during the 20th century have called themselves communist or have been members of communist parties around the world, including Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo and Vladimir Mayakovsky. It is not adequate to dismiss this phenomenon as mere propaganda, as official Communist propaganda lacked the sophistication to garner such widespread support (Hoti, 2021).

The research is devoted to his persona, life and poetry, intending to create a mosaic from a personal point of view consisting of the selected periods of his life by observing a timeline of his biography along with literary analysis to find out any interrelation between the turn points of the poet's life and the poems he wrote during the crucial changes and challenges he experienced. The focus of analysis is on poetry only, as it is a very comprehensive subject itself. However, certain works of another genres could be possibly analyzed likewise, such as a novel titled "Yaşamak Güzel Şey Be Kardeşim" (1967), translated as "Life's Good, Brother" or "The Romantics." While Hikmet is the only Turkish poet whose poems have been translated into more than fifty languages and whose work and legacy are gradually experiencing an increasing level of recognition, there is little research on the translation of his works (Demirci, 2021: 1). This thesis is aimed to offer a personal point of view to contribute to ongoing discussions on the interpretation of his works. Hence, it is written in English.

Numerous works have been written about his life and works from various perspectives. The most notable piece is the first comprehensive biography authored by Saime Göksu and Edward Timms (1999), however, rather than providing a literal analysis of the included poems, they utilize small details to depict and complement the biography. Another noteworthy contribution dedicated to his poetry is the master's thesis by İlayda Buse Demirci (Demirci, 2021). This thesis focuses specifically on the theme of homesickness, a prevalent element in Hikmet's works. During his last twelve years in exile, Hikmet produced a substantial collection of poems reflecting his longing for home. Azade Seyhan has also written several works exploring different aspects of Hikmet's life and poetry. For instance, "Enduring Grief/Autobiography as 'Poetry of Witness' in the Work of Assia Djebar and Nazim Hikmet" (Seyhan, 2003) delves into the subject of trauma and the role of poetry as a "material witness" to human suffering. They present slightly diverse perspectives on the topic, yet they share a common characteristic that this thesis also addresses: establishing a correlation between the author's works and his life. However, the approach adopted in this thesis aims to reconstruct specific events from his life through the study and analysis of his poems. This is in contrast to the last two titles mentioned, which focus on exploring particular emotions and their presence in the author's poetry.

The main research question of this study is: "If and to what extent is it possible to reconstruct specific events of Nâzım Hikmet's life from his poetry, given the substantial autobiographical essence in his works?" This inquiry is driven by the aim to understand the extent to which Nâzım's poems possess a biographical nature and to what degree he draws from his own life experiences. It is especially significant to explore this aspect since a majority of his works are recognized for their communist character, which inherently involves elements of propaganda.

In order to answer this question, the thesis relies primarily on Nâzım Hikmet's poetry compilation titled "Bütün şiirleri" as a primary reference, along with the English translations of his poems by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk in "Poems of Nazım

Hikmet,” as well as “Romantic Communist” authored by Saime Göksü and Edward Timms.

The poet’s biography was organized into different phases or chapters, each featuring a representative poem, except for chapter 3.1, which covers his early years and has a limited number of written poems. The poems will be analyzed through the methods of qualitative research by examining the translation process, the structure of the selected poems, and comparing them with the context of the poet’s life, all with the aim of creating a comprehensive “mosaic.”

2 On Analysis of Poetry

The relationship between the author “self” in poetry and the actual author has been a subject of scholarly debate within literary criticism. One prevalent assumption is that there is a degree of authenticity between the two, which allows for the inference of the subjectivity of the author through an analysis of their work. However, as post-structuralist theories have highlighted, this relationship is highly nuanced and complex (Hassan, 1988: 420-22). For the purpose of this bachelor thesis, it will be assumed that Hikmet has incorporated various elements of his imagined or actual autobiography into his poetry, providing a simplified framework for examination.

The question of the *translatability* of poetry has also long been a subject of debate across disciplines such as literature, linguistics, and translation studies. Despite progress in translation theory, a significant number of scholars continue to argue that poetry is essentially untranslatable due to the vast differences between the source and target languages, cultures, and literary traditions (Islam, 2019: 138). The claim of *untranslatability* posits that the essence of poetry cannot be conveyed through translation. The statement is very closely linked to the claim of *translatability*, which suggests that it is possible to establish an equivalence between the source and the target text (Tellioglu, 2018: 192).

The last but the most essential aspect to consider in the study of poetry is the analysis of its form and content. The fusion of form and content creates a discernible

pattern or structure that constitutes the valuable and insightful essence of the poem. Reading poetry involves and requires the discovery of contextual meaning. In addition to providing descriptive stylistic information, the analysis of poetic form can have critical applications that collectively reinforce the poem's thematic significance through its lexical patterns (Fowler, 1967: 78-81). It should be noted that the main emphasis of this thesis will be on the content of the poems rather than their structure.

2.1 Methodology

The study aims to present its findings based on a comparative analysis of historical facts from the poet's biography along with personal correlations. The goal is to identify potential relationships and connections while systematically reconstructing elements of the past. Overall, the study proposes to conduct research to examine the correlation between the poet's life and his literary works. This research was conducted based on following criteria:

- a) The research is specifically dedicated to analyzing Nâzım Hikmet's poetry.
- b) The poems chosen for analysis are those that can be reliably associated with defined periods of his life. Therefore, poems that were mainly personal and unrelated to any events mentioned in his biography were excluded.
- c) There is only one poem selected for analysis in each stage of his life, except for the first chapter, which covers his life from 1902 to 1921, and is represented by two shorter poems.
- d) While his love life played a significant role in his poetry, the thesis does not specifically focus on it.

The research employs a qualitative research methodology, which will be further explicated in the following paragraphs along with the multimodel created to carry on with the research.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon within its real-world context by means of observation, centering on the perspectives, interpretations, and experiences of individuals and groups involved. It tends to assess the quality (essence) of things using words, images, and descriptions. It also offers to examine the same phenomenon through similar or different methods by a number of researchers (Berg, Lune, 2017: 15). The study proposes to conduct a qualitative research to examine the correlation between the life of a poet and his literary works. The objective of the thesis is to establish a connection between the two through a parallel investigation, thereby achieving the stated research goal.

Historical criticism

Historical research seeks to methodically reconstruct the elements of the past that have also exerted an impact on the present. The comprehensive body of historical research draws upon an array of sources, comprising unpublished materials, in addition to primary and secondary sources. Social historical research is a technique utilized for exploring past events by analyzing written records and other accounts. Unlike traditional chronological accounts of history, this methodology endeavors to produce a descriptive narrative that captures the richness and dynamism of the historical era (Berg, Lune, 2017: 158). Given that the thesis is centered on the life and poetry of a poet, who lived as well as composed in the 20th century, the analytical approach will adopt a retrospective historical approach.

Comparative analysis

Comparative case studies involve extensive study of several cases, intended to allow better understanding, insight, or perhaps improved ability to theorize about a broader context. This research approach is also utilized when seeking to explore infrequent yet important occurrences, as it enables the collection of substantial data pertaining to the topic despite its relative rarity (Berg, Lune, 2017: 175). The subject matter of the thesis exemplifies a rare phenomenon, yet its examination offers a unique contribution to the

ongoing discourse. The study will employ a comparative analysis of historical facts extracted from the poet's biography and assumptions derived from personal analysis to construct a theoretical model. The comparison will seek to identify potential relationships and connections (Berg, Lune, 2017: 176).

Explanatory approach

Explanatory case studies are a valuable research approach when investigating causal relationships or addressing inferential research questions. In intricate research endeavors, researchers may opt to employ multivariate cases to explore a range of factors. The explanatory case study method aims to identify and scrutinize multiple factors and conditions that may contribute to a causal explanation for the case (Berg, Lune, 2017: 176).

Case study

The case study approach is a widely utilized research method that investigates a wide range of phenomena, including individuals, institutions, and significant events. It involves employing various data-gathering strategies and aims to identify or propose generalizable theoretical concepts. Case studies are often retrospective in nature, focusing on past events rather than ongoing issues. This method can be applied to study any phenomenon of interest. Case studies are valuable for conducting in-depth examinations of real-life situations, generating hypotheses, illustrating theoretical concepts, and providing insights that inform further research or practical applications (Berg, Lune, 2017: 170). The findings of a case study are typically presented in a written report that outlines the background information, research questions, methodology, data analysis, and conclusions. The report may also include direct quotes, excerpts, or examples from the data to support the analysis.

2.2 Nâzım Hikmet's Style(s) of Poetry

While being one of the most prominent modernist poets, his early poetic style was rooted in the Ottoman tradition. This is evident in one of his early poems, titled “Hala Servilerde Ağlıyorlar mı?” (“Are They Still Weeping Among the Cypresses?”), which was published in the earlier stage of his poetic journey (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 13). The cypress tree is a complex symbol that holds various meanings in different contexts. It is commonly found in Ottoman gardens and depicted in garden artwork. According to folklore, it is believed to be one of the trees in paradise, and its scent is said to be the first thing experienced after death. In the context of a garden gathering, the cypress represents the young male beloved, the wine server, the object of public love, and the ideal form of the object of love. It is also associated with the Arabic letter “elif,” which represents the numerical value of one and the name of God (Allah). Therefore, the cypress tree and the young male beloved are interconnected symbols that represent the unity of the Divine (Andrews, 2016: 31-32).

While Hikmet's early works were marked by clear and formative traditionalism, his true genius emerged through his departure from these established conventions (Kazım, 2015: 104). Through his family heritage, he found himself poised between the old world and the new, the cinematic culture of modernity and the mystical traditions of Islam. His poetic impulse may have been shaped by Rumi's meditations with their sensitivity to the deeper meaning of everyday life, after being introduced to the Sufi ideals of freedom, spirituality, and love (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 4-6).

Hikmet gained initial acclaim for his works of nationalistic verse that adhered to syllabic meter. However, his artistic vision underwent a transformative shift under the influence of the Russian futurist movement. It is evident that he was exposed to a significant external influence that deviated from his own tradition as he gave Anatolian settings to Mayakovsky's energy and anger (Almond, 2014: 33). He rejected traditional forms and instead adopted unconventional ones while attempting to “depoetize” poetry (Ahmed, 2019: 3). Numerous studies have focused on comprehending the stylistic change in Hikmet's writing (Kazım, 2015: 104). His poems feature simple language, contrasting

the Ottoman style, which was later often criticized by avant-garde poets for being unintelligible to the common man. He demonstrated through his poems, that modernity has been a mode of transformation compatible with different ideological commitments and various cultural identities (Aguiar, 2007: 105). Through his utilization of free-flowing verse, structurally coherent yet erratic form, exploration of consciousness, irony, and bitter humor, he distinguishes himself as one of the pioneering poets of modern Turkish verse (Kazım, 2015: 104).

