

**Appropriation and Reception of Classical
Antiquity in Early Republican Turkey: A Case in
Mediterranean Modernism**

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Comparative Literature



July 2023

Appropriation and Reception of Classical Antiquity in Early Republican Turkey: A Case in Mediterranean Modernism

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis examines the appropriation and reception of classical antiquity in literary texts from the late Ottoman and early Republican eras and proposes to flesh out the interwoven margins of modern Turkish and Greek literary history. Drawing on world literature scholarship, the introduction establishes a comparative approach to the literary studies of the Mediterranean. The two main chapters focus on the leading authors from the two literary movements in Turkish literary history that come forward in their treatment of classical reception and examine the works of these authors next to Greek authors who share similar approaches to the appropriation of classical antiquity. The first chapter focuses on how Yahya Kemal Beyatlı and Constantine Cavafy explore themes of decline as they draw upon Greco-Roman and Byzantine history. The latter discusses how Azra Erhat and George Seferis undermine the rigidity of nationalist boundaries in their description of the Mediterranean landscape, ancient ruins, and spolia from Western Asia Minor. By utilizing the frame of Mediterranean Modernism, it is argued that we must delve into how these authors react to Western European conceptions of classical antiquity and how they react to the escalating nationalism of their time against the backdrop of their multicultural background.

Keywords: Classical Reception, Turkish Literature, Greek Literature, World Literature, Mediterranean Studies, Poetry, Travelogue, Modernism

ÖZETÇE

Erken Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Klasik (Greko-Romen) Antik Çağın Benimsenmesi ve Alımlanması: Akdeniz Modernizmi için Bir Örnek

Enver Ali Akova

Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat, Yüksek Lisans

Temmuz 2023

Bu tez, geç Osmanlı ve erken Cumhuriyet dönemlerine ait edebi metinlerde Klasik (Greko-Romen) antik çağın benimsenmesini ve alımlanmasını incelemekte ve modern Türk ve Yunan edebiyat tarihlerinin ortak paydasını detaylandırmayı önermektedir. Giriş bölümü, dünya edebiyatı perspektifinden yararlanarak, Akdeniz ile ilgili edebi araştırmalara karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşım getirmektedir. Tezdeki iki ana bölüm, Türk edebiyat tarihindeki klasik alımlamanın öne çıktığı iki edebiyat akımının önde gelen yazarlara odaklanmaktadır ve bu yazarların eserlerini, Klasik (Greko-Romen) antik çağın alımlanmasında benzer yaklaşımları paylaşan Yunan yazarlarla beraber incelemektedir. Bu bölümlerin ilki, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı ve Konstantinos Kavafis'in Greko-Romen ve Bizans tarihinden yararlanarak gerileme ve dekadans temalarını nasıl keşfettiklerine odaklanmaktadır. İkincisi ise, Batı Anadolu'daki Akdeniz peyzajının, antik kalıntıların ve devşirme eserlerin betimlemelerinde Azra Erhat ve Yorgo Seferis'in milliyetçi sınırları nasıl esneklettiğini tartışmaktadır. Tezde, Akdeniz Modernizminin kuramsal çerçevesinden yararlanarak, bahsedilen yazarların Batı Avrupa'nın Klasik (Greko-Romen) antik çağı kavramsallaştırmasına nasıl tepki verdiklerini ve çok kültürlü arka planları ele alınarak zamanlarının tırmanan milliyetçiliğine nasıl tepki verdiklerini incelememiz gerektiği savunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Klasik Alımlama, Türk Edebiyatı, Yunan Edebiyatı, Dünya Edebiyatı, Akdeniz Çalışmaları, Şiir, Seyahatname, Modernizm

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My undergraduate and graduate education has grown in many and unpredictable ways so far. I owe this fortunate experience to my family, who offered me their unwavering support, and to my instructors, fellow peers, and many others for their continuous inspiration. For their invaluable help and support in preparing this dissertation, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my two advisors, Dr. C. Ceyhun Arslan and Dr. Haris Theodorelis-Rigas.

Dr. Arslan was always present whenever I was in need of support both in face of hardships, academic or otherwise, and he gave me the keys with which to open the fascinating and complex Mediterranean world. Dr. Rigas, who is one of the best and most influential scholars I have had the opportunity to take classes from, taught me Attic Greek and suggested and encouraged me to delve into the subject of the thesis. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of their help and how lucky I have been to work with both of my advisors.

My special thanks to Dr. Sooyong Kim for his generous attention and support throughout my master's in addition to being a jury member, to Dr. Christine Philliou and Dr. Özen Nergis Dolcerocca for being kind enough to participate in the jury, to Dr. Mert Bahadır Reisoğlu for his generous support, to Dr. Akis Gavriilidis and Dr. Cevat Çapan for their invaluable contributions to my research, and to Dr. Nazmi Ağıl for always supporting my voyage through poetry.

I am grateful to the Tübitak BİDEB 2210-A program for its generous support and to the GSSSH for their help and support throughout my master's.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Melih Levi, who as a friend and academic encouraged me to find a new and fruitful direction for my studies in Comparative Literature after departing from Economics and Mathematical Philosophy, to Dilara Karademir, for all her trust and love, and to İhsan Serdar Tiyek, for his abundant support to my research and for being an excellent “uncle”.

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Chapter 1:

**INTRODUCTION: TRACING WORLD LITERATURE IN EARLY
REPUBLICAN TURKEY**

The appropriation of ancient Greek texts and classical heritage in early Republican Turkey had as its primary motivation the upholding of Turkey's Westernization process under the founding figure and first president of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), and his successor İsmet İnönü (1884-1973).¹ From the perspective of world literature, the appropriation of ancient Greek texts and classical culture in Turkey can be described as a strategy of building literary capital,² or "legacy hunting" as coined by Pascale Casanova in the theory of the world republic of letters.³

Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (1999) aspires to rediscover the transnational dimension of literature obscured by the nationalization of literary studies (xi). It envisions the literary world as semi-autonomous from the political map. With this insight, Casanova contrasts national models of literature with a universal model of literature as two poles of attraction that exert "centrifugal" and "centripetal" forces on authors in the world republic of letters. The theory of the world republic of letters is adequate to highlight the interaction of these two forces in appropriating classical Greek

¹ I employ the term "appropriation" based on Lorna Hardwick's working vocabulary of reception studies: "taking an ancient image or text and using it to sanction subsequent ideas or practices (explicitly or implicitly)" (9). My use of the term is driven by the anachronism involved in the superimposition of the nationalist boundaries and identities of the nineteenth-twentieth century on the geography and socio-politics of classical antiquity.

² Literary capital and literary value depend on the number of classical texts, narrative, formal, and theoretical innovations, a cultivated public, interested aristocracy, and bourgeoisie, specialized press, publishers, various literary institutions, and the number of celebrated writers, sales of books among other factors (Casanova 14-15)

³ Another approach that may take into consideration the interaction between Turkish and Greek literatures in late Ottoman and Republican Turkey's context is Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory and in particular, its concept of "literary prestige". Polysystem theory allows for more complex relationships within literatures without one center and one periphery. See pages 14, 25 in Even-Zohar's "Polysystem Theory" and page 66 in his "Laws of Literary Interference".

heritage in early Republican Turkey, where nationalism and integration into European standards (Westernization) would merge.

One must acknowledge that the theory of the world republic of letters involves deficiencies and biases, pointed out by several authors. Harsha Ram points out its “evident Gallocentrism,” recognizing literary value only originating and spreading from Europe, specifically from France (320). Moreover, Laura Doyle displays that *The World Republic of Letters* overlooks the inter-imperial dynamics of “coproduced imperial modernities... [where] multiple empires compet[e] through modernization projects that are all at once economic, political, cultural, and technological” (674). My insistence on providing Casanova’s theory concerning the macro-level picture of the appropriation of classical antiquity in early Republican Turkey stems from the newly founded Turkey’s “fantasy of “Europe” taking center stage in the consolidation of a new Turkish identity” (Ertürk, *Turkey* 247). This envy of European values, together with the threat of being colonized after the First World War by the European powers, admits Gallocentrism while also situating Turkey’s Westernization process as a nationalist reaction to European colonization. Moreover, the Ottoman legacy does not appear as an inter-imperial power but is identified by Turkey’s Westernization discourse as a front to struggle against.⁴

Casanova defines legacy hunting as “to claim antiquity as a heritage to challenge the dominant measure of literary time” and studies how it was employed earlier in France, Germany, Greece,⁵ and Mexico (223). She writes that the launch of an extensive translation program of the classics in the eighteenth century,⁶ brought German to the level of another universal language and advanced German historical philology (Casanova 236-237). Turkey’s appropriation of classical Greek antiquity emulated the German example from a century earlier. Moreover, incoming German and Austrian

⁴ Other than the New Hellenism movement, I do not detect clear-cut continuity from classical reception in literatures of the late Ottoman Empire and Turkish literature in early Republican Turkey. For an analysis of Homer’s reception in the Ottoman Empire, see Günay Uslu’s *Homer, Troy and the Turks* (2017).

⁵ Casanova also notes that in its attempt to unite a lost history and culture in the nineteenth century, the new emerging Greek state also claimed a continuous link to the ancient Greeks. However, this claim was undermined by the German philologists who enjoyed the advantage of the trophies of their earlier legacy hunting, deeming Greeks Slavic and not Hellenic (Casanova 241-242).

⁶ Casanova notes Johann Heinrich Voss’s translations of *the Odyssey* (1781) and *the Iliad* (1793) (236).

émigré scholars who were exiled from Nazi Germany had a strong influence on Turkey's modernization. During their stay, they contributed immensely to the human capital of the young Turkish republic by writing books, laying the foundations of many fields of study and research centers, and developing the required terminology in Turkish.⁷ Especially German historical philology and its humanist curriculum has been a role model for the appropriation of Greek antiquity with the aid of philologists like Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, and Georg Rohde. Tasked with aligning European humanism with Turkey's struggle to establish secular nationalism,⁸ Spitzer devised the university curriculum in 1933, Rohde prepared textbooks, dictionaries, and a curriculum for introducing Latin to the Turkish secondary schools (Albachten *Exile as Translation*, 141; Apter 256). Albachten also suggests that Georg Rohde "had a strong influence on Hasan Ali Yücel, the Minister of Education between 1938 and 1946, who in a humanistic vein wanted to create a classical library with Turkish translations of works of world literature, especially by Greek and Latin authors" (*Exile as Translation* 141).

The state-sponsored Translation Bureau (Tercüme Bürosu),⁹ described by İsmet İnönü as the institution where "masterworks that were brought forth by nations since the ancient Greeks" were to take their place within Turkish national culture, was established in 1939 (Konuk 72). After its formation, the Bureau planned one hundred works to be

⁷ During this period, nearly one thousand two hundred émigré scholars came to Turkey. Rohde founded the Institute of Classical Philology in Ankara; Gerhard Kessler, along with his students, founded the first labor union in Turkey; Wolfgang Gleissberg and Fritz Arndt contributed to the development of scientific terminology in Turkish; Carl Ebert and Paul Hindemith founded the Ankara State Conservatoire and brought Bela Bartok in 1936; Fritz Neumark reformed the Turkish income tax system; Alfred Isaac played a vital role in the establishment of the social security system; Ernst Eduard Hirsch was an advisor to the Ministry of Justice and contributed to the formation of modern Turkish law system and legal terminology; also they have jointly worked in many other projects (Albachten, *Exile as Translation* 135, 139, 140, 141, 142; Apter 264).

⁸ The Westernization process and the reforms sought to transform the preceding Ottoman "multilingual and multiethnic Islamic regime to a monolingual, single-nation, secular state." The adoption of Western education models was present also in the Ottoman Empire. Germany, an ally of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, was especially influential in the establishment of the modern Turkish education system and German professors came in 1915 to teach in Darülfünun (Albachten, *Exile as Translation* 132-133).

⁹ The Translation Office (Tercüme Odası), which was established in 1821 in the Ottoman Empire, can be viewed as the predecessor to the Translation Bureau in terms of their critical role in the Westernization of both the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey.

translated, of which thirty-nine were ancient Greek translations (Cihan-Artun 3). Under the direction of Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, who worked with both Auerbach and Spitzer at Istanbul University, the Bureau was influential in its task of translating Western Classics (Konuk 72). The Translation Bureau published the series *Dünya Edebiyatından Tercümeler* (Translations from World Literature) as well as a journal called *Tercüme* which published translations and theoretical discussions by scholars including Auerbach and Rohde (Cihan-Artun 3). The first issue of *Tercüme* begins with an introduction by the Minister of Education of the time, Hasan Ali Yücel, which is followed by Goethe's essay, "Shakespeare und Kein Ende," both in German and Turkish translation.

Again for the first issue of *Tercüme*, Azra Erhat, an assistant of classical philology at Ankara University and one of the main authors this thesis focuses on, was asked to write a piece on Greek translations in German, emphasizing the role of German appropriation as a model for Turkey.¹⁰ Erhat's article "Yunan Eserlerinin Almanya'da Tercümesi" (Translation of Greek Works in Germany) is a short survey of the history of translation of classical Greek texts into German from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. In the article, Erhat recovers Goethe's threefold model of translation,¹¹ and sides with Goethe, who champions interlinear translation over simple prose translation and parody translation. Goethe defines interlinear translation as an approach to translation that advocates a complete identification with the original text at the cost of giving up "the uniqueness of the nation" in the target national language and notes that this kind of translation requires the development of "the taste of the masses" (65). Erhat, who described Turkey after Westernizing reforms as a "tabula rasa," advocates an attempt to alter the taste of the Turkish following Goethe (*Sevgi Yönetimi* 10).

¹⁰ This article is especially interesting concerning its use of Turkish. After being asked for an article for *Tercüme*, Erhat recalls her answer as "ben Türkçe bilmem ki" (but I don't know Turkish), referring to her multilingual past which I discuss later in the introduction (*Sevgi Yönetimi* 267). A separate argument can be inferred from the balance of "old" and "new" Turkish used in the article's language.

¹¹ Goethe distinguishes three types of translation: (a) plain prose translation that pays no attention to characteristics of the source language but aims to convey meaning, (b) parodistic translation that adapts foreign characteristics into the target language, (c) interlinear translation that identifies itself with the original at the risk of losing national characteristics of the target language (64-66).

Erhat's appraisal of interlinear translation underlines one of the tenets of Westernization in Turkey. Leaving behind the Ottoman heritage, the newly found Turkish republic was keen to establish a national and modern Turkish identity. At this historical moment, Turkish intellectuals and policymakers were confronted with a foundational dilemma: on the one hand, Greek antiquity evoked the cultural claims over Anatolia by their recent bitter enemies in the Turkish War of Independence; on the other, the Turkish appropriation of Greek antiquity, which aimed to create a classical heritage, was an essential stage in the building of such an identity and in positioning the nascent Turkish literature within the larger Mediterranean and the West. In studying this, my thesis differs from a large-scale approach such as the theory of world republic of letters and opts for the theoretical approach of critical localism.

Critical localism narrows down the scope and establishes connectivity through the complex interrelation between individual writers, the specific locations and regions in their literary productions, and their imagination. I employ critical localism in the thesis with respect to how the authors in question appropriate classical Greek and Byzantine antiquity in relation to their political reactions to their time and their visions of the Mediterranean. All authors I examine in the thesis — Constantine P. Cavafy, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, George Seferis, Azra Erhat — share a formative Anatolian connection shattered after the emergence of national borders. Cavafy descended from the Phanariot Greek community in Constantinople/Istanbul and lived for a while there; Seferis was born in Vourla and lived in Smyrna/Izmir until his middle adolescence; Yahya Kemal, though born in Skopje, lived most of his life in Istanbul; and Erhat was born in Istanbul and spent most of her life there. But more importantly, Anatolia/Asia Minor or Istanbul/Constantinople appear in their writings forging an inclusivist cultural vision and dealing with the loss of homeland. Despite the lack of direct dialogue with each other and despite very little intellectual connection between Turkey and Greece after the Greco-Turkish War, these authors pursued similar directions and topics in their works, as responses to the collapse of imperial aspirations on both Turkish and Greek sides, the erosion of multiculturalism, and the rise of rival modernities.

These commonalities are also due to their reactions to similar primary sources from ancient literature, such as that of Homer and pre-Socratic philosophers, as well as similar contemporary European sources, such as that of Orientalist writers and writers of literary Decadence. We can extend this shared intertext not only with Cavafy's

influence on Seferis or Yahya Kemal's influence on Erhat but also with cross-influences such as Erhat's interest in Cavafy's poetry.¹² A shared vision of the Mediterranean may explain the mutual influences despite the rigidity of nationalist borders after the Greco-Turkish War. In fact, the sea, the Mediterranean Sea that is, features prominently in the works of all the authors examined here.¹³ In this respect, my emphasis on critical localism through the Anatolian connection also alludes to an implicit Levantinism as a means of sociocultural identification.¹⁴

Critical localism, on the one hand, underlines the individual agencies of authors and allows us to jointly investigate how authors receive and appropriate specific locations in their works. On the other, this approach allows us to explore the role of travel as a rather overlooked form of connectivity. In contrast to print circulation, which has been maintained as one of the most important variables in studying connectivity in world literature as well as Mediterranean studies, I want to underline how travel can be marked as a form of connectivity, giving the opportunity to understand how individual writers observe similar geographies, ancient remains, objects, texts, and people and how they envisage them in their work. Travel, as a form of connectivity, played a constitutive role in how the Decadent movement shaped Constantine Cavafy's and Yahya Kemal Beyatlı's work when they spent their formative years in England and France respectively. Travels in Asia Minor also had a constitutive role in how George Seferis and Azra Erhat conceptualized a sense of belongingness beyond national boundaries.

As I have discussed the strategies of cultural heritage that were employed during the appropriation of classical antiquity in early Republican Turkey, and identified my

¹² The Azra Erhat Collection at Anadolu University shows that Erhat owned several copies of Cavafy's poetry.

¹³ Such as Cavafy's "Θάλασσα του πρωιού" (Morning Sea), Seferis's "Γυμνοπαίδια" (Gymnopaedia), Yahya Kemal's "Açık Deniz" (Open Sea) and Azra Erhat's "Mavi Yolculuk" (Blue Voyage).

¹⁴ Levantinism broadly refers to the characteristics (customs, attitudes, ideas) associated with the historical geography of the Levant as a cross-cultural and multilingual region. The use of the term "Levantinism" is most prominently associated with Jacqueline Kahanoff. See David Tal's "Jacqueline Kahanoff and the Demise of the Levantine" for a study of Jacqueline Kahanoff's understanding of the term. In literary criticism, see a discussion of Levantinism in Hala Halim's *Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism* (2013), especially in its fourth chapter, titled "'Polypolis' and Levantine Camp: Bernard de Zogheb".

theoretical approach as critical localism, I argue that my findings tell a story of humanism and inclusiveness when it comes to classical appropriation as opposed to Casanova's emphasis on rivalries. In the next section, I will discuss the comparative aspect of my thesis.

