

“THE POET OF THE FLAG” AND MORE:
RE-READING THE POETRY OF ARİF NİHAT ASYA

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis attempts to reread the poetry of Arif Nihat Asya in its particular political and historical context. The research question in this critical study is as follows: to what extent can the poetry of Arif Nihat Asya help students of social sciences in an understanding of Turkish-Islamic nationalist ideological discourse and mobilization from the transition to multi-party politics to the present-day political life in Turkey? This thesis makes an original contribution to the existing scholarship on three levels. First and foremost, it demonstrates that rather than being critical, analytical and original, the existing and predominantly Turkish-language academic works are based on a biased, selective and Turkish romanticization of Asya’s poetry. Second, taking the conceptual and theoretical debates on “poetic discourse” and “poetry of nationalism” from different parts of the world as its frame of reference, this study

inserts Asya's poetic work into the late and post-Ottoman context. Third, this original contribution in the particular context of nationalist poetic discourse reveals that there are three themes that appear most in his poetry: the conquest of Manzikert and Constantinople, struggle with communism during the Cold War and the Cyprus conflict. Going beyond the discursive analysis this study shows that poetry is a convenient literary genre that has an exceptional feature at the service of popular political mobilization.

Keywords: Arif Nihat Asya, Poetry of Nationalism, Poetic Discourse, Conquest, Anti-Communism



ÖZ

“BAYRAK ŞAİRİ” VE DAHA FAZLASI: ARİF NİHAT ASYA’NIN ŞİİRLERİNİ YENİDEN OKUMAK

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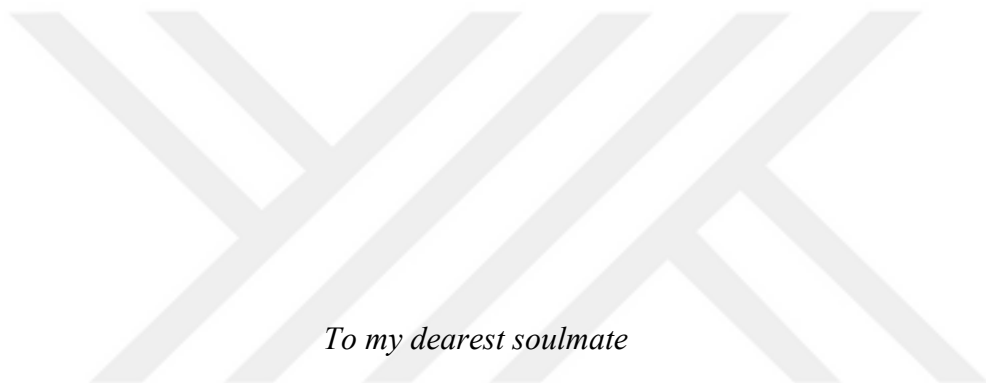
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Bu tez Arif Nihat Asya’nın şiirlerini özgül siyasal ve tarihsel bağlamında yeniden okumaya girişmektedir. Bu eleştirel çalışmanın temelinde yatan araştırma sorusu şudur: Asya’nın şiirleri, Türkiye’de çok partili hayata geçilmesinden günümüze Türk-İslam milliyetçi ideolojik söylem ve mobilizasyonu anlamada sosyal bilim araştırmacıları için ne kadar yardımcı olabilir? Bu çalışma, mevcut sosyal bilim çalışmalarına üç düzeyde özgün bir katkı sunmaktadır. Öncelikle, mevcut ve çoğunlukla Türkçe yayımlanmış akademik incelemelerin eleştirel, analitik ve özgün olmaktan çok Asya’nın şahsiyetini ve şiirlerini önyargılı, seçmeci ve Türk milliyetçi romantizasyonla malul bir yaklaşımla ele aldıkları gözleminin altını çizmektedir. İkinci olarak, “şiirsel söylem” ve dünyanın çeşitli bölgelerinden “milliyetçi şiir” konularındaki kavramsal ve teorik tartışmaları temel analitik çerçevesi olarak alan bu çalışma, Asya’nın şiirlerini geç dönem Osmanlı ile Osmanlı sonrası dönemdeki gayri-

Türk Müslüman toplulukların sözlü ve yazılı şiirleri ile aynı bağlama oturtmaktadır. Böylece Asya'nın şiirleri hakkında yapılmış yaygın ve Türk milliyetçi sınırlarla malul akademik yayınların ötesinde bu şiirleri daha geniş tarihsel ve siyasal bağlama yerleştirerek eleştirel bir mercek altına almaktadır. Üçüncü olarak, bu özgün inceleme milliyetçi şiirsel söylem tartışması çerçevesinde Asya'nın şiirlerinde öne çıkan üç temanın altını çizmektedir: Malazgirt ve İstanbul'un fethi, Soğuk Savaş döneminde komünizmle mücadele ve Kıbrıs Meselesi. Bu inceleme şiirin popüler siyasi mobilizasyonun hizmetinde kullanışlı bir edebi tür olduğu gözleminin altını çizmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Arif Nihat Asya, Milliyetçi Şiir, Şiirsel Söylem, Fetih, Anti-Komünizm



To my dearest soulmate

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RPP: Republican People's Party

DP: Democrat Party

JDP: Justice and Development Party

NSP: National Salvation Party

NMP: Nationalist Movement Party

WP: Welfare Party

NOP: National Order Party

TAF: Turkish Armed Forces

EOKA: *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston* (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is March 23, 2014. Huge crowds of people have gathered in Istanbul for the rally of the JDP called 'Once Again, the National Will' (Yeniden Milli İrade) since general elections are going to be held in a week, i.e. on 30 March 2014. According to some estimates, there are over two million people. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan takes a break from his speech to recite a poem by Arif Nihat Asya, entitled Prayer (Dua). As Erdoğan reads the poem, the crowds are fascinated. Every time Erdoğan finishes a line from this poetic prayer, they respond to him by saying "amen". Observing this interactive poetry recitation of the leader and his supporters, one can see an emotional bond between the two sides. Especially with such lines reading: "... My God! Do not leave this home full of Islam without Muslims/My God! Give us strength and do not leave this battlefield without wrestlers", the crowds get mesmerized.¹

The political event above indeed gets repeated in many other occasions of the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan-led JDP since the 2000s. Indeed Erdoğan often uses poetry a part of his speeches to create political mobilization. One of Erdoğan's most quoted poets is Arif Nihat Asya. This is one of the reasons that led me to formulate the research question underlying this thesis. I believe that Arif Nihat Asya's poetry can help students of social and political sciences in a study of the Turkish right. As the following pages

¹ "AK Parti Yenikapı mitinginde kaç kişi vardı," *Hürriyet*, 23 March 2014: <https://www.sabah.com.tr/galeri/turkiye/ak-parti-yenikapi-mitingi-23-mart-2014>

will make it clear, Arif Nihat's poetry is shaped by the socio-political context, the anti-communist sentiments of the Cold War and the Cyprus conflict. Therefore, an analysis of his poetry informed by his political and historical context is a promising undertaking in the study of the Turkish right. For instance, the theme of a real and/or imagined enemy as well as the themes of the conquest of Istanbul are still prevalent issues in contemporary Turkish right-wing political discourse and mobilization.

The appearance of public political visibility of the poetry of Asya at the service of the JDP's political mobilization naturally leads students of Middle Eastern and Turkish Studies to raise the following question: what is the relationship between poetry and political ideologies? More specifically, what does an analysis of Asya's poetry in its political and historical context have to suggest in the field of Turkish politics?

Taking these questions as its point of departure, this thesis begins with a review of poetry from Ottoman Turkish to modern Turkish. It also shows that the wider modernizing context in the Ottoman Empire also includes modernization in the field of literature. The second part of the first chapter then goes into a critical literature review about Arif Nihat Asya's poetry. The existing literature can be divided into three categories: province-based, personality-based, formal/thematic analysis. The studies in the first group approach provinces in the poetry of Asya and their main aim is to show the poems of Asya about specific provinces. The second group focuses on personality or character traits of Asya in terms of being nationalist, religious, conservative, honest and moral person. They basically glorify Asya without any critical evaluation. The last category is based on either formal or thematic studies about the poetry of Asya. These works analyze the formal features of Asya's poetry such as adjectives, adverbs, rhythm, metre.

The second chapter provides a conceptual and theoretical discussion on poetry. Firstly, it focuses on the following questions: What is poetry? Why does one write poetry? What distinguishes poetry from other literary genres such as prose? After the conceptualization of poetry, the relationship between poetry and discourse is investigated and it is suggested that poetry should be evaluated as a discourse. As each

line follows one other to form the text and the context, a poem acts in a particular way that forms a discourse which in turn nourishes a certain ideology. Both the poet and his/her readers are not exempt from ideological stance and they are both tightly bound by their own socio-political context. Then, I focus on the relationship between poetry, politics and ideology to prepare the ground for an understanding of the nationalist poetry. Finally, examples of non-Turkish Muslim nationalist poetry from the late and post-Ottoman period, namely Arab, Albanian and Kurdish oral and written poetry is presented to show that there is either a lack of reference or straight opposition to the Ottoman presence, which contrary to the wishful longing of Asya.

In the third chapter, the political and historical context is analyzed to make sense Asya's poetry. By providing such a survey, I aim to show that the peculiar relationship between Islamism, Turkish nationalism and Ottomanism has shaped the dominant political life in Turkey. This political background will help to deconstruct the unified Turkish and Islamic identity of Turkey envisaged by Asya since, this context primarily addresses the minority experiences in Turkey. It will focus on the Turkification policies of the CUP before World War I, through the Armenian experience as a target of these policies. Later, Kurdish resettlement policies planned in the Eastern Reformation Plan is examined since it was also a part of the Turkification of Turkey. Subsequently, anti-communism in the Cold War is emphasized since anti-communism shaped Turkish politics and the right-wing ideology in Turkey. In the post-Cold War period, the rise of Islamism in the 1990s and the rise of the JDP are also shed light on.

The fourth chapter of the thesis turns to a close and critical analysis of Asya's poetic discourse. There are three themes that appear very often: the theme of conquest through the Battle of Manzikert Battle and the conquest of Constantinople, the Cyprus conflict and struggle with communism through a profound hatred for the USSR and its domestic supporters, i.e. leftist Turkish youth. In this regard, the left-wing youth in Turkey are viewed to be poisoned and miserable. Finally, the last section in this chapter looks at how Asya's poetry is used at service of the ideological discourse of the Muslim Sunni Turkish right-wing political leaders. Turkish-Islamic musicians also set to music various poems of Asya, which received extreme pride and self-confidence by some

YouTube users. It is shown that the ‘spirit of conquest’ reflected particularly in the “Conquest March” (*Fetih Marşı*) still moves its listeners to a considerable extent.

The primary sources in this thesis comprise all poetry and prose books by Asya. I have gone into a content analysis of his poetic discourse. In order to identify recurring themes of his poems, I paid particular attention to key words and made a table showing the frequency of these themes. The theme of conquest, struggle with Communism and the Cyprus problem are three of the most recurring themes in his poetry. In this analysis of poetry, I also made use of the books bringing together his essays and columns in newspapers and journals as well as parliamentary records in the period 1950-1954 when Asya was a deputy.

1.1 Poetry from Ottoman-Turkish to Modern Turkish

Poetry has been at the centre of humanity’s artistic and intellectual progress for millennia. Indeed, poetry is the first form of discourse (Yavuz, 2005) and it is still one of the most influential literary forms. The other form of writing, namely prose gains value once and when it resembles poetry. However, with the simultaneous emergence of novel along with modernity and capitalism, poetry has been reserved the more limited domain of lyricality, rhetoric and sentimentality (Terzioğlu, 2009, p. 22). Novel and other prose genres have become apparent in the 19th century, which has changed the creation and perception of poetry (Terzioğlu, 2009, p. 24). While the creation and perception of poetry was changing in world literature, Turkish literature also transformed. Brief look at the transition from classical Ottoman-Turkish literature to modern Turkish literature is to understand the transformation of poetry can be useful.

The making of the modern world under the gradual increase of Western domination and colonization from the 16th century onward also drew the Ottoman Empire into its periphery particularly from the first half of the 19th century. Ottoman social, political and economic life underwent the so-called process of ‘westernization’ since modernization has become an universal experience (Göçek, 1996, p. 7). Before

moving on to the modernization experienced by the Ottoman Empire, it seems necessary to have a brief discussion of modernity in terms of understanding that every society, including the Ottoman Empire, has been modernized in a unique way.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the concept of modernity and modernization were viewed to be intrinsic or specific to the West. From the 1990s onward, new conceptualizations of modernity were introduced by sociologists. These were called “multiple modernity,” “hybrid modernity” or “varieties of modernity” (Schmidt, 2006, p. 77). These conceptualizations suggest that modernity is neither a singular/homogenous practice nor the West is hegemonic reference point for modernization (Eisenstadt, 2017, p. 2). Each society exhibits a unique modernization experience influenced by the internal and external dynamics. For instance, the modernization process in Vietnam was influenced by a combination of such factors as French colonialism, the influence of the Chinese culture, and the political engagement of the USSR. Likewise, in the Latin America context, the remnants of Spanish colonialism can be traced in its experience of modernization (Montaldo, 2016, pp. 153–164; Raffin, 2008, pp. 1–3).

Similarly, the Ottoman Empire also followed a distinct path for modernization in terms of its relationship with Europe. It was mainly modern French literature that influenced the Ottoman-Turkish literature (Göçek, 1996, p. 122). Thus, Ottoman-Turkish understanding of art and literature also could not remain the same since different ideas brought by modernization shook the prevailing understanding of arts. For instance, new art movements such as realism began to spread in waves. From the 14th century to the 19th century, Ottoman poetry was the dominant high cultural expression in Ottoman-Turkish literature (Aksoyak, 2009). The Ottoman poetry could not resist the changes introduced by modernity.

Before scrutinizing the Ottoman poetry in Ottoman culture, it appears useful to define Ottoman-Turkish culture in order to precisely locate the Ottoman poetry in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman-Turkish culture is either often intertwined with Islam, or Ottoman and Turkish titles are used interchangeably to define the Ottoman Empire. These approaches are quite reductionist, however, considering the cosmopolitan

structure of the Ottoman Empire (Ergül, 2012, p.1). With its Christian and Jewish population and a number of ethnic and cultural groups such as Arabs, Jews, Armenians, Laz, Circassians, Greek Orthodox and others, the Ottoman Empire was home to a heterogeneous populace, and therefore, cannot be merely reduced to Islam or Turkish culture (Ergül, 2012). The prevailing “center-periphery relations” also created social stratification that did not allow social integration (Mardin, 1973, p. 170). While the center displayed a homogeneous appearance, the periphery was mostly intertwined with ethnic and religious heterogeneity. With the presence of the Sultan, the imperial center exhibited a clear cultural advantage over its periphery (Mardin, 1973, p. 173). For instance, Ottoman bureaucracy was deeply influenced by the Iranian culture. The Ottoman bureaucratic elites integrated Arabic and Persian languages into official culture. Furthermore, the right to access to official and superior culture was extremely limited for the periphery. In short, most of the population, whether nomad or sedentary, urban or rural, were restricted in terms of their access to official culture (Mardin, 1973, p. 173). This invisible but steady barrier marked the relationship between the center and the periphery and showed the boundaries of Ottoman poetry. An article examining several poets of Ottoman poetry such as Mustafa Ali of Gallipoli (1541-1600), Bâkî (1526-1600), and Esrâr Dede (1748-1797) concludes that these poets use not only Arabic and Persian but also Greek, Albanian and Bosnian words (Aksoyak, 2009, pp. 1–18). Since Ottoman poetry in the Ottoman Empire comprised a mix of different languages, it would not be wrong to conclude that most of the population did not have comprehensive knowledge of the Ottoman poetry. In other words, only a relatively privileged group of people were the ones who were able to read, understand and enjoy the Ottoman poetry. In a way, the Ottoman poetry was occupying a central place in Ottoman culture, but it would be a mistake to evaluate Ottoman poetry independently of Persian or Arabic poetry. It means that literary forms of Ottoman poetry such as *gazel* and *nazire* should be investigated within the scope of classical Persian poetic forms and conventions. Even Ottoman sultans took classical Persian as a model to be emulated. Süleyman the Magnificent writing under the penname of Muhibbi himself makes it clear in one of his poems that he was influenced by the teachings of Hafez (Inan, 2017, pp. 671–689).