“Çıkıyor kayık	“ <i>The boat comes up</i>
iniyor kayık	<i>the boat comes down</i>
çıkıyor ka...	<i>the boat co...</i>
iniyor ka...	<i>the boat co...</i>
çık...	<i>up...</i>
in...	<i>down...</i>
çık...”	<i>up...”</i>

(Ran, 1928)

Those are the last verses of his poem “Bahr-i Hazer” (“Caspian sea”). Onomatopoeia (utilization or invention of a term that sounds like, imitates, or evokes the noise it depicts) and calligram (an arrangement of language, in the form of a poem, phrase, section of scripture or a single word, designed to create a visually coherent representation of a specific theme) are hallmark features of the avant-garde movement that emerged in Europe during the late 19th century. However, these techniques are not exclusive to the European literary tradition and can also be found in Japanese haiku poetry (Ibuki, 2013: 29).

Hikmet was deeply influenced by the Soviet theatre and the Russian Futurist movement, which had a profound impact on the development of his distinct poetic style, characterized by its emphasis on innovation and experimentation, its rejection of traditional conventions, and its focus on contemporary art, technology, and politics (Poggi, 2008: ix). However, it is possible to sense signs of an avant-garde approach prior to the influence of the movement. This is demonstrated in his piece titled “Gölgesi” (“Her

Shadow”), which was dedicated to the aspiring poet Suat Derviş. Within this composition, after taking a fancy and being ignored by her, he resolves his inner conflict by rebelliously declaring “I jumped on her shadow” (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 14).

He brought modern political language into Turkish poetry. His innovative use of themes created a significant impact, and his unique poetic style challenged the established Ottoman poetic tradition by introducing rough irregularities in its rhythmic structure, although he also later used the rhyme schemes of older forms to satirically comment upon earlier traditions (Aguar, 2007: 109). Additionally, he wrote articles that centered on the responsibility of artists in a society undergoing rapid transformation. Despite being renowned for his lyrical poetry, Nâzım was not hesitant to explore philosophical concepts, including the idea that physical objects lack any existence beyond one's own subjective consciousness. He frequently incorporated images of the material world reflected in water into his poetry. During the 1920s and 1930s, Nâzım seamlessly blended philosophical themes with a more delicate form of lyricism, which differed greatly from the forceful verses he had composed during his initial trip to the Soviet Union. In “Bahr-i Hazer,” the crashing waves symbolize internal conflicts within the Turkish Communist Party, which the resilient helmsman must accept. After being imprisoned in Hopa prison, his style of writing underwent further development. The confinement in prison helped him restrain his inclination towards Mayakovskian rhetoric, and he began using more concise and powerful imagery to depict characters and scenes with great emotional impact (Göksü, Timms: 61-74). Nâzım’s literary interpretation of Marxism later evolved from futurism to constructivism. These celebrations of technology emphasize the superhuman energy needed for the revolutionary struggle (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 47-51). In his view, constructivism involved merging revolutionary themes with bold poetic experiments, such as using short lines and disrupted rhythms (Göksü, Timms: 82). For Nâzım politics and poetry formed a single strand, while speaking the most aesthetically pleasing form of language – the industrial one (Halman 1969: 60).

During the Second Congress of Soviet Writers in 1954, which was to discuss art in the Soviet Union, he supported the campaign for freedom of expression by arguing that

artistic style is not determined by ideological position (Turkevich, 1956: 31). While communism still made sense to him, he also realized that the personality cult had come to dominate the entire communist system. His later poetry reflected a wishful thinking of romantic communism rather than a realistic view of the Soviet system.

2.3 The Life of Nâzım Hikmet

2.3.1 Early years (1902-1920)

Nâzım Hikmet was born on January 15, 1902, in Salonika¹, a cosmopolitan city located in the westernmost region of the Ottoman Empire with a diverse population that was receptive to Western ideas (Lafi, 2012: 2). His family belonged to the Ottoman ruling class, as both his great-grandfathers were men of great distinction. His mother encouraged young Nâzım's interest in literature and painting, as she was a talented painter herself, had a good knowledge of French and enjoyed reading poetry. Her lineage is traceable to both Polish and Huguenot (French Protestant) origins. It was the Polish roots that Nâzım held in high esteem, a sentiment that grew stronger towards the end of his life (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 1-2). After being forced into exile and deprived of his Turkish nationality (which he was given back symbolically decades after his death), he became a Polish citizen, adopting the surname Borzenski after one of his renowned great-grandfathers (Emiroğlu, 2019: 293).

The primary figure who served as an influential role model for him was his grandfather, Nâzım Pasha. His grandfather was an Ottoman administrator with mystical tendencies, who had established a close relationship with three renowned liberal poets of the time, Namık Kemal, Ziya Pasha, and Mithat Pasha, who were associated with the cultural renewal movement that would eventually pave the way for revolution. In the eyes of young Nâzım, the most captivating aspect of his grandfather was his poetic and philosophical inclination. The recitation of poetry was a common feature of family life, and since Turkish is permeated by the principle of vowel harmony, Nâzım's ear became attuned to the melodic cadences of his own language. It was in this environment, coupled

¹ Known as Thessaloniki today

with the encouragement of his mother, where his poetic journey first began (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 4-6).

In 1908, the Young Turks launched a successful bid for power from Salonika, challenging the authority of Sultan Abdul Hamid. However, the regime change did not bring stability, and the weaknesses of the system persisted (Zürcher, 2004: 79-110). The seizure of power by Enver Pasha in January 1913 was unable to prevent further losses for the Ottomans, as military defeat in the Balkans resulted in the relinquishment of nearly all European territories, with Salonika ultimately being ceded to Greece (Proctor, 2009).

In August 1913, the Treaty of Bucharest compelled the Ottomans to relinquish their European territory, with the exception of a small tract of land in Thrace. In October 1914, in part due to the hope of regaining these territories, the Young Turk government allied with Germany and barely a year after the end of the Balkan War, the Ottoman Empire was at war again – for the last time, also perceiving a threat from Tsarist Russia’s demands for control of the Bosphorus (Zürcher, 2004: 110). These events elicited a vigorous response from the young poet. One of his earliest poems, “Feryâd-ı Vatan” (“The Cry of My Country”)² was composed when he was merely eleven years old, a year before the outbreak of the First World War (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 7).

Following World War I, the fate of Turkey appeared to be in the hands of foreign occupying powers who sought to divide the country and distribute the spoil amongst themselves. In response, Mustafa Kemal departed for Anatolia in 1919 and quickly began organizing political and military resistance (Zürcher, 2004: 142). By establishing a Turkish National Assembly in Ankara, he set the stage for the eventual formation of the Republic of Turkey. During this time, the Young Turk leaders, who had been responsible for a series of crimes, fled across the Black Sea on a German gunboat (Nanda, 1989: 362).

A group known as the “National Front” emerged in June 1919 to coordinate resistance against the occupying powers, and influential writers such as Halide Edib, who was one of the leaders of the patriotic resistance, addressed the crowds at open-air public meetings and spread the enthusiasm of a nation dedicated to fighting for national

² For an analysis of the poem see chapter 3.1

liberation, Adnan Adıvar, and Ahmet Emin Yalman rallied around the journal “Büyük Mecmua” (Grand Magazine), which became a platform for passionate debates about the future of the Empire (Zürcher, 2010: 217-219). Despite the challenges of defeat and occupation, some positive developments emerged during this period, including the admission of women to classes at the university for the first time and their participation in public life (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 9).

Subsequent political events that led to the official occupation of Istanbul in early 1920 served to further fortify Nâzım’s sense of patriotic duty as a poet. In his poem titled “Kırk Haramilerin Esiri” (“Hostage of the Forty Thieves”), he encourages individuals to join the ongoing liberation movement in Anatolia. His sense of patriotism remains a subject of conjecture, particularly in light of the circumstances surrounding his departure from the Naval College, where he had studied since the age of fifteen, after impressing a friend of his father with his literary talent, who also held the position of Chief of Naval Staff (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 11-13).

2.3.2 Communism as the New Religion (1921-1928)

In the short space of two years, Nâzım experienced separation from the navy, his family and Istanbul. On the way to Anatolia, he was accompanied by his friend of many years, Vâlâ Nurettin, and two other young poets. On their journey, they met Turkish students who had been deported from Germany for their involvement in the Spartacus League movement³ in Berlin, who also introduced them to the ideas of Marx and Lenin (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 15-17).

During the First World War, Ottoman Turkey and Tsarist Russia had been firmly opposed to each other. However, amidst the revolutionary landscape of the post-war era, Lenin and Kemal forged a partnership in their joint fight against imperialism (Gökay, 2017). Following the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, the Ottoman Empire faced a state of international isolation. Consequently, during the conflict with Greece, the sole potential ally was the Soviet Union (Booth, 1968: 13). One could contend that this event

³ An organization defined by its opposition to Germany’s involvement in the First World War and its advocacy for a socialist revolution

marked a milestone in their relationship, characterized by a fluctuating nature based on prospective profitability, which has persisted to the present day.

After the arrival of the young poet in Ankara, a city searching for a new identity, Hikmet was presented with a new cultural experience in the form of Shakespearean dramas (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 19-20). This encounter could have planted the seeds of inspiration for future plays of his own.

Nâzım's connection to Mustafa Kemal was established through a distant relative on his mother's side. This introduction presented an opportunity for the poets to utilize their skills to serve the patriotic cause and urge young people to join the liberation movement. Despite the poets' actions, they were not conscripted into the armed forces. Instead, they took on the role of soldiers in the "battle for education" by becoming schoolteachers in Bolu, a city between Istanbul and Ankara, which also embodied the conflict between traditionalists and progressives (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 22-25). The traditionalists supported the reign of the last Ottoman sultan Mehmed VI Vahdettin, who was not only the head of the state, but also the Caliph of Islam, while defending the religious customs. Their demand represented a half of the identity battle which remained present even after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (Heper, 2000: 64). Under the skin of fighters for traditional values, there was also a fear of the new and completely foreign, which in the future divided one state into two nations that were unable to understand each other because they spoke a different language – literally and metaphorically. The disruption of tradition theoretically and practically brought their world and its order into chaos. The burden of the Ottoman era was an obstacle to the creation of a new world.

This appointment was part of a larger strategy aimed at transforming the quasi-feudal Islamic society into a modern and secular state. Their main task was to challenge strong religious superstitions. However, they gradually realized that they were making little progress with a community still in the grip of religious fanaticism and that their own safety could not be assured. Additionally, their restlessness grew as they longed for a contact with a wider world. They began to consider the possibility of voyaging overseas, and before long, they embarked on a journey to a land abounding in complex relationships,

the Soviet Union, not knowing yet it would be a country convulsed by the consequences of war and revolution, instead of the utopia of which they dreamed (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 26-31).

The initial memories of the Soviet Union were full of surprises that caused cultural shock, mainly due to the discovery that the opposition to religion was somewhat superficial. The poets learned the Russian alphabet by studying propaganda posters on the walls, and quickly became immersed in the new society, participating in demonstrations and singing revolutionary songs. Despite the hazards associated with communism, the poets took the fateful decision to join the Turkish Communist Party (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 32-34). In his autobiographical novel, “Yaşamak Güzel Şey Be Kardeşim” (1967), he reflected on these events towards the end of his life.