1.1 Towards a Comparative Case in Mediterranean Modernism

Emily Apter describes the appropriation of classicism in early Republican Turkey as a moment in history that forced "comparative literature, in its nascent form, to renegotiate its relation to nationalism" (270). Bringing attention to Leo Spitzer's role as a founder of the philological school in Istanbul along with his efforts to learn Turkish, she suggests that "the invention of comparative literature as a global discipline" owes to the crossing of European philological tradition with the nationalist politics of higher education in early Republican Turkey (263). Another essential outgrowth of this crossing can be found in the roots of Erich Auerbach's (1892 – 1957) touchstone conception of "Weltliteratur" (World literature).

In his seminal essay "Philologie Der Weltliteratur" (1952), Auerbach revises the philhellenic idealism of Goethe's term, "Weltliteratur," in a time which he declares to be "ungoethish" (ungoethean).¹⁵ Auerbach suggests that world literature does not lead to productive cultural exchange at international level; rather, it brings forth a process of homogenization and standardization that eradicates cultural exchange. In the "ungoethish" present, "*Weltliteratur* would be at once realized and destroyed," producing a world of single literary culture and language in the eclipse of local traditions (*Philology* 3). Auerbach notes that this process of standardization originates from Europe: "national wills... stronger and louder than ever" promote a uniform understanding of modernity (2). European nationalism appears as the locomotive for this process of standardization. But along with the collapse of humanism in Europe,

¹⁵ See p. 40 in Auerbach's "Philologie Der Weltliteratur" in original German to find the adjective "ungoethish" that can be either translated to English as "ungoethean" or as "against what Goethe had in mind." This term marks the difference between the spirit of the time Goethe belonged and the present time Auerbach was writing in. Mathura Umachandran argues that "ungoethish" points to the "rejection of philhellenism as an instance of universalism," and shows Auerbach's position against the Goethean idea that Classical Greek literature is ideal and exemplary for any work of literature (442).

Auerbach gives Turkey as an example where the non-European “equally ancient” humanistic culture has collapsed (9). Auerbach mentions his concerns about the modernization process of Turkey, which he himself also served, in several letters.¹⁶ A letter to Walter Benjamin in 1937 proves that his approach to “Weltliteratur” began to emerge during his stay in Turkey. He wrote:

Yet [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk] has had to accomplish everything he has done in a struggle against the European democracies on the one hand, and on the other against old Muslim pan-Islamist sultan economy, and the result is a fanatical, anti-traditional nationalism: a renunciation of all existing Islamic cultural tradition, a fastening onto a fantasy “ur-Turkey,” technical modernization in the European sense in order to strike the hated and envied Europe with its own weapons... The whole needs to be grasped together this way: I am more and more convinced that the contemporary world situation is nothing other than the cunning of providence to lead us along a bloody and circuitous route to the Internationale of Triviality and Esperanto culture. I thought this already in Germany and Italy, especially in the horrifying inauthenticity of “Blubopropaganda,” but here for the first time it has become a certainty for me (Auerbach et al. 751).¹⁷

The conclusion of “‘Philologie Der Weltliteratur’” gives an influential turn in the study of world literature: “In any event, our philological home is the earth: it can no longer be the nation” (17). Since Auerbach, many scholars adopted a transnational framework for literary studies.¹⁸ Beyond world literature, his remark also resonates in literary studies of the Mediterranean, which Armando Gnisci has aptly described as a “living model of world literature” (16). In her blueprint for Mediterranean literature, Sharon Kinoshita acknowledges that Mediterranean Literature is a project of reterritorialization that displaces the nation as the default category of analysis. Accordingly, I propose a comparative study of the classical reception in late Ottoman and early Republican Turkish literature in this thesis by attempting to flesh out the interwoven margins of Turkish and Greek literary history. In contrast to a near-exclusive emphasis on classical reception in early Republican Turkey in terms of its service to Turkish nationalism, this thesis departs from recent scholarship in its comparative method. I feature the literary history of Turkish literature as a nascent

¹⁶ See pages 69-70 of Kader Konuk’s *East West Mimesis* (2010) for several such letters.

¹⁷ “Blubopropaganda” is an abbreviation for the Nazi propaganda “Blut und Boden” (Blood and soil).

¹⁸ Some of many such studies include Franco Moretti’s *Conjectures on World Literature* (2000), Pascale Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letters* (1999), David Damrosch’s *What is World Literature?* (2003).

national literature and concern the positioning of Turkish literature within the larger Mediterranean via building a comparison with modern Greek literature.

The primary motivation for building this comparison is to delve into how Turkish literature was clinging to ancient Greek texts while Greek Orthodox life in Turkey was vanishing in the wake of the Greco-Turkish War and the Greco-Turkish population exchange. In *East West Mimesis* (2010), Kader Konuk highlights an anomaly in the nascent Turkish literature: how did Turkish intellectuals promote Greco-Roman learning as the basis of modern Turkish literature despite the ongoing antipathy between Turkey and Greece (5)? This points to a fundamental dilemma faced by early Republican intellectuals, that is, the conflict between the anti-Greek sentiment due to the recent Greco-Turkish War and the need for classical appropriation as a means to Westernization. But I suggest that we need to go around this dilemma. We need to go beyond the scope of national literatures in order to see the underlying common ground between Turkish and Greek literatures and notice the significance of classical reception in both literatures, primarily concerning the positioning of Turkish and Greek literatures vis-à-vis the western European cannon.

Spyros A. Sofos and Umut Özkırmılı argue that the emergence of the Greek and Turkish nationalist projects was the outcome of “the rapid transformations experienced by the subjects of the Ottoman Empire at a time when European imperialist powers were expanding their spheres of influence and progressively incorporating the Ottoman territories in the modern European state system” (*Nationalism in Greece and Turkey*, 76).¹⁹ The authors I focus on share the attribute of being Ottoman-born²⁰. Yahya Kemal

¹⁹ See Sofos and Özkırmılı’s book *Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey* (2008) for a comparative study of nationalism in Greece and Turkey.

²⁰ Yahya Kemal was born in Skopje in the Kosovo division of the Ottoman Empire, Azra Erhat was born in Istanbul. Cavafy was born in Alexandria in the centrifugal Egypt division of the Ottoman Empire and Seferis was born in Symrna/Izmir.

Beyatlı (1884 – 1958),²¹ and Azra Erhat (1915 – 1982)²² were born into prominent families from Skopje/Üsküp and Thessalonica/Selanik in the Balkans, while Constantine P. Cavafy (1863 – 1933),²³ and George Seferis (1900 – 1971)²⁴ were born into prosperous families from Constantinople/Istanbul and Smyrna/Izmir in Asia Minor. By framing the thesis as a literary study of the Mediterranean, I suggest that we must look into how these authors react to Western European conceptions of classical antiquity (for my purposes, classical Greek antiquity) and how they react to the escalating nationalism of their time against the backdrop of their multicultural background. Thereby, we can see unique yet similar approaches to the appropriation of classical antiquity used by these authors, especially concerning how they undermine nationalist historiographies and irredentist ideologies. Given that A.J. Goldwyn and R.M. Silverman define Mediterranean Modernism as a sum of individual histories that “reflect various reactions to the material, economic and political conditions of the late

²¹ Yahya Kemal Beyatlı was born in 1884 in Skopje (Üsküp) in the Kosovo division of the Ottoman Empire. After his primary education in both in Skopje and Thessaloniki, Yahya Kemal shortly stayed in Istanbul and left for Paris in 1903 to attend the University of Sorbonne until 1912. In his lifetime, he worked in several different positions including that of a lecturer of History and Literature at Istanbul University, a member of the Turkish Parliament for two terms, and an ambassador (to Poland, Portugal, Spain, Pakistan). He died in 1958 in Istanbul.

²² Azra Erhat was born in Istanbul in 1915 to a family from Thessaloniki and was raised in Vienna and Belgium until her family returned to Istanbul. Erhat was a student, assistant, and later a fellow colleague to philologists Georg Rohde, Leo Spitzer, and Eric Auerbach between 1936 and 1948 as a classical philologist. She translated the first complete edition of *the Iliad* and *the Odyssey* from ancient Greek into Turkish, along with many other works from Classical Greek. She died in 1982 in Istanbul.

²³ Constantine Petrou Cavafy was born in 1863 in Alexandria, in the centrifugal Egypt division of the Ottoman Empire to a prosperous merchant family from Istanbul’s Fener Greek community. Cavafy lived in Liverpool and London, acquiring British nationality. Then he moved to first Alexandria, but they left for Istanbul in 1882 devastated by the British occupation of Alexandria. Returning to Alexandria, Cavafy obtained a steady employment in the irrigation office and lived there until his death in 1933.

²⁴ George Seferis was a Greek poet and diplomat. He was born in Vourla in 1900 and raised in Smyrna/Izmir. He completed his bachelor’s at Sorbonne and moved to Athens to become a diplomat and has worked in various places, including England, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Italy. Seferis, who was a Nobel laureate, passed away in 1971.

nineteenth century and early twentieth century” around the Mediterranean, my thesis examines these authors as authors of Mediterranean Modernism.²⁵

In this thesis, I follow Michael Herzfeld in shifting attention from a discussion concerning ontological attributions about the Mediterranean to an epistemological discussion of the heuristic value of the concept of “the Mediterranean” in literary studies. Along with Herzfeld’s concept of Mediterraneanism, I hold that attributions to the Mediterranean highlight strategies of self-stereotyping distinctive cultural characteristics and civilizational ideals around the Mediterranean Sea (48). Again, close to the spirit of Auerbach,²⁶ this approach essentially highlights the reception of the Mediterranean instead of delving into a critical discussion concerning its ontological status. In the thesis, I focus on how authors appropriated sources from classical Greek antiquity and the Byzantine period in their visions of the Mediterranean and their political reactions to their time.

The two main chapters of my thesis focus on the leading authors from the two literary movements in Turkish literary history that come forward in their treatment of classical reception and their defense of Turkish literature as a part of a larger Mediterranean literature. First of these is the *Nev Yunanilik* (New Hellenism) movement from the late Ottoman period, which was led by Yahya Kemal Beyatlı and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889 – 1974). Though the movement was short-lived, it was important that it articulated that the Ottoman culture not only inherited classical Greek antiquity but also belonged to a larger Mediterranean world. In the first chapter, I examine the appropriation of and reaction to Western European conceptions of the Mediterranean past in Yahya Kemal Beyatlı’s and Constantine Cavafy’s works. Discernably influenced

²⁵ Among the main authors that I examine in the thesis, works of Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Constantine P. Cavafy and George Seferis are suitable to be analyzed under literary modernism in terms of their timeline and their influences. However, I also include the work of Azra Erhat, a later author, in my thesis. This owes not only to her being a major author and intellectual of classical reception in early Republican Turkey who had a pivotal role in the development of classical philology in Turkey as a student of Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach, but also to how her conceptualization of Asia Minor coincided with that of George Seferis.

²⁶ Umachandran recognizes that Auerbach suggests a starting point (Ansatzpunkt) for world philology (Weltphilologie), which she finds to be very similar to “doing the reception history of an idea, or a particular part of an artwork traced through different iterations, in a cultural tradition” (445).

by the Decadent movement in their formative years spent abroad, both authors wrote about the cosmopolitan past of their cities in times of growing nationalisms and explored themes of decline as they drew upon Greco-Roman and Byzantine history.

The other literary movement which was most active in appropriating classical antiquity in Turkish literary history was the *Mavi Anadoluculuk* (Blue Anatolianism) movement in early Republican Turkey. The main group included Azra Erhat and Sabahattin Eyüboğlu (1909 – 1973), who were students of and assistants to Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, as well as Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, pen-named Fisherman of Halicarnassus (1890 – 1973). Blue Anatolianists claimed exclusive ownership of the Archaic and Bronze Age civilizations in Asia Minor as well as part of classical antiquity and were also backed up officially by the support of the minister of education, Hasan Ali Yücel, in his 1938 – 1946 tenure. In the second chapter, I focus on how Azra Erhat and George Seferis appropriate classical Greek literature and conceptualize Asia Minor as they write about similar landscapes. I provide an ecocritical reading of their writings, based on their respective visits to western Asia Minor around the middle of the twentieth century, and discuss how they undermine the rigidity of nationalist boundaries in their description of the Mediterranean landscape, ancient ruins, and spolia from Asia Minor.²⁷

The research on Azra Erhat in the second chapter aims to put forward a thorough and original analysis of Erhat's work, supported by archival research.²⁸ Erhat's work has not received enough critical attention. She is not well-known internationally, and even though she is a known figure in Turkey, there is not a comprehensive monograph on her work in Turkish. Erhat occupies a vital role in the intellectual history of comparative literature. Erhat was not only a student to the main figures involved in "the invention of comparative literature", such as Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach, but she was their only student who knew at once German, French, Ancient Greek, Latin, and

²⁷ I use the term "Asia Minor" instead of Anatolia due to the preference of the former in classical studies. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* provides definitions only for the terms "Asia Minor, classical" and "Asia Minor, pre-classical" respectively in entries by Stephan Mitchell and by D.F. Easton.

²⁸ I visited Anadolu University's archive of Azra Erhat's manuscripts and library collection at Eskişehir (my visit was generously funded by Koç University Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities). I also contacted Azra Erhat's niece Gülleyla Arel along with other relatives and interviewed Mehmet Ali Uğur who was a close friend of Erhat from the Blue Anatolianist circle.

Turkish. Having been brought up in Vienna and Brussels and having attended a classical lycée, Erhat was valued very much at Istanbul University. Erhat writes in her memoir that Leo Spitzer, who regarded her as his best student, had to argue with the head of the Archeology department, Helmuth Bossert, who was very keen to take Erhat to the Archeology department (*Gülleyla 'ya Anılar* 126-128).

Two issues stand out about Erhat's particular importance of being a part of "the invention of comparative literature". Firstly, Erhat's duty as the translator of Georg Rohde (1899 – 1960)'s lectures at Ankara University, demanded that she work comparatively both with several languages and in accordance with a changing Turkish language. After Erhat started to work as an assistant to Rohde, she translated lectures for the students, most of whom lacked sufficient knowledge of the required foreign language. Erhat found this a challenging task, not because of the sophistication of Rohde's German, but because of her insufficient mastery of both "old" Turkish and "new" Turkish (*Gülleyla 'ya Anılar* 152). Having been brought up abroad, her competence in Turkish, in her own words, was only sufficient for having small talk with her parents when she started her degree (*Gülleyla 'ya Anılar* 120).²⁹ Erhat's assistantship was just after the Turkish Language Reform in 1932 (Dil Devrimi) was put in place, which aimed to create Turkish as a shared, vernacular, national language by replacing various Arabic and Persian words and rules of grammar from Ottoman Turkish with the newly developed Turkish neologisms.³⁰ In her translations, Erhat was not only responsible for transferring the content of the lectures, but she also had to appropriate her target language since her translation had to reflect the reformed "new" Turkish while also being familiar enough with "old" Turkish for the audience. Thus, with her experience as an assistant, Erhat had to develop a comparative approach that involved a "double mediation": She translated works into Turkish as she also learned her mother tongue anew during a time of language reform.

Moreover, Erhat claims to inherit a comparative methodology which she calls "Spitzer's method". As she describes it, this method, used both by Auerbach and Spitzer, involves text interpretation with a focus on style and allows a philologist to

²⁹ See also p.267 of *Sevgi Yönetimi*.

³⁰ The Turkish Language Reform must not be confused with the 1928 Turkish Alphabet Reform (Harf Devrimi) that replaced the Perso-Arabic script with the Latin phonetic alphabet.

analyze a large group of texts as well as cross-analysis of different languages (*Gölleyla'ya Anılar* 125-126; *Sevgi Yönetimi* 31-32). Erhat writes that studying with Spitzer was a turning point for her later work and her worldview (*Gölleyla'ya Anılar* 122). In this sense, an analysis of Erhat's work is indispensable in understanding the roots of comparative literature in Turkey.

In the thesis, my methodology consists of close reading with careful attention to historical context as well as archival research. Furthermore, I provide in each chapter my critical approach, which establishes the position of my research within literary studies of the Mediterranean. With the thesis, I attempt to shed light on a key moment in Turkish literature from a comparatist's perspective and contend the importance of this topic not only for Turkish literary history but also for the disciplines of world literature and Mediterranean studies.

Chapter 2:

THE DECADENT JANUS: CAVAFY AND YAHYA KEMAL AS THE TWO FACES OF MEDITERRANEAN MODERNISM

A.J. Goldwyn and R.M. Silverman outline Mediterranean Modernism as a sum of individual histories that “reflect various reactions to the material, economic and political conditions of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century” around the Mediterranean (17). Writers of Mediterranean Modernism reconsider factors such as tradition in a time of emerging modern ideas, as well as connection with a larger international world in a space conflating the local, the national and the cosmopolitan. This chapter concerns the work of two pre-eminent Ottoman-born poets, Constantine P. Cavafy (1863 – 1933) and Yahya Kemal Beyatlı (1884 – 1958), as exemplary individuals whose work manifests these features. Cavafy and Yahya Kemal shared similar life experiences as their prosperous families faced economic downturns and migrated during the final years of the Ottoman Empire. Discernably influenced by the Decadent movement in their formative years spent abroad, both poets explored themes of decline also in their later poetry as they drew upon Greco-Roman history. In their poems, Cavafy and Yahya Kemal engage with the passage from the Greco-Roman into the Byzantine, Modern Greek, and Ottoman civilizations while expressing their own political reactions to their time. Building upon Michael Herzfeld’s work, I discuss the use of Mediterraneanism as a speech act and its appropriation within the context of Mediterranean Modernism in order to move beyond Eurocentric understandings of the Mediterranean. In particular, this chapter examines the theme of ‘decadence’ in Cavafy’s and Yahya Kemal’s works to flesh out the uses and appropriations of Mediterraneanism. I examine the reception of Byzantium and Byzantinism in Cavafy’s poem “Στην εκκλησία” (“In Church”), offering a novel reading of the poem in response to an already established debate on its interpretation. I then analyze Yahya Kemal’s poem “Hayal Şehir” (“Phantom City”),³¹ discussing how it utilizes and overturns a

³¹ The reader may find the English translations of “Στην εκκλησία” and “Hayal Şehir,” as well as the poems in their original languages, respectively in Appendix A and Appendix B at the end of the thesis.

classicist-Orientalist trope while underlining overarching continuities between Greco-Roman antiquity and the Ottoman heritage.³²

2.1 *Mediterraneanism, Mediterranean Modernism and Decadence*

The concept of the Mediterranean as a shared cultural space in current scholarship has proved to be elusive, with no overarching approaches articulated about its geographical borders, connectivity and characteristics. As Judith E. Tucker notes, there is disagreement over almost every important aspect of the Mediterranean among scholars (9). Yet, Michael Herzfeld has proposed not long ago that we shift attention from the ontological debate to an epistemological one by pointing to the practical significance and heuristic value of Mediterraneanism. Instead of refusing to grant any ontological status to the Mediterranean, Herzfeld urges us to acknowledge the claims that the Mediterranean exists, as speech acts, i.e., performative utterances in the sense developed by J.L. Austin.³³ Thereafter, we should determine what conditions make attributions of Mediterranean culture persuasive as statements of fact (50). Given the persistence of the category of the Mediterranean, Herzfeld is interested in the consistency of self-stereotyping over a civilizational ideal around the Mediterranean Sea.