Keeping in mind that the Ottoman poetry was reminiscent of classical Persian literature, it is hence necessary to view the main characteristics of the Ottoman poetry as it is the predecessor of modern Turkish poetry. The dominant theme of investigation and debate among scholars of literature is that of authenticity. Veysel Öztürk argues that difference between the concept of authenticity in classical Ottoman-Turkish poetry and understanding of originality in modern Turkish poetry is one of the fundamental changes brought by modernization (Öztürk, 2016, pp. 135–161). According to Oxford Dictionary, while originality means to be different from others authenticity means that some of the features of entity resembles the features of original (“Authentic,” n.d.; “Authenticity,” n.d.; “Originality,” n.d.). It seems thus that the dividing line between classical and modern poetry lies at this point. When classical poetic forms like *gazel* or *mesnevi* are examined, the first thing that draws one’s attention is repetitive forms of depiction. What is interesting here is that when Ottoman poets deploy different metaphors in depicting their love or the beloved one, their metaphors are authentic rather than original. In other words, while the structure and layout of the *gazel* remain same, “artistic creativity” of poets comes to the fore (Öztürk, 2016, p. 138). Within their delimited poetic framework, they engaged in an artistic struggle (Öztürk, 2016, p. 137). The Ottoman poems hence reflect similarity rather than originality. Fuzuli expresses this contradictory situation as follows: “What a strange state! A spoken word cannot be written because it has been said before and an unspoken word cannot be written because it has not been said before” (Ayvazoğlu, 1982, p. 101).

The poets realized their art by means of certain schemes, stereotypes and prototypes since they were forced to produce in a designated pattern. This limitation is also noticed through objects and subjects that poets depict in their poems. Physical environment that overshadows poetry is reminiscent of Plato’s ideal universe: Instead of talking about a beloved one, garden or rose whom the poet can see or touch, he speaks of a perfect state of things. Objects were not used in their literal meanings but in the form of analogies: the beloved’s eyes are viewed as daffodils or almonds, eyebrows as a violin and hair as snakes.

While the Ottoman poetry continued to use the designated patterns, the poets of folk poetry in 19th century such as Emrah of Erzurum (1775-1854), Zihni of Bayburt (1795-1859), Aşık Dertli (1772-1846) and Seyrani (1800-1866) were very close to the classical poetry in terms of the words and imaginary world that they took from the classical Ottoman poetry. Tanpınar (2018) explains the classical Ottoman poetry and folk poetry though the topics that poets touch upon since these poets mentioned the changing social structure, i.e., reforms implemented by the rescript of Gülhane under the leadership of Mahmud II. In this sense, although Emrah of Erzurum presented the reforms in his folk poetry, however, he did not make a difference, on the other hand, Zihni of Bayburt, by using both aruz prosody and syllabic meter achieved a perfection in terms of form at least. Seyrani, on the other hand, differs from these poets by talking about the social problems brought by Mahmud II but still did not bring any considerable modification (Tanpınar, 2018, pp. 111–119).

That is why Ottoman poetry received increasing criticism by literary personalities in the late Ottoman period. The pioneering and outstanding figure is Namık Kemal (1840-1888), who criticized Ottoman poetry based on the above-mentioned concepts. According to Kemal, Ottoman poetry was far from original and disconnected from the reality. Kemal considered classical Ottoman poetry as immoral, unreal and imitation (Inan, 2017). According to him, strong literary forms like poetry should have a moral and social mission. He perceived this contrast through his focus on the etymological origin of the word *edebiyat* (literature) which means morality; however, classical literature was far from being moral (Öztürk, 2016, p. 143) He also strongly encouraged the use of national poetry as a cornerstone for the advancement of the empire. In his poems with nationalist and patriotic themes, he underpinned his desire to save the fatherland (Mardin, 2000, p. 283). In addition to poetry, play was the other literary genre that was also vital in patriotic agitation. The new poetic style of Namık Kemal aimed to create and promote moral sensitivity, national feeling, and love of the homeland. He ended the repetitive poetic styles used by classical Ottoman-Turkish poets and brought a new sense of originality to Ottoman poetry. That is why Namık

Kemal is considered to be one of the pioneering personalities paving the way to the modernization of the Ottoman-Turkish literature (Tanpınar, 2018, pp. 412–417).

The novel poetic approach adopted and propagated by Namık Kemal offered a new gateway to his successors like Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan (1852-1937). Yet unlike his mentor, his poetry did not concentrate on nation or homeland. He preferred to revive his poetry on emotions and experiences nurtured by the new literary movement called naturalism. He immersed himself in more metaphysical issues such as death as reflected in his well-known poem entitled *Makber*, dominated by a pessimistic atmosphere. In other words, Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan created a new individual creativity and originality on more subjective issues. As he spent most of his life in Europe, he was seen as a pioneer of pro-Western literature. Having carried Western-style originality to his poems, he received considerable criticism by Turkish literary critics (Öztürk, 2016, pp. 145–154). As Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962) indicates, Tarhan had an extremely fortunate life without deep human suffering. Traces of Hamid's fortunate life could be observed in his poems. These poems lacked human weaknesses since Hamid had never faced the harsh realities in his life (Tanpınar, 2018, p. 53). Although Hamid had spent time in Paris, Bombay, Beirut, London, and Vienna and knew Arabic, Persian, French and English, his poems did not contain European overtones (Demircan, 2003, p. 3; Enginün, n.d.; Tanpınar, 2018, pp. 253–258). However, Tevfik Fikret (1867-1915) was able to reflect Europe in his poems, even though he never travelled beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire (Tanpınar, 2018, pp. 253–258). It is assumed that Fikret only knew French since he was teaching French (Kaplan, 1986, p. 7). There is no more information on what other languages Fikret was fluent in. That could be the reason why Tanpınar compared these two poets.

Similar criticisms would later be raised by Nâzım Hikmet (1902-1963). Hikmet targeted Hamid in his articles called *Putları Yıkıyoruz* (*We are Demolishing the Icons*). In these articles, he criticized the well-known Turkish poets and novelists like Abdülhak Hamid, Mehmet Emin Beyefendi and Yakup Kadri. In Hikmet's opinion, Hamid's only talent was that he had a great command of Ottoman Turkish. According to Hikmet, Hamid was over-influenced by the leading figures of French literature such

as Racine and Corneille, thus he did not deserve the title of *dahi-i azam* (genius). He wrote plays and poems, but these poems could not be translated into different languages since they would have lost their value once they were translated (Tanpınar, 2018, p. 36).

The harshest response to Hikmet's criticism came from the poets like Ahmet Haşım (1887-1933) and Hamdullah Suphi (1885-1966). Haşım liked Hikmet's poems in the beginning but the latter's increasing reputation seems to have contributed to a change in Haşım's attitude (Toprak, 2015, p. 39). Hikmet's inclusion of Ahmet Haşım in 'We are Smashing the Icons No.2' has completely changed Haşım's attitude to Nâzım Hikmet. As claimed by Haşım, Hikmet was a proletarian poet and nothing more (Toprak, 2015, p. 39). While these debates were continuing in literary circles, the content of debates was not only directed to poets themselves. While poetry was still subject to continued change, it caused an atmosphere of uncertainty and controversy among literati about the functions of poetry (Wellek & Warren, 1954, p. 23). For instance, there were conflicts about whether poetry should involve social and political events, ideological leanings, historical and political themes (Wellek & Warren, 1954, pp. 107–124). There were also debates on how poetry could maintain its form and purity. New ideas and concepts led to disagreement among men of literature regarding the role and meaning of poetry. Yahya Kemal and Ahmet Haşım argued that poetry should not come close to prose since it derives its value from its proximity to musicality. Both poets argue that poetry should maintain its purity and its musical dimension must be preserved (Okay, 2004, pp. 101–109). In a literary milieu in which such debates were continuing to mark modern Turkish poetry, Nâzım Hikmet followed a distinct direction in understanding and creating poetry. When Nâzım Hikmet wrote his poems, his understanding of poetry was in a serious contrast to the poetry of Ahmet Haşım and Yahya Kemal. Haşım and Kemal insist on the musicality, i.e. melodic aspect of poetry since poetry can only gain its purity by revealing these features. Furthermore, the concern for meaning destroys the harmony of a poem since it is like a song touching the heart and soul (M. Yılmaz & Yılmaz, 2010, pp. 107–126). In other words, they argue that poetry should not become an object of ideology. If poetry

becomes intertwined with ideology, it leaves its elegance behind and ideology kills its delicacy. According to them, in order to keep poetry at the desired level of subtlety and elegance, it had to be disconnected from history, politics and philosophy. In their views, poetry cannot be used to shed light on either history or politics.

Nâzım Hikmet is thus a turning point from classical Ottoman-Turkish to modern Turkish poetic forms and conventions. Indeed, he created a bomb effect in the world of poetry not only with his poems but also with his articles revealing a novel and radical view of poetry. Hikmet's innovation is that he brought poetry closer to novel. In other words, he saved poetry from rhymed and metered structure. Alongside these stylistic innovations, he also introduced radical changes in terms of the subjects covered in poetry. In a literary setting dominated by the aforementioned debates, he introduced social and political themes into his poetry. While his earliest poems are also colored by Turkish nationalism, he subsequently focuses on anti-colonial resistance, socialism, and revolutionary struggle in his poetry. He achieved these by demolishing conventional stylistic meters and rhymes and by novelizing poetry. Hikmet, in a way, has demonstrated that poetry is an effective tool in social and political engagement. He basically eradicated the conventional norms that defined the understanding of poetry in the history of Turkish poetry up until that time (Terzioğlu, 2009).

Hikmet created a plot that could take place mainly in novels. Therefore, he took poetry to a quite different level on both purposeful and semantic grounds. He constructed historical and collective characters, which were not just fictitious but were also protagonists. Since these characters come directly from real life, they increase a sense of reality in their readers' minds while creating a sense of reading a novel rather than a poem. Perhaps one of the best examples in this context is the book of poetry entitled *Taranta Babu'ya Mektuplar (Letters to Taranta Babu)*. This book contains 123 letters of a young Ethiopian man. Through these imaginary letters, he went into a critique of modern Western racism and colonialism. It can even be said that these letters have become alternative historical narratives. These letters can be used as a map to understand the madness created by fascism in Mussolini's Italy. With the help of these letters, it is possible to view world history not from the point of view of the Western

colonizing countries like Italy but from the perspective of colonized countries such as Ethiopia. In another poetry book entitled *Benerci Kendini Niçin Öldürdü? (Why Benerci Killed Himself)*, Nâzım Hikmet focuses on a fictional Indian character called Benerci who dedicated his whole life to the anti-imperialist cause of saving his country from British colonial domination (Terzioğlu, 2009).

An interesting analysis of Hikmet's poetry is provided by Öykü Terzioğlu. With a attention to the social, political, historical and ideological context of Hikmet's poems, Terzioğlu goes into an analysis that is beyond a merely literary one. By adopting concepts borrowed from literary criticism, political science, history, and sociology, she suggests that Nâzım Hikmet's poetry can be read as poetics of anti-colonialism. Moreover, she argues that socialist and anti-colonialist worldview in Hikmet's poems should be read through historical materialism and the possibility of revolution. Hikmet opposes the ruling class by making poetry an object of resistance by inserting novelistic and humorous features to poetry (Terzioğlu, 2009, pp. 187–192).

While anti-Western colonial perspective framed in a socialist political ideological poetic discourse in modern Turkish poetry was not common, the introduction of Turkish Islamist and Turkish nationalist themes into Turkish poetry was much more common. One can refer to Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873-1936), Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), Mehmet Emin Yurdakul (1869-1944), Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1904-1983) and Arif Nihat Asya (1904-1975). One of the pioneering figures of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp wrote poems in support of Turkish nationalism. Although Gökalp's political life was seen as a return from Turanism to Turkism, even when he was an advocate of Turanism, he opposed biological racism and defended nationalism based on the unity of religion, language, history and culture (Tokluoğlu, 2012, p. 103). Writer of the Turkish national anthem and hence literally "the Turkish national poet", Mehmet Akif Ersoy, too, was in favour of Turkish nationalism with Islamic overtones (Pajaz, 2013, p. 89). Necip Fazıl Kısakürek was also the advocate of Turkish nationalism with a anti-Semitist, anti-Alevi and anti-secular views by highlighting the religion of Turkey as Sunni Islam and excluding non-Muslim communities however, nationalism

of Arif Nihat Asya does not include hatred for Jewish people and Alevism (Singer, 2013, pp. 81–88).

1.2 A Critical Assessment of the Turkish Scholarship on Arif Asya's Poetry

Arif Nihat Asya's poetry is an essential source in an analysis of modern Turkish politics since he is most often called *Bayrak Şairi* (*Poet of the Flag*). He is also known for his poem titled *Fetih Marşı* (*Conquest March*), set to music and popular among young generations of nationalist-Islamist circles. Having lived between 1904 and 1975, he was a witness to radical political and military developments in Turkey, the Middle East, and the world at large. One can refer to the Balkan Wars, World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the War of Liberation and the foundation of the Turkish Republic, single and multi-party political periods, the Cold War, the Korean War and the 1960 and 1971 military interventions. Therefore, it is no surprise that his poetry provides a view of late Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republican history. Out of a total of 2994 poems he penned, approximately 700 poems have direct and/or indirect cultural, political, historical, and religious symbols, references, and personalities. Although he contributed to various Turkish nationalist papers and journals such as *Türk Sözü*, *Demokrat*, *Memleket*, *Yeni İstanbul*, *Hayat*, *Çağlayan*, *Türk Yurdu*, *Hisar*, *Elif*, *Defne*, *Türk Sanatı* and *Devlet* (Birinci, n.d.)