The Soviet Union was still struggling with the aftermath of revolution and civil war, as well as a campaign against landowners and a devastating drought that led to millions of deaths from famine (Graziosi, 2017: 43). As a communist and a poet, Nâzım was confronted with appalling scenes that forced him to abandon his idealistic notions of the Soviet Union as a liberated and egalitarian society. Additionally, he had to create a new poetic style to articulate the upheavals of this modern politics (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 37-38).

Turkey to which he returned late in 1924 was a different country than the one from which he had left three years earlier. Kemal’s victory was marked with the international recognition through the Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923. On 29 October of the same year was the deteriorating, crumbling and exhausted Ottoman Empire, proclaimed the Republic of Turkey – a secular state that was awaiting a series of radical and significant reforms in the area of education and across many aspects of public life (Zürcher, 2004: 160-182). The press had significant liberty, and there were opportunities to engage in discussions about the merits of various political systems, and also delve into innovative literary concepts (Heper and Demirel, 1996: 110).

Upon his return to Turkey, Nâzım began a new phase in his development by contributing to *Aydınlık*, the monthly magazine of the Communist Party. In doing so, he

aimed to make the intricate ideas of Marxist theory more accessible to Turkish readers. However, he faced a challenge in developing a conceptual language while heavily relying on abstractions of Arabic origin. He also argued that Turkish literature should celebrate its own folk heroes – the rebels against Ottoman rule who fought for equality and justice.

The contributions he made to the magazine transformed not only the perception of art, but also the ideological foundation of the Party. However, his efforts were abruptly halted due to a Kurdish rebellion that created a crisis, allowing Kemal's government to justify suppressing all political opposition, including the press (Zürcher, 2004: 174). That forced Nâzım to live in darkness, both literally and metaphorically for several months. Eventually he managed to obtain false identity documents, which enabled him to return to the Soviet Union, where he aimed to create a fresh type of political performance art by incorporating simple scenery with geometric designs, incorporating aspects of cabaret and pantomime, and possibly even drawing inspiration from Turkish puppet theater (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 62-66).

The Kemalist regime's oppressive tactics and persecution of leftist groups had discouraged many people, causing the leftist party to lose both potential and current supporters. In an effort to address these shortcomings after communist newspapers were banned, the Party launched a comprehensive review strategy in 1926, with Nâzım expected to take a prominent role in it. Nonetheless, he did not come back to Turkey until the summer of 1928 (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 70).

2.3.3 Demolishing the Idols (1928-1938)

Nâzım made the decision to illegally cross the border without a visa, but he was caught for entering the country using a false identity. He was imprisoned for the first time and spent six months in jail before eventually being released (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 72-76).

By this date the Kemalist regime has consolidated its power, having suppressed both the Kurdish rebels and religious opponents. Mustafa Kemal had nearly gained dictatorial control, but his modernization efforts had increased his reputation internationally, even

leading to the possibility of the country joining the League of Nations (Güçlü, 2003: 190). Nâzım's accomplishments as a poet overshadow his work as a political activist, as he was especially productive between 1928 and 1938. During this time, there was a public campaign for communism through legal publications, as well as a secret underground movement. Nâzım was at the forefront of the legal campaign, using publications such as the weekly magazine *Resimli Perşembe* and the monthly *Resimli Ay* to spread radical ideas. Despite his literary success, he was accused of merely pretending to incorporate Marxism into his poetry, and his individualistic approach continued to be viewed with suspicion by dogmatic Marxists. Eventually, he was expelled from the Party for being a bourgeois deviationist. However, despite all his efforts, he was still unaware of the terrible consequences of Stalin's programme. The idealistic conception of communism formed during the 1920s in Moscow continued to shape his vision (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 70-81).

After he was hired as a proofreader for the magazine, a new generation of writers emerged, who were interested in addressing social issues such as the struggles of the working class, peasants, and those oppressed by the ruling class. The magazine also advocated for women's rights, promoting criticism of repressive religious and social institutions. He believed that writers should face the challenge of social change and serve the people (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 85-87). The controversy over "demolishing the Idols" created a divide in the literary world between the progressive *Resimli Ay* and the traditionalists supported by conservative newspapers and the patriotic association known as "Halk Ocakları" ("Turkish Hearts") (Sütçüoğlu, 2011: 97).

Due to the first gramophone recording of his poems, his fame was spreading beyond just the literary elite. His voice attracted new admirers, including Mustafa Kemal. However, in January 1931, *Resimli Ay* was shut down due to political pressure, as the majority of the contributors took a radical stance which displeased the proprietors. Despite this setback, Nâzım was committed to confronting his bourgeois opponents and continued to do so in the form of a book (Göksü, Timms: 95-97).

The years 1929-33 mark the longest period of freedom he experienced in Turkey, characterized by a very active social life. All turned around with his father's death, caused by carelessness of the doctors. Hikmet felt so incensed that he wrote a satirical poem about the greed of the owning class, which paved the way for his next arrest. He was in and out of prison so often that it was difficult to keep track of all the charges against him (Göksü, Timms: 100-103). During this time he also had to choose a surname, under legislation introduced as a part of Atatürk's modernization programme (Türköz, 2007: 893). He had been reluctant to adopt a surname, as many of his contemporaries were choosing sonorous names like "Başaran" ("Successful") or "Kurtaran" ("Saviour") (Göksü, Timms: 104-110). Eventually, with wit and at the same time indifference, he adopted the surname "Ran," similarly as one of the prominent female poets and activists, Halide Edib Adıvar, whose surname literally means that she "has a name" or that her "name exists."

2.3.4 One Life Spent in Prison (1938-1950)

Despite facing the possibility of a death penalty, Nâzım found the conditions in Bursa prison to be manageable. His previous experience living in a Soviet commune helped him adapt to the prison life. During his time there, he remained productive in his literary pursuits and even prepared a film scenario, which marked the beginning of his involvement in cinema and opened up new opportunities for future success (Göksü, Timms: 113). After being released due to an amnesty marking the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic, Nâzım continued working with İpek Studios under Muhsin Ertuğrul, an actor and director who made significant contributions to Turkish theatre and cinema (Arslan, 2014: 5). Nâzım later served as Ertuğrul's assistant, which may have influenced the cinematic elements present in his later poetry, especially "Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları" ("Human Landscapes From My Country") (1967) (Göksü, Timms: 114).

Due to his impact on young readers, including students and military cadets, Nâzım became a considerable threat and was subsequently arrested again. Despite the crisis of those years, his productivity was noteworthy. In 1936, he produced one of his most outstanding historical poems, called "Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı" ("Epic of Sheikh

Bedreddin”), in which he gave a new political meaning to a peasant uprising in the medieval Ottoman Empire (Kalin, 2019: 350). When read in the context of 1936, this poem can be interpreted as a metaphor for confronting the fascist threat (Göksü, Timms: 121-130).

He was a poet who wrote with a purpose and was fully aware of the danger posed to his own freedom. In his fight against fascism, he made significant sacrifices. As a result, he faced numerous accusations and arrests, some of which were justified while others were wrongful. He was eventually sent to Bursa prison, where he would spend the next ten years of his life (Göksü, Timms: 137-168).

In 1941, the German army’s attack on the Soviet Union had a profound impact. The German army made remarkable advances, which led to the belief that fascism was unstoppable and the Soviet Union would have to surrender (Stolfi, 1982: 45). However, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1942 and brought the United States into the war, the balance shifted. Churchill was determined to persuade Turkey, which was neutral until then, to join the allied side, but the Turkish leadership was reluctant (Deringil, 1982: 48). Nâzım was frustrated that he could not influence the events. Although he was unable to comment on world events, he served as a teacher and political mentor in prison, as most of the inmates were illiterate. His idealism changed, and the workers depicted in his poetry were no longer the idealized heroes of Social Realism, but instead incorporated the bitter experiences of the prison population. He turned the stories of inmates, which were only photographs, into liveful movies. He also used his personal experiences and suffering from deteriorating health as inspiration for his poetry, while turning his physical symptoms into lyrical form, expressing his anxieties about illness, aging, and death (Göksü, Timms: 172-181).

His epic poem, *Human Landscapes*, which continued to progress during his imprisonment, eventually took over 20 years to write and was not actually published till the 1960s, for the fear of publishers and presumable doubts of Nâzım himself, as such kind of book from the hands of a communist writer should not have been published just when Turkish troops were being sent forth to fight in Korea, in a war which he, as a member of

the World Peace Council strongly opposed (Çetin, 2018: 67). Only fragments of the surviving text's small section were published during his lifetime. The origins of the poem offer valuable insights into his intellectual development. It features a collection of narratives that were started at different times with diverse intentions, documenting the lives of ordinary Turkish people instead of renowned individuals, while endowing the political narrative with more personal overtones by using letters that he received from his friends. At the end the implications of the work reached beyond the boundaries of Turkey. It was not a book of poetry, he equally utilised elements of prose, theatre, even film scenario. During the same period, he also worked on a second major project that he had started in prison in 1939 - "Milli Kurtuluş Destanı" ("The Legend of National Liberation"), drawing on Atatürk's speeches to reconstruct the details of the War of National Liberation and gain historical authenticity, which he eventually integrated with the conception of *Human Landscapes* (Göksü, Timms: 220-234).

Nâzım's life was in turmoil during 1949, but his spirits were lifted by a public campaign that aimed for his release (Halman, 1969: 62). However, Nâzım remained sceptical about the attempt to downplay his communism, he didn't want to be pardoned; instead, he was determined to have justice served. A series of events took place, including press conferences where patriotic passages from Nâzım's poems were read to gain public support. He believed that a hunger strike was the only way to succeed. Two appeals were created, one by prominent artists and writers, and the other by members of other professions such as doctors, lawyers, and politicians. Nâzım's case gained international attention, with telegrams of support arriving from abroad (Göksü, Timms: 207-211). An international committee was formed in Paris in September 1949, co-ordinated by the poet Tristan Tzara, and supported by leading French artists and intellectuals, including Camus, Sartre, and Picasso (Blasing, 2013: 329). The Amnesty Bill was ultimately passed on July 14th, 1950 as a form of compromise. Despite facing numerous challenges and obstacles along the way, Nâzım was eventually granted his freedom (Göksü, Timms: 216).

2.3.5 The Romantic Communist (1950–1963)

Although Nâzım's release was celebrated by some, there was a prevailing sense of unease due to the society's overall indifference or hostility towards political prisoners. Nâzım faced an intense barrage of Cold War propaganda, being labeled a traitor and devoid of any moral values and prospects in the communist realm. The anti-communist campaign, instigated by the Adnan Menderes administration, demonstrated the starkly divided state of Turkish politics by engendering an atmosphere of suspicion and fear akin to a witch hunt (Göksü, Timms: 253-256).

Upon Nâzım's arrival in Moscow during the height of the Cold War, he was greeted with an overwhelming amount of attention and seen as a hero who had chosen freedom, while kept under surveillance by the secret police. Nâzım had not been in Moscow since 1928 and his thirteen years in jail left him unaware of the effects of Stalinism and the political and cultural repression in Soviet society (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 257-259).