Coined after Edward Said's "Orientalism," Herzfeld's concept of Mediterraneanism highlights what he deems self-stereotyped distinctive cultural characteristics around the Mediterranean Sea as well as a civilizational ideal, which also "serve[s] the interests of disdainful cultural imperialism" (48). Thus, Herzfeld analyzes the strategies of the self-stereotyping of Mediterraneanism as a social practice, emphasizing how the Mediterranean pasts are always already politicized (63). That it avoids essentializing any perspective while utilizing the Mediterranean connectivity makes Mediterraneanism an attractive concept. Regarding Mediterraneanism's

³² I employ "classicist-Orientalist" to highlight the interaction between orientalism and classicism after the establishment of Orientalist philology in the early nineteenth century, especially concerning the superimposition of the nationalist boundaries and identities of the nineteenth century on the geography of classical antiquity. I elaborate more on the use of this term in the section "Yahya Kemal and the Phantom City," drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) and Martin Bernal's *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilisation* (1987).

³³ See Austin's book *How to Do Things with Words*.

interaction with imperialism, Claudio Fogu points out that “Mediterraneanism may share with Orientalism the original sin of othering, but it has also been appropriated by the other it supposedly created” (183). Building on Fogu’s point, I flesh out Cavafy and Yahya Kemal’s appropriation of the Mediterranean pasts, which are informed by recent classicist and Orientalist historiographies, and at the same time represent acts of resistance to them. I make use of the practical nature of Mediterraneanism to establish a framework that brings out the different yet compatible reactions of Cavafy and Yahya Kemal.

For Goldwyn and Silverman “[t]he delicate balance *between appropriation and resistance*, between tradition and innovation, between the absorption of international culture and the oppositional assertion of local culture” is the defining feature of Mediterranean Modernism (17; emphasis added). Accordingly, Cavafy presents a particular vision of the Byzantium past in “Στην εκκλησία,” in which he positions himself against not only a Byzantinist, essentially Orientalist, approach but also nationalist Greek irredentism. Yahya Kemal, on the other hand, appropriates a classicist-Orientalist trope in “Hayal Şehir” to show the Ottoman continuity of Greco-Roman civilization in the wake of the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Beyond his preoccupation with the Ottoman legacy in his poems, Yahya Kemal also openly contested the emerging nationalist historiography, which purposefully excluded the legacy of the fallen Empire (Uysal 240). Even though Cavafy and Yahya Kemal are informed by Orientalist and nationalist historiographies, “Στην εκκλησία” and “Hayal Şehir” in my reading show a resistance to both. As for their stance vis-à-vis modernism, Cavafy explicitly celebrates his own modernist approach: “Cavafy, in my opinion, is an ultra-modern poet, a poet of the future generations” (*Selected Prose* 143). Yahya Kemal, in turn, primarily concerned with the modernization of a cosmopolitan imperial culture, may be viewed, like Cavafy, as an author of Mediterranean Modernism.³⁴

In discussing the self-stereotypes of Mediterraneanism, Herzfeld also mentions social corruption and the perceived loss of a well-defined golden age (55). In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, during the decline and fall of the

³⁴ Nergis Ertürk observes Yahya Kemal’s unique approach to the modernization of Ottoman heritage in employing Baudelaire’s Symbolism as “a vehicle for the rediscovery of the vanished lyric voice of Ottoman divan poetry” (*Modernism Disfigured* 4).

Ottoman Empire, Cavafy and Yahya Kemal were also exploring themes of decline in their poetry, respectively, in Alexandria and Istanbul—two major Mediterranean harbor cities. They were discernably influenced by the Decadent movement flourishing in France and Britain during the formative years they spent abroad. In general, the Decadents expressed unease with the progressive criterion of modernity, believing that “the modern world was headed toward catastrophe” (Calinescu 162). As a reaction to the objectification of selfhood under the capitalist civilization, the Decadents cultivated self-examination as a stepping stone to the emergence of an aesthetic individualism, of the kind that is observable in the idiosyncratic poetics of Cavafy and Yahya Kemal.

David Weir characterizes Literary Decadence as the dynamics of transition into modernism and notes that “an interference of mimesis and poesis” during the late nineteenth century was an important factor in this transition (16). That is, writers moved from realism per se to a more complex, obscure representation that made use of irony, aestheticism and iconoclasm. Both “Στην εκκλησία” and “Hayal Şehir,” finalized after a similarly long rewriting process, are narratives of a particular experience: for Cavafy, entering into a Greek-Orthodox church; for Yahya Kemal, viewing Üsküdar from the European side of Istanbul, as the setting sun covers Üsküdar with its light.³⁵ A second level of description emerges from these ordinary experiences, in accordance with the known symbolist influences on both poets. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901 – 1962), Yahya Kemal’s pupil and longtime friend, notes in his review of “Hayal Şehir” from 1947 that Yahya Kemal is capturing a simple, daily experience of any Istanbulite, but with it also the burden of the decay felt by these people (*Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler* 338). Similarly, reading “Στην εκκλησία,” one goes through a detailed examination of the Church seemingly from the eyes of a devout Christian only until the very last—oddly but very carefully selected—possibly disdainful word, “Byzantinism” (“Βυζαντινισμό”). The appeal to double meanings, preserving the decadent elements

³⁵ Both Cavafy and Kemal made numerous revisions on their poems over the years. The first known draft of “Στην εκκλησία” is dated 1892, eventually self-published as late as 1912 (Jeffreys, *Reframing Decadence* 131). “Hayal Şehir” first appeared in *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi* on July 19, 1947. But Ebubekir Eroğlu claims that the poem dates from the early 1920s (61). Eroğlu’s claim is corroborated by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s statement that he had memorized its lines from earlier on (*Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler* 338).

beneath such daily experiences, attracts attention to both a very local experience as well as a universal question of decay.

“Στην εκκλησία” and “Hayal Şehir” “draw creative energy from a sense of historical decline, [and] philosophical pessimism” (Weir and Desmarais 2). These poems show how Cavafy and Yahya Kemal appropriate Greco-Roman and Byzantine heritage while adapting and resisting Western approaches and show how they react to the political atmosphere of change in their time, clinging to the cosmopolitan past in the rise of nationalism.

2.2 Cavafy’s Glorious Byzantinisms

Although first drafted in 1892, “Στην εκκλησία” (“In Church”) is formally classified among Cavafy’s later poetry that thematically focuses on the Byzantine period.³⁶ The poem evokes the sublime aura of the church until the very end of the poem, where the last word, “Byzantinism” (Βυζαντινισμό), affords potentially contemptuous connotations. As Anthony Hirst notes, there is a debate over interpreting the final phrase, “our glorious Byzantinism” (στον ένδοξό μας Βυζαντινισμό),³⁷ and the poem (110). Sarah Ekdawi and earlier, Alkis Thrylos have suggested an ironic reading where “Στην εκκλησία” “question[s] devotional practices, rather than commending them” (30).³⁸ Diane Haas, on the other hand, rejects this interpretation and argues that the phrase reflects genuine patriotic pride and religious feelings as a heartfelt reaction to Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1827).³⁹ In this chapter, I suggest that this double reading that frames the debate is irreducible and at the heart of the poem. First, I pay close attention to the first stanza, which emphasizes

³⁶ See Jeffreys 131. Also note that Cavafy classified his own poems using varying systems of thematic classification. One such list, including his earlier poems is called “Byzantine Days” (Ekdawi 19-20).

³⁷ Like many other scholars (Ekdawi, Hirst, Beaton, Haas), I am more inclined towards a literal translation of the final phrase “στον ένδοξό μας Βυζαντινισμό” as “our glorious Byzantinism”. Roderick Beaton notices that this literal translation is not favored by English translators of Cavafy (‘*Our Glorious Byzantinism*’ 132n6). However, I feel the literal translation is better in preserving the original ambiguity of the term.

³⁸ Ekdawi’s reading can be found in “Cavafy’s Byzantium”. Hirst notes that Alkis Thrylos, earlier, also offered a similar reading (110).

³⁹ In “‘Στον ένδοξο μας Βυζαντινισμό’: σημειώσεις για στίχο του Καβάφη,” especially see pages 80-81.

an excessive focus on materialism and corruption in the church, which, in turn, highlights the pejorative undertones of the term “Byzantinism.” Then, drawing on Haas’s work, I trace the influence of Constantine Paparrigopoulos over Cavafy in his disagreement with the Western historiographical tradition’s attitude of association of Byzantium with decadence. However, I argue that Cavafy ultimately maintains two levels of irony in the poem by paying close attention to a correction Cavafy made in “Στην εκκλησία” in one of his self-published manuscripts, which suggests a mocking take on Paparrigopoulos’s nationalist historiography. I conclude that the poem’s approach to the Byzantine past reflects Cavafy’s idiosyncratic and cosmopolitan conception of his own Greekness.

Przemyslaw Marciniak defines Byzantinism, a concept created in the nineteenth century, as a constructed notion that brings together all negative ideas about Byzantium and notes that it is strongly associated with decadence (47-48). Similar to Orientalism, Byzantinism is “a primarily text-based construct” based on no empirical evidence (50).⁴⁰ In fact, the Byzantine Empire has never existed under the name “Byzantium” but was known as the Roman Empire.⁴¹ Anthony Kaldellis argues that from the Middle Ages onward, conceptions of Roman identity developed by the papacy denied “Byzantium” the right to the Roman name, leading to external distortions of Byzantine identity (4-6). As a result, Byzantium was not included in the nineteenth-century vision of the development of Western culture, unlike classical antiquity (Marciniak 51). Similarly, Byzantium was not a reference point in the early stages of Greek nationalism, which instead focused almost exclusively on classical antiquity.⁴² It is exceptionally original that Cavafy picks Byzantium and refers to it with the concept of Byzantinism, which I argue foreshadows Cavafy’s unique approach to Greekness.

⁴⁰ A discussion concerning the kinship between Byzantinism and Edward Said’s Orientalism is beyond the scope of this chapter; see Stouraitis and Marciniak.

⁴¹ Stouraitis summarizes the terms used by the Byzantines themselves: “*Rhōmaiōn archē, Rhōmaiōn basileia, Rhōmaiōn politeia, Rhōmania* and *Rhōmaïs*” (19).

⁴² Most Modern Greek poets, until the aftermath of the Second World War, were reluctant to identify with Byzantine heritage, with the exceptions of Cavafy and Kostas Palamas. See “Two Cheers for Byzantium” by Antony Hirst for Cavafy’s and Palamas’s disparate approaches to Byzantium. See Roderick Beaton’s “Our glorious Byzantinism” for Byzantine themes in postwar Greek poetry.

Ekdawi rightly observes that in “Στην εκκλησία,” the Orthodox Church in the early twentieth century was “not an artefact... [and its role was] meant to be spiritual, not decorative” (29). Acknowledging this, I want to emphasize the excessive materialistic details and manifestations of the church to be provocative as well as mocking in terms of their contrast with the Orthodox Church’s spiritual and ascetic teachings. Byzantinism is reflected both content-wise and formally in the first stanza. The first stanza is a full sentence in three lines with the verb “αγαπώ” (I love) placed in the middle of the first line and the objects of the church listed using the genitive article “της.” These objects, which the speaker loves, are the labara (a six-winged gold standard carried in the procession), the silver of its vessels, the chandeliers, the lighting, the icons, and the pulpit, in order of appearance. The list of these luxurious items hints at how Cavafy aligns the love of the Orthodox Church with its material aspects. Here, the lighting (τα φώτα) of the church is not natural light but a consuming, expensive practice that requires effort and an abundance of olive oil to sustain a relatively dark illumination. The excessive materialistic details of the church are provocative in their contrast with the church’s spiritual and ascetic teachings. Cavafy evokes a sense of community in apposition to other confessional groups and describes a local church in a cosmopolitan, multi-confessional context as he uses “εκκλησία των Γραικών” (church of the Greeks) rather than “ελληνική εκκλησία” (“Greek church”) in line 4, using the genitive to refer the Greeks as a group. This local church attains these luxurious items with local donations in exchange for its teachings of an austere way of life. The speaker’s love of the church ironically seems to deliver a mocking voice that points to the corruption in the church.

The first stanza contains a specific visual connection with Byzantinism. In his description of the church’s interior decoration, Cavafy’s intricate word order evokes an *ekphrasis*, a characteristically Byzantine literary genre.⁴³ The use of asyndeton in the list of objects and the tricolon in the last line provide a hint for visual arranging. As there are no conjunctions present, if one marks objects with “o,” verbs with “v,” and modifiers with “m,” one can visualize the first stanza as *o v o / o m o / o o o*, alluding to a geometric visual work with columns at the edges of the lines. This sophisticated formal

⁴³ For the practice of ekphrasis in Byzantine literature, see the entry “Ekphrasis” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* by Kazhdan and Jeffreys.

nature could draw on Literary Decadence's fascination with Byzantine art. Adam Goldwyn in *'Constantinople Our Star'* mentions that decadent and modernist artists in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, who were searching for monumental stability, permanence, and perfection, found in the Byzantine geometric visual arts a source for the ordered, stylized and artificial art that is anti-mimetic (227). Byzantium was viewed as a lost utopia for "combining extremes of sensuality and asceticism" (Goldwyn 233). Furthermore, Byzantinism, in particular, was held as the "definitive conceptualization" of art in modernity by the art critic Alexander Benois in the early twentieth century (Taroutina 2). These hint at Cavafy's interest in the Western portrayal of Byzantium. Also, Cavafy's use of the tricolon auctum is unusual since there is no crescendo following the end, which also turns down the expectation of an emotional response in favor of the dry tone and materialistic preoccupation. The intended meaning of "Byzantinism" is therefore reflected both in the formal devices and the actual content of the first stanza.

The description of the luxurious ornaments of the church continues in the second stanza.⁴⁴ Still, here, I want to focus on the notoriously ambiguous phrase "στον ένδοξό μας Βυζαντινισμό" (our glorious Byzantinism) in the final line. This phrase, on the one hand, affirms the ironic reading mentioned above, associating the experience of Byzantine churchgoing with the fascination of excessive luxury and moral decay. However, Haas shows Cavafy's divergence from Gibbon's disparaging remarks on Byzantium, based on Cavafy's reading notes of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* from his formative years (1882-1905)- including the time of the poem's first composition in 1892. As she observes, Cavafy's notes, primarily written in English, openly show hostility to Gibbon's unfavorable view of Byzantium, calling Gibbon at times "ignorant" and having "bad grammar" (Haas, *Cavafy's Reading Notes* 77, 79). She also points out that Cavafy especially conveys irritation at the fact that Gibbon uses the criteria of classical philology in judging Byzantine and Modern Greek poetry instead of appreciating them in their own right (79). Haas argues that "Στην εκκλησία" and its final line can be interpreted as "a response to Gibbon's disparaging remarks on the

⁴⁴ Notice the gleaming vestments of the priests "λαμπρότατοι μες στον αμφίων τον στολισμό" (most resplendent in the finery of their vestments) as well as "τες μεγαλοπρεπείς των ιερέων παρουσίες" (the majestic presence of the priests) in line 9 and line 6 respectively.

liturgy of the Eastern Church” (94). Thus, Cavafy’s divergence from Gibbon’s perspective on Byzantium casts doubt on the validity of the ironic reading.

Haas emphasizes that Cavafy counters Gibbon’s historical evidence with that of Paparrigopoulos in *Ιστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους* (1860-77) (91). Comparing Cavafy’s notes on Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall* and Paparrigopoulos’ *Ιστορία*, Haas even suggests that Cavafy might have attempted a parallel reading (31). Hellenizing and nationalizing Byzantium were fundamental “to demonstrate the historical continuity of the Greek nation from mythological times to the present” in Paparrigopoulos’ *Ιστορία*, which employed the term “the empire of medieval Hellenism” for the Byzantine Empire (Mackridge 198). Cavafy appears to be influenced by Paparrigopoulos on the subject of the unity of the Greek people from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages and down to modern times.

In an early article dated 1892 and entitled “The Byzantine Poets,” Cavafy defines Byzantine poetry as “the link between the glory of our ancient poets and the... golden hopes of our contemporary Greek poets” (*Selected Prose* 36). In the same article, Cavafy quotes a passage by Paparrigopoulos, pointing to the passage as “the most succinct sketch of Byzantine poetry” (39). In the passage, Paparrigopoulos discusses similarities between the Byzantine poet Gregory of Nazianzos and Alphonse de Lamartine. Similarly, Cavafy’s preoccupation with the material details of the church in “Στην εκκλησία” might, in fact, be echoing the Byzantine poet Theodore Metochites and his description of the Chora monastery, in which Metochites “goes into raptures” over gold and silver liturgical vessels, liturgical vestments, pearls and gems in the monastery (Featherstone 219).⁴⁵ We can also trace Paparrigopoulos’s influence in Cavafy in another prose piece, “Greeks and Not Romans” from 1900, where Cavafy points out that Greeks should be accounted to “call that section [of the Roman Empire] the Greek Empire,” and not Roman Empire (*Selected Prose* 128). Indeed, Cavafy’s reading of Paparrigopoulos against Gibbon is revealing concerning the analysis of the poem.

Nevertheless, one must also take into consideration that “Στην εκκλησία” is not among the Byzantine poems written in Cavafy’s formative years but then disowned in

⁴⁵ For more details and translations of passages from Metochites’s description of Chora monastery, see Featherstone.

1906.⁴⁶ This suggests that Cavafy considered “Στην εκκλησία” as befitting his later poetry and his mature conceptualization of Byzantium. I believe that a particular correction Cavafy made in a manuscript of “Στην εκκλησία” illustrates his mature conception of Byzantium in its entirety. In “Ποήματα: 1908-1914,” Cavafy crosses out the printed word “Βυζαντισμός” (Byzantism) using a pen, replacing it with “Βυζαντινισμός” (Byzantinism).⁴⁷ The crossed-out word, Byzantism, is a rare, alternative spelling of Byzantinism. It typically refers to Byzantium’s legacy in Russia and Slavic Eastern Europe under its influence, where it has traditionally been viewed as a positive model worth emulating, as distinct from its Orientalist and derogatory connotations.⁴⁸ In nineteenth-century Russia, Byzantium was viewed positively as an alternative to Western liberal ideology (Angelov 12). Byzantism was especially praised by Konstantin Leontiev (1831-1891), a diplomat to the Ottoman Empire, as an ascetic teaching and as an antithesis to Western development (Zlatkova 122). Leontiev also saw Byzantism as a better fit for Russia’s cultural formation than Pan-Slavism (125).