However, he was most productive in the writing of poetry. That is why it is necessary to closely, critically, and analytically investigate his poetry. Although Asya's poetry has received attention predominantly by researchers coming from the field of Turkish literature, it is quite unfortunate to observe that researchers in the social science disciplines such as sociology and political science do not seem to focus on poetry as a source of social, political and historical analysis. There are exceptions to this claim, however. For instance, Nurdan Gürbilek provides remarkable social and political critique with an attention to literature. In her book entitled *Sessizin Payı* (*The Share of the Voiceless*), she approaches the 1980 coup through Dostoyevsky's renowned work *Crime and Punishment* (Gürbilek, 2019). Another inspiring study in this line is the

work by Aslı Özge Koçak-Hemmat, who examines Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's novel titled *Huzur (A Mind at Peace)* by means of Edward Said's critique of Orientalism. Although Tanpınar is generally viewed as an intellectual who successfully reconciles the traditional Ottoman past with modernity in his novels, Koçak-Hemmat argues that Tanpınar's protagonist is a self-orientalist, which suggests that rather than a successful reconciliation, Turkish modernization has its own contradictions (Koçak-Hemmat, 2017, pp. 231–251). Despite their exceptional insightful, exceptional and interdisciplinary analysis, however, it seems fair to argue that both Gürbilek and Koçak-Hemmat still perpetuate a widespread scholarly interest, i.e. a dominant focus on novels which comes at the expense of an unfortunate disregard of poetry. There seems to be a common tendency in present-day Turkish academia that those who would like to study poetry should be trained in literature. That seems why it is unsurprising that many theses written about Asya's poetry are all in the field of Turkish Literature (Akıncı, 2019; Demirkır, 2018; Sabırlı, 2010; Sezgin, 2017; Uluçay, 2018; Yıldırım, 2019; Yıldız, 1990). Therefore, once an analysis of Asya's poetry is limited to those specializing in Turkish Literature, it seems unavoidable that such an inquiry would remain limited since, as will be shown below, most of the time their analysis suffers from a lack in a conceptual and theoretical treatment of Asya's poetry.

Even a quick glance at the existing scholarship on Asya's poetry clearly demonstrates that mostly written by academics in Turkish universities' departments of Turkish Literature, these works seem to be like each other's copies as they are predominantly preoccupied with a formalistic, imitative and repetitive productions with no critical and innovative approach whatsoever. More specifically, a close look at the present literature on Arif Nihat Asya's poetry shows that these Turkish-language works are often articles appearing in Turkish universities' peer-reviewed journals. At times one can also see books and journals published by Turkish nationalist, conservative or Islamist publishers. While publishers such as Ötüken, Gonca, Yeni Avrasya, and Ebabel have been publishing books about Asya, journals such as Töre, Türk Yurdu, Milli Kültür, and Türk Dili publish articles about Asya (Bakiler, 1977, 2004, 2007; Bilir, 2011; Çetin, 2017; Kukul, 1983, 1988; Özdemir, 2003; Yıldız, 2009).

The departments and programs of Turkish Literature at prestigious universities such as Bilkent and Boğaziçi publish regular literary journals, which do not have any study on Asya's poetry. Two literary journals, *Kanat* and *Journal of the Turkish Literature*—one in Turkish and the other in English—are published by the Department of Turkish Literature in Bilkent University. Subjects in these journals are generally Turkish novelists such as Murathan Mungan, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Orhan Pamuk, Elif Şafak (Bowman, 2011; Bulamur, 2009; Fortuny, 2011; Shaw, 2010). As to the poets examined in these journals, one can see Nâzım Hikmet, Melih Cevdet Anday (Doltaş, 2008; Erkol, 2007; Timms & Timms, 2008).

The literary journal of Boğaziçi University, namely *Metaphor*, on the other hand, includes works on Western literary figures such as John Maxwell Coetzee, James Joyce, and Alice Oswald (Atasoy, 2018; Demirhan, 2017; Dündar, 2017). The interesting point is that Turkish nationalist, and conservative poets such as Arif Nihat Asya and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek were not considered as a topic of investigation in these journals. Such a disinterest seems to reflect the ideological division within the academic community.

The same disinterest seems also to prevail in the English-language scholarship in the field of Turkish Studies. I have checked the issues of such journals as the *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies* (formerly known as *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*) and *Middle Eastern Literatures*. In these journals, too, the articles focusing on modern Turkish literature are predominantly limited to novels such as *Çalılıkusu*, *Yaban* and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (Dolcerocca, 2017; Erol, 1991, 1992; Wishnitzer, 2015). Sadly, there are very few studies on modern Turkish poetry while there is literally no study of the poetry of Arif Nihat Asya.

In brief, there is a striking gap in both the Turkish and English-language scholarship on the poetry of Asya. Undertaken mostly by monoglot Turkish male academics teaching in the fields of Turkish Literature, Education and Theology in Turkish provincial state universities, these works appear iterative with regards to their original

contribution to the field. Far from a critical, conceptual and innovative approach, Turkish-Islamic nationalism is treated as a given underlying all these studies without any questioning. Therefore, although completely unintended when I set out for this research, upon the conduct of the literature review, I have discovered the extremely poor quality of the Turkish academic production on such an important poet called “Poet of the Flag” (*Bayrak Şairi*). Despite their prevalent analytical poverty, however, a critical survey of these works is indispensable. It seems possible to categorize the existing academic works into three: those focusing on the appearance of provinces in Asya’s poetry; personality or character-based analysis; and formal analysis.

1.2.1 Provinces

The first group of Turkish academics examine Asya’s prose and poetry with a focus on his preoccupation with certain provinces and/or regions. Asya was a teacher of Turkish literature employed in public high schools, which meant that his place of residence changed many times as he was appointed to different schools located in different provinces. It seems that he loved these new provinces so much that he penned poetry about them. These poems are not limited to large provinces such as Istanbul and Ankara. He has included in his poetry such cities as Ağrı, Kars, Çorum, Afyon, and Konya, i.e. cities that seem to have hardly received attention in Turkish nationalist prose and poetry. One can even note that most of the time, these cities were not considered worthy to mention in poems penned by other poets. What makes Asya interesting here is that he gave place to almost every province of Turkey. That seems why various provinces in Asya’s poetry have become one of the subject matters of scholars of literature. Why geography have become a subject of study so often raises a separate question since such works have been covering a large part of the studies on Asya. Places in of Asya’s poem are intertwined by either Turkish nationalism, Ottomanism or Islamism. For example, in his poems, the associations/identifications established with provinces are as follows: Kars and Sultan Alparslan, Edirne and Ottoman mosques, Afyon and Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev, Konya and Rumi, Urfa and Prophet Abraham and so on. What seems notable here is that the provinces are most

often associated with Turkish-Islamic-Ottoman past. A large number of academic work ‘analyzes’ how Asya represents one or more provinces in his poetry. It is important to note that the earliest study on Asya was undertaken in 1990, when Turkish-Islamic synthesis was actively promoted after the 1980 coup.² It was in such an ideologically reshaped academic setting that Turkish nationalists aimed to highlight the Turkish and Islamic past and/or features of Anatolian provinces. These academics hence seem to reproduce Asya’s romantization of Anatolia and representation of the Turkish homeland. To illustrate, Abdullah Satoğlu, Yüksel Topaloğlu, Mustafa Eski, Hatem Türk focus on Edirne, Adana, and Kastamonu, respectively (Eski, 2008; Satoğlu, 2003; Topaloğlu, 2007; Türk, 2018). Ersin Özarslan provides a review as he has brought together all places appearing in Asya’s poems (Özarslan, 2010). Topaloğlu analyzes differences of the images of Edirne in Asya’s poetic work with that found Ahmet Kutsi Tecer’s poems. He demonstrates that Asya’s retrospective view of Edirne has a historical depth. Asya commemorates the past with a deep longing because the past is home to ruined shadow of a once-majestic empire era (Topaloğlu, 2007, pp. 192–211). Another comparative analysis made by Mehmet Güneş examines the place of Edirne in historical context through a view on the poetry of Yahya Kemal and Arif Nihat. The loss of Rumelia by the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan wars became the subject of poems of both poets. Even though the sense of loss in poetry of Yahya Kemal is presented in a more epic theme —most likely because he was born and brought there while Asya was born and brought up in Istanbul— the feeling of deprivation in both poets is similar. Both poets remember these days with sorrow and longing since these lands no longer belong to the Turks. With no substantiation, Güneş extends this sense of nostalgia from the two poets to most of the Turkish people (Güneş, 2011, pp. 183–206). Such a nationalist overgeneralization is ill-balanced as it fails to take into account that even the Turkish inhabitants in border regions of Turkey have different memories regarding their region’s past. Conceptually and theoretically

² I focus on this matter in more detail in Chapter III.

uninformed, such claims stretch nationalist fantasies to the heterogeneous population in Anatolia, which in itself is a discursive and historical construction.

Hatem Türk and Songül Cansız examine the representation of the province of Adana in Asya's prose and poetry, respectively (Cansız, 2018; Türk, 2018). Kastamonu's appearance in Asya's poetry is topic of another academic by the name of Mustafa Eski, who limits himself to direct quotes without any examination from the poems that Asya wrote while living in Kastamonu. Eski's article provides some interesting information about Asya such as his role in high school theatre as a Byzantine emperor (Eski, 2008).

Ersin Özarslan conducts the most comprehensive study about the representation of places in Asya's poetry (Özarslan, 2010). Bringing together all places appearing in Asya's poems, he divides the perception of place in poetry of Asya into three categories: "abstract places" (like mythological places like Ergenekon and Mountain Kaf), "uncertain places" (e.g. geographical formations) and "specific places" (such as provinces). Even though Özarslan has a wider scope still his work is similar to others in that it is dry and descriptive. In other words, like the works cited above, this work, too, goes into an examination of the appearance of provinces in Asya's poetry without delving deeper into the question of why Asya has been so engaged in penning poetry about so many provinces. The region that received Asya's poetic attention the most is Cyprus. Having lived and served as a high school literature teacher in Cyprus in the period of 1959-1961, Asya wrote 58 poems on Cyprus. Two other academics focus on the place of Cyprus in Asya's poetic work, again in a descriptive and romanticizing manner (Karabacak, 2019; M. Özdemir, 2003).

In the first category of Turkish academic production, the main purpose seems to show how Asya represents various cities in his poems by uncovering and highlighting the meaning of the province in question. Written in a very dull and dry 'academic' writing style, these studies overflow with extensive quotations from Asya's poems, a feature that characterizes almost all of these works.

1.2.2 Personality or Character-Based Analysis

Another recurring type of published research predominantly focuses on the personality or character of Asya. These works voice praise and admiration for Asya, sometimes reaching the point of turning him into a legend. Aiming to promote the personality of Asya, academics in this category provide merely eulogies of Asya rather than a truly critical and analytical engagement through a thought-provoking academic inquiry. The character traits that emerge in these studies are as follows: faithful, nationalist, idealist, conservative, honest, outspoken, generous, humble, and affectionate.

One of the most repeated character traits is that he was a “genuine Muslim believer.” Some of these studies focus on the Mevlevi affiliation of Asya and underline his poems about Rumi (Aktaş, 2008; Yıldız, 2013).³ Analyzing Asya’s poems about Rumi, another study argues that Asya differs from other poets who write about Rumi mainly since Asya did not only write poems about Rumi but he also devoted his life to the Mevlevi order (Aktaş, 2008). Aktaş praises Arif Nihat since he was different from other poets who wrote about Rumi. While claiming that Asya was both a student, a poet and a follower in the “School of Rumi”, Aktaş mostly underlines the images Asya uses about Rumi which are “to swaddle” (*kundaklamak*), “crib” (*beşik*) and “reed” (*ney*). He also states that Asya saw himself and his wife as the son and daughter of Rumi (Aktaş, 2008, pp. 43–54). He further asserts that because Asya was able to use aforementioned images very well and he surrendered himself to the dervish convent of Rumi, he became one of the most important disciples of the Mevlevi order (Aktaş, 2008, p. 53). Aktaş never bothers to refer to the philosophy of Rumi or demonstrate in what ways Asya accepted these teachings and used in his life. It must be noted here, however, that the academics regarding Asya as a Mevlevi do not account

³ At this point, it is notable that this approach is not limited to academic works. Certain conservative groups view him as a pioneer of Sufism. According to poet Yusuf Dursun, Asya was so devoted to Sufism that he became a Mevlevi sheikh (Baş, 2016).

for what makes Asya a Mevlevi, substantiated with references from Rumi's poetry (Yıldız, 2013).

Not only because Asya has penned a total of 55 poems on Rumi but also the fact that his Mevlevi affiliation is presented in such a cliché manner without any substantiation, it seems necessary to make of point of caution on the state of the scholarship on Rumi and his teachings. For many years, studies on Rumi remained under the monopoly of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman state completely blocked inferences about Rumi that did not match Islam and state ideology, however, Rumi's philosophy is too universal to be reduced solely to Islam. Rumi's doctrine of non-dualism which was influenced by ancient Indian philosophies including Buddhism, does not accept binary opposition such as heaven and hell, good and evil. Rumi found it more important to be a moral person than to be a religious person (Vaziri, 2015, pp. 1–19). Rumi studies in Turkey is far from assessing Rumi's teachings from a world-historical perspective that sees Islam only a later development. Turkish researchers continue to mispresent Rumi with their short-sighted readings. A reductionist reading of Rumi is also manifested itself in representation of Asya as Mevlevi just because he wrote poems about prayer, mosque and prophet. In this respect, Aktaş's work is not surprising considering the stereotypical and scholarly uninformed views of Rumi in Turkey.

Furthermore, based on Asya's religious poems, a researcher emphasizes that Asya was a proper Muslim who fulfilled the requirements of Islam (Cetin, 2017). Süleyman Doğanay is another researcher who emphasizes mystical and religious aspects of Asya. An interesting point in his analysis is that he divides Asya's lifetime into two periods: before and after 1933. Until 1933, Asya had a depressing mood and questioning nature. After 1933, Asya turned to be a Muslim who established foundations of his faith upon thinking and questioning (Doğanay, 2009, pp. 10–14). In the last part of his work, Doğanay visualized Asya's belief in God, his devotion to prophets, his thoughts on adhan (see also, Özçelik, 2009). Although the works highlighting his religiosity are based on evidence from his poetry, however, they remain ill-balanced as they are based on selective readings of his poetry.

Another personal characteristic of Asya underlined in these studies is that his nationalist attitude (Çetin, 1988; Diriöz, 1968; Kukul, 1983, 1988; Metin, 2002; Satoğlu, 2003; Yıldız, 2002). Indeed another writer notes that Asya was enormously proud of his Turkishness and Muslimism and he was not scared to declare himself as pan-Turanist. According to Asya, there was no other nation that lives Islam as well as the Turkish nation and none of the nations has performed jihad for Islam like the Turkish nation (Bakiler, 2008, pp. 340–354). He is accepted as a master in his use of the Turkish language (Bakiler, 2008; Börekçi, 2009). Rather than providing a deeper and thoughtful reading of Asya's poetry, these works are merely limited to their pre-acceptance of Asya as a poet who uses Turkish well. The most well-known title attached to his name, however, "the poet of the flag". Adopting and repeating it over and over again, none of these researchers attempts to locate such basic information. I have not been able to locate precisely when and who coined this 'title' to refer to him.