During his time in the Soviet Union, Nâzım actively participated in the international peace movement and attended numerous conferences worldwide. By 1952 he had become increasingly involved in public affairs and was eventually selected for official missions to various countries including Austria, Czechoslovakia, China, Germany, Hungary, and Poland to disseminate Communist ideology. While his primary goal was to promote Soviet interests during the Cold War, his diplomatic and literary actions held greater significance. Through these peace conferences, he reiterated his unwavering commitment to global cooperation and revitalized his literary reputation (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 265-67). Despite failing to obtain Soviet citizenship, he acquired a Polish passport and changed his surname to Borzenski (Emiroğlu, 2019: 293).

As an official member of the World Council of Peace, Hikmet wrote extensively about political and social issues, including human rights violations, for which he was awarded an international peace prize. He was actively against the Korean War, where he criticized the Turkish government for supporting American imperialism at the cost of lives of workers, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Soviet-sponsored peace

movement successfully raised concerns about the use of weapons of mass destruction, with Hiroshima becoming a symbol of an unprecedentedly dangerous era (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 268-269). As a poet laureate of the peace movement, he utilized his literary works, including poems such as “Japon Balıkçısı” (“The Japanese Fisherman”), “Bulutlar Adam Öldürmesin” (“Don't Let the Clouds Kill”) and “Kız Çocuğu” (“The Little Girl”) to serve as an advocate for his cause (Blasing, Mizanoğlu-Reddy, 2002: 271).

In the mid-1950s, Nâzım also continued writing plays and had one of them, titled “Ferhat ile Şirin” (“Legend of Love”), staged in Czechoslovakia in 1954. In early 1957, he wrote a poem called “Pırağ Dedikleri” (“This Place Called Prague”), which presented a dark and somber vision, hinting at political disillusionment and personal depression. Although Nâzım did not publicly question the Soviet invasion, he was skeptical about the cult of the great leader, while still having great respect for him (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 272-276).

Following Stalin’s death, the Soviet Union experienced a gradual process of liberalization. Nâzım’s stance vividly highlighted the dilemma of balancing party loyalty and individual self-expression during this period. He attempted to reassess the Stalin Period through a three-act play titled “İvan İvanoviç Var Mıydı Yok Muydu?” (“Did Ivan Ivanovich Exist or Didn’t He?”), written in 1954. His plays of this period adapted traditional folk motifs to the “New Humanism” of the 1950s, exploring people’s individual strengths and weaknesses. He wanted his works to address all his readers’ problems (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 277-295).

From 1954 to 1963, through his involvement in theatre, Nâzım had the opportunity to make various broadcasts in Turkish for the main broadcasting centers of the communist world. His radio journalism was not a forceful form of communist propaganda, but a more nuanced and humorous approach that appealed to the listeners’ sense of social justice. Nâzım was a vocal advocate for greater democracy in Turkey, while also criticizing the country’s military alliance with the United States and the establishment of American bases throughout the nation (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 300-301). Nâzım consistently criticized imperialism throughout his lifetime, beginning with the Sultan’s capitulation to western

powers in the early 1920s and later targeting American imperialism (Mignon, 2021: 164). He addressed topics of concern to everyday citizens, including petrol shortages, inflation, and postage prices. Following the 1960 military coup, his commentaries shifted to advocate for more significant changes, such as land reform and working-class participation in politics. While his previous broadcast had appealed to the entirety of the Turkish population, he now specifically called for the working class to bring about change. This led to a strong backlash, with one newspaper in Ankara even labeling him a traitor (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 304-309). His broadcasts were politically biased, with no mention of Soviet imperialism or popular uprisings in countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, which were considered to have already been liberated by the Red Army according to official doctrine (Blasing, 2010: 21).

Throughout the last decade of his life, Nâzım seemed to be attempting to condense a lifetime of travels into just a few years. While his medical well-being may have been jeopardized by this lifestyle, it proved to be highly productive in terms of his poetry. In January 1962, he finally obtained a full Soviet passport and continued his travels until the final months of his life, which brought about emotional renewal. In his later poetry, he celebrated the life of a poet who had experienced a wide range of both joy and suffering, remaining a romantic communist until his death. He was open about the personal values that inspired his public commitments, and even in his most political poems, he retained his unique voice. His late poetry was marked by a resonance with intimations of death, as exemplified in his poem “Masalların Masalı” (“A Fable of Fables”) in which he used simple Turkish words to revive a tradition of meditations on transience within the context of a modern cosmology. Nâzım Hikmet died on in June 1963 as a result of a cardiac event. Throughout his final thoughts, he transposed his profound anxieties into simple words while contemplating death (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 324-346).

3 Analysis of Selected Poems

The poet's biography was organized into different phases or chapters, each featuring a representative poem, except for chapter 3.1, which covers his early years. The poems will be analyzed by examining the translation process, the structure of the selected poems, and comparing them with the context of the poet's life, all with the aim of creating a comprehensive "mosaic." The analysis of the poems will be conducted using three versions in following order: the original poem in Turkish (bold text), the published translation (regular text), and a literal translation (italic text), with the exception of the second poem in chapter 3.1, for which an official translation is not available. The original poems were sourced from Nâzım Hikmet's poetry collection "Bütün şiirleri," while the English versions were obtained from "Poems of Nazım Hikmet" by Randy Blasing, as well as "Romantic Communist" by Saime Göksü and Edward Timms.

As mentioned earlier, translating poetry presents a challenge to the essence of the poetry itself.⁴ The plain "common" language of Hikmet's poetry makes it easier to translate into other languages, however, unfortunately, due to the complexity, layering and elusiveness of certain expressions, it is sometimes impossible to capture the beauty with all its aspects. To achieve a successful translation of poetry, the emotional essence must be preserved, however, certain elements are closely intertwined with the language in which the poetry is written, making it more appropriate to consider them as "interpretations" rather than translations. The following chapters will explore the extent to which poetry loses or preserves its meaning in the actual translation process and whether it is truly translated or rather recreated. These works have been chosen for their significant relationship to a particular event in the poet's life, geographic location, or overarching influence in a broader sense. The selected poems will be listed and analysed in chronological order.

⁴ See chapter 2 (On Analysis of Poetry)

3.1 Feryâd-ı Vatan (The Cry of My Country) & Mehmet Çavuşa! (To Corporal Mehmet!)

It is important to mention that the Turkish poems in question are not the original versions, as they were written during a time when the official form of the Ottoman Turkish alphabet used the Perso-Arabic script. The alphabet underwent a reform from Perso-Arabic to Latin script as part of extensive reforms in the early years of the newly established Turkish republic (Zürcher, 2004: 183). Therefore, with this particular version, it is not preferred to incorporate the visual aspects of the poem into the structural analysis.

At the age of 11, in 1913, Nâzım wrote one of his earliest poems, titled “Feryâd-ı Vatan” (“The Cry of My Country”). This was during a critical period as the Ottoman Empire, on the verge of World War I, was compelled to renounce its European territories, except for a small region in Thrace. While this poem may not have the same level of depth and complexity as Hikmet’s later works, it provides a glimpse into his early poetic sensibilities. The second poem, “Mehmet Çavuşa!” (“To Corporal Mehmet!”) allows us to delve further into his intense patriotic emotions, while also unveiling initial autobiographical and personal hints to seek within his poetry.

Feryâd-ı Vatan

Sisli bir sabahı henüz

It was a misty morning still

It was still a foggy morning

Etrafı bürümüştü bir duman

everywhere covered in smoke

Surroundings had been covered with smoke

Uzaktan geldi bir ses ah aman aman!

a distant voice is heard: help help!

A voice came from afar: Oh God! Lord help us!

Sen bu feryâd-ı vatanı dinle işit

Hearken to the cry of your country,

[You], hear [and] listen to this cry of the country

Dinle de vicdanına öyle hükmet

hear it and tell your conscience

Listen, too, to your conscience, judge like that

Vatanın parçalanmış bağı

the torn heart of your country

The torn heart of the country

Bekliyor senden ümit

is counting on you.

Is awaiting hope from you

The first line sets the atmosphere of the poem. It begins by describing the scenery full of smoke, possibly after a battle, with the context likely being the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). “Ah aman aman!” is one of the expressions that, although translated successfully, convey the biggest emotion in the original. The repetition adds a sense of urgency or distress while introducing the central event of the poem. This deep sense of patriotism and social awareness, which is quite remarkable for someone of only thirteen years of age, aligns with the themes that Nâzım would explore throughout his life, as he became known for his commitment to social justice and his politically engaged poetry. The poem’s structure moves from distance to a direct appeal. Without explicitly naming anyone, he indirectly points a finger at certain individuals and straightforwardly holds them responsible, urging them to reflect on their actions and consider whether they are acting in the best interest of their country or simply pursuing their own agenda. It is likely that the poem was directed towards those who were seen as the Empire’s hope during its decline, namely the Young Turks, who were publicly criticized for involving the Ottoman Empire in World War I.

Alternatively, it is possible that he is directing his words towards the reader, encouraging them to be attentive, actively listen, and allow their conscience to steer their actions and choices. The poem underscores the significance of moral judgment, as if imploring the reader to reflect upon the situation and consider how they might alter it. He suggests that the reader, as an individual, holds the power to provide that hope and contribute to the healing and unity of the nation. In 1915, shortly after the arrival of the Allied forces in the Dardanelles, Nâzım wrote a poem infused with even greater patriotism, addressed to a certain sergeant.

Mehmet Çavuşa!

Vatan için ey kahraman

Hayatına hor baktın

*For the homeland, oh hero
You disregarded your life*

**Arslan gibi saldırarak
Namertleri hep yaktın**

*Attacking like a lion
You always burned the cravens*

**Kurşun bitip tüfeğin de kılınca
Düşmanına taş attın**

*When bullets ran out and your rifle broke down
You threw stones at your enemy*

**Bu besâlet karşısında hangi kale
düşmez ki**

*In the face of such bravery
Which fortress would not fall*

**Bu şecaat karşısında hangi düşman
kaçmaz ki**

*In the face of such courage
Which enemy would not flee?*

**İşte senin düşmanın
Tabii ki kaçacak**

*Behold! Your enemy
For sure they will run away*

**Yine büyük Türk adı
Dağlar taşlar aşacak**

*Once again, the great Turkish name
Will surpass mountains and stones*

**Yine Türkün bayrağı
Kaleleri yıkacak**

*Once again, the flag of the Turks
Will bring down fortresses*

**Yine Türkün gemisi
Denizleri aşacak**

*Once again, the ship of the Turks
Will cross the seas*

**Yine Türkün sanatı
Avrupa'ya taşacak**

*Once again, the art of the Turks
Will overflow to Europe*

**Yine Türkün sinesi
Vatan aşkıyla dolacak**

*Once again, the heart of the Turks
Will be filled with the love of the country*

**İşte bunlar emin ol
Emin ol ki olacak**

*Here they are, you bet
Believe me, it will happen*

**Yine Türkün tarihi
Yaldızlı sayfeler yazacak.**

*Once again, the history of the Turks
Will write the gilded pages.*

The poem is essentially a heartfelt ode to the Turkish nation, and in some ways, a self-centered attitude reminiscent of past eras like the Golden Age of the Ottoman Empire. It aims to inspire and uplift, invoking a sense of national pride and resilience. It glorifies the heroic actions and the indomitable spirit of an unnamed protagonist who fights

tirelessly for the homeland, burning the cowards and traitors, and overcoming all obstacles. This echoes Hikmet's own themes of heroism, patriotism, resilience, and the struggle for justice. Taking a closer look at the verse "Yine Türkün sinesi / Vatan aşkıyla dolacak," we may find a link to an "identity crisis" that began to be prevalent in the Ottoman Empire since the 19th century. This crisis was followed by the reforms of Tanzimat, which not only aimed to make the Empire more western but also sought to unify it in order to treat all ethnicities and nations equally (Zürcher, 2004: 51). Consequently, this unified Empire would be loved by all citizens. The objective was to prevent them from seeking independence, which became a fatal threat for the multiethnic Ottoman Empire. This threat was reaching its peak exactly at the time when young Nazım wrote this poem.