Cavafy’s familiarity with Byzantism was probably due to the Byzantine past’s increasing influence in conceptualizing the Greek national borders for a new Greek Empire in the nineteenth century after the Greek Revolution in 1821, which was supported by the Russian Empire (Kaldellis 21-22). Hirst writes that Cavafy’s later renewed interest in Byzantium “as a subject for poetry is related to contemporary events” (111). It is noteworthy that Cavafy dates the poem in his collections as 1912 when the Greek military became successful in the first Balkan War and was ever closer to realizing its irredentist politics.⁴⁹ With the Balkan Wars, there was rivalry and

⁴⁶ Ekdawi shares a complete list of Cavafy’s Byzantine poems and mentions which were disowned in an autoscholium in 1906 (20). Cavafy underwent a poetic crisis that subsequently modified his poetics, after his formative years following his study of Gibbon (Haas, *Cavafy’s Reading Notes* 96).

⁴⁷ Find the corrected manuscript on cavafy.onassis.org/object/u-1908-1914-3/. Observe “Στην εκκλησία” in Photo 24 of the collection. This collection seems to have been published near 1914. However, there is a catalog in it, including some 1916-1918 poems that are not in the collection. The archivist notes that this catalog possibly belonged to another collection and was inserted later.

⁴⁸ The term “Byzantism” (Βυζαντισμός) is derived from the root Βυζάντιον (the Byzantine polity) whereas “Byzantinism” (Βυζαντινισμός) from the root Βυζαντινοί (the Byzantine people).

⁴⁹ See the date of “Στην εκκλησία” in the final list of poems in the collection *Ποήματα: 1912-1920*: cavafy.onassis.org/object/u-480/. Cavafy also lists “Στην εκκλησία” in his list of poems from 1907- 1915, c.f. cavafy.onassis.org/object/1907-1915-1/.

military conflict between the Greek state and surrounding Slavic countries. From 1913 to 1928, the Greek government deemed the Slavic names a disgrace to the Greek nation, changing the toponyms of the Slavic inhabited areas it had conquered (Danforth 69). Vassilios Letsios shows that Cavafy was rewriting and appropriating Greek political verse making use of intertextual connections, especially after the beginning of the Balkan Wars (214). Letsios suggests that Cavafy's rewriting of the political verse delivers in a subtle manner the satirical perspective, the anti-epic approach, and the reconsideration of the heroic (214).⁵⁰

At a time of rising nationalism, I believe Cavafy intended to subvert Paparrigopoulos's unified history of the Greeks and its nationalist ambition by referring to Byzantium. Peter Mackridge notes that according to Stilpon Kyriakidis, Paparrigopoulos' nationalist ambition was also driven by a rivalry against the Slavs, tracing the historical continuity of the Greek nation from antiquity to modern times to show that Greeks did not descend from Slavs (199). By uncovering Byzantinism underlying Cavafy's use of Byzantinism, we can see that Cavafy is mocking Paparrigopoulos's nationalist ambition by means of associating the Greeks, "our race" (φυλής μας) in the penultimate line, with the Russian and Slavic reception of Byzantium. Cavafy chose the word "Byzantinism" over "Byzantism" because he did not want to be openly political but to make subtle use of irony and because he wanted to shock the reader by using a term of debasing connotations where one expects a reflection of national pride.

As Cavafy is positioning himself against irredentist nationalist politics, he is positing the conception of his own Greekness as cosmopolitan. Cavafy, purposefully in my view, writes "ἐκκλησία των Γραικών" (church of the Greeks) in line four which suggests that "Γραικός" (Greeks) is used as a pre-national exonym in the poem like it was used in the Ottoman Empire as well as in the Roman Empire to distinguish Greeks from other Orthodox Christians. The use of such a pre-national term as "Γραικός" instead of "Ἑλληνας" (Hellene) (which corresponds to the Modern Greek nation-state) calls attention to how Cavafy did not identify himself with Athens-centered mainland Greece. Cavafy famously described himself as 'Hellenic' rather than 'Hellene' as

⁵⁰ Cavafy praised cosmopolitanism against nationalism in rewriting Kostis Palamas' political verse (Letsios 205).

belonging to the diaspora influenced by foreign custom (Tsakiridou 116).⁵¹ This is reflected in his idiosyncratic language, which evokes non-Helladic and older varieties of Greek.⁵² How Cavafy evokes a sense of belonging through a holistic lived experience of a Greek church in “Στην εκκλησία,” from the smell of the church to its decorations, recalls his unpublished poem “Ποσειδωνιάται” (“Poseidonians”) in which he talks about a former Greek colony whose Hellenism, devoid of the practice of Greek language, remains only in the form of an annual festival.

In “Our Museum” (1892), Cavafy writes about the glorious Hellenism of Alexandria as “another Greece which... bequeathed Greek refinement and grace to the Oriental ideas” (*Selected Prose* 42). For Cavafy, the Oriental is neither incompatible with Greekness nor must be confused with barbarism along the lines of Gibbon’s Byzantinism (Haas, *Cavafy’s Reading Notes* 34). In *Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism*, Hala Halim explores Cavafy’s “strong awareness... of Egyptian Arabophone literary production” and its contribution to Western modernism (116). Cavafy’s cosmopolitan Greek identity belongs to “another Greece” as an alternative to mainland nationalism. Like Alexandria, Constantinople of the nineteenth century was a cosmopolitan city where Cavafy and his family lived. Moreover, it was the city from which his family descended.⁵³ I maintain that, for Cavafy, Byzantium (linked with Constantinople) was another alternative cosmopolitan space to the Greek nationalist mainland and must remain outside the domain of nationalist politics and historiography, just like Alexandria.

In “Στην εκκλησία,” Cavafy employs two levels of irony.⁵⁴ Thus, we can neither simply conclude that the poem embodies a decadent, Orientalist approach to Byzantium nor can we suggest it reflects patriotic pride in a unified Greek history. We must move

⁵¹ Cavafy famously said “Εγώ δεν είμαι Έλληνας, είμαι ελληνικός”. He reportedly spoke Greek with a British accent and was a British national with a Greek passport living in British-occupied Alexandria (Tsakiridou 116).

⁵² For example, he uses the article “τες” instead of the Modern Greek “τις” in lines 6-7 of “Στην εκκλησία.”

⁵³ Cavafy descended from the Phanariot Greek community in Constantinople and lived for a while in Constantinople.

⁵⁴ Roderick Beaton also demonstrates Cavafy’s use of the doubly ironic device in a few of Cavafy’s poems, displaying how Cavafy develops ironic juxtaposition (C.P. Cavafy: Irony and Hellenism 519).

beyond the current reductive debate on the poem between these two lines of interpretation and embrace the poem's double reading to resurrect Cavafy's cosmopolitan Byzantium without jumping to conclusions. Cavafy also steers us to such a reading in "Shakespeare on Life":

I esteem the observations of great men more than I do their conclusions. Minds possessed of genius observe with exactitude and assurance; indeed, when they outline the pros and cons of a matter for us, we are able to draw conclusions for ourselves. But why shouldn't they, you will ask me? Simply because I do not have much confidence in the absolute worth of a conclusion. (*Selected Prose* 27).

2.3 *Yahya Kemal and the Phantom City*

"Hayal Şehir," translated to English as "Phantom City," begins with an imperative to view Üsküdar, a neighborhood on the Asian side of Istanbul, from Cihangir, another neighborhood of Istanbul on the European side, and to observe the dream-like quality of the urban landscape. With this city landscape, Yahya Kemal presents the Orient as an archaic entity—the "East of yore" in line 8— and portrays the magnificence of the archaic Orient under the reflected lights of the falling sun.⁵⁵ With the sunlight gone, what remains are the lights of the poverty-stricken households in the Üsküdar, displaying the city "from the most accurate lens" ("en sahih aynadan") (line 24). In this section, I first identify a classicist-Orientalist trope of describing Üsküdar used by several nineteenth-century European writers in their travelogues and argue that Yahya Kemal also employs it in "Hayal Şehir." I suggest that Yahya Kemal appropriates the classicist-Orientalist vision, associating Ottoman heritage with the continuity of Greco-Roman antiquity in the poem. Furthermore, I show that Yahya Kemal overturns the classicist-Orientalist trope he employed in the first two stanzas by confronting the perception of Ottoman decline and fall.

Edward Said describes the goal of the early Orientalists, such as Sir William Jones and the later the Royal Asiatic Society, to learn, rule, and compare the Orient with the Occident in order to digest the Orient and understand it in terms of a sum of laws, figures, customs and works (78). As a part of this process, Said brings attention to the

⁵⁵ With a literal translation of line 8, one can observe that Yahya Kemal describes the Orient as three thousand years old and presents it as archaic. S. Behlül Toygar's translation, "East of yore," fails to demonstrate this detail.

role of classical texts in the education of European Orientalists and the vision of the Orient induced by them. Illustrating the European Orientalists' visit to the modern Orient, he emphasizes how they ameliorated the obvious political impotence of the modern Orient with the intention to "rescue some portion of a lost, past classical Oriental grandeur" (79). European Orientalists had taken over the responsibility to analyze the classical Orient as they saw the modern Orient to be decadent and unfit for such a duty. Martin Bernal depicts a similar strategy in what he calls the Aryan Model of Greek history, which began to advocate the view that the ancient Greek civilization was essentially European only in the nineteenth century after the rise of Orientalist and comparative philology in Europe (1).⁵⁶ I employ the term "classicist-Orientalist" to highlight the interaction between Orientalism and classicism in superimposing the nationalist boundaries and identities of the nineteenth century upon the geography of classical antiquity as well as postulating an ideal civilization.

In "Hayal Şehir," Yahya Kemal appeals to a classicist-Orientalist trope of viewing Üsküdar, which he must have discovered in nineteenth century European travelogues about Istanbul.⁵⁷ In the first stanza of "Hayal Şehir," the speaker depicts how the reflecting sunlight reproduces the sumptuous Orient of the past ("üç bin sene evvelki mutantan şark" in line 8). In Tanpınar's words, the sun does not simply reflect here, but it imagines a phantom city (*Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler* 340). The phantom city, or the archaic Orient, is presented in the poem between a state of dream and reality, a vision akin to that of Orientalists as described by Said. From the reflections of the buildings, the sun starts building palaces, a dream house of fun ("eğlence hayalhanesi") and a mansion for the fairies ("peri kaşanesi"), displaying a golden age through the material richness, prosperity and fantastic elements (lines 4-5-6). In these palaces of the phantom city, Yahya Kemal describes a deity in a trance-like state who drinks golden wine with joy and pleasure, "Mestolup içtiği altın şarabın zevkinden" (line 9). He is implying the Dionysian state of ecstasy as if describing a bacchanalia. The reference to Dionysus is a deliberate allusion that marks Yahya Kemal's appropriation of the

⁵⁶ Bernal examines the Aryan model and its problems throughout the first volume of *Black Athena*, and especially in the seventh chapter "Hellenomania 2: Transmission of the new scholarship to England and the rise of the Aryan Model, 1830-1860."

⁵⁷ Many Ottoman intellectuals in nineteenth and twentieth centuries read Orientalist Works and engaged with them. See Zeynep Çelik's edited volume *Europe Knows Nothing about the Orient*.

classicist-Orientalist vision since Dionysus is commonly depicted as a god of foreign (eastern) origin.⁵⁸ Also, Yahya Kemal's portrayal of Oriental grandeur suits Üsküdar's name in classical antiquity, Χρυσόπολις (Chrysopolis), which means golden city in ancient Greek.⁵⁹ Yahya Kemal's phantom city is physically built upon the golden sunlight of the parting day as well as metaphorically built upon the grandeur of the ancient golden city, Chrysopolis. Yahya Kemal himself also referred to Üsküdar as Chrysopolis in a prose piece, titled "Türk İstanbul," just like many Orientalists did in their description of Üsküdar.⁶⁰

Tanpınar mentions that, in Yahya Kemal's work, we can trace influences of French authors like Alphonse de Lamartine, Theophile Gautier, Henri de Regnier and Pierre Loti, who were seeking a vision of the Oriental in Istanbul (*Yahya Kemal* 45). Tanpınar further observes that Yahya Kemal was very enthusiastic about the portrayal of Istanbul by these authors, which he thought was revealing the depth of the way of living in Istanbul (Tanpınar, *Yahya Kemal* 45). I detect a trope of describing Üsküdar also shared by Edmondo De Amicis, Theophile Gautier and Gerard de Nerval, which I believe Yahya Kemal drew inspiration from in writing "Hayal Şehir".

In his travelogue *Constantinople* (1877), De Amicis recognizes in his first sight at Üsküdar a city of radiant beauty as if "just called into being by the touch of a *fairy wand*" (23; emphasis added). Right away, he calls attention to Chrysopolis, the golden city, and how the light brings an extraordinary variety of colors, together with thousands of yellow and crimson villas (24). Gauthier, in *Constantinople* (1853) also refers to Üsküdar as Chrysopolis noting the many brightly colored houses while describing how they are surrounded by the ever-present feeling of "placid fatalism" of the Orient (343). Finally, in *Voyage en Orient* (1851), Nerval expresses Üsküdar as a place where the landscape ignites when the sun sets, akin to the incandescent palaces of the phantom city in "Hayal Şehir" ("Som ateşten bu saraylar" in line 7) and describes the grandeur of Üsküdar with its many villas (603-604). Nerval refers to Üsküdar as "la Cité d'argent" (city of silver), but the translator notes that this name refers to Chrysopolis (758).⁶¹

⁵⁸ See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dionysus>.

⁵⁹ From the combination of χρυσός (golden) and πόλις (city).

⁶⁰ See page 12 of *Aziz Istanbul*.

⁶¹ See [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Voyage_en_Orient_\(Nerval\)/Théâtres_et_fêtes/VI](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Voyage_en_Orient_(Nerval)/Théâtres_et_fêtes/VI) for the original French of *Voyage en Orient*'s chapter where Nerval refers to Chrysopolis.

Common to all these descriptions of Üsküdar, we can see the grandeur of the Orient, especially related to the reflection of the sun, embodied under its ancient Greek name Chrysopolis. Yahya Kemal appropriates the European Orientalist vision of Istanbul in “Hayal Şehir,” sharing their aim to restore Üsküdar’s “former” classical greatness. However, Yahya Kemal’s appropriation adds another layer to this restoration project. He is of the belief that Greco-Roman civilization bequeathed its classical greatness to the Ottoman civilization.

Laurent Mignon distinguishes between Yahya Kemal’s early stage of imitating the classicist vision of Jean Moreas (Ioannis A. Papadiamantopoulos) and the stage of appropriation in which he questioned these ideas to extract “his own poetry as an expression of Ottoman Turkish nationalism” (71). Mignon’s paper also hints that Yahya Kemal’s later Ottoman and Muslim Mediterranean vision was underpinned by Moreas’s classicist vision. I believe “Hayal Şehir” illustrates this shift from imitation to appropriation in Yahya Kemal’s poetics. I hold that the archaic Orient in “Hayal Şehir” is an amalgam of the Greco-Roman civilization and Ottoman civilization. The Greco-Roman references in the poem are revealed to incorporate Ottoman elements at a second glance. Chrysopolis reappears as a location used by Persian and Turkish armies to besiege and threaten Byzantium. In “Türk İstanbul,” Yahya Kemal writes that the “Turkish cavalymen” who first invaded Üsküdar in 1081 were the first Turks to set eyes on Byzantium (*Aziz İstanbul* 16). Yahya Kemal further mentions in the poem that the inspiration and the power of the god, which alludes to Dionysus, is to be temporary, “O ilâhın bütün ilhâmı fakat ânîdir” (line 13), hinting at the ephemerality of his own imitation of the classicist vision.

Upon his return from Paris, where he adopted a classicist vision, the Mediterranean for Yahya Kemal – as in Plato’s quote – was like a pond around which civilizations were perched like frogs.⁶² This vision paved the way for the Muslim Mediterranean civilization, a vision Tanpınar observes in Yahya Kemal’s poetry (*Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler* 353). Yahya Kemal was especially concerned with the civilizational value of the Ottoman Empire compared to the Roman Empire. He suggested that even though the Ottomans and Romans have nothing in common other than being conquerors, the Ottoman Empire was the successor of the Roman lands (*Aziz*

⁶² Hasan Ali Yücel writes that Yahya Kemal quoted this line from Plato’s *Phaedo* (256).

İstanbul 35). And he conceived Byzantium as a decadent state dividing the Ottoman lands into two (*Aziz İstanbul* 72). Tanpınar comments that Yahya Kemal depicted the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II invading Byzantium as an incarnation of the antique spirit (*Yahya Kemal* 53). In a story called “Çamlar Altında Muhasebe” (Settling Under the Pine Trees), Yahya Kemal describes how Mehmed II was taught the classical trivium, including works of Plato, Plutarch, Sophocles and Homer, and how Mehmet II was raised to be the next Roman emperor to end the Byzantine decadence (*Aziz İstanbul* 91). The idea that the grandeur of the Roman Empire resurfaced under Ottoman rule is also apparent in Yahya Kemal's eager description of the civilizational progress led by Mehmed II. Highlighting that Ottoman Istanbul was built on Byzantine ruins, Yahya Kemal illustrates the architectural progress following the century of the fall of Byzantium (*Aziz İstanbul* 56).

In the line before the final stanza, the phantom city vanishes as the sunlight disappears to the west (“Kaybolur hepsi de bir anda kararmakla batı”). This very geographical fact demands attention as it exhibits how the phantom city’s presence depends on the light from the West, suggesting the Orientalist roots of the very vision the phantom city is built upon. After the sunlight retreats, Üsküdar’s short-lived pomp leaves behind only a poor neighborhood. The contrast between the phantom city and the real city is prominent in the poem. The lights of the poverty-stricken households in the neighborhood display the city from the “most accurate lens” (line 24). Yahya Kemal overturns the classicist-Orientalist trope by confronting the perception that the Ottoman Empire experienced a civilizational decline.

Yahya Kemal foreshadows the perception of decline through the use of a double entendre. Indicating the source of the phantom city, Yahya Kemal writes, in line 4, “The illusion of sun contrives palaces from panes” (“Güneşin vehmi saraylar yaratır camlardan”). The word “vehmi” which belongs (in the genitive case) to the sun here, is intended to be read as illusion or phantasy, but the same word “vehm” (“vehmi” being its possessive predicate) also means unaccounted fear as well as anxiety, entailing that the fear has a constitutive role in this phantom city. Yahya Kemal expresses the fear of confronting the lost Oriental grandeur carried away with the sunset. This fear can be traced back to when Yahya Kemal returned to Istanbul from Paris in 1912. Sermet Sami Uysal, who interviewed Yahya Kemal during his final years and composed a biography of the poet, shares an account of Yahya Kemal’s portrayal of Istanbul in 1912 as

antiquated and underdeveloped, particularly concerned with how the city was perceived by European visitors (145-146).