In addition to religious and national features, Asya's political stance is another topic of personality-based analysis (Türk, 2019; Yıldırım, 2019). Asya's thoughts about political leaders such as Abdülhamid II, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Adnan Menderes are examined by Bakiler who argues that in Asya's view, Atatürk did not have a Soviet-style left-wing ideology. Atatürk's ideology can be considered as leftist only comparing to Ottoman sultanate regime which can be considered as close to rightist (Bakiler, 2008, pp. 214–216). Asya also blamed the mentality of İsmet İnönü and the RPP for betraying Atatürk's memory and for executing the leader of DP, Adnan Menderes. He commemorated Adnan Menderes with deep sorrow and appreciation since he did great thing for the development of Turkey (Bakiler, 2008, pp. 377–391).

Asya compared Adnan Menderes with Abdulhamid II and concluded that both of them shared the same fate. According to Asya, Abdulhamid was a sultan who defended the Middle East against British imperialism during his lifetime, but he also was misrepresented by the Turkish Academy and Turkish intellectuals (Bakiler, 2008, pp. 257–271). Through this part of Bakiler's work, important information about Asya's ideology, perception of life and politics can be obtained. In line with his nationalist stance, Asya thought that conflict between Kurds and Turks, Alevis and Sunnis,

created by West to exulcerate Turkish nation from Turkey and he also advocated to guarantee the right to life of all non-Muslim minorities (Bakiler, 2008, p. 376). Mustafa Baydar also conducted an interview style study with Arif Nihat Asya himself which is similar to book of Bakiler's (Baydar, 1972). As it can be understood from the above section, studies on Asya repeats each other on his nationalism, religiosity, and political stance. In this regard, Saadettin Yıldız and Yavuz Bülents Bakiler who carry out these studies will be examined in more detail since they are the pioneering figures of these studies.

Firstly, Saadettin Yıldız, dean of Faculty of Science and Letters of Lefke Avrupa University in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, is the earliest academic who did research on Asya's poetry. After Yıldız graduated from the Turcology department of Faculty of Language History and Geography in Ankara University in 1972 and became a teaching assistant then chief of department of Faculty of Science and Letters in Osmangazi University in Eskişehir after 1997. He published books such as *Arif Nihat Asya'nın Nesirleri*, *Arif Nihat Asya'nın Şiir Dünyası*, *Tanzimat Dönemi Edebiyatı*, *Hasret Damlaları*, *Arif Nihat Asya'dan Seçmeler*, *Arif Nihat Asya*, *Arif Nihat Asya-Nesirler*, *Yol Odur ki Aşka Vara* from the publishers as follows: *Ötüken*, *Neşriyat*, *Nobel Akademi Yayıncılık*, *Turkish Ministry of Culture*, *Turkish Ministry of Education* ("Saadettin Yıldız," n.d.)

Although Yıldız approaches Asya with an academic interest, however, Asya is treated most often in an overly romanticizing tone in Yıldız's works. From time to time, this romanticization attains the degree of unacceptable and irrational limits. In many parts of his article, Yıldız expresses his admiration by praising Asya's intuitive sense and his ability to analyze. While a certain degree of admiration may seem understandable, but it really becomes problematic at the point of the fetishization of Asya's life story. The following rather awkward example demonstrates the limits of an academic work: Yıldız notes that the dates Asya's birth, his writing of *Bir Bayrak Rüzgar Bekliyor* and his death are all the same, i.e. January 5. Yıldız states this coincidence with following words: "the day that Adana was liberated, which was one of the favorite cities of Asya, from foreign invasion; the day that the poem of *Bayrak (Flag)* was written in which

caused Turkish people to love Arif Nihat Asya, and the day that death kissed Asya's cheek, is the same'' (Yıldız, 2013, p. 34). Sharing the photo of Asya's grave with its precise geographical coordinates, on the other hand, is truly inexplicable.

Secondly, writer Yavuz Bülent Bakiler as a close friend who spent a long time with Asya published two books and several pieces on Asya. They are invaluable as they are based on Bakiler's his first-hand account on Asya's life story (Bakiler, 1977, 1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2017). Like the earlier ones cited above, Bakiler's praise for Asya, too, gets so absurd. Bakiler praises Asya for being a poet who wrote more poems about "mother" than any other poets (Bakiler, 2008, p. 80). Yet this is not something to be praised mainly because Asya was brought up without his mother. In other words, most likely a result of childhood pain and/or trauma, longing for mother is turned into a romanticized feature. It really seems unnecessary to add to these examples of creating a legend from Asya emptied from his blood and flesh human features. Suffice it to say that many more publications are found in this category and lacking in both fresh analytical contribution and conceptual/theoretical engagement (Aytaç, 1996; Bilir, 2011; Köseoğlu, 2011; Öner, 1979; Orakçı, 2003, 2008).

In sum, personality-based analyses approach Asya in a legendary fashion as if he is free of human condition. Relying only on a selective reading of certain poems at the expense of ignoring others, these academics and writers only focus on the poems related to nationalism, faith and love of nature and so on. Therefore, they ignore the fact that he was a poet who also wrote on other subjects including sexuality. In this context, the claim that Asya never saw women as sexual objects (Cetin, 2017) is completely unfounded as while 55 poems are about Rumi, the content of another 55 poems is clearly about sexuality and women. In other words, even though Asya's religiosity is underlined very often, these researchers turn a completely blind eye to the poems with explicitly erotic and sexual contents. Although all these poems have been in print in his books of poetry, they are almost always overlooked. None of the researchers and writers referred to touch on these poems so far ever. Representation of Asya as a role model for Islamic way of living in these studies, causes a distorted portrayal of Asya's personality. Unlike all these publications, this thesis aspires neither

to romanticize nor judge Asya's personal, political, and ideological stance. He certainly was a religious person who had nationalist goals yet at the same time, Asya was a person who used to drink and smoke and write about women and sexual fantasies. The job of a student of social sciences must be to analyze and understand these texts and poets in their context as accurately as possible.

1.2.3 Formal and Thematic Analysis

The third group of studies about Asya's literary work consists of thematic and formal analysis of his prose and poetry. The most comprehensive study in this group is prepared by Saadettin Yıldız who wrote both his master's and doctoral dissertations on Asya in 1990 and 1994. As a professor of Faculty of Science and Letters in Lefke Avrupa University, Yıldız provides a detailed literary analysis of Asya's poetry. Firstly, he analyzes these poems in terms of harmony, rhythm, and style. Then these poems are evaluated by Yıldız in terms of form. Afterwards, Yıldız answers the question of whether Asya's poems have adjectives, pronouns, and adverbs. In the final part of his work, he scrutinizes the poetry of Asya in terms of thematic aspects. He divides the topics of Asya's poetry into four categories: love, death, religious mysticism, and love for the homeland (Yıldız, 1997). Yıldız's work can be considered as a main reference in the scholarship about Asya (Yıldız, 1990). It provided a guide to those who wanted to go into a formal or thematic study about Asya's poetry. A considerable number of the published and unpublished studies similar to Yıldız's seem to be in the same line as that of Yıldız's work since they do not provide a fresh contribution to the field (Akıncı, 2019; Andı, 2004; Demirkır, 2018; Sabırlı, 2010; Sezgin, 2017; Uluçay, 2018).

Another formal study about Asya made by Mehmet Tat. Tat deemed it appropriate to examine elegies of Asya in terms of subject rather than form. Tat explained what elegy is and how the concept of death in Turkish poetry changed from the past to the Tanzimat period. He states that Asya's elegies can be examined in three categories:

elegies for Asya's family members, elegies for religious and historical figures, and elegies for Asya's friends (Tat, 2016, pp. 382–390).

Another type of formalistic endeavor was made by Selami Alan who exclusively focused on *beşik* poem of Asya. Alan examined *beşik* poem in terms of meaning and form. He used a specific technique which is called structuralist approach in his analysis. This approach is based on the total exclusion of social, political and historical context of the lifetime of the poet (Alan, 2015, p. 94). Instead, Alan's view is limited to formal features of poetry such as harmony and rhythm while was studying poetry within the framework of this approach (Alan, 2015, pp. 99–100).

Conclusion

This extensive critical literature review suggests two prominent points: first, modern Turkish poetry has not received due attention for a scholarly investigation. Second, uncritical-minded Turkish nationalist academics and writers subject Asya's life story and poetry to tremendous distortion. Their publications that predominantly appeared in provincial universities journals in Turkey are repeated copies of each other. They can be categorized in three groups: province-based analysis, personality-based analysis, and formal and thematic analysis. These works are lacking in both political and historical contextualization and a comparative/global perspective approaching Asya's life story and poetry through a conceptual engagement.

In the light of these critiques, this thesis aims to fill the gap in the present scholarship on two levels. First and foremost, it aspires to contextualize the poetry of Asya in its social, political and historical setting. Thus, it draws on a variety of conceptual tools from such fields of study as sociology, psychology, history and political science. Such a contextualizing inquiry is expected to effectively show that every personality be it a poet, a writer or a thinker is indeed bound by the atmosphere of his/her time; therefore, it would be incomplete to analyze their written work independently from their context. Analyzing Asya's poetry through the conceptual tools of different academic

disciplines, on the other hand, can contribute to our understanding of the Turkish right-wing political thought, sentiment, and mobilization.



CHAPTER 2

WRITING AND READING POETRY: POETIC DISCOURSE, POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND NATIONALISM

In this chapter, I focus on the varying conceptualizations of poetry. I lay out the meaning of poetry from various theoretical perspectives. To do that, I first focus on the questions of the meaning of poetry as well as the reasons underlying its writing. Then, I move on to the question of the relationship between poetry and discourse in order to reveal the close connection between poetic discourse and ideology. The third section of the chapter is devoted to the ways in which poetry has functioned as a major literary as well as political ideological medium to voice, communicate and set in motion sentiments. In this particular interpretation, I will draw on the existing scholarship undertaken on the relationship between poetic discourse and nationalist mobilization from the former lands of the Ottoman Empire located in the Balkans and the Middle East. Since the nationalist poems by Albanian, Palestinian, the Sudanese and Kurdish poets from around the turn of the century through the 1950s provide particularly crucial as they provide a kind of testing ground for us to locate Arif Nihat Asya's poetry as it relates to the formerly Ottoman lands such as Cyprus, Kirkuk, Mosul and Skopje. Put bluntly, this chapter aims to hit two birds with one stone. First, it provides the theoretical perspective that informs this thesis in the way it approaches poetry. In such a reading, the emphasis on poetry as a discourse and its particular relationship to political ideologies in general and nationalist ideology in particular is emphasized. Second, drawing on the scholarship on poetry and nationalist ideologies from the late and post-Ottoman Middle Eastern and Balkan territories, this chapter provides a view of these lands by their respective nationalist poets. Such an overview intends to provide a mirror image of the Turkish nationalist poetry of Asya blended

with a profound Ottomanist nostalgia. Furthermore, such a focus on Balkan and Middle Eastern nationalist poets contemporary with Asya helps us locate the latter into a global literary as well as ideological setting beyond its superficial and narrow-minded Turkish academic interpretations that particularly from the late 1980s through the present with the rise of Turkish-Islamist synthesis (Yavuz, 1998, pp. 31–32).

2.1 What is Poetry?

As a form of art, poetry has been an essential gateway to both individual and collective emotions and expressions throughout world history. Since the beginning of the recorded history, poetry has also functioned as the artistic site and medium by which not only large-scale political historical events, but also personal and individual emotions have been recorded. Perhaps the best example one can give is the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest known piece of literature in world history. The story of Gilgamesh provides important clues to today's people about such issues as death, immortality and human history (George, 2000, p. xiii). In this section, I elaborate on the two closely interrelated questions “What is poetry?” and “Why does one write poetry?”.

To understand what poetry is, it seems appropriate to understand what poetry is not, i.e., comparing poetry with the other literary genre, i.e. prose. Poetry has been the dominant genre in until the Renaissance and prose has been trying to resemble poetry since poetry is catchy and charming. In fact, words derived from the prose such as *prosaic* and *prosaïque*, means uninspired and unoriginal (Terzioğlu, 2009, pp. 22–23). It seems that poetry evokes images that are deemed to be aesthetic, original and catchy while prose is more likely not. Defining poetry in this way brings the question of why human beings try to produce poetry since the questions of what poetry is and why one writes poetry cannot be considered separately because the meaning of poetry and the act of writing poetry are closely linked.

John Stuart Mill explains this point in his 1833 article titled “What is Poetry?”. Mill defines poetry as the reflection of a person's inner voice to the outside world. Poetic

discourse appeals to the inner world of a reader. In a way, one represents the map of his/her inner world to other people through poetry and it is this map of sentiments that provides readers with an understanding of the poet's thoughts and feelings. It seems that one of the best ways to reflect one's inner world is to write poems since one represents his/her deepest and most interesting thoughts or emotions through poetry. Seen from Mill's perspective, the poetic representation is like painting, i.e. when one writes a poem, then one becomes a painter. In other words, poetry is like picturing of emotions. Fairly consistent on the relationship between poetry and emotions, Mill claims that poetry is not poetry unless it is colored by the emotions such as love, hate, pity, sadness, and admiration. According to him, this type of visualization of emotions can only be achieved through poetry (Robson, 1963).

Although Mill's debate about what the poem is and what a true poem contains provides a starting point, it is not enough to explain what pushes one to write poetry. What is the thing that drives people into deep artistic writing processes such as the creation of poetry? At this point Sartre's approach can be useful. Although Sartre does not speak specifically about poetry, he focuses on the reasons that push people to write and thus his findings are important in terms of bringing a new perspective on writing poetry. Approaching the writing as a form of art, Sartre states that art is an escape for people. Although this sentence may have a lot of meanings, it would not be wrong to argue the action of writing is either related to one's desire to rediscover the world with different interpretations or related to one's desire to escape from the real world. As a result of this meltdown, the world is captured with countless comments and is understood in countless ways. In this way, writing becomes a form of demanding freedom (Sartre, 2015).

Although the reasons for writing can be seen this way, Sartre underlines that writing is not a one-way action (Sartre, 2015, pp. 51–55). One does not write only for himself/herself or his/her own emotional manifestation since writing is not a unilateral but rather a dialectical process. That is to say, poetry as a literary art can only exist through its readers since writing and reading are the two sides of a coin in terms of being interlocked, i.e. writing can be considered as a reading contract between the

writer and the reader (Terzioğlu, 2009, p. 20). In other words, when poets finish writing their poetry, their artistic creation does not actually end; quite to the contrary, it starts right at the moment of its writing. Once the poem is finished, the poet calls on the reader: since until the reader reads the poem, poem in question only has physical being. By the act of reading the written work, the reader grants a complete existence to the written work. Every single reader rediscover and recreates a poem as s/he reads it, and hence the so-called recreation continues with each new reading (Sartre, 2015, pp. 46–80). Put differently, the existence of written work is closely related to the subjectivity of its readers since poetry is not simply the total meaning of words standing side by side; it is much more than that. Every time a reader reinterprets the written work in his/her mind and heart, poetry will acquire another meaning. Therefore, the individuality of readers is decisive in the emergence of different meanings. This is mainly because the meaning that a reader extracts from poetry varies depending on various reasons related to the reader's subjectivity, such as the mood of the reader, the reader's position in life and/or the reader's ideology.