He speaks of name of the Turks surpassing all challenges, conquering fortresses, crossing seas, and spreading art and love for the homeland. In the realm of poetry, we can view it as a kind of solace amidst life's challenges and difficulties. Here, the ode assures us that justice prevails, regardless of the actual reality. These sentiments align with Hikmet's belief in the power of the Turkish people to shape their own destiny and create a better future, a conviction that ultimately reached its pinnacle with the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. With the verse "Yine Türkün sanatı Avrupa'ya taşacak," he not only implies that the magnificent arts of the Turks will once again be adored in Europe, but possibly also conveys his aspirations for fostering positive relations with Europe. This is because art not only aims to delight the eye and express ideas, but also enables a distinct form of communication that may not occur otherwise, or at least not with such profound depth.

Hikmet frequently used the name "Mehmet" in his poetry. It held personal significance as he initially published his early poems under the pen name "Mehmet Nâzım" and later named his son the same. Mehmet was a prominent theme in *Human Landscapes* as well, representing the enduring Turkish infantryman who courageously faced the hardships of war. Interestingly, in 1951, when Nâzım was working on revising this part of the poem for publication, it became an ironic twist of fate that thousands of Mehments were once again conscripted to participate in a foreign conflict (Göksü, Timms,

2006: 245-246). Furthermore, it is worth noting that Nâzım Hikmet's childhood hero, his uncle, who fought in the Balkan Wars in the autumn of 1912 at the tender age of 20, bore the name Mehmet Ali (Şabanoğlu, 2015). Hence, it is highly likely that the poem was dedicated to him. Amidst this atmosphere of euphoria, Nâzım's fervent patriotism fueled his eagerness to actively participate. His patriotic poetry opened doors for him, leading to his enrollment as a cadet at the Naval College in Heybeliada (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 7).

3.2 San'at Telakkisi (Regarding Art)

"San'at Telakkisi" reveals significant insights into Nâzım's perspective as a writer and artist, serving the purpose of his manifesto. He questions, "Perhaps I lack 'the poetic nature'?" Nonetheless, he manages to infuse a poetic essence into his profound appreciation for industrialism and the grubby faces of laborers, thereby forging his distinctive artistic style. His language undeniably carries a romantic and poetic quality, while celebrating the idea of dynamism, energy, movement and propaganda. His poetry could be separated from politics. They were two sides of one coin that could not exist without each other.

**Bazen ben de gönül ahlarımı
çekerim birer birer
kan kırmızı yakut bir tespih gibi,
ve bu kızıl pırıltılı tespihin ipi
sırma saç tellerindedir...**

Sometimes I, too, tell the ah's
of my heart one by one
like the blood-red beads
of a ruby rosary strung
on strands of golden hair!

*Sometimes I pull the sighs
of my heart one by one
like a blood-red ruby rosary,
and the string of this red shimmery rosary
is made of strands of golden hair...*

**Fakat
benim
şiiirime ilham veren perimin
omuzlarında açılan kanat :**

**asma köprülerimin
demir putrellerindedir!.**

But my
poetry's muse
takes to the air
on wings made of steel
like the I-beams
of my suspension bridges!

*But
the wing(s) that opened on the shoulders
of my fairy who inspires my poetry
is from the iron beams
of my suspension bridges!.*

**Dinlenir,
dinlenmez değil
bülülün güle karşı feryatları..
Fakat asıl
benim anladığım dil :-
Bakır, demir, tahta, kemik ve kirişlerle çalınan
Bethovenin sonatları..**

I don't pretend
the nightingale's lament
to the rose isn't easy on the ears. . .
But the language
that really speaks to me
are Beethoven sonatas played
on copper, iron, wood, bone, and catgut. . .

*It is not unheard,
it is listened to
nightingale's cries for the rose...
But the language
that I actually understand :-
are Beethoven's sonatas played
on copper, iron, wood, bone and catgut..*

**Sen istediğin kadar
tozu dumana katar
sürebilirsin atını!.
Ben değişmem
en halüsüddem
arap atına;
saatte 110 kilometrelik sür'atini
demir raylarda koşan
demir beygirimini!.**

You can *have*
galloping off
in a cloud of dust!
Me, I wouldn't trade
for the purest-bred
Arabian steed

the sixty mph
of my iron horse
running on iron tracks!
*You can ride your horse
as much as you want
swirling up dust
I would not trade
for the purest bred
Arabian horse;
the speed of 110 kilometres per hour
of my iron horse
running on iron tracks!.*

**İri şaşkın bir sinek gibi takılır bazan gözüm
odamın köşesindeki usta örümcek ağlarına..
Lakin asıl hayranım ben :-
halikleri mavi gömleklili mimarlarım olan
77 katlı beton-arme dağlarına!**

Sometimes my eye is caught like a big dumb fly
by the masterly spider webs in the corners of my room.
But I really look up
to the seventy-seven-story, reinforced-concrete mountains
my blue-shirted builders create!

*Sometimes my eye is caught like a big confused fly
by the masterly spider webs in the corner of my room..
But I'm a real admirer of :-
the seventy-seven-story, reinforced concrete mountains
whose creators are my blue-shirted builders!*

**Erkek güzeli
"Biblos ilâhı genç Adonis"
köprü başında karşıma çıkırsa,
belki bakmadan geçerim de;
Filozofumun yuvarlak gözlüklü gözüne,
ve ateşçimin
dört köşe terli bir güneş gibi yanan yüzüne
bakmadan geçemem!..**

Were I to meet
the male beauty
"young Adonis, god of Byblos,"
on a bridge, I'd probably never notice;
but I can't help staring into my philosopher's glassy eyes
or my fireman's square face
red as a sweating sun!

*If I came across
the male beauty
"young Adonis, the god of Byblos"
on a bridgehead, perhaps I'd even pass by without looking;
I can't pass by without looking into my philosopher's round-glassed eye*

*and at my fireman's square sweaty face
burning like a sun!*

**Ben
elektirikli tezgâhlarımda doldunılan
üçüncü nevi hazır cigara içerim de,
isterse Samsunun olsun
tütünü kâğıda elimle sarıp içemem!.
Değişmedim
değişemem**

Though I can smoke
third-class cigarettes filled
on my electric workbenches,
I can't roll tobacco—even the finest—
in paper by hand and smoke it!
I didn't—
wouldn't—trade

*I can also smoke
third-class ready-made cigarette(s)
filled on my electric workbenches,
let it even be from Samsun
I can't roll tobacco in paper with my hand and smoke it!
I didn't trade
I wouldn't trade*

**Havvanın çırılçıplaklığına
meşin kasketli meşin ceketli karımı!.
Belki benim "tab'ı şairanem" yok?!.
Neyleyim!.**

**Toprak ananın çocuklarından çok seviyorum :-
kendi çocuklarımı!**

my wife dressed in her leather cap and jacket
for Eve's nakedness!
Maybe I don't have a "poetic soul"?
What can I do
when I love my own children
more
than Mother Nature's!

*My wife dressed in a leather cap and jacket
for Eve's nakedness!.
Perhaps I don't have a "poetic nature"?
What can I do
when I love my own children more :-
than children of Mother nature!*

Certain words or expressions, despite being translated correctly, sometimes lose their complexity and multi-layered nature. For example, the word "katar" in the line "Sen

istediğin kadar tozu dumana katar sürebilirsin atını!” Hikmet's poetry may be misunderstood and accused of being plain and lacking poetic sensibility. It can be observed that specific emotions are more easily evoked and empathized with when reading a literal translation. This is particularly noticeable from the perspective of individuals who are not proficient in the Turkish language, as the verses may appear somewhat dry or even superficial. However, Hikmet infuses his writing with a great deal of playfulness. While his poetry can be considered a departure from the strict rules and emphasis on tradition in Ottoman poetry, it challenges us to do the same to a certain extent. In the stanza, Nâzım declares that he would not exchange his “iron horse,” symbolizing a locomotive, for the most precious and expensive horse alive. The word “katar” holds significance within the compound verb, and its individual meaning can be traced back to Persian influence on Ottoman Turkish. Originally derived from “qatar,” “katar” referred to a line of animals standing one after another and later evolved to represent all the wagons pulled by a locomotive. Thus, we can observe how this word connects various aspects of the stanza and the entire poem, revealing the underlying links between them. Even the word “kiriş” in the line “benim anladığım dil bakır, demir, tahta, kemik ve kirişlerle çalınan Beethoven'in sonatları...” encounters a similar issue. It was translated as “catgut,” referring to a musical instrument string. However, it can also mean “beam,” which aligns perfectly with the subject matter.

Last illustration can be seen in the line “halikleri mavi gömlekli mimarlarım olan 77 katlı beton-arme dağlarına!” The term “halik” typically refers to the Creator, and within the context of Islam, creation is attributed solely to Allah. However, Nâzım employs this word to describe the workers, not only drawing a comparison to God but also implying that a worker is his God. This further reinforces the idea of “communism as the new religion.”

It is suitable to highlight the line “isterse Samsun'un olsun” as well. It was translated as “even the finest tobacco,” where it is unfortunate to witness the diminishing beauty of seemingly simple words. “Samsun” refers both to a specific type of tobacco and the region of its production, known as Samsun tobacco, which holds historical significance

in Turkey and is highly valued for its exquisite scent and taste. There is no purpose in excluding it; as a result, the line loses a profound significance, depriving us of insights into Turkish culture, history, industry, and more.

The poem, although its exact date is unknown, was composed around 1925, coinciding with the time when Nâzım became acquainted with the ideas of Marx and Lenin, during a period of new experiences in the Soviet Union. Being a communist and a poet, he had developed a distinct perspective on poetry writing. His perspective on poetry closely resonated with the ideas expressed by György Lukács, who asserted that true poets actively engage in the social struggle, while those who merely seek to “describe” are inadvertently aligning themselves with oppressive forces. Art serves a social function, it can either reinforce the existing political order or challenge and disrupt it (Graham, 1997: 5). Hikmet’s concept of beauty involved blending traditional imagery with elements of modernism, futurism, socialism, and industrialization. His muse took the form of a fairy with iron wings, and while the nightingale’s song remained unforgettable, the language he truly comprehended was that of Beethoven (whose works were deeply analyzed within the context of communism) sonatas played on materials like copper, iron, and wood. Nâzım would not exchange the locomotive for the most esteemed breed of horse. He found beauty in the smudged cheeks of laborers rather than in superficial appearances. A single glimpse of his wife adorned in a leather cap and jacket, which was typically worn by Russian Bolsheviks, was more valuable to him than a gaze upon Eve’s nakedness. Furthermore, he fearlessly acknowledged that he held the hearts of his “own children” (communists/workers) in his palm, rather than those of “the children of Mother Nature” (representing society at large).