Tanpınar writes that Yahya Kemal's intention was nostalgia in his search for the archaic Orient and that he was aware it did not exist apart from its existence in the arts, meaning that the archaic Orient was dead: "Hakikatte bu, 'Şark öldü!' demektir" (*Yahya Kemal* 26). In "Sade Bir Görüş" ("A Modest Opinion"), Yahya Kemal compares the death of classic Turkish poetry with the soul leaving the body. He likened the decay of the body to the decay of the Turkish language, meter and harmony, producing an environment most suitable for a period of decadence, in which writers and poets are trying to awaken the bones and skulls of the dead (51). Nergis Ertürk states that Yahya Kemal's poetics of decadence arises from admitting the impossibility of restoring the past (*Modernism Disfigured* 5). The inability to revoke the past has been a matter Yahya Kemal revisited time and again during his final years. In his unfinished essay titled "Maziye Diriltmek" ("Restoring the Past") from the posthumously published "Edebiyata Dair" ("On Literature"), Yahya Kemal writes that though all literature is built upon the past, reviving the past is a nearly impossible task, since we are not even able to revive a single day we have lived from our personal history (311-312). Perhaps it is this sentiment of loss and a feeling of closeness with the Ottoman decadent literary movement Edebiyat-ı Cedide,⁶³ with which Yahya Kemal sets the poem in Cihangir, near the hill Tarlabası which Yahya Kemal used to symbolize Edebiyat-ı Cedide.⁶⁴

In "Hayal Şehir," Yahya Kemal builds the phantom city upon a classicist-Orientalist trope of describing Üsküdar, which aimed to ameliorate the obvious decay of the real city to rescue a lost Oriental grandeur. Yahya Kemal's depiction of the Oriental grandeur further sophisticates this trope since he endows the Ottoman civilization with elements from the Greco-Roman Mediterranean milieu. Yet, the final stanza of the poem overturns the classicist-Orientalist trope and confronts the decadence of the real city. Though the phantom city is lost, Yahya Kemal feels at peace with the self-

⁶³ See Özen Nergis Dolcerocca's "Ottoman Tanzimat and the Decadence of Empire" for detailed discussion concerning the poetics of Edebiyat-ı Cedide and the fin-de-siècle controversy in the late Ottoman literature.

⁶⁴ See Mignon, 10.

sufficient luminosity of Üsküdar he portrays,⁶⁵ near one of the oldest Ottoman cemeteries, the Karacaahmet cemetery.⁶⁶

2.4 Conclusion

Mediterranean Modernism is a sum of individual histories: the idiosyncratic poetry of both Cavafy and Yahya Kemal react to at once very similar and very different aspects of the material, economic and political conditions of their time. Like the two-faced Janus, the exclusively Roman God of transitions and time, Cavafy and Yahya Kemal fix their creative gaze on the Greco-Roman past, while, at the same time, reacting to the nationalist and modernist aesthetic projects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I employ Mediterraneanism to establish a framework that brings out the different yet compatible reactions to classicist-Orientalist historiography and Literary Decadence by these poets in “Στην εκκλησία” and “Hayal Şehir” respectively. Despite the parallelisms between the two, my style of analysis for each poem differs. Compared to my analysis of “Hayal Şehir,” I choose to focus on more formal elements in discussing “Στην εκκλησία” because Cavafy’s employment of ironic content is indiscernible from that of ironic form. Analyzing these two poems together, I explore the role of classicist-Orientalist ideas and decadence as appearing both in very local experiences as well as in the form of a universal and international question. I am therefore convinced that this study provides valuable insights into the circulation of classicist-Orientalist ideas and the role of decadence in both local and transnational milieus around the modernizing Mediterranean.

⁶⁵ “Serviler şehri dalar kendi iç aydınlığına” (line 18).

⁶⁶ Gauthier’s description of placid fatalism and the aura of death surrounding Üsküdar also implies the effect of the Karacaahmet cemetery in Üsküdar (343).

Chapter 3:

SEFERIS AT EPHEBUS, ERHAT AT TROY: ASIA MINOR IN
GEORGE SEFERIS AND AZRA ERHAT

*Bakıyor pencereden Mihail Trastellis;
fakat bu toprak hiçbir şey söylemiyor ona.
Dilini bilmediğinden değil.
Böyle ikindiye, böyle baharda
ne Rumca'dır, ne Türkçe
toprakcadır toprağın konuştuğu dil...*

—Nazım Hikmet, *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*, “Birinci Kitap, II”

In conceptualizing the Mediterranean, connectivity has been established as a prominent element utilized throughout a variety of approaches, including the concept of “critical localism” which is highlighted by Edwige Tamalet Talbayev in *The Transcontinental Maghreb* (2017). As a countermove against the extensive emphasis on global connectivities in literary studies, critical localism challenges the ahistorical character of theoretical and structuralist studies of the Mediterranean and underlines the individual agency of writers assigned to the margins of mainstream understandings of the Mediterranean and emphasizes a local approach to connectivity. In this chapter, I focus on how George Seferis (1900 – 1971) and Azra Erhat (1915 – 1982) appropriate classical Greek literature and conceptualize Asia Minor as they write about similar landscapes. I provide an ecocritical approach to their writings, based on their visit to western Asia Minor around the middle of the twentieth century and discuss how they undermine the rigidity of nationalist boundaries in their description of the Mediterranean landscape, ancient ruins, and spolia from Asia Minor. First, I examine Seferis’s poem “Μνήμη, Β’” (Memory II), subtitled “Ephesus,” and his posthumously published diaries concerning his visit to Ephesus, reflecting on this cathartic experience for Seferis. In these texts, his approach to nature, antiquity (via Heraclitus of Ephesus), and the trauma of losing his homeland (πατρίδα) converged and crystallized his stance against irredentism, for which he coined the term “the mechanism of catastrophe.” I then investigate Azra Erhat’s travelogue *Mavi Yolculuk* (Blue Voyage) (1962), aided by the rest of her literary output, and delineate her reception of Greek antiquity, which, in organic unity with the Asia Minor landscape, conveys an anti-imperialist parable in search of a sense of belongingness based on attributes beyond race, ethnicity, and

religion. While exploring how critical localism can generate new axes of comparison, my method departs from recent scholarship, which tends to juxtapose Turkish and Greek claims to the classical past as mutually exclusive, competing narratives revolving around nationalist/chauvinistic lines (in lieu of a better term). In short, the approach employed here aspires to flesh out the interwoven margins of Turkish and Greek literary history, respectively, as they converge over the Mediterranean landscape.

3.1 Critical Localism, Mediterranean Ecocriticism, and Paths Crossed

In her blueprint for a category of study called “Mediterranean Literature,” Sharon Kinoshita highlights multilingualism, cross-readings, translations, and transmission of literary motifs and genres “around or shaped by Mediterranean experiences of connectivity and interaction” (314). With this formulation, Kinoshita leaves us with an incentive to understand more about the connectivity in Mediterranean Literature. The connectivity that lies at the heart of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell’s *The Corrupting Sea* (2000) reminds us of the unity of the Mediterranean in its fragmented microregional interactions “of human and physical factors.” Horden and Purcell hold a distinction between “history in,” which is a record of history related only contingently to its geographical setting, and “history of,” which claims or (can) claim an understanding of the whole environment (9). With this distinction, we can see that a plurality of “histories in the Mediterranean” converge to the “history of the Mediterranean” through connectivity. But can we retain this model of connectivity in a study of Mediterranean Literature?

Ian Morris argues that Horden and Purcell’s distinction between “history in” and “history of” is too strong to practically conceptualize a “history of” the Mediterranean. Morris brings attention to problems with conceptualizing the Mediterranean strictly over microregional interactions and suggests that we should instead treat connectivity as a process, which he calls Mediterraneanization, rather than a static state (33). Hence with Mediterraneanization, “we should vary geographical scale to fit the problem” in conceptualizing the Mediterranean to capture the process (51). When it comes to literary studies, there is merit, in my view, in shifting the geographical scale of connectivity in accordance with local or broader paradigms. However, I propose that we need to highlight the importance of critical localism to counteract the ahistorical character and

impersonal dynamics of theoretical and structuralist studies while underlining the agency of writers and communities that have been assigned to margins. In literary studies, we must also narrow down the scope to the lenses of individual writers and establish connectivity through the complex interrelation between writers, the specific locations and regions in their literary productions, and their imagination. Critical localism engages in such a study.

In *The Transcontinental Maghreb* (2017), Talbayev rightly highlights “the potential and limitations of Mediterranean models of critical localism anchored in the material specificities of postcolonial spaces” (18). As a countermove against the extensive emphasis on global connectivity in recent literary studies, I believe that critical localism can flesh out new axes of comparison that build on specific locations and regions and delve into processes of connectivity that spread across the Mediterranean Sea. This would allow us to jointly investigate how writers receive and appropriate specific locations, which deeply influenced their work and were, in turn, envisaged through them. “Against an embedded network of polarized reading grids (Global North vs. Global South, Europe vs. Africa, Christianity vs. Islam) ...,” I think that critical localism can “restore the liminal space of the Mediterranean to a place of critical prominence” (Talbayev 2-3). In this light, this study also acknowledges Kinoshita’s characterization of Mediterranean Literature as a project of reterritorialization which displaces the nation as the default category of analysis and reiterates the importance of historical and cultural analysis as well as textual phenomena (314).

As I examine how Seferis and Erhat appropriate classical literature as they write about the Asia Minor landscape, I follow Serenella Iovino’s *Mediterranean Ecocriticism* (2017) and her compositionist perspective that examines the complex interrelation between nature, agencies, narratives, political forces, landscapes, and imagination. According to Iovino, far from being static, the Mediterranean landscape has cooperative agency: memory and culture go hand in hand to form a natural-cultural inter-formation (332-333). Accordingly, I explore the western Asia Minor landscape not as a static structure but as something that can illuminate the agencies of the writers. Asia Minor appears in their writing as a part of the larger Mediterranean and as a locus where the rigidity of nationalist boundaries is systematically undermined. For Seferis, the

larger Mediterranean coincides with his own understanding of Hellenism; for Erhat, it is the specific geography that gives rise to Mediterranean Mythology.

In 1948, Seferis and Erhat might as well have crossed each other's paths in Turkey's capital, Ankara. That year, Seferis moved to Ankara for his position in the Greek Embassy, and Azra Erhat was dismissed from her duty as an associate professor of Classical Philology at Ankara University due to her marriage to a foreigner, the Hungarian Bela Szabo, as well as due to her leftist sympathies. Tanpınar, whom Erhat would liken to Socrates in a future interview with him,⁶⁷ describes Ankara of that period as a city set on limiting its historical consciousness, forcing the visitor to appreciate every aspect of the city exclusively through references to the Turkish War of Independence (*Beş Şehir* 24). It is possible that a feeling of 'being stuck' in such a mono-historicized city was experienced by both authors, prompting them to develop similar themes and styles and informing their literary engagement with the western Anatolian landscape in the 1950s.

Both Seferis's diaries and Erhat's travelogues consist of highly literary, polished passages. Their entries are not in the colloquial language of mere "notes to one's self." It is especially striking that they use similar motifs to describe the discontinuity of Greek life in Asia Minor. Seferis writes in his journal, "The natives will need a long time to become used to the sea. They have it, but, imagine, they don't know what to do with it!" (*A Poet's Journal* 171). And Erhat writes, "The Aegean Sea has lost its local people, and that is why the shores and the sea ceased to flourish" (*Sevgi Yönetimi* 157).⁶⁸ They also find Greek and Turkish cultures to be complementary to each other as well as integral parts of a larger Mediterranean. While in Izmir/Smyrna, Seferis attempts a comparison to Athens: "They have great affinity: the same atmosphere, the same myth, even the gods seem to look down on you with the same sort of disposition" (*A Poet's Journal* 177). Erhat similarly comments: "... when they come together and converse, you cannot decide if they speak Turkish or Greek or Italian... the language of the Mediterranean that merged everything into one brilliant civilization" (*Mavi Yolculuk*

⁶⁷ See page 233, Tanpınar, *Mücevherlerin Sırrı* (2002).

⁶⁸ Translations of Azra Erhat's passages into English are mine unless indicated. "Ege, asıl yerlisi olan halkı yitirmiştir besbelli, bu yüzden kıyıların da denizlerinin de gelişmesinde bir duraklama olmuş" (*Sevgi Yönetimi* 157).

43).⁶⁹ Finally, both texts are emotionally laden with family-members and acquaintances figuring into their imagination and occupying important roles. Seferis's family, and especially his brother, play an important role in the diaries, while Erhat's acquaintances, fellow poets and writers make up the plot and the atmosphere in her travelogues. Perhaps the most fascinating commonality of them all is that against the backdrop of the soaring tensions between the Turkish and Greek states over the Cyprus Issue, both authors consistently forge an inclusivist cultural vision in their works.⁷⁰

3.2 *Seferis at Ephesus*

Seferis visited the ruins of Ephesus in October 1950, after a long summer in which he traveled across western Asia Minor, including his native town of Βουρλά (Vourla; Turkish: Urla). In the growing darkness of the evening, he was struck by the realization that the theatre of Ephesus, along with other ancient theatres of Asia Minor, was staging a never-ending tragedy "for it was not allowed to find its catharsis" (188). Nonetheless, as his poem "Μνήμη, Β'" (Memory II), subtitled "Ephesus,"⁷¹ and his posthumous diaries suggest, his visit to Ephesus was a point of emotional purification for Seferis. In these writings, nature and the ruins of Greek antiquity embedded in the landscape seem to resist irredentism and "the mechanism of catastrophe."⁷² In this section, I discuss the role of the memory of Vourla and the Asia Minor disaster in Seferis's understanding of Hellenism and his cultural consciousness. Then, I pay close attention to "Μνήμη, Β'" and Seferis's diary entries around his visit to Ephesus to unravel his use of nature and his reference to the philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus.

⁶⁹ "... baş başa verip konuştukları zaman kullandıkları dil Türkçe mi, Rumca mı, İtalyanca mı kestiremezsiniz... ışıltılı bir uygarlık içinde birleştirmiş Akdeniz'in dili" (*Mavi Yolculuk* 43).

⁷⁰ Alexis Alexandris describes Greek-Turkish relations in 1944-54 as experiencing a short-lived rapprochement within NATO, especially against the expanding Soviet Union (234). While composed around this period, the works I am analyzing here were eventually published after 1960.

⁷¹ I quote the original Greek of the poem as well as Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard's English translation from the bilingual edition, *George Seferis: Collected Poems, 1924-1955* (1981). Please find the English translation of "Μνήμη, Β'" as well as the poem in its original language in Appendix C at the end of the thesis.

⁷² Seferis uses this phrase during his stay at Izmir in 1950 and his visit to what is left of his ancestral home and his old neighborhood (*A Poet's Journal* 177).

Both Seferis himself and several of his critics have singled out the Asia Minor disaster as the event that has influenced him the most.⁷³ The Asia Minor disaster, prompted by the irredentist *Megali Idea*, led to the evacuation and forced migration of thousands of Greek families from Smyrna/Izmir, including the Seferiadis family. Most family-members had actually moved to Athens in 1914,⁷⁴ before the Greco-Turkish War, and Seferis did not suffer a loss in the family, other than the profound feeling of uprootedness that defined Seferis's literary production. In fact, it is not Smyrna but Skala tou Vourla, which is described by Seferis as the only place he calls his "home" (πατρίδα), that marked "a paradise lost" (Beaton, *George Seferis* 15). Seferis's distinction between the city life in Smyrna and the more intimate and creative life in Vourla runs parallel to his distinction between his political career as a diplomat and his literary career as a poet (Beaton, *George Seferis* 398; Gavriilidis 246). Likewise, in an opposition to state-sponsored discourse, to which he had been subjected since his schooling in Smyrna,⁷⁵ and later as a Greek civil servant, his childhood memory at Vourla appears in Seferis's notion of Hellenism. This Hellenism serves as an alternative to the irredentist vision of Greekness and lies at the heart of his inclusivist sense of belonging, revolving around a cultural and civic identity, a common way of living, and a shared Greek language.

On his visit to Konya in 1950, after writing about the Greco-Roman marble and ruins in the area, Seferis mentions a conversation with a refugee from Serres (near Thessaloniki) who is one of the two pastry shop owners of Konya. Seferis writes how this conversation reminded him of a "minor Greek civilization, not that of the intellectual currents but the one that permeates everyday behavior" (*A Poet's Journal* 133). This sense of a living Hellenism is also captured in his visit to Cappadocia the same year since Seferis notes that Greekness owes much to Hellenism in the peripheries, where it is in flux (*Kapadokya* 77). Seferis's living Hellenism captures the Greek-speaking cultural identity that preceded the rise of nationalism—in lieu of a better word—and it stands opposite the ethnic confessional understanding of Hellenism

⁷³ Seferis explicitly states this in a letter to Timos Malanos, dated 13 May 1944 (Anastasia Aglaia Lemos 18).

⁷⁴ See page 23 on *George Seferis* by Roderick Beaton.

⁷⁵ Seferis cited by Beaton: "Smyrna meant school, which was intolerable... prison. An incomprehensible world, alien and hateful. Skala [tou Vourla] was what I loved" (*George Seferis* 15).

avored by irredentism. His treatment of Cretan Turkish refugees that feature in his diaries marks this inclusivist cultural vision. The continuity of a shared Greek language from antiquity to his day is the unifying character of this identity. At one instance, Seferis, frustrated with his job at the Greek Embassy of Ankara, feels deep sympathy for a Cretan Turk bursting into tears upon hearing Seferis speaking Greek. The Cretan Turk asks him, “What can they understand, here in the depths of Anatolia, about our island?” (*A Poet’s Journal* 100). Seferis underlines this shared identity with other Cretan Turks also, who “speak wonderful Greek... [and] feel great nostalgia for their island.” Seferis writes of another Cretan Turk from Ankara known as a standard complainer but calmed down once they had conversed in Greek (*A Poet’s Journal* 182). This language also affects Seferis personally, reminding him of local life in Vourla. Seferis cites the phrase “the depths of Anatolia” in several places and, at one point, writes that through it, he recalls his childhood (*A Poet’s Journal* 133).

Seferis’s understanding of Hellenism also incorporates cultural elements that go beyond his personal attraction to a shared linguistic heritage and practice. In the diaries, he displays an interest in Karaghiozis shadow theater play, the Greek rendering of the Ottoman shadow theater play Karagöz and Hacivat. Seferis captures a striking quote from a Karaghiozis play by Sotiris Spatharis in which Alexander the Great meets Karaghiozis and recognizes him, while Karaghiozis does not (*A Poet’s Journal* 19). Seferis underlines a living culture that mixes with Hellenic continuity without the explicitly Orientalist hierarchies that characterized Western European conceptions of Hellenism. By bringing Turkish elements next to Greek ones, Seferis provides a multicultural understanding of Hellenism through the locality.⁷⁶ And yet Seferis’s memory of Vourla is not devoid of Orientalist undertones. Akis Gavriilidis brings attention to Seferis’s description of Vourla as where he once “entered as if in a garden of Halima, where everything was fascination,” using imagery drawn from Islamic iconography (246). “Halima’s Tales” is the popular Greek translation and adaptation of the *Thousand and One Nights* (*Arabian Nights*), where Halima replaces Shahrazad

⁷⁶ Polina Tambakaki, in his comparative study of Seferis and John Keats, delineates Seferis’s understanding of Greek Hellenism in juxtaposition to European Hellenism and highlights the importance of the locality for Seferis (250).