If the meaning is connected with the reader, what kind of a relationship exists between the poet and his/her poetry? In other words, the relationship between poetry and the poet affects the meaning to be derived from poetry. While reading poetry, should the poet's existence be ignored, and poetry seen as completely independent from the poet? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the critical approaches to poetry. There seem to be three different approaches on modern poetry: Conventional Literary Theory, The New American Critics and Poetry as Discourse by Anthony Easthope. Following this survey on the theoretical approaches to modern poetry, it is pointed out that this study adopts Anthony Easthope's approach as laid out in his book titled *Poetry as Discourse*.

The Conventional Literary Theory that was formulated in Britain, considers poetry as a reflection of the poet's existence (Easthope, 1983, p. 4). Words used by the poet or the way poet uses these words cannot be thought independently from the way the poet makes sense of life. The word selection of a poet shows how the poet feels and thinks. In this sense, poetry becomes a channel of communication between the poet and his/her

reader. The reader closely testifies to life experience of the poet through his/her poems. For instance, reading Shakespeare's sonnets is like observing his experiences and touching his soul. The moment the reader reads his sonnets, it is as though Shakespeare is resurrected and talking to his readers (Easthope, 1983, pp. 4–5)

Unlike the British Conventional Literary Theory that highlights the profound contact between poetry and its poet, The New American Critics put forward by literary theorist William K. Wimsatt (1907-1975) and aesthetician Monroe Beardsley (1915-1985) provides an altogether different theoretical perspective on poetry. The New American Critics assert that the poet writing the poem and the poet who exist in the poem are different people. In this sense, it puts forward a difference between the implied author and the historical author. While the historical poet means his/her own personality, the implied author changes in every poem. Basically, the New American Critics view poetry to be independent of the poet rather than explaining it through the existence of its poet because poetry is seen to be self-contained without the presence of the poet (Easthope, 1983, p. 5).

Although these approaches seem different from each other, they aim the same thing: drawing the boundaries of the poetic interpretation. In this sense, the meaning should be fixed, stable and univocal, while the meaning of poetry should be limited to the words on the page. Drawing on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, the third perspective on poetry is provided by Anthony Easthope, who challenges these two theories with a focus on the relationship between the signifier and the signified (Easthope, 1983, pp. 5–6). According to de Saussure, within the boundaries of a particular language, the signifier is the sound or image that points to a certain concept. The concept pointed out here is the signified and it is the meaning of words (cited in Easthope, 1983, p. 12). Considering that poetry consists of words on paper, it can be thought that the meaning of poetry is supposed to be equal to the sum of the meaning of signifiers. In other words, phonemes such as a, b, c which are the smallest structures of language, have a relationship with each other before their relationship with signifieds. De Saussure describes this relationship as mutual differentiation. Based on this, phonemes such as a, b, c have their own weights or autonomy independent of

those who use them, i.e. when no one uses these signifiers, they still have their physical and material identity. As noted by Easthope: “Words are things before they become words, and they become things again when they do”. In this respect, it can be said that the signifier and the signified have an arbitrary relationship with each other within the boundaries of the language in question (Easthope, 1983, p. 6)

From this point of view, the idea that the “meaning of poetry is supposed to be equal to the sum of sounds/signifiers since signifieds and signifiers are interconnected” needs to be challenged. Considering a written work such as poetry, signifieds in question are not fixed; hence, the meaning of the poetry is not fixed. It is possible to summarize this as follows: when the same poem is read by the same person at different times, then the meaning of the poem changes; and when the same poem is read by different people at different times, then the meaning of the poem changes. Likewise, when the same poem is read in a different context, then its meaning changes since it has no single and unchanging meaning (Easthope, 1983, p. 7). Put differently, the act of reading poetry and its meaning is subject to an unending chain of shifts. In this sense, the act of reading and making sense of poetry is not a simple matter of language. It is way more complex than that. In brief, poetry is neither merely connected with the personality of the poets, as the British Conventional Literary Theory claims nor a part of the implied author/poet as claimed by the New American Critics. Therefore, in this thesis, I follow Anthony Easthope’s theoretical perspective to which I turn in the following section.

2.2 Poetic Discourse

In order to examine the close relationship between language, discourse and poetry on solid grounds, it is important to understand the difference between *langue* and *parole*. According to the distinction made by de Saussure, *langue* is mostly used to describe a language with certain rules, while *parole* is an individual production to conduct speech or writing using a certain language. In this context, poetry can be considered as *parole* in terms of being a creation made by an individual within the limits of a certain

language (Easthope, 1983, p. 7). Although poetry is considered to be an articulation in and through language, in order to conceptualize the poetry as a discourse, differences between linguistic analysis and discursive approach must be underlined. While linguistic analysis deals with small units such as phonemes or morphemes, discursive approach moves on the assumption that continuity of sentences forms the text, and the union of texts forms the discourse. Within this framework, discursive approach deals with how one sentence is sequentially linked to another. For instance, sentences come together in a successive way to form a text. As texts come one after another, they feed or create a certain discourse. Although it seems that there is an ideal order between sentences, there is no such constancy. Each added sentence to a text either changes or reinforces the existing discourse. The focus of discourse analysis is therefore on how to deal with the question of how sentences follow other sentences to form a particular relationship (Easthope, 1983, pp. 8–9).

Considering the linguistic analysis and discursive approach, it seems clear that poetry can be examined on the grounds of language and discourse since poetry is both constituted by the succession of sentences with a certain order and articulated by the rules of a specific language (Easthope, 1983, pp. 8–9). Following Easthope's suggestion, therefore, one needs to dig deeper into the outward language components of the poetry of Asya. What the predominant Turkish academic output on his poetry does, alongside their unquestioned and taken-for-granted Turkish nationalist biases, is that they take the language use in his poetry as their focus without going into a deeper treatment of its underlying discourse. In other words, they consider the poet as unquestionable in terms of being outside the language and the text, as claimed by the Conventional Literary Theory and they view the language to be natural, as claimed by the Conventional Theory of Discourse. This assumption about transparent language is rejected by both de Saussure and Derrida since signifiers have their own material and physical identity. As I pointed out before, the value of the letters such as a or b is not determined by the intention of the person using it; these phonemes have their own values independent of those who enunciate them. Thus, signifiers are not inferior to signifieds since signifieds cannot exist without signifiers. Letters, words or signifiers

are ‘things’ before they constitute a poem. Thus, signifiers have their own material and physical identities apart from the signified. Furthermore, although one always finds signifiers in a language, the way signifiers are used is different in poetry than their use in prose, i.e., signifiers are more widely and intensely used in poetry, i.e. signifiers are reinforced or concentrated in poetry. In other words, rhyme and meter become important (Easthope, 1983, pp. 8–9). It can be said that repeated voice/word after the rhyme in a poem distinguishes poetry from other literary genres and provides a privileged discursive status for poetry.

Now that it has been clear that poetry is a product of both language and discourse, the question that comes to the fore is as follows: considering that every discourse has a historical and ideological dimension, is poetry a type of discourse in which reality is reflected? In other words, is poetry transparent? Poetry is neither neutral nor transparent; poetry as a discourse, cannot remain objective in history like all discourses (Easthope, 1983, p. 17). Information provided by the poet is primarily connected with the reader. In a way, the relationship between the successive sentences that make up the discourse is determined by the reader. Based on the theory of Derrida, while one is trying to convey his/her ideas with the help of writing as a form of linguistic communication, a writer tries to communicate with people who are absent (Derrida, 1988, p. 4). If this view is considered with specific attention to writing poetry, it becomes more meaningful. For example, even though the poet has a particular audience and a particular emotion in mind while writing his/her poem, what happens after the poet’s and even his/her reader’s death? Therefore, when one thinks that the poems will be read even long after the death of the poet, then it can be easily seen that the poet writes his/her poems for absent readers to start with. In this case, poetry can be thought of as a copier machine that keeps producing unceasingly. In other words, even when the poet and his/her first readers disappear, new generations of readers continue to read and interpret his/her poetic work. Poetry continues to be cited and recited by readers whether they share the same feelings or opinions about it. This unending process of interpretation and reinterpretation indispensably undermines the assumption that the meaning is hidden or transparent only in the original text

(Easthope, 1983, p. 14). It underlines the importance of the novel interpretations of the original text with new generations of readers in their differing social, political, economic, and historical settings. As these reinterpretations are tightly tied to the specific subject positions of readers, they, too, are by no means transparent.

It is hence clear by now that analyzing poetry is an endless act of production and reproduction-in-progress from the original deliberate intention and writing of the poet to its unceasing reception by readers. Even though a poem never undergoes any literal change, it seems fair to claim that the conscious intention of the poet will never be equivalent to the understanding of his/her reader. Put bluntly, there will always be a void between the intention of the poet and the reader.⁴ Derrida describes this void as *différance* (Easthope, 1983, p. 15). In the case of poetry, this gap arises from the discursive quality of poetry, i.e. *poetic discourse*.

In sum, poetry is both a product of language as it is created by the poet within the boundaries of a certain language; and of discourse because it is a specific combination of texts to form the discourse. Another distinguishing characteristic of poetry as a discourse is that it differs from prose since poetry highlights and concentrates the signifier. Thirdly, poetry is neither transparent nor neutral as a form of discourse; and the discourse that dominates poem is determined by its reader since the poet writes his/her poems without knowing who will read it. That is why poetry offers an endless potential for its openness to multiple interpretations.

⁴ There might even be a void between the intention/thinking/emotion of the poet and his/her wording. After all, language and particularly rhymed and metered poetic discourse is a mere representation. Then, it is not uncommon to see that a poet or a writer works quite hard on the wording of their works as they feel the wording does not do justice to what they have in mind.

2.3 Poetry, Politics and Ideology

...each era has its poetry; in each era, circumstances of history elect a nation, a race, a class to take up to torch, by creating situations that can be expressed or that can beyond themselves only through poetry” (Sartre, 1988, p. 330)

Jean Paul Sartre’s article named *Black Orpheus* is probably one of the seminal illustrations which shows the relationship between poetry and politics. Sartre examines how the colonial relationship between Blacks and Whites nourished Black poetry. Although the enslavement of Africans precedes modern period, their enslavement reached unprecedented levels from the 15th century onward. Up until the 19th century, millions of Africans were sold into slavery and sent to the Americas to work in sugar plantations.⁵ A racist and White supremacist worldview went hand in hand with the colonial expansion of the West to the rest of the world from the 15th through the 19th centuries. In this racist hierarchy, the White came to be viewed as the symbol of civilization, good, truth, virtue, and light; while the Black became the symbol of uncivilized, savagery, evil, demon and brutal (Cesaire, 2005; Fanon, 2015). Enslaved Africans never stopped developing a wide range of resistance strategies in response to the White supremacist and racist European thought, ideologies and historiography. An outstanding weapon at the service of Black people has been both oral and written poetry. The pioneering figures of the *Negritude* Movement, namely Senegalese poet Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001) and Aimé Fernand David Césaire (1913-2008) used poetry as a weapon against the so-called racial, mental and spiritual superiority of the West (Sartre, 1988, pp. 291–329). Black poets destroy the history created by the White. In a way, they used poetry as a vehicle for Black people’s liberation and encouraged White man to look at his own history and consciousness since history of whites includes enslavement, colonialism, and torture. A common history, common memory and common consciousness were developed among Black people with the

⁵ In addition to the Americas, they were also traded to the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Historian of the Ottoman Empire, Ehud Toledano puts the number of enslaved Africans in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire at an estimated 1.3 million (Toledano, 2007)

help of poetry. Black people were reborn from their ashes like a phoenix since Black man who has been away from his country for centuries is starting to remember the culture of his own language, full of dances and rituals. For instance, they used the French language and French artistic styles in their writings. In a way, they shot the enemy with their own gun. Moreover, they abolished the conventional use of French words, they *de-frenchified* the French language. They use different images such as the “innocence of black”. This is a quite radical move considering that innocence is generally identified with the white color. Sartre hence notes that they deconstructed the oppressor’s language by breaking down previous images. The words black and white are deconstructed and new meanings are attributed to them. As in the concept of yin and yang, white becomes black and black becomes white again. It can be said that the concept of negritude transformed a race-free state (Sartre, 1988, pp. 291–329). Sartre thus argues that poetry becomes a strong conductor, enabling Black people to communicate not only with their own hearts and consciousness but also with Black people from all around the world. Black poetry becomes an extraordinary place where individuality and collectivity come together.

Alongside race, social class, too, is involved in the making of modern poetry. Black poetry is not only fed by blackness but also by its proletarian aspect. Black poetry is becoming the voice of all proletarians in the world since Blacks are exploited twice by the capitalist order unlike white workers. Black poetry views the collapse of the capitalist order to be the destruction of the racist order. Black poetry has the universalist aim of eliminating all ethnic, racial and class divisions. According to Black poetry, black soul will emerge and reunite with the world when colonialism and capitalism are destroyed. Black poetry is thus political at its heart since concepts such as capitalism, colonialism and slavery are historical phenomena and thus it is not surprising that most of the pioneers of the Negritude Movement are also Marxists (Sartre, 1988, pp. 291–329).

Sartre’s analysis of Black poetry is based on the written poetic works of Black poets based in French colonies and their characterizing features are race and social class-based inequalities and injustices. Lila Abu-Lughod’s ground-breaking book entitled

Veiled Sentiments, on the other hand, extends the common and conventional understanding of poetry as merely the domain of men and written medium. Based on two-year ethnographic fieldwork among the Awlad ‘Ali Bedouins in Egypt, Abu Lughod demonstrates the ways in which poetry intersects with individuality, discourse and ideology. Through the recitation of short oral poems called *ghinnawas*, the two vulnerable social groups namely women and the youth of the Awlad ‘Ali community express their sentiments in everyday interactions (Abu-Lughod, 2016, p. 26). It is through these poems that the system of values based on modesty and honor is challenged by women and the youth. While values such as self-control are glorified, weakness and vulnerability are welcome as they are associated with childhood. Through their *ghinnawas*, women and young people violate the ideology of Awlad ‘Ali based on modesty and honor (Abu-Lughod, 2016, pp. 171–215). As the recitation of an oral poem is like revealing one’s own secret to another, they offer a tool to the sentiments that cannot be expressed in everyday interactions. People do not express their sentiments taken to be incompatible with the dominant ideology from an everyday discourse because it has its consequences. By contrast, when the feelings are expressed through oral poetry, they are taken to be justified. The fact that it is often not clear who composed the poem also is advantageous for the person reciting it (Abu-Lughod, 2016, pp. 234–238). Oral poetry in everyday life, therefore, provides a sentimental instrument/shelter for particularly women and the youth as they can avoid facing criticism. Indeed, by letting them communicate their sentiments in an acceptable medium, oral poetry even helps them receive sympathy from others as they can sympathize with them (Abu-Lughod, 2016, pp. 240–248). In a way, the composition and recitation of oral poetry appears like a hidden journal where the limits of morality are blurred for those using it. Abu-Lughod’s book is showing that politics of poetry may provide new insights into what should be considered as political or can enlighten sociocultural realities that have not been evaluated before (Bush, 2015, pp. 189–190).