3.3 Gömlek, Pantolon, Kasket ve Fötire Dair (On Shirts, Pants, Cloth Caps, and Felt Hats)

As discussed in chapter 2.3.4, Nâzım’s idealistic view of communism took shape during the 1920s in Moscow. This vision continued to influence him, even though he was unaware of the negative consequences of Stalin’s program. However, as time went on,

particularly in the 1930s, Nâzım underwent a transformation in how he perceived the great leaders. The poem reflects his loyalty and romanticized stance on communism.

Bana :
"temiz gömlek
giymek
düşmandır," diyenler
varsa eğer,
muazzam hocanın resmine baksın.

If there are those
who'd call
me
"an enemy
of a clean shirt,"
they should see a picture of my great teacher.

*If there are those
who'd tell
me
"he's an enemy
of wearing a clean shirt,"
let them see a picture of my great teacher.*

Ustalanının ustası Marks'ın
ceketi rehindeydi,
bir övün⁵ yemek yerdı dört günde.

The master of masters, Marx, pawned
his jacket,
and he ate maybe one meal every four days;

*The jacket of Marx, the Master of Masters
was pawned,
he would eat one meal in four days.*

Dalgalarırdı fakat
heybetli sakalı :
bembeyaz
tertemiz
kolalı
bir gömleğin üstünde..

yet
his awesome beard
cascaded
down a spotless
snow-white

⁵ It is likely that this is a typographical error. In this particular situation, the word "öğün" (meaning "meal") would be the most appropriate choice

starched shirt . . .

However

*his imposing beard:
fluttered
on a snow-white
spotlessly clean
starched
shirt..*

Ütülü pantolona idam hükmü kim verdi?

And since when did pressed pants get the death sentence?

Who sentenced the ironed pants to death?

Tosunlar,

**şu bizim tarihi demek parmak okusunlar :
1848'de kurşunlar**

**demir bir tarak gibi geçerken başından,
halis İngiliz kumaşından
halis İngiliz modasıyla
ütülü mum gibi bir pantolon giyerdi
- Alanglez -**

insanların en büyüğü Engels . . .

Wise guys

should read our history here, too:
"In 1848, as bullets parted his hair,
he'd wear
pants of genuine English wool
in true English style,
creased and waxed
à l'anglaise–
the greatest of men, Engels . . .

Lads

*it means our history, let them read [with] finger:
Bullets in 1848, like an iron comb going down his head
[he]'d wear pants
from pure English fabric
in true English style
ironed and waxed
– à l'anglaise –
the greatest of men, Engels...*

Vladimir Iliç Ulyanof Lenin

**ateşten bir dev gibi çıktığı zaman
barikata,**

yakalığı da vardı

kıravatı da . .

When Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin stood
like a fire-breathing giant on the barricades, he wore a collar
and a tie as well . . .”

*When Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin climbed
the barricades like a giant from fire,
he had a collar
and a tie as well..*

**Bana gelince :
Ben ki, herhangi bir⁶ proleter şairiyim,
Marksisto - Leninist şuur,
30 kilo kemik,
7 litre kan,
bir iki kilometre kadar,
damar,
adale, et, sinir ve deriyim;**

As for me
who's just another proletarian poet
–Marxist-Leninist consciousness,
thirty kilos of bones,
a couple kilometers
of blood vessels,
muscles, flesh, skin, and nerves–

*As for me:
Me, who's just another proletarian poet,
Marxist – Leninist consciousness,
30 kilos of bones,
7 litres of blood,
one or two kilometres
of blood vessels,
muscles, flesh, nerves and skin;*

**ne kafamın dışındaki kasket
içindekine delâlet
eder,
ne de biricik fötrüm beni
geçmekte olan geçmişe alet
eder. . . .**

the cloth cap on my head
doesn't tell
what's in it
any more than my only felt hat
makes me a tool
of the past that's passing ..

neither does the cloth cap on my head

⁶ “Herhangi bir” has another interpretation as “certain,” which further corresponds to his message

*tell
what's inside
nor my only Fedora
makes me a tool of the passing past...*

**Buna rağmen
ben :
haftada altı gün kasketliysem eğer,**

But
if I wear a cloth cap
six days a week,

*Despite this
if I
wear a cloth cap six days a week,*

**haftada bir gün
sevgilimle seyrana giderken
biricik fötrümü
tertemiz
giymek içindir bu . . .**

it's so that once a week
when I'm out with my girl
I can wear
clean
my only felt hat . . .
*wearing my only felt hat
spotlessly clean
is for
when I go out with my girlfriend
once a week...*

**Fakat
neden benim iki fötrüm yok?
Ne dersin üstat?
Tembel miyim?
Hayır!**

Except
why don't I have two felt hats?
What do you say, master?
Am I lazy?
No!

*Though
why don't I have two felt hats?
What do you say, Master?
Am I lazy?
No!*

**Günde 12 saat
sayfa bağlamak,**

**ayakta dikilip
anası ağlamak
sapına kadar çalışmaktır . .**

To bind pages
twelve hours a day,
to stand on my feet
till I drop,
is hard work.

*To bind pages
12 hours a day,
to stand on my feet
to suffer a lot
is working up to the hilt.*

**Kapkara cahil miyiz?
Hayır!
Meselâ :
"Sat-Sin" bey kadar cahilü cühelâ
olmasam gerek. . . .**

Am I totally stupid? No!
For instance,
I could hardly be
as backward
as Mr. So-and-So . . .

*Are we totally ignorant?
No!
For instance:
I shouln't be as uneducated
as Mr. So-and-so*

**Budala mıyım?
Eh,
pek
değil . .**

Am I a fool?
Well,
completely . . .

*Am I a fool,
Well,
not
really..*

**Belki biraz derbederim..
Lâkin hep
asıl sebep :
proleterim,
be birader,
proleter!!..**

Maybe a bit careless . . .
But all the time
the real reason is that
I'm a proletarian,
brother,
a proletarian!

*Perhaps I'm a bit careless
But all the time
the real reason is:
I'm a proletarian,
o brother,
a proletarian!..*

**Ve benim iki fötrüm,
iki milyon fötrüm, ancak**

And I'll own two felt hats
-two million-
*And I'll have two felt hats,
two million felt hats, but*

**her
proleter
gibi,
Borsalino - Habik - Mosan - Mançister
tezgâhlarının sahibi
olursam - olursak - olacak!...**

only when,
like every
proletarian, I own—we own—
the textile mills
of Barcelona-Habik-Mosan-Manchester!

*when
like every
proletarian
I become - we become - becomes
the owner of the counters
of Borsalino-Habik-Mossant-Manchester!*

**Ve ilââââââââ,
Lââââââââ!!!!!!...**

And if n-o-o-o-o-t,
NOT!

*And uuuuuuuuntil not,
Nooooooooot!!!!!!...*

When it comes to the English translation, there are a few aspects worth mentioning. For instance, in the phrase “Budala mıyım? Eh, pek değil..” the last part was translated as “completely,” which conveys the opposite meaning. In reality, Nâzım acknowledges that

he is not a fool at all, but rather a little careless. In the translation of final lines of the poem: “her proleter gibi, Borsalino - Habik - Mosan - Mançister tezgâhlarının sahibi olursam - olursak - olacak!...” Borsalino, Habik, Mosan, and Mançister are portrayed as cities, possibly because Mançister (Manchester) led to Borsalino being mistakenly associated with Barcelona (Barselona in Turkish). However, Borsalino and Mossant (Mosan), for instance, were renowned luxury hat brands manufactured in Italy and France during the 19th century.

This poem, as the title suggests, focuses on clothing, which apparently held significant importance in terms of communist identity. Nâzım’s dedication to the working class was evident not only in his poetry, but also in his casual style of dress. He enjoyed wearing a cloth cap, usually slinging his jacket over his shoulder, leaving his shirt unbuttoned, and purposely wrinkling his trousers. It was his personal statement against the uptight individuals in the literary establishment (Göksü, Timms, 2006: 94). He had such a strong sense of unity with the working class that he went as far as considering all of them, including himself, to be a single entity, as reflected in his words: “Kapkara cahil miyiz?” (“Are we completely ignorant?”). It is worth noting that he used “we” instead of “I,” despite referring to himself in earlier and subsequent lines. However, Blasing and Konuk translated it as “I.” On the other hand, the great masters were completely different from the working class. He portrayed Marx, Engels, and Lenin in a formal manner, perhaps even fancily dressed, wearing spotless white shirts and even ties. This may subtly allude to the illusion and cult surrounding their personalities, which eventually began to shatter. When arguing about why he doesn’t have two felt hats, he concludes that it’s not because he’s too lazy to earn enough money to buy them, but rather because the work required is extremely tiring. As mentioned in his biography⁷, he joined *Resimli Ay* as a proofreader. He became known for working tirelessly without breaks and had a distaste for the unconventional bohemian way of life, while finding immense satisfaction in the print room, where he would assemble and bind pages with the workers (Sertel, 1991: 167).

⁷ See chapter 2.3.3 (Demolishing the Idols)

He declares that once all the proletarians become the owners of the counters of luxury hat stores, he will possess as many felt hats as he desires. However, wearing a felt hat was seen as bourgeois, creating significant issues from a communist perspective. Ultimately, being labeled as “bourgeois” proved fatal for Nâzım as he faced accusations of merely feigning communism. Nâzım’s individualistic perspective remained suspect among dogmatic Marxists, leading to his expulsion from the Communist party (Göksü & Timms, 2006, 80). In the book titled “Marksizmin Kalpazanları” (“Impostors of Marxism”) (1936), Hikmet Kıvılcımlı states:

“The poet Nazım Hikmet pretends to include Marxism in his poetry, like a borrowed shirt. If you take this shirt off his poetry, you will see any ordinary bourgeois poet in Babıali Street.”

However, it is evident that communism became a lifelong dedication for Hikmet, and he wholeheartedly immersed himself in this idea. He keeps enchanting the readers who are open to listen, not with his devotion, but with his delicate craftsmanship and the romantic lens through which he perceives the world. Is it not true that a person’s inner faith, determination, and love are the most powerful driving forces, even despite the majority dogmatic communist work, which was authored by individuals who disapproved of Hikmet’s poems and deemed them to be not genuine?

3.4 Ben İçeri Düştüğümden Beri (Since I Was Thrown Inside)

“Ben içeri düştüğümden beri” is a poem written 1947 during his time in prison. It serves as an illustration of his perception of the surrounding world during that period. In the poem, Nâzım emotionally and honestly recounts everything that has happened “since the time he fell inside” the prison. Despite its title suggesting a subjective and egocentric nature, the poem surprises by adopting a different approach, as explained by Nâzım towards the end. Rather than being self-centered, it is an account of the inner world (both prison and his own mind) and the external world.

**Ben içeri düştüğümden beri
güneşin etrafında on kere döndü dünya.**

Since I was thrown inside
the earth has gone around the sun ten times.