(Papachristophorou 313).⁷⁷ Though this characterization of Vourla first appears as an Oriental paradise lost, I believe it rather pertains to a sense of locality, given that the story Seferis refers to is an adapted version. In his visit to Vourla, seeing the still functioning holy spring (yiasma, ayazma), used by both Greeks and Turks, Seferis notes that rituals do not go away easily (*A Poet's Journal* 170). Seferis highlights a sense of locality to underline his belongingness to Vourla: "There, the people, sailors, and villagers, were my own people"; and moves to emphasize the paramount significance of the natural surroundings: "The roads, the trees, the shores, were the roads, trees, and shores of a country that belonged to me" (qtd. in Beaton, *George Seferis* 15-16). The memory of Vourla emerges as the model for the living Hellenism Seferis advocates.⁷⁸

However, the destruction of Vourla after the Greco-Turkish War is as significant as its memory in understanding Seferis's Hellenism. In "Dialogue On Poetry: What Is Meant By Hellenism?", Seferis warns of the dangers Hellenic values face, especially its destruction in the name of the purification of Hellenism and reminds the reader of the significance of Greek diaspora in the revival of Hellenism (91-92). This danger especially lurks in what he calls "the mechanism of catastrophe" in the diaries. It is beyond the catastrophes of war, "the extermination of a fully alive world," that is, the Greek life in Asia Minor and the destruction of Seferis's understanding of the living Hellenism with the Asia Minor catastrophe and the ensuing population exchange (*A Poet's Journal* 187). "The mechanism of catastrophe" is nothing short of irredentism itself. After his visit to Ephesus, Seferis deliberates upon a remark made by his Dutch companion in his visit to Smyrna in the summer of the same year:

The moral of this whole story may be, for the people, the remark my diplomat companion made last July: "The Greeks say the Turks burned Smyrna; the Turks say the Greeks burned it. Who can tell which is the truth?"

The evil has been committed; the significant question is who will redeem the evil. (*A Poet's Journal* 189).

⁷⁷ Seferis is most probably referring here to the second major Greek translation of the work, *Halima itoi Hiliai kai Mia Nyktes* (1890) by Vlassis Gavriilidis (Papachristophorou 313).

⁷⁸ Vourla figures in Seferis's very early poetry also. One of his first poems, a sonnet written in Athens, is signed with the pseudonym "Yorgos Skaliotis", i.e., George from Skala tou Vourla (Beaton, *George Seferis* 32).

The mechanism starts with irredentist politics leading to ethnic cleansing and breaking down an interconnected multicultural society. Seferis's Hellenism stands against this mechanism. In Greece, in 1946, Seferis writes how Greek marches of the Balkan War are a sign of a tomb-looting, which exhumes everything (*A Poet's Journal* 34). An irredentist sense of Hellenism is presented as prevalent in the post-Greco-Turkish War, so much so that Seferis notes that because of "the unprecedented concentration of Hellenism on Greek soil (during interwar years) only the possibility of a new diaspora would allow the Greeks to accomplish anything" (*A Poet's Journal* 34). Again, diasporic and multicultural Hellenism is presented as the only hope for the revivification of Hellenism. Athens and Ankara, being the capital cities of the Greek and Turkish states, respectively, as well as Smyrna after the Catastrophe, are often depicted in the diaries as lifeless in contrast to the memory of Vourla. Gavriilidis suggests that Seferis deeply mistrusts state-sponsored Hellenism and looks back with nostalgia at the Greek non-state (264). In "Μνήμη, Β'" and his diary entries on Ephesus, we can see that nature in connection to ancient ruins is what remains in resistance to this "the mechanism of catastrophe."

"Μνήμη, Β'" portrays a vague correspondence between the narrator and an ambiguous interlocutor at Ephesus. Building on Seferis's visit to Ephesus and, earlier, Smyrna and Vourla, the poem offers a revealing perspective on Seferis's Hellenism. The landscape conveys tension through an amalgam of vivacious descriptions of nature surrounded by inanimate ancient ruins that recall desolation. I suggest that the landscape provides a narrative where it plays the role of a witness and a constant reminder of the catastrophe while hinting at the possibility of regeneration through resisting the catastrophe.

In *A Letter on "Thrush"*, Seferis notes about himself that he has "a very organic feeling that identifies humanness with Greek nature." He adds that he does not mean anthropomorphism, but an all-permeating order, alluding to Heraclitus, that binds humanity together with nature (24-25). Nature, in its full agency, is captured in Seferis's countless landscape descriptions from Asia Minor from his diaries as well as travel writing on Cappadocia. There, nature, in fact, emerges as an attempt to regenerate life. In Skala tou Vourla, Seferis finds the sea "terribly alive" and the wind trying to reunite it with "the face of a dead girl," a reference to the abandoned houses of Vourla, entry to which was forbidden at the time due to strict military control (*A Poet's Journal* 168).

Similarly, in Ephesus, Seferis finds the ruins “to be in indescribable despair”; they “vanish in boundless silence” as they lack “the blood” necessary for speaking, referring to the absence of Greek life. In his search for the drowned harbor of Ephesus, Seferis notices that the ruins are unattended and decomposing or used as pieces of spolia in nearby constructions. Seferis draws a parallel between the ancient world and the world of his memory. He concludes, “[t]he Smyrna of thirty years ago was much closer to ancient Ephesus than today’s Izmir.” But the fauna and flora are alive to soothe the sense of loss and hint at recreation. The hoot of an owl serves as a wake-up call from the sense of loss. The cyclamen, bulrushes, and reeds on the road to the drowned harbor and those on the columns remind him of Ionian skies. Seferis writes that the cyclamen and the twilight preserve from ancient times “the undulation... of the great soul of Heraclitus” (*A Poet’s Journal* 184-185).

The landscape in “Μνήμη, Β’” develops this idea. While the remains, “μάρμαρο που έμοιαζε απομεινάρι αρχαίου πυλώνα” (the marble remnant of an ancient gate), άδεια κοχύλια θεάτρων (empty shells of theaters), αλλοτινό λιμάνι, χωνεμένο (old harbor, devoured) elicit destruction and desolation, the vivid landscape evokes continuity. With the twice repeated sentence “Είναι παντού το ποίημα” (The poem is everywhere), the poem clearly alludes to Heraclitus’s all-permeating order (λόγος) (Loulakaki-Moore 98). Seferis conjures the appearance of Heraclitus’s soul through “undulation”. The display of flora and fauna, and through it, the Heraclitan order, is demonstrated by biological movements. A lizard slithers (“σέρνεται”) over dry stones, a dolphin swims to keep company (“συντροφεύει”) and disappears (“χάνεται”), the old harbor is devoured (χωνεμένο) by the rushes. As described in line 10, winds have their own wings and are in harmony with the wings of a seagull. Heraclitus’s spirit is embodied in nature.

Seferis, who also translated fragments of Heraclitus, refers to Heraclitus exclusively on occasions where he wants to convey injustice (Loulakaki-Moore 95).⁷⁹ In the context of this poem, I argue that Heraclitus’s work, embodied in nature, is employed especially against what Seferis’s notion of “the mechanism of catastrophe.” We know that in 1955, Seferis made an explicit connection between Heraclitus’s

⁷⁹ Beaton also claims that Heraclitus emerges in the later poetry of Seferis “as powerful bulwarks against the forces of disorder in the world” (*George Seferis* 135).

philosophy and the mechanism of catastrophe in response to the September Events, the pogrom against the Greek community of Istanbul. Seferis writes that the Furies (Ερινύες) are waiting behind the sun facing this mechanism of self-destruction (Beaton, *George Seferis* 326). The Furies are the deities of vengeance, and for Heraclitus, the assistants of Justice (Granger 268). The Furies also appear in Seferis's diaries, in an entry right after his visit to Ephesus, after deliberating about the vanishing of Greek life from Asia Minor. Arguably with reference to this, in lines 15-17, Seferis writes, “στο φως των άλλων/ ο κόσμος φθείρεται· μα εσύ θυμήσου/ Άδης και Διόνυσος είναι το ίδιο» (“in the light that other people see things,/ the world spoils; but you remember this:/ Hades and Dionysus are the same”). I interpret “the light of the other” here that causes the world to spoil to be the view of irredentism and nationalism at large,⁸⁰ which with the Greco-Turkish War, the Greco-Turkish Population exchange and their aftermath, devastated the harmony of Greek life in Asia Minor, which Seferis identifies with his memory of Vourla.

As the poem indicates, Seferis manages to resist this overwhelming sense of loss with aid of a quote by Heraclitus. In line 17, the sentence “Άδης και Διόνυσος είναι το ίδιο” (“Hades and Dionysus are the same”) is a rendering of a sentence from Heraclitus's fragment CXVI (D.15) “ούτός δὲ Αἰδης καὶ Διόνυσος” (“Hades and Dionysus are the same”) (Kahn and Heraclitus 80).⁸¹ In his commentary on the complete fragment, Kahn suggests that this fragment exemplifies Heraclitus's radical rationalism against pious activity (263). In the rest of the fragment, Heraclitus criticizes the pious who join the phallus worshipping Dionysus and declares their actions – the bacchic frenzy – shameless. Seferis, in his use of this fragment, appropriates Heraclitus's radical criticism for his critique of irredentism and condemns the irredentist actions of his time, which, according to Seferis, destroy life in the name of capturing or

⁸⁰ Beyond Greek irredentism, Seferis also criticizes nationalism on the part of the Turkish state in his visit to Ephesus. Seferis laments the fact that the explanations in the Ephesus are only in Turkish, viewing this as “nationalistic stubbornness” (*A Poet's Journal* 183).

⁸¹ In *Ο ποιητής και ο χορευτής* (1979), Nasos Vagenas points out that Seferis's allusion to Heraclitus's fragment CXVI (D.15) in “Μνήμη, Β'” also bears a reference to a verse of Angelos Sikelianos which addresses the unity of Dionysus-Hades (206). Vagenas further argues that the significance of Sikelianos's poetry for Seferis is not only in terms of pioneering free-verse modern poetry but is also very pertinent to Seferis's understanding of Greekness and Hellenism (209).

maintaining national borders. In the diaries, we see Seferis commenting on a very similar conflict. After visiting Ephesus and contemplating the desolation of the ancient ruins both there and in the rest of Asia Minor –which he likens to a seashell bereft of life–, Seferis finds himself ashamed that he does not rest assured by the justice of the Furies even though he knows that eventually, they will bring order. Seferis writes that at the twilight, he is ashamed of wanting to howl that all has been an enormous lie (*A Poet's Journal* 188). Accordingly, in “Μνήμη, Β’”, in line 21, we see the twilight being compared with “το θάνατο ενός ζώου” (“the death of some animal”). Here, we can again acknowledge that biological movements, such as the dying of an animal, or an urge to howl, embodies Heraclitus’s spirit and sense of order against the mechanism of catastrophe.

The tension between the sense of loss and the sense of relief by nature marks the cathartic experience of Ephesus for Seferis. We can see this in “Μνήμη, Β’” through the use of double entendre. In the poem, the interlocutor visits the old harbor of Ephesus, just like Seferis does. The poem describes the old harbor as now devoured under the rushes in lines 19-20, “χωνεμένο τώρα πέρα στα βούρλα.” The word for rushes, “βούρλα”, is the same as the name of the birth town of Seferis, Vourla, his lost paradise. The old harbor of ancient Ephesus is both digested and, as such, preserved by nature and by the memory of his hometown. The identity between Ephesus and Vourla for Seferis appears even more clear if we consider the full name of his hometown, that is Skala tou Vourla, meaning harbor of Vourla. In his search for the old harbor of Ephesus, Seferis is also searching for his hometown; and in the search for his hometown, he is also searching for Ephesus. This circular pursuit defines his living Hellenism, a continuity through language and a way of living in the face of the mechanism of catastrophe. A similar use of double entendre also appears in Seferis’s final poem, “Ἐπὶ ἀσπαλάθων” (“On Aspalathoi”), marking a statement against the military tyranny of the Greek state (Beaton, *George Seferis* 403). In the poem, Seferis asks for the name of the yellow bush, which makes him think of the dictator Ardiaios from Plato’s *Republic*. The answer is provided in the final word of the poem, which is “Τύραννος” (“tyrant”), but the word connotes its political meaning. Seferis, in that poem, assumes a Heraclitan order within nature itself that punishes usurpers of absolute power (Beaton, *George Seferis* 403). Seferis’s nature-oriented double entendres solidify the position of his Hellenism against the official Hellenism of the Greek state.

We can also explore the cathartic nature of this experience for Seferis by problematizing the identity of his interlocutor. Other than Heraclitus, we must consider the possibility of the interlocutor being the Homeric character Elpenor, as an alias for those whom Seferis had lost, including Seferis's younger brother Angelos Seferiadis.⁸² This possibility emerges from an unconventional reference to the same sentence we discussed above from Heraclitus's fragment CXVI (D.15). Seferis writes:

We went with Annoula and took a dip in a pool about twenty-five kilometers outside of Ankara.
At night I felt such a longing for the sea, such an ineffable longing.

Elpenor:

Down here I now know

Hades and Dionysus are the same

wasting a long time in order to die (*A Poet's Journal* 115).

The Heraclitan quote comes from the lips of Elpenor. Elpenor appears in several of Seferis's writings. Edmund Keeley suggests that alluding to Elpenor's story from *The Odyssey*, the role of Elpenor in Seferis's poetry is that of a weak-willed companion who earns their own undoing due to a "hedonistic violation of the just order of things literally preclud[ing] their return to a lost paradise" (389). Seferis describes Elpenor as "sympathetic, emotional, average, and wasted" (*A Letter on "Thrush"* 15). With respect to Heraclitus's fragment, I believe Elpenor stands for those whom Seferis lost to the mechanism of catastrophe, primarily those who had vanished during the Greco-Turkish War. In line with this, the quote from Heraclitus's fragment suggests that death (Hades) and pleasure (Dionysus) are the same, reminding Seferis that whenever he feels pleasurable and away from the troubles of lost ones, the conscious relief triggers a process of recalling the memories of those who did not make it through the war. Maila Garcia-Amaros notes the sense of guilt Seferis writes about in his letters around the Asia Minor Catastrophe for not joining the war and brings attention to the fact that Seferis was away in Paris throughout the conflict—for seven years—and did not return to either Greece or Asia Minor. Based on the letters Seferis's sister wrote to Seferis, Garcia-Amaros claims that Seferis stayed in Paris in order to avoid being enlisted in the

⁸² I would like to thank Haris Theodorelis-Rigas who has drawn my attention to this association. He mentioned that the late Peter Mackridge often reminded him that there may be a biographical reason behind Seferis's near-obsession with Elpenor.

army (238).⁸³ This sense of guilt emerges again in his later poetry and work. We can observe it in the diary entry quoted above. While Seferis is outside the stuffy, bureaucratic atmosphere of Ankara, having relaxed and feeling a longing for the sea, which may be possibly constructive in reminding Heraclitus, he is struck by the voice of Elpenor and Heraclitus's fragment, feeling ashamed for forgetting. The sense of guilt attached to relief appears present in Seferis's diaries from the start of his diplomatic service in Ankara. He mentions Elpenor's syndrome in a diary entry from 1948:

Professor Logre described an illness characterized 'by the incomplete awaking from sleep with transitory memory disturbances'... Elpenor's syndrome. Well, we must be careful what we write; who knows, maybe someday it will become an illness officially. (*A Poet's Journal* 100-101)

Elpenor's disease perfectly describes Seferis's state of mind during his visits to the western coast of Asia Minor in 1950. Nature appears as an emerging motif for recreation and relief in *A Poet's Journal* in addition to "Μνήμη, Β'". While Seferis notes the familiar landscape and the welcoming aroma of herbs on his way to Smyrna and Vourla, he instantly regrets the returning memory (*A Poet's Journal* 164). Just like Elpenor, who descended to the underworld while retaining his senses, Seferis found himself in a lifeless village in Vourla, which he would never return. He described the houses as sick animals, and "the little life still left in them depended on me alone," while the village is described as a wasteland other than the remaining mulberry tree (*A Poet's Journal* 168-169). Similarly, in Poros, earlier, where he was on vacation, away for the first time from his diplomatic duties, and where he notes that he feels much more human with nature, he cannot stop himself from noticing a *kourita* boat (a Smyrna manufactured boat, possibly used in the evacuation during the Asia Minor Catastrophe) (*A Poet's Journal* 58-60).

Finally, we must pay attention to Angelos, to whom Seferis dedicates his diaries, as a possible influence on the interlocutor of "Μνήμη, Β'," deepening further the catharsis for Seferis. Angelos passed away just before Seferis set to visit western Asia Minor. Roderick Beaton notes that Seferis might have been conspicuous of his brother's death as suicide because of his troubled final years in the United States. Angelos was prosecuted as a communist by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and he was also denounced by the Greek consulate of San Francisco. Moreover, a letter to Seferis from

⁸³ I would like to thank Akis Gavriilidis for bringing my attention to this paper.

one of Angelos's close friends underlined that while Seferis was envied in the United States, Angelos was prosecuted (Beaton, *George Seferis* 285). As an emotional response to this, the unbalance of the sense of guilt attached to happiness is present in the poem. The interlocutor, Angelos, along with the memories of those who could not make it, howl, "Αφήστε με ν' ακούσω τον αδερφό μου!" ("Let me hear my brother!"). Yet, Seferis does not reply. There is only silence, even nature freezes, as the final line puts it, "στο γυαλί του γαλάζιου" ("on the glass of blue").

3.3 *Erhat at Troy*

Alongside Sabahattin Eyüboğlu and Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, pen-named Fisherman of Halicarnassus (1890- 1973), Azra Erhat is known as a core member of an intellectual group named "Mavi Anadolucular" (Blue Anatolianists), who were most active in the appropriation of ancient Greek letters in the early decades of the Turkish Republic. It is the same group that also initiated the Mavi Yolculuk (Blue Voyage), sailing trips around the western Asia Minor coastline visiting ancient sites, currently a popular tourist itinerary. Unlike several other studies, this section does not ascribe a cohesive ideology to the Blue Anatolianist intellectual group but instead focuses on the work of Erhat to challenge certain claims about her work. First, I look into the travelogue *Mavi Yolculuk* (1962), covering the two Blue Voyages in 1961 and 1962, during which Erhat published her translation of *The Iliad*. I focus on how nature and the Asia Minor landscape figure in her writing as an organic element attached to the afterlife of the remains and ancient literature. Then, in line with her use of nature, I delineate her reception of *The Iliad*, along with other pre-Classical Greek literature and philosophy, and the formation of her anti-imperialist, anti-eurocentric and anti-philhellenist scholarship, covering her influences from her childhood in occupied Istanbul to her time spent at the British museum. Finally, against the claims that her work advocates a chauvinist nationalist ideology in rivalry with Greece concerning the ownership of classical antiquity, I argue that Erhat put forth a sense of belongingness based on qualities beyond race, ethnicity and religion. Erhat's vision becomes visible, especially in her indictment of the disappearance of Greek Orthodox life in Asia Minor.