Oral poetry in the modern Middle East did not function only at the service of challenging and/or undermining dominant moral ideologies. They also worked to

challenge the dominant ideological narratives of modern nation-states imposed on the population under their jurisdiction. Those seen to be misfit in the making of the nation are subjected to assimilation into the dominant ethnic, religious, and cultural element. Official ideological historical narratives therefore either completely ignore or misrepresent the stories of its minorities. The minorities, on the other hand, come up with their own literary means such as poetry to present their own alternative narratives. The work of Metin Yüksel on Kurdish oral and written poetry seems a good case in point since it is very meaningful to appraise the ordinary people as historical and political figures since Kurdish poets from the 19th century through the 20th, also raised a critical voice against the Ottoman Empire and post-Ottoman nation-states.

Hardly mentioned in dominant Turkish historical accounts, the Mount Ararat Revolt (1927-1930) led to the finalization of the border disputes between Turkey and Iran through land exchange. From the point of view of Kurdish inhabitants in the region, on the other hand, the making of Turkish-Iranian border was a bloody and destructive moment as it led to the massacre and forced resettlement of the Kurds on both sides of the border (Yüksel, 2016). In two articles, Metin Yüksel also approaches the poetry of the two most prominent Kurdish poets of the 20th century, namely Abdulla Goran (1904-1962) and Cegerxwîn (1903-1984). The poems of Goran and Cegerxwîn not only promote Kurdish nationalist views but as members of Iraqi and Syrian Communist Parties for some time, they also bring Kurdish oppression and struggle into a conversation with all the oppressed social classes, colonized nations (Yüksel, 2014, 2015). The cases of Goran and Cegerxwîn are also notable because they show that national awakening through poetry can go hand in hand with Marxist ideological convictions.

In addition to them, through their poetic compositions, Kurdish oral poets called *dengbêj* composed, disseminated, and transmitted nationalism through Kurdish oral poetry. Kilam, songs singed by the *dengbêjs*, also shows how Turkish government perceived by the Kurds until the 1980s in Turkey, i.e., they reveal the political relationship between Kurds and Turkish government (Hamelink & Barış, 2014, p. 50).

One of these *kilams* with the themes of escape and liberation from the state is as follows:

Come and take my hand
We will free ourselves from our country and go
We will go to the hill of Kemaliyê
And we will pass the border
We will rescue ourselves among our brothers in Ecem (Iran)
(Hamelink & Barış, 2014, p. 51)

While these *kilams* are about the escape from the Turkish state, frequently mentioned the rebels initiated by the Kurdish outlaws and imprisonment of these rebellious since being caught by the Turkish government seen as a shame and escape from prison is praised. Bişarê Çeto's (1871-1914) escape from prison is expressed as follows:

They were saying: long live Bişar Axa, long live!
From that day until today this [this event] has been written down
[In the documents of] the Turkish capital,
In that ruin Ankara
It has been registered at the door of the prison of Belîs (Bitlis)
And in the logbooks of the Mustafa Kemal Pasha
(Hamelink & Barış, 2014, p. 54)

It is understood from these *kilams* how the Kurds perceived the Turkish government and leader of Turkish government and reveal that Kurds do not belong themselves to the territory of Turkey. Ali Ağcakulu (2012) also worked on the effect of *dengbêjs* through Radio Yerevan broadcasting from Armenia on the development of Kurdish nationalism in the period of 1955-1990 since after the military coup of 1980, the Turkish government forbade the use of Kurdish. While this radio broadcast *dengbêj* performances of Kurdish epics, Kurdish history, and culture, they protect their own language and culture against assimilation.

Although the works of Yüksel, Hamelink & Barış and Ağcakulu emphasize Kurdish nationalism after the World War I, however, in the period of 1878-1913, Kurdish nationalism was also exist as a pro-Ottomanist approach since Kurdish intellectuals began to contribute to Kurdish nationalism with the idea of Ottomanism. While they were criticizing the idea of Turkism, which was tried to be implemented under the leadership of Unionist regime, they underlined the anti-nationalist Ottomanism with a specific emphasis of Kurdish nationalism. Bozarslan (2016) also examined the same period through the examples of Şerif Paşa (1865-1951), Kurdish nationalist. Influenced by the teachings of Prince Sabahaddin, Şerif Pasha was in favor of collaboration of Kurds and Armenians for the wellbeing of Ottoman Empire. Bozarslan concluded that Kurdish nationalists were still defending the Ottomanism and neglecting the Turkish nationalism since they were approaching the Muslim periphery as the core of Empire. Despite the division in Kurdish society, Ottoman Empire's loss of Serbia, Romania, Macedonia and most of the Thrace as well as the independence of Albania in the period of 1878-1913, reflected the independence of Kurdish nationalism can be seen in the following poem of Hacı Kadir-i Koyi (1817-1897), Kurdish poet:

Just yesterday the people of Sudan stood up like lions,
Now they are independent, the envy of all the world,
Bulgarians and Serbs and Greeks, also Armenians and Montenegrins
All five do not number as many as the Babans
(Bajalan, 2019, p. 57).

While the case of *ghinnawas* and *dengbêj* performances shows that dominant moral and official ideological discourses and narratives are challenged on the basis oral poetic works from the perspective of minoritized social groups, on the other hand, Gohrab's work asserts that poetry can also be produced and used by the state and for the state. As in the case of Iran, to consolidate the power of the ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the 1979 Revolution, Iranian state took advantage of the poetry for state's interest. A considerable body of poetry produced and put into circulation

during the Iraq-Iran War aimed to create morale of the fighting troops with ample references extolling war and martyrdom (Gohrab, 2016).

The discussion so far has made it clear that poetry has a dual dimension: poetry exists both with its physical and ideological features. This brings us to the conclusion that poetry is both aesthetic and ideological, i.e. consisting of both form and content (Easthope, 1983, pp. 20–22). Although at first sight these two might be considered as a binary opposition, they are indeed not separate. At this point, I would like to turn to the question of poetry's being a venue at the service of the ideological expression. A point where individuality and collectivity intersect, poetry has both a material and historical side to it since poetry, as an aesthetic expression, shows the ideological consciousness of its poet. Swedish writer Birgitta Trotzig examines this question quite well in her article called "Ideology and Poetry" (1985). Herself a poet who lived between 1929 and 2011, Trotzig states that the feeling that dominated the world when she was young was chaos since the world became a field of disasters. She notes that everything she wrote in her literary career between 1951 and 2000 is a sum of what she has been witnessing throughout her life, which also witnessed the Cold War period. During her lifetime, she witnessed worldwide conflicts and wars. Her testimony led her to take shelter in poetry to protect her own spirit and existence. From this personal point of departure, Trotzig sets out to investigate the relationship between reality, ideology, and poetry. According to Trotzig, ideology may seem distant to poetry if ideology is defined in a reductionist way through party membership or party politics (Trotzig, 1985, p. 309). However, ideology is much more than party politics and party membership. It is seen that broad meaning of ideology comes from its relationship with discourse since discourses are social formations that provide the necessary basis for the evolution of an ideology (Dijk, 2006, pp. 115–140). Although the relationship between ideology and discourse is not direct or linear, ideologies are often created and nourished by discourses. Easthope (1983) summarizes this point by noting that ideology is created by the certain kind of representations of discourse. In brief, as a relatively autonomous field, poetry is created by a set of discourses, which in turn prepares the ground for a certain ideology.

In this respect, poetry is a social rather than merely individual act of a poet's creativity. Moreover, writing poetry is not simply choosing words and placing them on a page. Since narration in a poem is determined by the poet's selection of signifiers, the poet examines the words s/he intends to use in his/her poetry and looks at what these words have meant in history until his/her times. In a sense, the poet examines the historical context of words (Trotzig, 1985, pp. 306–315). As a result of this examination, poetry becomes ideological since the signifiers included in the poem have a historical and material dimension since signifiers have their autonomy, i.e. signifiers can exist without the signifieds. At this point, poetry occupies a specific point of which history and politics are also parts. Thus, the meaning of the poem is not equal to the sum of the direct meaning pointed by the signifiers since its meaning is the sum of the historicity and materiality of these words (Trotzig, 1985, p. 311). Although poetry has a place and meaning with regard to history, it cannot reflect the history directly since poetry is not transparent. The fact that poetry does not immediately reflect reality means that it is a reality of life. In other words, poetry offers a multifaceted view of reality since ideology cannot show all dimensions of reality. While recapturing reality, poets cannot and indeed do not aspire to be objective since history and politics replaced the position of poets in life over and over again.

One interesting example of such a shift in both poetic and ideological practice is deserving a close look is a Syrian Arab poet. Under the penname Adunis, Ali Ahmad Said Esber (1930-) shows that ideology revealed by discourses is a product of the poet's subjectivity. The ideological stance of Adunis has shifted between varying positions throughout his life: Syrian nationalism, Nasserism and extreme leftism. Therefore, understanding his poetry is impossible without understanding his ideological stance. When he was a member of the SSNP, Adunis devoted his poetry to the political ideology of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) (Bawardi, 2007, p.223). Researcher Basiliyus Bawardi shows this attitude of Adunis through his poems titled, *Only Despair (Wahdahu al-Ya's)* and *Arwad, oh Princess of Illusion (Arwad ya amirat al-wahm)* (Bawardi, 2007). *Only Despair* was published in 1958 during the Syrian-Egyptian unity, which was opposed by the SSNP. In this poem colored with

symbolism, Adunis sees Egyptians as barbarians and people of sand who invaded Syria. Published in 1959, *Arwad, oh Princess of Illusion*, on the other hand, reflects the nostalgic longing of Adunis for Arwad, the city of ancient Eastern Mediterranean civilization of Phoenicians in their golden age (Bawardi, 2007, pp. 228–230). Furthermore, Adunis adopts the poetry type of Phoenicians rather than Arabic poetry as an indicator of his rejection of cultural heritage of Arabs while glorifying Syrian nationalism associated with the distant pre-Islamic past embodied in the Phoenician past.⁶ However, his ideological position changed in the late 1950s and 1960s, when Adunis served as the editor-in-chief of the called *Shi'r*. Although there were no writings about Arabic poetry or Arab culture in *Shi'r* and the prevailing focus was more on Western literature, Arab cultural legacy started to appear by the end of 1959 (Bawardi, 2007, pp. 232–235).

Up to this point, I have focused on how and why writing poetry is ideological. Another important point here is to understand why reading poetry is also ideological. To delve into this question, one needs to keep in mind that while poetry as an aesthetic literary genre is a product of history, neither the poet nor the reader can stay outside history. How the reader reads a poem is also profoundly shaped by the reader's specific subject position in history (Easthope, 1983, p. 24). Therefore, reading a poem is essentially an ideological act. As I discussed in the section entitled "Poetic Discourse", while reading a poem, interpretation belongs solely to the reader, i.e. the poem is created by the reader. To understand this special relationship between the reader and the poetic text, it is also necessary to focus on the concept of historical materialism since the reading is socially and historically determined. The concept of historical materialism suggests that economic foundation of a society functioning as its infrastructure determines the superstructure, such as arts and culture (Marx & Engels, 1950, pp. 328–329). As soon as one is born, one becomes the carrier of statuses that determine one's social and

⁶ It must be noted that this attitude was by no means limited to Adunis. A similar attitude of Islamic past was seen in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Egypt in the age nations and nation-states.

ideological positions. The phenomenon of different interpretations of poetry seems best to be explained with the help of this concept since the infrastructure determines what one understands from poetry as an aesthetic form (Easthope, 1983, pp. 19–21).⁷ From this perspective, all new readings of poetry are rooted in one's ideological position mainly because one's cognitive and intellectual capacity is determined by his/her social and historical being (Easthope, 1983, pp. 24–29). If ideology is captured in its broadest sense, then, it is exceedingly difficult for one to stay out of ideology while reading a poem. Catherine Belsey summarizes this paradoxical situation in her book called *Critical Practice*. According to Belsey, rejecting all the ideologies is also ideological since being out of ideology is like refusing to speak, i.e. one's abdication from basic and universal right, *freedom of speech* (Belsey, 2002, p. 52).

Based on these theoretical debates, it can be concluded then that poetry analysis cannot be undertaken only in a superficial and formalistic way as a considerable number of Turkish academics' work examined in the first chapter do. Since the social, historical and ideological backgrounds of the poem, poet and reader are constitutive dynamics that make what writing and reading poetry is, an analysis of poetry has to go beyond such formalistic engagements and excavate deeper into these multifaceted and fascinating meanings embedded in poetry.

2.4 Nationalist Ideology in Poetry

In the previous section, I shed light on the relationship between poetry, politics, and ideology. As the predominant political ideology that shapes Arif Nihat Asya's mindset is Turkish nationalism, one needs to thoroughly inspect the question of poetry's use as

⁷ Although Easthope attempted to draw attention to the fact that reading poetry is related to the ideological position of subject and historical materialism, however, he also criticizes the Marxist tradition in the 1930s since it directly approaches poetry as a part of the economic base. From an Althusserian point of view, Easthope underlines that society consists of three parts as follow: economic, political, and ideological and none of them is superior to the others.

an instrument and scene of nationalist ideology. The first observation that needs to be made regarding nationalist ideology is that there is a vast literature on the question of nationalist ideology from various academic disciplines such as political science, sociology, and history. A leading theorist of nationalism, Eric Hobsbawm underlines the intersection between nationalism and literature. With the help of literature, nationalist ideology can fulfill its goal by crossing political and geographical boundaries (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 126).

But before understanding the relationship between literature or poetry and nationalism, one needs to understand the relationship between nations and nationalism. In this regard, Ernest Gellner introduced the constructivist theory to understand the relationship between nations and nationalism and his approach is also important to capture the bond between nationalism and nationalist poetry. According to Gellner, nations are the product of nationalist ideology which means nations are not constructing the nationalism, i.e., nations find their existence because of active efforts of a certain segment of society, *elites* (Walicki, 1998, p. 611). In this respect, nations are constructed creations, i.e., nations are not real or noted by Anderson they are imaginary communities (Anderson, 2017). In this respect, the constructivist theory is in contradiction with the primordialism since primordialism claims that nations exist throughout history, however nations had not existed throughout history. In fact, the Hobsbawm says that the word, nation, was not used before the 18th century. Instead of nations always in history, nations are constantly reinvented since there is no sacred political destiny that unites nations, it is a myth. It is the nationalism that created the nations by taking sometimes the culture and history to create nation (Hobsbawm, 1995, pp. 30–67). That is why, the word nationalism comes before the nations. In this respect, it is necessary to mispresent the history by imaginary interpretations. Imagined collective hopes, aspirations, dreams are used to sake of unity of nation. That is why the idea of eternal past and possibility of infinite future is highly emphasized in nationalist discourses (Anderson, 2017, p. 25).

Indeed, nation-states promoted nationalist poetry. Through their poems, nationalist poets around the world aim to show that their nations are both primordial entities. In

this regard, Aberbach views nationalism to be the midwife of nationalist poetry (Aberbach, 2003). Aberbach further lists a number of “national poets”: al-Basir (1895-1974), Lord Byron (1788-1824) Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849), Heinrich Heine (1797-1856); and Hafeez Jalandhari (1900-1982) and Muhammed Iqbal (1877-1938) for Iraqi, Greek, Hungarian, German and Pakistani nationalisms, respectively (Aberbach, 2003, pp. 255–275).