*Since I fell inside
the Earth has gone around the Sun ten times.*

Ona sorarsanız :

**"Lâfı bile edilmez,
mikroskobik bir zaman."**

If you ask it:

"That's nothing—
a microscopic span."

If you ask it :

*„It's not worth mentioning,
a microscopic time. “*

Bana sorarsanız :

"On senesi ömrümün."

If you ask me:

"Ten years of my life!"

If you ask me :

„Ten years of my life. “

Bir kurşun kalemim vardı

ben içeri düştüğüm sene.

I had a pencil
the year I was thrown inside.

*I had a pencil
the year I fell in.*

Bir haftada yaza yaza tükeniverdi.

It lasted me a week.

It was used up in a week by [constant] writing.

Ona sorarsanız :

"Bütün bir hayat."

If you ask it:

"A whole lifetime!"

If you ask it :

"A whole lifetime."

Bana sorarsanız :

"Adam sen de, bir iki hafta."

If you ask me:

"What's a week?"

If you ask me :

"One week, two weeks, who cares."

Katillikten yatan Osman,

**ben içeri düştüğümden beri,
yedi buçuğu doldurup çıktı,**

Since I've been inside
Osman did his seven-and-a-half
for manslaughter and left,

*Osman, who was in for murder,
since I fell inside,
did his seven-and-a-half and left,*

**dolaştı dışarlarda bir vakit,
sonra kaçakçılıktan tekrar düştü içeri, altı ayı doldurup çıktı tekrar,**

knocked around on the outside for a while,
then landed back inside for smuggling, served six months, and got out again;

*wandered around for a while,
then fell in again for smuggling, did his six months and left again,*

**dün mektup geldi, evlenmiş,
bir çocuğu doğacakmış baharda.**

yesterday we had a letter—he's married,
with a kid coming in the spring.

*yesterday the letter arrived, he got married,
his child will be born in spring.*

**Şimdi on yaşına bastı,
ben içeri düştüğüm sene,
ana rahmine düşen çocuklar.**

They're ten years old now
the children born
the year I was thrown inside.

*They just turned ten years old,
the year I fell inside,
conceived children.*

**Ve o yılın titrek, ince, uzun hacaklı tayları,
rahat, geniş sağırlı birer kısrak oldular çoktan.**

And that year's foals, shaky on their spindly long legs,
have been wide-rumped, contented mares for some time.

*And that year's wobbly, slender, long-legged foals,
have become contended, broad-rumped mares a long time ago.*

**Fakat zeytin fidanları hâlâ fidan,
hâla çocuktur.**

But the olive seedlings are still saplings,
still children.

*But the olive seedlings are still saplings,
still children.*

**Yeni meydanlar açılmış uzaktaki şehrimde
ben içeri düştüğümden beri.**

New squares have opened in my far-off city
since I was thrown inside.
*New squares have been opened in my faraway city
since I've fallen inside.*

**Ve bizim hane halkı
bilmediğim bir sokakta
görmediğim bir evde oturuyor.**

And my family now lives
in a house I haven't seen
on a street I don't know.
*And our household
lives in a street that I don't know
in a house that I didn't see.*

**Pamuk gibiydi, bembeyazdı ekmek
ben içeri düştüğüm sene.**
Bread was like cotton, soft and white,
the year I was thrown inside.
*It was like cotton, the snow white bread
the year I fell inside.*

**Sonra vesikaya bindi,
bizim burda, içerde, birbirini vurdu millet
yumruk kadar, simsiyah bir tayın için.**
Then it was rationed,
and here inside men killed
for a fist-sized black loaf.
*Then it was rationed,
we people, here inside, shot each other
for a pint-sized jet black loaf.*

**Şimdi serbestledi yine,
fakat esmer ve tatsız.**

Now it's free again
but dark and tasteless.

*Now it became for free again,
but dark and tasteless.*

**Ben içeri düştüğüm sene
İKİNCİSİ başlamamıştı henüz.**

The year I was thrown inside
the SECOND hadn't started yet.
*The year I fell inside
the SECOND hadn't started yet.*

**Daşav kampında fırınlar yakılmamış,
atom bombası atılmamıştı Hiroşima'ya.**

The ovens at Dachau hadn't been lit,
nor the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

*The ovens at Dachau camp weren't lit,
the atomic bomb wasn't dropped on Hiroshima.*

Boğazlanan bir çocuğun kanı gibi aktı zaman.
Time flowed like blood from a child's slit throat.
Time flowed like blood from a child's throat that was slit.

**Sonra kapandı resmen o fasıl,
şimdi ÜÇÜNCÜDEN bahsediyor Amerikan doları.**

Then that chapter was officially closed.
Now the American dollar talks of a THIRD.

*Then that chapter was officially closed,
now the American dollar talks about THIRD.*

**Fakat gün ışıdı her şeye rağmen
ben içeri düştüğümden beri.**
Still, the day has gotten lighter
since I was thrown inside.

*But despite everything, the day has gotten lighter
since I've fallen inside.*

**Ve "Karanlığın kenarından
ONLAR ağır ellerini kaldırımlara basıp
doğruldular" yarı yarıya.**

And "at the edge of darkness,
pushing against the earth with their heavy hands,
THEY've risen up" halfway.

*And "From the edge of darkness
THEY pressed their heavy hands on the pavements
and straightened up" halfway.*

**Ben içeri düştüğümden beri
güneşin etrafında on kere döndü dünya.**

Since I was thrown inside
the earth has gone around the sun ten times.

*Since I fell inside,
the Earth has gone around the Sun ten times.*

**Ve aynı ihtirasla tekrar ediyorum yine,
ben içeri düştüğüm sene
ONLAR için yazdığımı :**
And I repeat with the same passion

what I wrote about THEM
the year I was thrown inside:

*And I repeat with the same passion
what I wrote for them
the year I fell inside :*

**"Onlar ki toprakta karınca
suda balık
havada kuş kadar
çokturlar
korkak, cesur,
cahil, hakîm
ve çocukturlar,
ve kahreden
yaratan ki onlardır,**

"They who are numberless like ants in the earth,
fish in the sea,
birds in the air
who are cowardly, brave,
ignorant, wise,
and childlike,
and who destroy
and create,

*"They who are countless like ants in the earth,
fish in the sea
birds in the air
coward, courageous,
ignorant, wise
and childlike
those who destroy
and who create,*

**şarkılarımda yalnız onların maceraları vardır."
Ve gayrısı,
mesela benim on sene yatmam,
lâfî güzaf.**

my songs tell only of their adventures."
And anything else,
such as my ten years here,
is just so much talk.

*there are only their adventures in my songs."
And anything else,
such as my ten-year serve
are meaningless words.*

The title itself may pose some translation challenges. According to grammatical rules, to maintain the closest possible meaning, it should be translated as “Since I fell inside” rather than “Since I was thrown inside.” The reason being that the verb “düşmek” corresponds to “to fall” and is not in the passive form, which would have a different meaning.⁸ However, despite this difference, the overall message remains intact, conveying that Nâzım ended up in prison. Nevertheless, when comparing how he might have perceived the experience, slight nuances in interpretation may emerge. Certain expressions that draw the reader into the story within the poem are also challenging to translate directly in a few words, such as “yaza yaza tükeniverdi.” The official translation, “It lasted me a week,” fails to capture the intensity with which the poet used the pencil, and the sudden realization that the pencil had run out as he continued to write without cease.

The initial verses employ a postmodern style, resembling a common aspect mostly found in postmodern historical novels: the inclusion of multiple narrators with diverse perspectives. This can also be linked to his tendency to give space to individual voices, particularly those of the most marginalized individuals, which he demonstrates by the character Osman and possibly his incorporation of modernist techniques, notably the utilization of street vernacular in the language.

The poem presents a raw emotional depiction that emphasizes the relativity of time. In the context of this poem, we’re speaking of a full decade. We consider that the Earth has completed ten orbits around the Sun—what does a decade mean in the grand scheme of the universe? How does one individual compare to the vastness of the universe? Conversely, adopting a “fractal” viewpoint, we recognize that, just as we are integral parts of the universe, there exists an entire universe concealed within each of us. We are both connected to a greater puzzle and simultaneously experiencing a similar phenomenon internally. Hikmet’s approach to the topic begins with a broad perspective and gradually delves into more specific and personal aspects. As mentioned earlier, despite being imprisoned, he remained well-informed about global events, even though he couldn’t comment on them. Although he introduces the poem by saying “Since I fell inside [the

⁸ Düşünmek stands for “to think”

prison],” he still addresses significant world events, some of which he also reacted to in his other works, such as the Hiroshima attack. He discusses the changes that occurred during the decade he was imprisoned, while highlighting that each of us have a different pace: the children grew older, the foals became robust, and his family moved to an unfamiliar street and house, however, the olive trees still remained seedlings. It also showed his strong awareness of global events, yet paradoxically revealed his disconnection from his own family. He emphasized the consequences of war and particularly criticized the effort of the United States. He pointed out that when he was imprisoned, World War II had not yet begun, but now, almost in an instant, “American dollar” talks about a potential World War III. This highlights the alarming speed at which time seems to pass, using a vivid and disturbing analogy of blood flowing rapidly from a child’s throat. It also reflects his humanism and his strong opposition to war. Additionally, when he mentions bread in the poem, it appears to be a reference to the economic changes during the interwar period. He recalls that during the year he was imprisoned (1938), the bread had a snow-white appearance and a texture resembling cotton. This aligns with the period of economic recovery from the Great Depression in the 1930s, which was subsequently disrupted by the onset of World War II (Hale, 1980: 108-109).

Assuming the role of a teacher and political mentor in jail brought about a change in the themes he explored. The workers portrayed in his poetry were no longer portrayed as idealized heroes but were instead imbued with the harsh realities experienced by the prison population. The poem itself may contain a reference to countless individuals in its final verses, likening them to ants in the earth, fish in the sea, birds in the air, etc.

In the end, Hikmet ultimately urges us to shift our attention towards the positive aspects and goodness in life. He says that despite everything, “the day has gotten lighter.” This serves as a reminder and an opportunity for us to reconnect with the essence of life, appreciating the simplest joys like bread, the happiness derived from building a family, or the beauty of an olive tree. These often become overshadowed when we focus solely on what we perceive as more significant issues.

3.5 Ölü Nezval'le Sohbet (Conversations with Dead Nezval)

**Sen gittikten sonra, hemen
hava soğudu, karladı.
Böyle olunca, ölene
gökyüzü, derler, ağladı.
Ama biliyorsun, bahar,
gün açtı on üç Nisanda,
Pırağ gülümseyiverdi,
hattâ orda, kabristanda.**

Soon after you left
it got cold and snowed.
When that happens, they say the sky
is weeping for the dead.
But that's spring, you know.
On the 13th of April the sun opened up.
Prague suddenly smiled
even there at the cemetery.