Mavi Yolculuk begins with an alluring passage that lasts three pages, contemplating the sense of uncanniness of the objects she had brought from the Blue Voyage to her flat in Istanbul:

It has not been twenty-four hours since we came back from the Blue Voyage. The things I brought are lying on the copper tray. The smell of the sea and the seaweeds within the room. This smell, which breathes relief and health as it mixes into the wind of Gökova, suffers lingering death within the four walls of the flat as if it looks for its environment like fishes jumping from the nets to the deck. (Erhat 3)⁸⁴

Erhat goes on to describe with minute details the many sea creatures she had collected on the copper tray: sea urchins, horn shells, fan mussels, brown crabs, and more. The copper tray presents the objects as if in a still life and functions along with the flat to highlight the artificial surrounding of these objects and creatures of nature. But Erhat's imagery is striking in capturing the freshness in contrast with still life. Erhat particularly describes how fan mussels were gutted within days, as well as how horn shells were cleaned, emphasizing that they were only recently alive. As if just collected, like hooked fishes, these creatures gasp for a windy breath and long for their environment, the sea. On the tray, we also see a salt cellar full of sand. Erhat describes the salt cellar as barely containing the radioactive healing power of each sand grain within. Just along with these creatures and the radioactive sand, we are presented with marble pieces of remains from Cnidus' anonymous temples, having on them egg motifs. The remains are surrounded by pieces of wood and roots clinging to them. And in front of all stands the amphora with stains of cuttlefish ink, a sea-star attached along other sea creatures on its body, and on its mouth a huge mysterious sea flower. Erhat notes that it must have been lying at the bottom of the sea for more than two thousand years. The amphora smells of the sea, the remains of dirt, and Erhat writes she is almost sad that she brought them here, withering, dying like a sea creature in her flat. These ancient remains are embraced by nature so much that they are almost organic. From this mesmerizing picture, Erhat turns our attention to how she got them only for a few copies of her book

⁸⁴ "Daha yirmi dört saat olmadı mavi yolculuktan döneli. Bakır tepsinin üstünde serili duruyor getirdiklerim. Odada bir deniz, bir yosun kokusu. Gökova'nın yellerine karışınca açıklık, sağlık soluyan bu koku apartman odasının dört duvarı arasında can çekişiyor, ağlardan güverteye sıçrayan balıklar gibi keskin fırlayışlarla çevresini arıyor sanki" (*Mavi Yolculuk* 3).

Mavi Anadolu (Blue Anatolia) (1960), and we are introduced to the ongoing narrative of the Blue Voyage (*Mavi Yolculuk* 4).

Nature in Asia Minor, for Erhat, is interwoven with the afterlives of the remains. In *Mavi Anadolu*, Erhat writes that the remains in Troy, Ephesus, and other ancient sites talk through the earth, mountains, and rivers to the Asia Minor inhabitants (1). This, on the one hand, is an urge for fellow Anatolians to own these past cultures, especially the civilizations centered around Asia Minor before the Classical period, such as Lydia, Phrygia, Caria, as well as the earlier Hittites, and claim a framework for Turkey's modernization akin to European modernization. But I also situate this urge to be anti-imperialistic in its rivalry to philhellenism. On the other, it is of interest to this chapter that Erhat proposes her claim through the flora of Asia Minor: "Let us make the stones and earth, which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands, speak" (*Mavi Anadolu* 6).⁸⁵ Most explicitly, Erhat writes:

We, who can wander step by step each coast of this region which gave the first light to Western culture, why don't we stretch out our hands and pluck the raw fruit, why don't we adopt this tradition, which has branched out on our lands and is still sprouting today? (*Mavi Yolculuk*, 135)⁸⁶

Erhat claims a sense of cultural continuity of the ancient civilizations through the flora and its immediate effects on the inhabitant culture of Asia Minor.⁸⁷ The inheritance of these civilizations is primordially pastoral; they are to be plucked like raw fruits that sprout every year. Those who are involved in the exploration of these civilizations, especially via Archeology and Classics, regardless of their country of origin, are welcomed by Erhat as much as by the inhabitants. Upon encountering an American-French underwater archeologist team that explores the site of Halicarnassus, Bodrum, Erhat describes the underwater archeologist women as Sirens, which the Aegean Sea

⁸⁵ "...gözümüzün gördüğü, elimizin değdiği taşları ve toprakları konuşuralım" (*Mavi Anadolu*, 6).

⁸⁶ "Batı kültürüne ilk ışığı yakmış bölgeleri kıyı kıyı, adım adım dolaşabilen bizler, elimizi uzatıp da niçin koparıyoruz ham meyveyi, niçin benimsemiyoruz bizim topraklar üzerinde dal budak salmış ve bugün bile filiz veren bu geleneği?" (*Mavi Yolculuk* 135).

⁸⁷ S.M. Can Bilsel argues that symbolic or cultural continuity was a common aim for all the Blue Anatolianist intellectual circle, trying to establish the ancient people of Asia Minor as cultural or symbolic ancestors of the Anatolian Turks (232). Though I share Bilsel's comment, I must note that Erhat's understanding of the Anatolian inhabitants was not restricted to Turks. It is in this light that I discuss her notes on the multi-cultural elements of the Asia Minor populations.

embellishes (*Mavi Yolculuk* 40). They become a part of pastoral Asia Minor and the continuity of the ancient civilizations. Erhat's understanding of the archeological inheritance of Asia Minor is inclusive in this sense, given that she herself grew up and was taught in Vienna and Brussels and worked under Jewish German and Austrian émigré professors in Turkey, such as Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, as well as Georg Rohde.

The blue voyage of 1962 was especially concerned with *The Iliad*, visiting the Aegean shores mentioned in the epic and citing sections from the epic as Erhat had finished translating it that year together with A. Kadir. In *Mavi Yolculuk*, Homer appears as the "most trustworthy guide" among also other noteworthy writers, Pausanias, Strabo, Plinius, and Vitruvius (188). In this voyage, the distinction between how Erhat addresses modern-day Mount Ida, Kaz (Goose) Mountain, and how she addresses modern-day Troy, Hisarlık, is particularly interesting as she highlights the role of nature and anti-imperialism in her reception of Greek antiquity.

The first stop of the 1962 voyage starts near Kaz Mountain, from where the Gods and Goddesses watch the Trojan War and where the poet Melih Cevdet Anday (1915- 2002) cites a passage (lines 340-350) from book fourteen of *The Iliad* where Zeus, seduced by Hera, calls her to sleep with him on the top of Mount Ida. As they make love, the "divine earth" grows grass, lotus flowers, crocus and hyacinths grow wet with dew, and a golden cloud appears. Erhat feels the presence of Zeus and Hera and senses immortality through the waterfalls of Kaz Mountain and its golden yellow figs and gigantic pines (*Mavi Yolculuk* 99). Later in the voyage, as they go up Kaz Mountain, almost magically, a retelling of the story takes place, reversing it metaphorically. They detect a couple of what at first appear to be illicit lovers in the deforested section of the mountain, but who then turn out to be illegally cutting down gigantic pines instead of making them grow. Erhat offers a Homeric simile, comparing the couple to enemy soldiers sacking the forest by providing a Homeric background for the story via the epigraph of the same section, which quotes *The Iliad*, book twenty-three (lines 139-140), where Agamemnon orders his men to cut down the trees of Mount Ida for Patroclus's Pyre. Erhat gets furious and absolutely shattered about the degradation of the flora and writes as if they are cursed, how the forest moans, and how they could not catch fish like there was none left for some time (*Mavi Yolculuk* 123-124). Here, Erhat provides a glimpse of her understanding of the role of nature in pre-

Socratic philosophy. In her later book *İşte İnsan-Ecce Homo* (1969), she claims that Mévoç (might, rage) appears in nature as the force of life in pre-Socratic philosophers (*İşte İnsan* 59). With the use of personification, Erhat describes Mévoç appearing in the swelling sea, blowing a wind that brings order to the universe, just as in Heraclitus's all-permeating logos (*İşte İnsan* 67). In her voyage, Erhat embraces a form of metaphysical monism in her descriptions of nature, which conveys the interconnection between nature and the afterlives of remains and Homeric myths.

Erhat also notices that Kaz Mountain appears in Islamic (both Sunni and Alevi) local myths, which preserve some motifs of Paris's story around Mount Ida in *The Iliad*. She notes that leaving the incompatible member of the society on Mount Ida is a common trope in each myth as well as contacting the wild animals in Mount Ida and causing a catastrophe at the end (*Mavi Yolculuk* 110). With all its variety, Erhat discusses how nature and its local imagination figure in similar ways in its mythology. The Homeric epics are especially important for Erhat as they have been perfected through an oral tradition that remained alive in the memory of the locals through the ages (*Mavi Yolculuk* 188). Erhat does not abstain from calling Homer a compatriot from Izmir (Smyrna) while noting that he is believed to be from Ionia (*Homeros* 1). S.M. Can Bilsel mentions Erhat's creative efforts in achieving the gist of Homeric Greek in an Anatolian Turkish vernacular (233).

In complete contrast to the spell of Mount Ida's captivating nature, Erhat – unlike her fellow travelers – is very much willing to miss the visit to modern-day Troy, Hisarlık. One important reason is the effect of the American NATO fleet and the problematic touristic rearrangement of the site to meet the needs of the tourism sparked by the NATO visit. Erhat especially notes that the excavation site was eradicated so that Coca-Cola could be sold to “American soldiers of NATO who do not have a clue about either Homer or Troy” (*Mavi Yolculuk* 147).⁸⁸ Erhat's anti-imperialist stance appears in her writings extensively, from her memories to writings on ancient remains and Homeric epics, as well as in *Mavi Yolculuk*. In a newspaper article, she indicates how pleased she is to be called a “mythological socialist” (*Sevgi Yönetimi* 58). Though anti-American discourse appears in her writings, especially concerning the famous protest against the 6th American fleet in Istanbul in 1968, I rather want to highlight especially

⁸⁸ “NATO'nun Homeros'tan da, Troya'dan da habersiz Amerikan askerlerine...” (*Mavi Yolculuk* 147).

her anti-imperialist stance on the preservation of antiquities in Asia Minor, in connection with the Ottoman involvement in the First World War and its aftermath, i.e., the Turkish War of Independence.

To start with, anti-imperialism is embedded in Erhat's understanding of ancient history and is intimately linked with her rejection of Philhellenism as a viable form of historiography. In the introduction to her *Mythological Dictionary* (*Mitoloji Sözlüğü* 1972), which is one of the first Turkish dictionaries of Greco-Roman mythology (together with Hittite mythology), she argues that Philhellenism, and Western sources under its spell, disregarded the Anatolian, Cretan, Mesopotamian, Phoenician, Egyptian origins of Greco-Roman mythology and unjustly confined Mediterranean Mythology to Greece and Italy. Erhat goes so far as to trace the roots of this bias back to antiquity, where Homer was censored by the Achaeans, and Virgil had to serve the Augustan cultural politics (8). She shrewdly asserts that ancient Greek culture has survived in Asia Minor in a much truer form than in Greece because it is not affected as much by Western Romanticism and Philhellenism (*Gölleyla'ya Anılar* 23). Similarly, she emphasizes that pre-Socratic philosophy in Asia Minor is where the ideas of Classical philosophy emerged from, so as to claim that these ideas were only synthesized in Athens during the Classical period. In this respect, Erhat likens Athens of the Classical period to Paris as the center of world art and literature, attributing imperialist aims to both centers (*Mavi Yolculuk* 77).

Concerning the preservation of the antiquities in Asia Minor, Erhat intertwines her leftist sympathies with nationalistic tendencies under an anti-imperialist cause; she writes, “the only positive, productive and scientific aspect of nationalism is not ridiculous practices of craniometry, but preserving ancient monuments and structures, that is, all signs and data of ancient civilizations that have sprouted in our country” (*Homeros* 58).⁸⁹ Erhat was especially critical of the Ottoman policies regarding the removal of antiquities, lending them to British, French, German officials “to the extent of providing guarantees for restitution should damage be incurred on the reliefs” (*Mavi*

⁸⁹ “... ulusçuluğun olumlu, verimli vet ek bilimsel sayılabilecek yolu yöntemi, kafatasları ölçerek biçerek sonuçlar, gülünç ve güvenilmez sonuçlar çıkarmak değil, eskiden kalma anıt ve yapıtlara, yani her türlü uygarlık belirti ve verilerine, yurdumuzda filiz vermişse, sahip çıkmaaktır” (*Homeros* 59).

Yolculuk 235).⁹⁰ References to the British Museum appear everywhere in her work, as the institution with the most complete collection of antiquities from Asia Minor. The quest for preserving or reclaiming Anatolian antiquities from the coveting hands of imperialist armies may be directly related to Erhat's childhood memories from Allied-occupied Istanbul. Erhat writes in her memoir that after being ordered by the British Imperial Army to vacate their house, the women of the family, with help from others, smuggled the family's belongings on their persons, hidden under their veil (*Gülleyla 'ya Anılar* 14). In *Mavi Yolculuk*, we see how Erhat associates nature and the removal of antiquities with reference to the remains of Cnidus. Addressing the relocation of the marble lions from Cnidus to the British Museum, Erhat likens Cnidus to a field after harvest (*Mavi Yolculuk* 82). This metaphorical field, then, embodies a cotton field, of which the local people of modern-day Cnidus, Datça, struggle to make a living (61). More surviving antiquities await under the cotton field that can barely feed the locals, while the British Museum enjoys the status of the most valued collection worldwide. This sense of injustice is a recurring theme that occupies an important role in Erhat's travelogue.

Bilsel rightly argues that Troy appears as a literary *topos* in the agenda of Turkish Humanists, where the fall of Istanbul in 1453 and the Turkish War of Independence are often re-interpreted as retaliation for the fall of Troy (233). Similarly, Özlem Berk Albachten suggests that the myth of Troy functions as a "lieu de mémoire," bringing a "residual sense of continuity" in Turkish cultural memory (*The Myth of Troy* 288). In addition to Bilsel's and Albachten's observations, it is worth noting that this literary *topos* went beyond Turkish cultural memory and was even evoked at times by the British forces themselves. The Armistice of Mudros between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire on 30 October 1918, which demobilized the Ottoman Army and led to the Turkish War of Independence, was signed on the British battleship HMS Agamemnon.⁹¹ Erhat's writings also share this literary *topos* up to a degree. Erhat draws parallels between the Battle of Gallipoli or the Turkish War of Independence and the

⁹⁰ "... onaylamakla kalmamış, İngiliz elçisine yolda bu kabartmalar bir zarara uğrarsa, tazmin edeceğini bildirmiştir" (*Mavi Yolculuk* 235). For Ottoman policies regarding Greco-Roman antiquities, see *Plundered Empire: Acquiring Antiquities from Ottoman Lands* (2019) by Michael Greenhalgh as well as *About Antiquities: Politics of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire* (2016) by Zeynep Çelik.

⁹¹ See <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191737886.timeline.0001>.

Trojan War. Hector appears as an alias for General Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, fighting against British invaders in Gallipoli or in the Turkish War of Independence against the Allies.⁹²

In *Mavi Yolculuk*, the blue voyage of 1962 starts with a mock-proclamation, asking travelers whether they side with Hector or Achilles. Everyone chants that they side with Hector (97). Kenan Behzat Sharpe mentions this scene in the epigraph of his paper “Hellenism without Greeks”. He argues that the ideology behind the Blue Anatolianist movement, including that espoused by Erhat, was undergirded by chauvinistic nationalism over exclusive ownership of classical antiquity in an open rivalry with Greece (172). However, he does not analyze further the ending of *Mavi Yolculuk*, and the blue voyage of 1962. Before the voyage ends, travelers are again asked if they side with Hector or Achilles. Most side with Hector once more, claiming that Achaeans came from Greece to exploit Asia Minor. But, at the same time, the poet Melih Cevdet says that they should not judge the characters from a nationalistic point of view but instead love Greece as much as Anatolia. Erhat explicitly endorses this sentiment in the conclusion of her travelogue (149). Elsewhere, Erhat disavows the claim that Achilles is a kind of imperialist; she writes, “A friend said Achilles is a kind of imperialist, like Hitler, who attacks our country. I got extremely frustrated with this claim” (*İşte İnsan* 88).⁹³ Like Melih Cevdet, Erhat holds a sense of belongingness based on qualities beyond race, ethnicity, and religion. Erhat’s inclusivist cultural vision was crystallized in her will, which she wrote on 28 May 1982, only months before she passed away.⁹⁴ Erhat challenges the critics of the appropriation of the Hittite civilization in early Republican Turkey and notes that this claim was never meant to be literal or scientific but rather to provide a cultural vision for Turkey. There, Erhat interprets Atatürk’s cultural politics as it was never meant to claim that “Hittites were Turks in the

⁹² See pages 4-5 in *Homeros*, pages 158-159 in *Mitoloji Sözlüğü* and page 156 in *Sevgi Yönetimi* by Azra Erhat.

⁹³ “Ama başka bir dost... Akhilleus benim yurduma saldıran bir sömürgeci, bir çeşit Hitler’dir. Demez mi? Bu lafa öyle kızdım, öyle kızdım ki!” (*İşte İnsan* 88).

⁹⁴ I would like to thank to İhsan Serdar Tiyek for his help in my research about Azra Erhat and sharing me such a valuable document as well as letting me use images of the documents.

past... but that Turks of today could become Hittite”.⁹⁵ Then, she asserts her vision: “In the future, the Turkish civilization will be conceived as a composite, complex, mixed entity.”⁹⁶

The island of İmroz (Ιμβρος) appears as the last surviving utopia embodying Asia Minor life in Erhat’s descriptions in *Mavi Yolculuk*. Erhat asks herself, “Why is this island so happy”? The answer arising from pages that follow is this: Greek and Turkish are spoken together, there is no capital holder exploiting the people, production is cooperative, and even though people emigrate from the island, they come back and invest in the island’s infrastructure and other needs (143-145). Elsewhere, in her appraisal of the translation of a selection from Thucydides’s *History of the Peloponnesian War* by Aleksandros Hacıopolos, who was a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and of Greek origin, Erhat highlights the importance that Greeks (Rums) are equal citizens of Turkey and remarks on how Turkish and Greek seemed to her to be closely associated languages (*Sevgi Yönetimi* 93).⁹⁷ It is noteworthy that Modern Greek was the first language she learned after Turkish, by conversing with her Greek au pair (*Gülleyla’ya Anılar* 21). Moreover, we can see that Erhat recognizes the tragic discontinuity of Greek Orthodox life in Asia Minor. In her review of Dido Sotiriyu’s *Farewell Anatolia* (1962), which in its original title appears as *Ματωμένα Χώματα* (Bloody Soil), Erhat compares the Anatolian local people of *The Iliad* with the Greeks, Armenians and Turks living in Asia Minor during the World War, and notes how unfortunate it is that they could not stick together against the imperial forces. Erhat writes that Greeks, who are the “genuine locals of the Aegean” who “inherited the many

⁹⁵ “Atatürk’ün istediği, amaçladığı, Hitit’in geçmişte Türk olması değil... bugünün Türkünün Hitit olması idi.”