A glance at the common features of nationalist poetry demonstrates that it is a universal phenomenon. Aberbach underlines three shared features of nationalist poetry. First, victories and defeats are exaggerated. While the nation’s past is mostly viewed to be full of glories, its past defeats are also embellished in a way that triggers the feelings of vengeance in the minds and hearts of its readers. To illustrate, while Turkish nationalist ideological discourse places an emphasis on the Ottoman conquests, Armenian and Jewish nationalist discourses are shaped mainly by a stress on the experiences of exiles, defeats, and genocide (Aberbach, 2003, pp. 255–275). By illustrating nation’s past more heroically than it really is, they tend to overestimate past achievements to further the glorification of the nation. By underlining the past defeats, on the other hand, they maintain and nourish the feelings of revenge and longing in their readers.

Secondly, whether a narrative of a defeat or a glory, nationalist poetry almost always promotes an enemy in opposition to its authentic modern nation. Every nationalism has its own other. Nationalist poetry justifies the use of force and violence at the service of the nation’s ideals against its so-called imaginary or real enemy. In these poems, nation’s own liberation, ideals and progress is marked with revenge (Aberbach, 2003, pp. 255–275). Thirdly, nationalist poets underline the importance of individuals while at the same time placing individual in the background. It attaches importance to individual for the homeland since the spirit of the nation can survive if people realize the vital importance of nationhood. Nationalist poets seem to be aware of this: their poems exist as long as people are captivated by them. Put differently, nationalist poetry mobilizes the sentiments of its readers. Nationalist poets attach importance to individuals not because s/he is a unique human being, but mainly because s/he is

viewed to be a building block of the nation. Preventing the independent flourishing of individuality from the national mass, they aim to lead them to dissolve in the larger national body. Their poems are recited, memorized, and sung by the members of nation like a pledge of allegiance. In a way, these poets visualize themselves as an ideal citizen who dedicated themselves to the nation and its glorious past: something that other citizens are expected to emulate. In brief, nationalist poets and their poetry work at the service of the nation-building project (Aberbach, 2003, pp. 255–275).

Drawing on Aberbach's examination on the shared characteristics of nationalist poetry, it seems that useful to thoroughly investigate nationalist poetry from the late Ottoman period to the post-Ottoman Middle East and Balkans. As this is also a period that corresponds to the lifetime of Asya, such a quick survey is expected to provide the poetic and nationalist ideological counterparts of Asya in the very lands, which he claims in the name of Ottoman imperial glory and conquest. Such a view becomes more interesting and meaningful if one is limited to the non-Turkish Muslim communities mainly because Asya's poetic discourse blends Turkish nationalism with Islamic symbols and references. Therefore, in the rest of this section, I will specifically focus on the nationalist poetry of three non-Turkish and Muslim communities in the Balkans and the Middle East, namely Albanian, Palestinian, Sudanese, Yemeni and Kurdish.

Albanian struggle for independence is dated to the period between 1878 and 1912. This is also a period when nationalist poems and songs were produced. Albanians were a heterogeneous population divided along religious (Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic) and linguistic lines (Ghegs and Tosks). Although such heterogeneity influenced the literary products such as songs, tales and poems, one can still observe that a considerable part of this literature was nationalist. One can hence refer to such Albanian poets as Thimi Mitko (1820-1890), Naim Bey Frashëri (1846-1890) and Sali Butka (1857-1938) who put their poetic skills at the service of the Albanian nationalist cause. Thimi Mitko was born in the Albanian city by the name of Korçë and he studied in a Greek school found in the same city. Since Mitko set up clothing business, he often traveled to the Ottoman Empire, Greece, and Romania. During these visits, he

became acquainted with the intellectuals from Western and Central Europe. He joined the Albanian community in Istanbul in 1857 and wrote articles on Albanian nationalism. He subsequently settled in Egypt and contacted the Albanian speaking people in Greece and Italy. Mitko collected the songs and tales related to Albanian history and he used these songs to create an Albanian national identity (Sugarman, 1999, pp. 421–422). These songs include important historical events and personalities for the Albanian community. Rebellion of Muhammed Ali of Egypt —Albanian Ottoman governor— against the Ottoman rule is one of the historical topics that is found among these songs as follows:

In the year 1800
Memush the traitor sent a message to him
“Ali Pasha, arise and come,
av eri *reaya* [subject peoples] av erisen up.”
“Surrender, O wretched Shēnvasil [a Christian Albanian village in the Sarandë district]!”
“We won’t surrender as long as we are alive...
We are all brave fighters:
Magjor Lima the swordsman,
Spiro Buti with the long neck.”
“Stand firm, men, stand firm,
For Ali Pasha has been intimidated...”
(Sugarman, 1999, p. 423)

Towards the end of the 19th century, while the Ottoman Empire was in decline, poetry songs about *kachaks* (Albanian outlaws) also began to emerge. Mitko’s poem called *Marsejesa* and written in 1880 subsequently became one of the anthems of Albanian independence. This poem reflects the desire of Mitko about Albanian enlightenment and renaissance in the light of knowledge. In his poems, it is seen that he wanted to liberate Albanian people from the Ottoman domination, Albanian language, and culture from the influence of the Greek alphabet (Sugarman, 1999, p. 427).

Naim Frashëri (1846-1900) is another pioneering poet that follows the footsteps of Mitko. Frashëri includes religious terminology related to Shi'ism in his poems about Albanian nationalism (Doja, 2013, pp. 115–133). For instance, the Battle of Karbala is used as metaphor in his poems. The pain of Albanian nationalists for their nation is likened to the suffering of the followers of Imam Hussein: "... may he die for the Motherland, as al-Mukhtar did for Husayn, may he emulate Ibrahim" (Sugarman, 1999, p. 433). Secondly, in his poem titled "*Mëmëdhe*" (Motherland), Frashëri dreams about the borders of Albania. He wanted the lands in Greek, Kosovan and Macedonian to be made a part of Albania (Sugarman, 1999, p. 430). This kind of territorial claims is indeed a common feature of nationalist poetry. Thirdly, Frashëri depicts his love for his nation with a frequent focus on the pastoral beauties of the national lands, which is another theme frequently encountered in nationalist poems. The following lines are taken from his well-known poem titled *Stockbreeding and Farming (Bagëti e Bujqësi)*:

O mountains of Albania and you O tall oak trees!
Broad fields of flowers that are in my thoughts day and night!
You beautiful hillocks and you limpid streams!
Peaks, crags, and hillsides, cliffs and forests of intense green!"

(Sugarman, 1999, p.429).

This poem was memorized by generations of Albanian students and fulfilled the role of awakening nationalist sentiments in young generations (Sugarman, 1999, pp. 427–433).

Another interesting Albanian nationalist poet is Sali Butka (1857-1938), whose innovative characteristic compared to Mitko and Frashëri is that he set nationalist poems to music. Setting to music at times seems to have required the additions and shortening of the original lyrics to make its musical performance more effective and/or moving. He turned the poems into a song after World War I and these poems were printed and distributed, becoming the songs of Albanian independence. Setting the

poems to music aimed to stimulate the nationalist feelings and warrior spirits of Albanian men during the war (Sugarman, 1999, pp. 433–444).

Arab poets in the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman eras, too, were active in the Arab national awakening through their poetry. Undoubtedly, poetry has been the utmost Arabic cultural and literary history beginning with the Jahiliyya poetry. In the wake of the expansion of Islam, Arabic poetic conventions shaped the subsequent Islamic literatures such as Persian, Turkish and Kurdish. It is no wonder then that Arab writers and poets approach poetry as a landmark in Arabic literature. As a researcher by the name of Yasir Suleiman underlines, without poetry it would be impossible to talk about Arab nationalism since poetry was seen as something that came from the past and must be glorified in Arab nationalism (Suleiman, 2010). Indeed, Arab nationalist discourses increased with the circulation of poetry mainly through the newspapers published in Beirut and Cairo in the second half of the 19th century since Arab statesmen in Ottoman Empire such as Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) began to print dictionaries, encyclopedias, and newspapers in Arabic, i.e., Arabic language was seen as an important part of Arab cultural awakening, *nahda* (Cleveland, 2018, pp. 147–148).

There were two main themes in these poems: underscoring the importance and uniqueness of the Arabic language and getting rid of the rule and pressure of Turks for nationalist aims of Arabs. Palestinian poet Suleiman al-Taji al-Faruqi (1882-1958) penned one of his poems addressing the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed Reşad (1848-1918). In this poem, he asks the language of education in public schools in Greater Syria to be Arabic. He also criticizes the Turkification policies of Young Turks since they had changed Arabic with Turkish (Suleiman, 2010, p. 267).

A Syrian poet, Fu'ad al-Din Khatip (1879-1957), too, conveyed a request to the Ottoman Empire to make Arabic the official language of the Empire (Suleiman, 2010, p. 267). It is also notable that the Young Turks were seen as an enemy to Arab nationalism by these Arab nationalist poets. Lebanese poet, Abd al-Hamid al-Rafi'i (1859-1932) in one of his writings called the Young Turks as “bloody foreigners”

(*ajam*), since the Young Turks were harming the language and culture of Arabs. He also stated that Arabs would never reach their nationalist aims under the rule of Turks. In response to anti-Arab writings appearing in the Ottoman-Turkish magazine called *Iqbal*, as a response Lebanese poet Amin Nasir al-Din underlined the superiority of Arabs over the Turks and Arabic over Turkish (Suleiman, 2010, p. 268). A Maronite Christian and one of the leading figures of Arab nationalism, Naguib Azoury mounted a campaign, *Ligue de la patrie arabe*, and called for Arabs in Syria and Iraq to topple down the Ottoman control in 1904 (Abu-Ghazaleh, 1972, p. 37). Arab nationalism which is dated back to the second half of the 19th century emerged with an emphasis on the Arabic language, history, and culture. Following the Second Constitutional Period, it criticized the Young Turkish policies in Arab provinces. Poets were in the front line of this critical voice. Arab nationalism through poetry continued well into the post-Ottoman Arab Middle East. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the direction of Arab nationalism has changed but the involvement of poetry remained the same. Palestinian nationalism seems one of the quintessential examples to show the effect of poetry in nationalism after the collapse of Ottoman Empire since Palestinian nationalism was triggered both by the Britain and Israel. Palestine was a British mandate between 1920 and 1948. Two nationalist poets of Palestine, Ibrahim Tuqan (1905-1941) and Burhan al-Din al-Abbushi were seen as the poets of Palestinian resistance. By using classical metres in Arabic poetry, Tuqan mentioned Arab history by highlighting the past achievements of Arabs. Tuqan underlines that Palestinian people must make sacrifices to revive its past splendor. One of his poems, titled *Red Tuesday (al-Thalatha al-Hamra)*, refers to three Palestinians slaughtered by the British authorities since they rebelled against the British rule. With reference to this incident, he praised these three young men who would be rewarded with heaven by God. Tuqan called for rebellion against the British authorities and asked for help from all the Arabs in the world. His poems with these themes attracted so much attention from the public that he was finally arrested (Abu-Ghazaleh, 1972, pp. 48–49). Burhan Al-Din al-Abbushi also wrote poems about Palestinian nationalism by highlighting the past achievements of Arabs. Abbushi views Prophet Muhammad as an idealized person for the Palestinian nationalist goals since the Prophet devoted himself to the Arab world.

Reinterpreting the Prophet in such a nationalist light, he calls Palestinians to do the same for their homeland (*watan*) (Abu-Ghazaleh, 1972, pp. 50–51).

While Palestinian nationalist discourse through poetry took a stance against British colonialism between 1920 and 1948, it took a new turn following the disaster (*nakba*), i.e. the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948. After the Six Days War, Israel tried to prevent anything that could hinder Jewish nationalist articulations. Within this context, Ibrahim Tugan's poem called *al-habashiyy* (The Christmas Turkey) was removed from the school. Poems of Palestinian poets such as Mahmud Darwish (1941-2008) and Samih al-Qasim (1939-2014) also were exposed to censorship (Suleiman, 2010, p. 259). As a response to Israeli pressures, Palestinian poets continued to publish their poems by shortening or changing their structure and they continued to mention the hegemonic practices of Israel in occupied territories. The active presence and involvement of poetry and poets in the battlefield, can best be seen in the fact that Israeli Minister of Education Yossi Sarid (1940-2015) proposed to include Mahmud Darwish's poems in the school syllabus as an extension of the peace process between Israel and Palestine in 2000. His proposal was rejected by Likud Party and National Block Party since this initiative would damage the foundations of Israel (Suleiman, 2010, pp. 260–261).

This issue received an international coverage when *New York Times* noted in its pages that: "Today marked the first time that poetry was used Palestinian poetry, no less – to try to topple an Israeli government" (Sontag, 2000). With this incident, Palestinian nationalism has gained a different dimension since it has shown, as noted by Yasir Suleiman, colonial situation created by Israel is not only conducted through land but also through poetry. Poetry is indeed not only a part of nationalist politics, it is politics (Suleiman, 2010, pp. 260–261).

As an outpost of the Ottoman Empire, Sudan is another interesting case. Sudan was under the control of Funj Sultanate when it was occupied by Mohammad Ali of Egypt in 1820. The Mahdist State in 1880 brought Mohammad Ali's control to an end for while. However, Sudan was reduced to colonial status under the joint control of Egypt

and Britain in 1899 (Sharkey, 2006, pp. 163–164). Becoming the object of colonialism triggered the nationalist sentiment in Sudan. Sudanese nationalist poet Hamza al-Malik Tambal (1897-1951) introduced the concept of *Sudanese*. Tambal noted that poets should write their poems in nationalist tones to develop the concept of being *Sudanese*. Nevertheless, the concept of *Sudanese* led to controversy since the elites in Northern Sudan used the word *Sudanese* to refer to those from slave origins. With the contribution of poets, *Sudanese* nationalism used the words *Sudanese* for their political discourse in the post-colonial period of Sudan as follows: “Sudan for the Sudanese” (*Sudan lil-Sudaniyyin*) (Sharkey, 2006, p. 171).

In the post-Ottoman Arab Middle East in the age of nations and nation-states there were rival nationalist imaginings. One should be careful not to homogenize all these different movements under the category of “Arab world”. An interesting case in this context comes from Yemen. Al Mahra, governorate of Yemen, found in Southeastern Yemen use the Gibberish language, which distinguishes this community from other Arabic-speaking areas of Yemen. The use of a different language other than Arabic also seen as a threat before the national unity of Yemen. This cultural differentiation has become more peculiar with the presence of sung poetry, mixture of poem and song, in the Mahri language against the cultural dominance of Northern Yemen. This genre both brings together the poet, singer, musician, and Yemeni nationalism along with Mahra regionalism. It adapts the *humayni* poetry, a type of Arabic poetry the Mahri language, lyric poetry and singing. The Mahri-language sung poetry helps the Mahra region make a claim against the centralizing and homogenizing views of Northern Yemeni-based nationalist discourse and to destroy the perception that the Mahri language is pre-modern and/or backward. The sung poetry of the Mahra region highlights the distinct characteristics of their culture while underlining the harmony of their culture with Yemeni nationalism (Liebhaber, 2011, pp. 249–265).