*Instantly after you left
it got cold and snowed.
When it happens, they say
that the sky cried for the dead.
But you know, that's spring.
It became sunny on the 13th of April,
Prague suddenly smiled,
even there at the cemetery.*

**Hâlâ biraz dua gibi
ediliyorsa da lafın,
vitrinde günlük güneşlik
kara tüllü fotoğrafın.
Hava belki yine bozar
ve lâkin önümüz Mayıs...
Pırağ'da, Mayıs, bilirsin,
yemyeşil, altın sarısı
saldırınca sokaklara
siler kederi genç kızlar
pencere camları gibi
ve senden kalan keder de
gölgen gibi kaybolacak
Pırağ kaldırımından.**

Though they still speak of you
almost as if they were praying,
your black-draped photo
stands bright and sunny in the store window.
The weather could turn bad again,
but then we're facing May –
May in Prague, you know,

green, gold-yellow.
When it attacks the streets,
young girls wipe grief clean
like window panes,
and the grief you left us
will vanish like your shadow
from the sidewalks of Prague.

*It's still spoken of you
it's almost like a prayer
bathed in sunlight in the showcase
your black-veiled photograph.
Maybe the weather will turn bad again
and yet May is ahead of us...
In Prague, May, you know,
green, golden
when it attacks the streets
young girls wipe off grief
like window panes
and the sorrow left by you
will disappear like your shadow
from the sidewalks of Prague.*

**Dünya bu... Doğrusu zaten
hayatı seven, akıllı,
iyi yürekli ölüler,
ne kırk bir günlük yas ister,
ne "Benden sonra Tufan!" der.
Faydalı bir şeyler, bir söz,
bir ağaç, bir gülümseme
bırakarak çekip gider
ve dirilerle bölüşmez
kabrinin karanlığını
ve kendi başına taşır
ağırlığını taşınır.**

This world . . . But to tell the truth,
the life-loving, smart,
good-hearted dead
don't want forty days of mourning
or say "After me the deluge!"
Leaving behind some helpful things
—a few words, a tree, a smile—
each gets up and goes
and does not burden the living
with the darkness of the tomb,
carrying the weight
of his stone all alone.

*This is world... Anyway
life-loving, smart
good-hearted dead
neither want forty days of mourning*

*nor say "Deluge after me!"
Leaving something helpful behind,
a word, a tree, a smile
and they do not share with the living
the darkness of their grave
and carry by themselves
the weight of their stone.*

**Ve dirilerden hiçbir şey
istemedikleri için
ölmemiş gibi olurlar...
Biliyorum, sen de Nezval,
sen de böyle bir ölüsün,
Pırag'ın iyi yürekli,
dünyayı seven, akıllı
ölülerinden birisin...**

And because they ask nothing
from the living,
it's as if they aren't dead. . .
Nezval, I know
you're like that, too—
you, too, are one of the good-hearted,
world-loving, smart
dead of Prague.

*It's like they're not dead
because they don't ask anything
from the living
I know, you too, Nezval,
you're like that as well
you're one of the good-hearted
world-loving, smart
dead of Prague...*

**Telefondan çağırdılar,
ayrılacağız, ne yazık.
Hoşça kal kardeşim Nezval.
Bizim dünyamızda yine
en tatlı yemiş: aydınlık...**

*They called from the phone,
we'll split up, what a pity.
Goodbye Nezval, my brother.
Once again, the sweetest fruit
in our world: light...*

“Conversations with Dead Nezval” is a continuing reaction to Vítězslav Nezval’s passing, symbolizing a goodbye, following his initial poem titled “Viçeslav Nezval Üstüne Söylenmiştir” (“On Vítězslav Nezval”), which was an immediate response to his death. He

acknowledges that while Sláveček used to exist, he no longer does, but his legacy and influence (“Nezval”) will live on.⁹

“The phone rang.
I heard the news.
How soon, how soon, how soon,
there was Sláveček, now he is gone...
*
Nezval lasts.”

Nezval, a renowned avant-garde Czech poet, possessed a style comparable to Hikmet’s, characterized by unbounded creative passion that never waned. Both poets shared an inseparable bond with poetry, considering it an integral part of their lives. Their common ground lays in their unwavering faith in revolutionary ideals, an optimistic outlook on revolution and finding inspiration in the works of Mayakovsky. Under the influence of his poetry, Hikmet got rid of traditional forms of writing, began to create verses in the spirit of folk poetry and became a follower of the classics of Marxism (Dobrovský, 1983: 47-49). The poem reflects Nâzım’s approach to dealing with the emotional turmoil that arises when grieving for a dear friend, while also depicting subtle aspects of everyday life in Prague. Vítězslav Nezval appears in several of Hikmet’s poems with the Turkish transcription of his name as “Viçeslav.” These poems also include “Bazı anılar” (“Some memories”), and “Slavya Kahvesinde Şair Dostum Tavfer’le Yârenlik” (“Friendship With My Poet Friend Taufer in Cafe Slavia”), which also represents a culmination of cultural and poetic events, as Cafe Slavia, both in the past and present, has been a renowned gathering place for poets, playwrights, and intellectuals.

The fragmented visual structure of each line, maintaining a steady rhythm, evokes a sense of sobbing and grief, however, this particular aspect was lost during the translation process. However, some elements of the poem, such as its regularity, gentle rhyme, and resulting melodiousness, were maintained to a certain extent. While the simplicity of the language was preserved, certain subtle nuances that are untranslatable vanished, for example the informal language and common reader-oriented approach conveyed by

⁹ Sláveček is a diminutive form of the name Vítězslav

expressions such as “orda” (there), which would be written as “orada” in formal Turkish. In general, the translation provided by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk offers a valuable interpretation of the poem. However, it is noteworthy that the final stanza, which includes the parting line “Hoşça kal, kardeşim Nezval,” has been omitted. The term “kardeş” in Turkish carries the meaning of “sibling” while also serving as an informal form of address, similar to “buddy.” This expression highlights Hikmet’s personal affection for Nezval. Overall, the poem effectively conveys an atmospheric and lyrical depiction, consistently maintaining a sense of Hikmet’s unspoken farewell throughout. Although predominantly lyrical in nature, the concluding paragraph serves as the epic centerpiece of the poem, portraying a poignant emotional decision that one must confront. Excluding it slightly modifies the significance and narrative, leaving it somewhat incomplete.

In his poem “Yine Memleketim Üzerine Söylenmiştir” (“On My Country Again”) he realized that he had no remnants or mementos from his homeland, which left him filled with grief (Akyıldız, 2015: 386). As his life neared its end, Nezval’s death, which became another piece of the crumbling mosaic. Following his passing, the temperature dropped, and Prague was blanketed in snow. This weather occurrence may symbolize both the unpredictable weather patterns known as “Aprílové počasí” (“April's fools weather”) in Czech and the chilling feeling one experiences upon receiving terrible news. However, he confronted the situation bravely and almost with slight recklessness. He highlights that the agony and vivid memories of the deceased will fade away, openly acknowledging that women are the cure for his aching heart, as May holds significant importance as the month of love in Czech traditions. He recognizes the truth that “Dünya bu...” (“such is the nature of the world”), yet acknowledging that “those with kind hearts,” whom he appreciated, would not desire it any differently. They give and do not take from others, they do not desire others to mourn their departure or anticipate the world falling into chaos in their absence, the only things meant to be left behind are their good thoughts and good deeds. Therefore, instead of grieving, Nâzım chooses to reflect on his friend’s positive attributes and character, while emphasizing the poetic legacy he leaves behind as a “useful” contribution made by those with kind hearts.

Prague is a recurring theme in numerous of his poems. During his stay, especially in 1958, Hikmet dedicated a significant amount of his writing to capturing his impressions of the “Hundred-spired Prague” and the individuals he encountered. His focus revolved particularly around the intellectual and cultural vitality of the city, which he actively engaged with by attending literary gatherings and forging connections with fellow artists. A complete collection of poems titled “Pobyt v Praze” (“Stay in Prague”) exists in Czech, translated by Jiří Taufer, a notable Czech poet and a friend of Hikmet. The book titled reveals Hikmet’s captivation with the city’s enchanting beauty. Additionally, some of the poems, including those previously mentioned, pay homage to his Prague acquaintances, Vítězslav Nezval and Jiří Taufer themselves.

4 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and introduce the life and works of Nâzım Hikmet Ran, a writer, communist, and activist. It seeks to determine whether it is possible to reconstruct certain aspects of his life by analyzing his poems and searching for connections between elements in his poetry and events in his life. His work is familiar to readers around the globe. Nâzım Hikmet's literary legacy has left a long lasting impact in many countries, making it important to offer a subjective perspective on his poetry and life to contribute to ongoing discussions. However, it is crucial to note that this perspective is just one among many, as each reader may interpret poetry differently, adding a unique and subjective element. Language itself acts as a filter through which we perceive the world, and subjectivity adds to the beauty of poetry. The thesis also provided a critical view on the translation of Hikmet's poetry, emphasizing that while translations by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk offer a valuable interpretation, they may not capture the essence that makes Nâzım's poetry truly his. This critique is not meant to disparage their work, as translating poetry from a rich, playful, and complex language like Turkish is extremely challenging. However, it serves to highlight the importance of critical thinking when engaging with poetry and reminds readers that interpretations can never fully convey the original message.

The impact of reading Nâzım Hikmet's poems varied greatly depending on whether they were read in their original language or in English translation. Interpreting a poem involves more than just understanding the translation of the text. It requires capturing the nuances and specific elements of the original language, which may not always be accurately conveyed in a literal translation. This often results in the loss of emotional depth. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to refer to the English versions of his poems as "interpretations" rather than translations. It is important to consider that these English interpretations are intended for readers who do not speak or understand Turkish, which can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. Some critics may accuse Hikmet's poetry of being simplistic, propagandistic, or lacking poetic quality, but such judgments are likely based on reading the English interpretations, which fail to capture the subtle nuances and

complexities of his work. The research also aimed to challenge the misconception that Hikmet's works are purely propagandistic. In reality, he stood out as a unique figure among communist writers. His deeply personal and heartfelt style eventually led to his expulsion from the official communist community, but it did not alter his personal beliefs and approach. He remained a committed communist throughout his life, perhaps even displaying utopian tendencies at times, earning him the label of a "Romantic communist." This opens up the possibility of future exploration, comparing his works to those of dogmatic writers to better understand why he diverged from the official discourse.

It has been proven that despite initially appearing as pure shallow propaganda, his poetry conceals intricate autobiographical storylines that align perfectly with the timeline of his life. Consequently, it becomes possible to some extent to reconstruct specific stages or events of his life by analyzing his poems. Each selected poem narrates a story that provides significant insight into a particular aspect of his life and his own persona. These aspects include his profound love for his homeland, which began in his early years and grew stronger as time went on; his perspective on art and the world; his interpretation of Marxism and communism itself; the factors that set him apart from other communist writers and led to his exclusion from the communist community; his contemplation of abstract concepts such as time and the profound impact of his decade-long imprisonment; and finally, his experiences in exile, particularly in Czechoslovakia, the relationships he formed, and how they mutually influenced one another. Certainly, the thesis didn't cover all the subjects he addressed (his works in other genres further broaden this range). His aspiration was for people worldwide to experience freedom and happiness. Thus, he transcended boundaries with his themes, making him a poet of global significance. Each person can interpret his work differently, yet he shall be remembered for his fight for the greater good in his perspective and giving voice to those who are not heard.

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