⁹⁶ “Türk uygarlığı kompozit, karmaşık, katışık bir bütün olarak düşünülebilecektir”. See Appendix D for the image of the page of Erhat’s will where this and the previous quote appears.

⁹⁷ It must be noted that Erhat’s statement, which was published in the newspaper “Cumhuriyet” in 1973, is highly controversial given the soaring tensions over the Cyprus issue between the Greece and Turkey in the 1970s and the long history of anti-minority policies implemented in Turkey. Especially with respect to İmroz, see *Şimdi Kim Kaldı İmroz’da: Mutlular Adasından, Yasak Bölgeye: Gökçeada* (2022) by Serdar Korucu.

thousands of years of Aegean civilization,” are gone now.⁹⁸ Erhat once more uses nature to reflect her view: there is no one left to work the sea (*Sevgi Yönetimi* 157-158).

In the Azra Erhat archive at Anadolu University, I found a short travelogue meant only to be shared privately with the travelers of the Blue Voyage of 1979 – Azra Erhat’s final blue voyage⁹⁹ – which included more details on the Greek population of Turkey. Before sailing off, they stay for a day in Cunda, a town on the Aegean Sea with many Cretan Muslim inhabitants. There, Erhat visits a recently sacked Orthodox Church. After talking to the terrified sexton and seeing icons with eyes carved out, walls with threats written on them, and demolished seats, Erhat is disgusted and writes the same day again about the sea and a book about ecological preservation: “The sea is awful, dirty, utterly dead. The book I read and brought here to discuss, [is] ‘La mort de la Méditerranée’ (The Death of the Mediterranean) ...” (6).¹⁰⁰

3.4 Conclusion

The inclusivist cultural visions evident in the writings of Seferis and Erhat, first of all, offer a principal case to appreciate how critical localism can generate new axes of comparison. Contrary to the recent scholarship which positions Turkish and Greek claims to the classical past as a priori antithetical, mutually exclusive narratives driven by chauvinistic nationalism,¹⁰¹ this chapter attempted to flesh out the interwoven margins of Turkish and Greek literary history, as they converge over Mediterranean landscape. This research also aims to put forward a thorough analysis of the work of Erhat, supported by archival research. By narrowing down the scope to two writers who may or may not have met each other during their stay in Ankara, I attempted to focus on

⁹⁸ “Ege’nin binlerce yıllık tarihini miras alan Egeli orada yaşamamaktadır artık” (*Sevgi Yönetimi* 158).

⁹⁹ I arrived at this information after an interview with Mehmet Ali Uğur, a friend of Azra Erhat and a fellow traveler in almost all the blue voyages that included the Blue Anatolianist intellectual circle. Erhat was diagnosed with cancer soon after the 1979 blue voyage.

¹⁰⁰ “Deniz ise berbat, pis, ölü mü ölü. Benim okuduğum ve yanımda yolculuğa getirip tartışılmasını istediğim ‘La mort de la Méditerranée’ (Akdenizin Ölümü).” *La mort de la Méditerranée* (1977) is an analysis on the ecological preservation of the Mediterranean by Claude-Marie Vadrot.

¹⁰¹ See Kenan Behzat Sharpe’s *Hellenism without Greeks: The Use (and Abuse) of Classical Antiquity in Turkish Nationalist Literature* (2018) and F. Betül Cihan-Artun’s *The İnönü era translation movement: classics in the service of Turkish nationalism* (2017).

points of convergence in their works, centered around the western Asia Minor landscape and its ancient heritage. The complex interrelation between their works, imagination, and landscape opens room for new comparisons in Turkish and Greek literary history, as well as for conceptualizing Mediterranean Literature along regional and ecocritical lines.



Chapter 4:

CONCLUSION

Classical reception has been critical in the building of national identity in Greece under the profound influence of the European Enlightenment and has been significant in the Westernizing reforms in early Republican Turkey and the building of a secular nationalist identity. Marking the centenary of the Greco-Turkish population exchange, my aim in this thesis was to sustain a comparison that sheds light on the underlying common ground between Turkish and Greek literatures around the first half of the twentieth century. I focused on two Turkish writers born to families from Thessaloniki/Selanik and Skopje/Üsküp, and two Greek writers born to families from Smyrna/Izmir and Constantinople/Istanbul. By utilizing the frame of Mediterranean Modernism, I argue that we must delve into how these authors react to Western European conceptions of classical antiquity and how they react to the escalating nationalism of their time against the backdrop of their multicultural background. I suggest that we can observe similarities in their idiosyncratic approaches to the appropriation of classical antiquity, especially with respect to how they undermine nationalist historiographies and irredentist ideologies.

Contrary to recent scholarship which positions Turkish and Greek claims to the classical past as mutually exclusive, competing narratives revolving around nationalist lines, I attempt to provide an original approach to the subject by illustrating how Turkish and Greek literatures converge over classical reception. There are also other works that I could not incorporate into the thesis but warrant further investigation regarding classical reception in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey. Among these, is the work of Evangelinos Misailidis (1820 – 1890), Yusuf Kazım Köni (1903 – 1957), and Melih Cevdet Anday (1915 – 2002), which would broaden the range of the research of this thesis and would provide new approaches to the appropriation of ancient Greek texts and classical heritage in late Ottoman literatures and Turkish literature.

The appropriation of classical antiquity in early Republican Turkey was an integral step in building the secular values of the Turkish Republic and positioning the nascent Turkish literature within the larger Mediterranean and the West. With this

thesis, I hope to provide an original approach to the subject on the one-hundredth anniversary of the Turkish Republic, a century after the Turkish renaissance.



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Appendix A: English Translation of “Στην εκκλησία”

Below, you can find the English translation of “Στην εκκλησία” (“In Church”) by Evangelos Sachperoglou, as well as Cavafy’s original Greek (*The Collected Poems* 64-65). I want to note again, as I did in footnote thirty-seven, that I would be more inclined towards a literal translation of the final phrase “στον ένδοξό μας Βυζαντινισμό” as “our glorious Byzantinism.” Roderick Beaton notices that this literal translation is not favored by translators (*‘Our Glorious Byzantinism’* 132n6). However, like many other scholars on this issue, I feel the literal translation is better in preserving the original ambiguity of the term.

In Church [1912]

I love the church-its liturgical fans,
the silver of the vessels, its candlesticks,
the lights, the icons, the pulpit.

When I enter there, in a church of the Greeks,
with its fragrances of incense,
amid the liturgical voices and harmonies,
the majestic presence of the priests
and the stately rhythm of their every move —
most resplendent in the finery of their vestments —
my mind travels to the great glories of our race,
to our illustrious Byzantine past.

Στην εκκλησία [1912]

Την εκκλησίαν αγαπώ — τα εξαπτέρυγά της,
τ’ ασήμια των σκευών, τα κηροπήγιά της,
τα φώτα, τες εικόνες της, τον άμβωνα της.

Εκεί σαν μπω, μες σ’ εκκλησία των Γραικών
με των θυμιαμάτων της τες ευωδίες,
μες τες λειτουργικές φωνές και συμφωνίες,
τες μεγαλοπρεπείς των ιερέων παρουσίες
και κάθε των κινήσεως τον σοβαρό ρυθμό —
λαμπρότατοι μες στων αμφίων τον στολισμό —
ο νους μου πηαίνει σε τιμές μεγάλες της φυλής μας,
στον ένδοξό μας Βυζαντινισμό.

Appendix B: English Translation of “Hayal Şehir”

Below, you can find the English translation of “Hayal Şehir” (“Phantom City”) by S. Behlül Toygar (39). You can find as well Yahya Kemal Beyatlı’s original Turkish (*Kendi Gök Kubbemiz* 17).

Phantom City [1947]

Go and watch, at sunset, from Jihangir, this season,
Abandon thyself a while to confronting vision.
For this evening an utterly different charm obtains,
The Illusion of sun contrives palaces from panes.
That Lord desiring fun for his imagination
Doth turn window panes into a fairy’s mansion.
With these incandescent palaces the opposite shore
Much resembles the sumptuous East of yore.
In trance with the joy of golden wine he drank,
Red cup in hand retiring from horizon’s flank,
For centuries, in the Orient, the architect of light
Fantastically reproduces Scutari in this sight.
Yet swift are all the inspirations of that Sire,
How evanescent do seem all these edifices of fire.
They vanish suddenly as the west is bedimmed,

Poor Scutari’s pomp is indeed short-lived.
Regretting not what the sun hath put to flight
The city of cypresses sinks into her inner light.
In such a clime of eternal condonation,
Gold deceives not, be it pure or imitation.
Every spot looks heavenly by the bent of people,
O’er the opposite shore from every dark hill,
At night, the lamps of many a poor residence
Reflect Scutari from the most accurate lens.

Hayal Şehir [1947]

Git bu mevsimde, gurup vakti, Cihangir’den bak!
Bir zaman kendini karşıdaki rü’yâya bırak!
Başkadır çünkü bu akşam bütün akşamlardan;
Güneşin vehmi saraylar yaratır camlardan;
O ilâh isteyip eğlence hayalhânesine,
Çevirir camları birden peri kâşânesine.
Som ateşten bu saraylarla bütün karşı yaka
Benzer üç bin sene evvelki mutantan şarka.
Mestolup içtiği altın şarabın zevkinden,
Elde bir kırmızı kâseyle ufuktan çekilen,
Nice yüz bin senedir şarkın ışık mîmarı

Böyle mâmûr eder ettikçe hayâl Üsküdar'ı.
O ilâhın bütün ilhâmı fakat ânîdir;
Bu ateşten yaratılmış yapılar fânîdir;
Kaybolur hepsi de bir anda kararmakla batı.

Az sürer gerçi fakîr Üsküdar'ın saltanatı;
Esef etmez güneşin şimdi neler yıktığına;
Serviler şehri dalar kendi iç aydınlığına,
Ezelî mağrifetin böyle bir ikliminde
Altının göz boyamaz kalpı kadar hâlisi de.
Halkının hilkati her semtini bir cennet eden
Karşı sâhilde, karanlıkta kalan her tepeden,
Gece, birçok fıkârâ evlerinin lâmbaları
En sahîh aynadan aksettiriyor Üsküdar'ı.

Appendix C: English Translation of “Μνήμη, Β”

Below, you can find the English translation of “Μνήμη, Β” (“Memory II”) by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. You can find as well George Seferis’s original Greek. Both appear in the bilingual edition, *George Seferis: Collected Poems, 1924-1955* (1981), pages 378 to 381.

Memory II

Ephesus

He spoke while sitting on what seemed to be
the marble remnant of an ancient gate;
endless the plain on the right and empty,
on the left the last shadows moved down the mountain:
‘The poem is everywhere. Your voice
sometimes travels beside it
like a dolphin keeping company for a while
with a golden sloop in the sunlight,
then vanishing again. The poem is everywhere,
like the wings of the wind moved by the wind
to touch for a moment the sea-gull’s wings.
The same as our lives yet different too,
as a woman’s face changes yet remains the same
after she strips naked. He who has loved
knows this; in the light that other people see things,
the world spoils; but you remember this:
Hades and Dionysus are the same.’
He spoke and then took the main road
that leads to the old harbour, devoured now
under the rushes there. The twilight
as if ready for the death of some animal,
so naked was it.

I remember still:
he was travelling to Ionian shores, to empty shells of theatres
where only the lizard slithers over the dry stones,
and I asked him: ‘Will they be full again some day?’
and he answered: ‘Maybe, at the hour of death.’
And he ran across the orchestra howling
‘Let me hear my brother!’
And the silence surrounding us was harsh,
leaving no trace at all on the glass of the blue.

Μνήμη, Β΄*Ἐφεσος*

Μιλούσε καθισμένος σ' ένα μάρμαρο
που έμοιαζε απομεινάρι αρχαίου πυλώνα·
απέραντος δεξιά κι άδειος ο κάμπος
ζερβά κατέβαιναν απ' το βουνό τ' απόσκια:
«Είναι παντού το ποίημα. Η φωνή σου
καμιά φορά προβαίνει στο πλευρό του
σαν το δελφίνι που για λίγο συντροφεύει
μαλαματένιο τρεχαντήρι μες στον ήλιο
και πάλι χάνεται. Είναι παντού το ποίημα
σαν τα φτερά του αγέρα μες στον αγέρα
που άγγιξαν τα φτερά του γλάρου μια στιγμή.
Ίδιο και διάφορο από τη ζωή μας, πώς αλλάζει
το πρόσωπο κι ωστόσο μένει το ίδιο
γυναίκας που γυμνώθηκε. Το ξέρει
όποιος αγάπησε· στο φως των άλλων
ο κόσμος φθείρεται· μα εσύ θυμήσου
Άδης και Διόνυσος είναι το ίδιο».
Είπε, και πήρε μεγάλο δρόμο
που πάει στ' αλλοτινό λιμάνι, χωνεμένο τώρα
πέρα στα βούρλα. Το λυκόφως
θα 'λεγες για το θάνατο ενός ζώου,
τόσο γυμνό.

Θυμάμαι ακόμη·

ταξίδευε σ' άκρες ιωνικές, σ' άδεια κοχύλια θεάτρων
όπου μονάχα η σαύρα σέρνεται στη στεγνή πέτρα,
κι εγώ τον ρώτησα: «Κάποτε θα ξαναγεμίσουν;»
Και μ' αποκρίθηκε: «Μπορεί, την ώρα του θανάτου».
Κι έτρεξε στην ορχήστρα ουρλιάζοντας:
«Αφήστε με ν' ακούσω τον αδερφό μου!»
Κι ήταν σκληρή η σιγή τριγύρω μας
κι αχάραχτη στο γυαλί του γαλάζιου.

Appendix D: Azra Erhat's Will

Below, you can find page six of Azra Erhat's will, dated 28 May 1982. The document belongs to the private collection of Özden Murtezaoğlu, a close friend of Azra Erhat, and a fellow participant to the blue voyages. I would like to thank İhsan Serdar Tiyeek, Özden Murtezaoğlu's nephew and the owner of her private collection, for providing such a valuable document in addition to his manifold support throughout my research. İhsan Serdar Tiyeek gave me his permission to use this photo of Azra Erhat's will in my thesis.

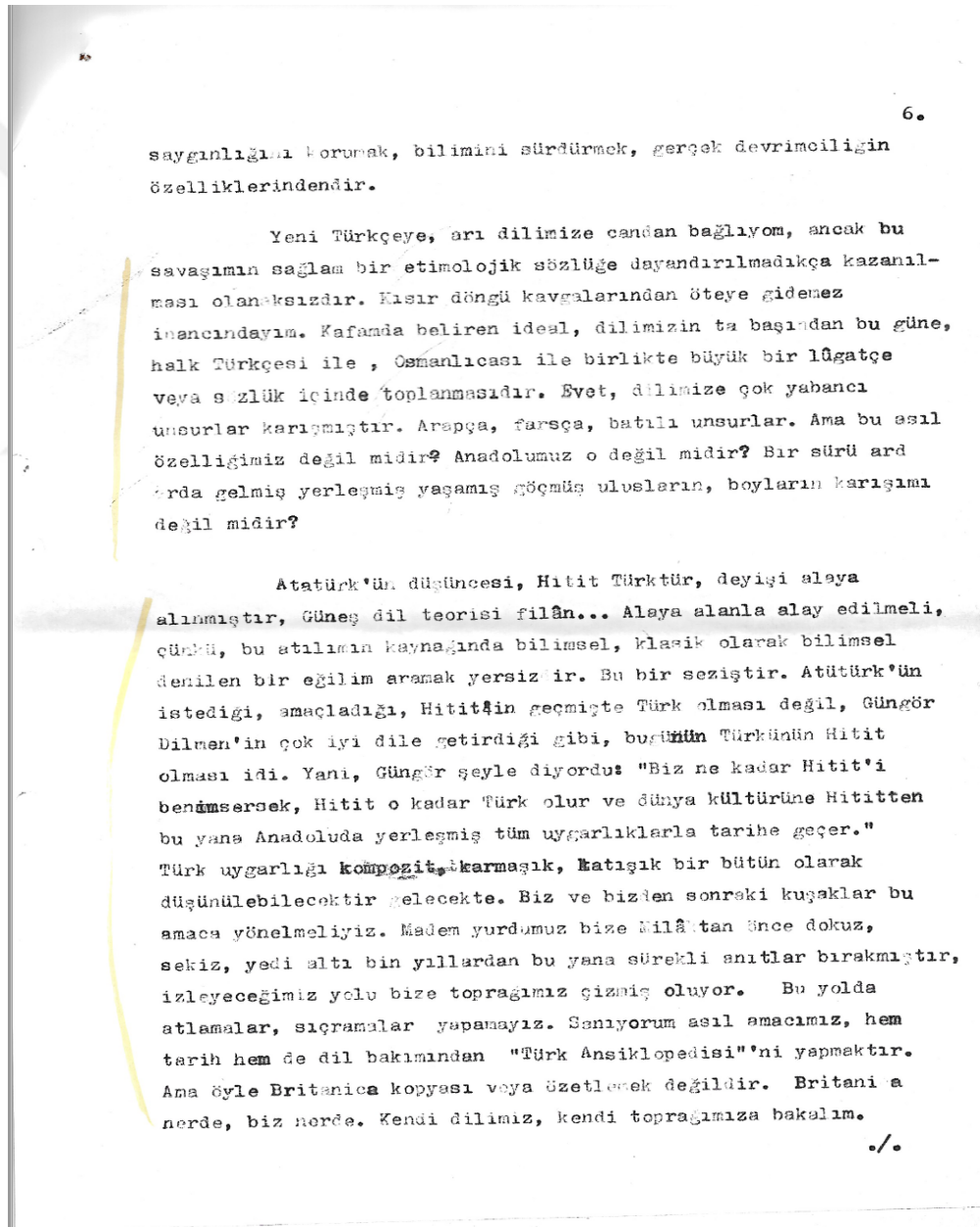


Fig. 0.1: Enver Ali Akova. *Unpublished typescript of Azra Erhat's will*. 5 May 2023. Private Collection of Özden Murtezaoğlu.