Conclusion

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical discussion on poetry with particular attention to it as a discourse in its specific manifestation through varying nationalist ideological

discourses from the 19th through the 20th centuries Ottoman and post-Ottoman territories in the Balkans and Middle East. While this study draws particularly on the work of Easthope, Sartre and Abu Lughod's works are also inspiring as they highlight the written and oral poetry as a tool at the hands of marginalized and oppressed social groups at the levels of both macro political and micro everyday struggles. The survey of specific cases from late Ottoman and post-Ottoman non-Turkish Muslim communities, namely Albanian, Palestinian, Sudanese, Yemeni and Kurdish poetry highlights the role of poetry in the emergence, spread and taking root of nationalist ideology in the politically, historically and ideologically shifting conditions. Such a focus aims to bring the wider regional context as reflected in these poems into a conversation with the poetry of Asya who has an altogether different vision on these lands, which is the focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

FROM EMPIRE TO NATION STATE: POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In order to be able to contextualize the lifetime of Asya and analyze his poetry, it is indispensable to go into a political and historical survey of the period from the late Ottoman Empire through the 1970s, i.e. the period corresponding to his lifetime. Although Asya lived between 1904 and 1975, this survey also includes the period from the 1970s up to the present day mainly because the reception of his poetry has seen a quite favorable context particularly following the rise of the current government, namely the Justice and Development Party (henceforth JDP) in 2002. Considering the main goal of this thesis, the relationship between Turkish nationalism and Islam in the making of modern Turkey is emphasized with specific attention to the concepts political and ideological concepts and projects of Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkification. The existing scholarship on the making of society and politics from around the turn of 19th century to that of the 20th is critically surveyed with the question of the broader political and historical context in which not only Asya's poetry but also its reception took shape.

4.1 The Legacy of the “Long 19th Century”

One of the longest-living empires in world history, the Ottoman Empire came under the increasing military and economic domination of industrial European powers from around the beginning of the 19th century. The Tanzimat (1839-1876) and the First Constitutional Period (1876-1878) were political responses to the changing political setting, the trade treaties, and foreign loans. The 1876 bankruptcy of the empire was

the peak of the deepened financial crisis. A new movement, Young Turks, was beginning to mature as an alternative answer to the rule of Abdülhamid II regarding the economic and political problems of the Empire in the second half of the 19th century. The origin of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) was established by the students of military medical academy, namely İbrahim Temo (1865-1939), Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), İshak Sukuti (1865-1902) and Hüseyinzade Ali (1864-1941) in 1889. The interesting point here is that none of the founding figures was Turkish: the CUP was established by two Kurds, one Albanian and one Circassian (Bozarslan, 2015, p. 194).

Although the organization was not homogeneous, the Young Ottomans had a consensus on several issues such as opposition to the dictatorship of the Sublime Porte by means of constitutionalism and modernization (Ünlü, 2016, p. 89). Young Turks re-established the constitutional regime with the 1908 Revolution. Members of the CUP believed that one of the urgent remedies to keep state alive was the reintroduction of a constitutional order. The Bulgarian declaration of independence and the unification of Crete with Greece soon after the declaration of the constitution, however, showed that even a constitutional order would not revive this dying empire (Kayalı, 2016, p. 37). Constitutionalism would not heal the wounds of the Ottoman Empire mainly because the political and ideological phenomenon of nationalism was imposing itself as the new “rule of the game”.

Nationalism made itself felt in all imperial domains. Even though the imperial edict of Gülhane and the Royal Edict of Reform envisaged by the Ottoman State underlined the rights and freedoms with a liberal understanding, they also unintentionally facilitated and/or contributed to nationalist aspirations of minorities. It was in this context that the idea of Ottomanism, i.e. being an Ottoman citizen regardless of one's religion and ethnicity, as advocated by the Tanzimat Edict, did not pave the way for the desired result. In addition to the incapability of Ottomanism to create harmony within Ottoman society, it also muddled the waters. Non-Muslims like Armenians and Greeks whose economic and legal rights were expanded with the Imperial Edict of Gülhane and the Edict Reform generated further tensions among Ottoman subjects,

had caused Muslim subjects to develop feelings of hatred and resentment against them (Ünlü, 2016, pp. 81–91).

At this stage, the Young Ottomans were beginning to become the voice of angry Muslim community. The Young Ottomans believed that thanks to the Reform Edict (Islahat Fermanı), Christian population acquired more rights than Muslim subjects. They viewed it as the Edict of Privileges (İmtiyaz Fermanı). The New Ottomans such as Ziya Paşa, Namık Kemal and Ali Suavi reflected this uneasiness in their essays (Türküne, 1994, p.68-70). Indeed, in an essay, Ziya Paşa best shows the emotional reaction of the Young Ottomans against Christians. Ziya Paşa notes that it has been around twenty million Muslims who under the rule of the Ottoman dynasty shed their blood to conquer the Ottoman imperial lands unlike eleven million Christians of different Christian sects. Despite their self-sacrifice, it is Muslims who have been most destitute in the empire. That is to say, while the Young Ottomans aimed to invigorate the ideology of Ottomanism to keep the Ottoman Empire together, they simultaneously maintained the hierarchy between Muslims and Christians by viewing the Muslims to be the self-sacrificing conquerors and protectors that laid the foundations of the Ottoman Empire (Türküne, 1994, p. 70).

The Young Ottomans took Islam as the essential characteristic of their opposition as the Ottoman Empire was viewed to be violating the shari'a (Türküne, 1994, p. 87). As they regarded the reason for the Ottoman's weakening to be based on irreligiosity, the political recipe they proposed included an Islamic rule since "the shari'a gave every man the same right" (Mardin, 1962, p. 373). For instance, Namık Kemal ordered books about Islam from his father when he was in Europe to refer to Islam in his essays. That is to say, Islam was not only used to gain the support of Muslim subjects and ulama, but it was also utilized as a basis of liberty, democracy, legitimacy and constitutionalism in their engagements with modern Western political ideas and institutions. While they reinterpret terms and concepts coming from the Islamic political, historical and intellectual conventions such as meşveret and şura which were used in reference to democracy and parliament, they attempted to show that Islam was already suitable for modern political ideas and institutions (Türküne, 1994, pp. 92–

103). Therefore, it seems fair to argue that Ottomanism of the New Ottomans was rather weak when compared to their Islamism. In this sense, the New Ottomans were both the first Islamists of the Ottoman Empire and the founding fathers of Muslim contract that would gain power during the reign of Abdulhamid II (Ünlü, 2016, p. 90).

Abdulhamid II realized that being an Ottoman citizen did not create the necessary emotional sense of belonging among non-Muslims as they started to search for more exclusive solidarity. Indeed, as observed by a scholar, the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman War was as a symbolic moment when Ottoman Muslims no longer approached Ottomanism as a solution. In response to the difficulty of consolidating non-Muslims, the remedy was seen as the strengthening of belonging and loyalty of Muslims within the empire (Ünlü, 2016, p. 89). Put differently, the inability of Ottomanism would be compensated with Islamism. During the reign of Abdulhamid II, hatred and resentment of Muslim subjects towards non-Muslim population were successfully channeled into a state policy under the guise of Islam. The foundation of the Hamidian Regiments can be given as an example of this policy: while they were established to counter the potential Russian incursions, it also aimed to turn Muslim Kurds against Armenians (Ünlü, 2016, pp. 91–92). In this way, Kurds were also indirectly kept under the control of the state. The inclusion of Sunni Kurds in the Hamidian Regiments took place at the expense of the exclusion of other religious groups such as Alevis from the functions of the state (Ünlü, 2016, p. 96). Barış Ünlü calls this exclusion as the contract of Muslims since it envisaged a structure in which Sunni Muslims were rewarded for their services while non-Muslims were either excluded or assimilated (2016).

Promoting Sunni Islamic allegiance such a determinant led to the re-positioning of other groups within the “tolerant” Ottoman Empire. A remarkable study conducted by prominent historian of late Ottoman Empire, namely Selim Deringil scrutinizes the reality of Ottoman toleration towards non-Muslims during the reign of Abdulhamid II. Underlining the unifying character of Islam reflected its effects on the religious orientation of non-Muslim subjects within the empire. While Islam was functioned as an anchor, official religion of Ottoman Empire, i.e. the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam was underlined. Conversion from Christianity to Islam gained momentum in the last

quarter of the 19th century, even though there was no official enforcement (Deringil, 2004, p. 68). Besides that, the Yezidis, İstavri community, the Nusayri, the Kızılbaş, and Armenians all became a part of conversion policies of the Ottoman Empire (Deringil, 2004, pp. 68–92). Therefore, the standardization of ethnic-religious differences reflected in the enlargement of Sunni Islam in the last quarter of 19th century can be viewed as the imperial understanding of Islamism.

Relationship between Ottomanism and Islamism not only affected the policies of the Sublime Porte towards minorities, but it also changed the approach of the center towards the two communities inhabiting its eastern borderlands, i.e. Kurds and Armenians. While Abdulhamid II favored Kurds against Armenians under the roof of Islam, the CUP did not have consistent attitude towards Armenians. To understand the imbalanced attitude of the CUP, differences of opinions within the CUP need to be emphasized. After the establishment of the CUP in 1889, there were two opposed groups, Ahmet Rıza and Mizancı Murat. While Ahmet Rıza (1858-1930) was a secular and positivist intellectual approaching Islam only as an integrative factor, Mizancı Murat (1858-1930) as a conservative intellectual was underlining the Islamic character of the state. While Ahmet Rıza approved the policies of Abdülhamid II about Armenians, Mizancı Murat was critical of them (Ünlü, 2016, p. 100).

Another rival of Ahmet Rıza was Prens Sabahaddin (1879-1948) who was in favor of the involvement of Armenians in the CUP. Not only Prens Sabahaddin but also some other pioneering figures of Young Turks such as Tunalı Hilmi were also thinking about the Ottomanist ideals (Ünlü, 2016, pp. 101–102). Yet the idea of Ottomanism could not get support from the Muslim periphery. This prevalent Muslim sense of vengeance against non-Muslims grew exponentially, leading to the persecution of Armenians from the 1890s in the empire. In 1909 in Adana, for instance, it is estimated that more than 20.000 Armenian were killed (Ünlü, 2016, p. 111). Although either Abdülhamid II or the CUP was held responsible for this incident, Barış Ünlü places the stress on the feelings of local people such as administrators, notables, and clergymen rather than center (Ünlü, 2016, p. 112). This event is important in terms of showing how Ottomanism and Islamism was perceived by Muslim periphery.

The Balkan Wars were a traumatizing turning point in late Ottoman history. The loss of Macedonia, Thessaloniki and the Thrace brought about economic and emotional collapse. Emotional dimension was so great that it subsequently affected political decisions of the CUP since the aforementioned regions were the hometown of many CUP leaders (Ünlü, 2016, p. 118). According to the Ottoman elites, one of the reasons behind the loss of these regions was Christian population. Minorities such as Armenians were blamed for the collapse of the empire. The CUP's fear about Armenians, i.e. their engagement in separatist movements has increased after the Balkan Wars. They were afraid of the possibility of cooperation between Armenians and Russia at any moment. The Balkan Wars also paved the way to a demographic shift in the Ottoman Empire as Muslim population became more dominant (Zürcher, 2017, p. 135). Taking advantage of this demographic change, the idea of Ottomanism was abandoned by the CUP (Ünlü, 2016, p. 18). Fading away of Ottomanism also paved the way for Turkish nationalism since pioneering figures of Turkish nationalism such as Yusuf Akçura, Fuad Köprülü and Ziya Gökalp started to think about the possibility of Turkism for saving the empire (Ünlü, 2016, p. 119). The shift from the idea of Ottomanism towards Turkish nationalism mixed with Islamism was mainly since the non-Muslim minorities within the empire were no longer trusted (Ünlü, 2016, p. 123). Multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual empire would gradually be made Turkish because of Turkification/Islamization policies implemented by the CUP. Methods such as ethnostatistics, ethnographic map and ethnographic studies created the necessary basis for the Turkification of Anatolia (Dündar, 2008, p. 85).

With the help of these methods, the population of not only non-Muslims but also Muslims such as Armenians, Rums, Jews, Assyrians and Kurds were recorded. Data about non-Muslim population used by the CUP initiated operations for the regulation other identities (Dündar, 2005, 171-172). Although the CUP took some measures for regulation, it was unable to take more mighty action, such as forced resettlement. Minorities were discomforted by gangs affiliated with the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Special Organization), the secret organization related to the CUP. Territorial losses combined

with demographic shifts thus paved the way for an increased homogenization of the diverse population of the empire.

4.2 From World War I to the Single-Party Period

World War I provided a convenient basis to put into effect the Turkish nationalist projects of the CUP about the non-Muslim population within the empire. With the loss of a population of 5 million comprising mostly non-Turks, the Balkan Wars led the CUP to shift its direction to Anatolia. In one-way, demographic change in the Ottoman lands with the Balkan Wars was transformed into an effective government strategy by the CUP under the ideology of Turkism (Dündar, 2002, p. 31). The period between 1913 and 1918, the immigration and resettlement policies implemented by the CUP against both Muslims and non-Muslims such as Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Albanians and Bosnians within the empire can be evaluated in the context of strengthening the Turkish character of Anatolia (Dündar, 2002). With the Deportation Law adopted on 27 May 1915 and 30 May 1915, Armenians and other minorities viewed to be threat to the state were resettled (Dündar, 2002, pp. 62–63). Although suspicion against Armenians was on the rise, it is seen that the CUP was sometimes showing an inconsistent attitude towards Armenians. While Enver Pasha was congratulating the Armenian Patriarch for Armenian people's courage on the Battle of Sarikamish, Talat Pasha wanted the Armenians to be resigned from their duties as policemen in state organization (Üngör, 2016, p. 120). Despite the inconsistent attitude in the CUP, however, Enver Pasha proposed that Armenians must be exiled to a place where they could not cause problems (Üngör, 2016, p. 120). From then on, Armenians became the particular target of the deportation law of the CUP. The CUP leaders such as Talat Pasha carried out an exile process. While there were local elites and commoners such the governor of Diyarbakır, mayors, gendarmeries and Kurdish tribes who were actively involved in this process (Üngör, 2016, pp. 114–161).

An oral history project on this subject was conducted by Ayşe Gül Altınay and Fethiye Çetin to highlight the period between 1915 and 1916. They conducted interviews with

the people whose grandmothers were Muslim Turkish converts of Armenian origin. They shared important points from memories of their grandmothers and shed light on events in the deportation process that took place in 1915. These life stories focus on looting properties, rape and compulsory Islamization of Armenian people. Some Armenian women that were either raped or forced to convert to Islam to escape death, became a part of Muslim families (Altınay & Çetin, 2009; Üngör, 2016). Moreover, a policy of dispossession against the Armenian community was implemented in the same period. Armenians' property was transferred to Muslims with the regulation called Abandoned Properties (Emval-i Metruke) (Kaiser, 2017, pp. 123–157). The Arab-populated parts of the empire, i.e. came under the French and British mandates by the end of World War I. Islamic political discourse promoted from the New Ottomans, Abdülhamid II and the CUP failed as there was also an Arab Revolt led by Sharif Husayn of Mecca for a future Arab state that would be his dynasty (Cleveland, 2018, pp. 175–176). Crucially, this process was not only of territorial demographic but also economic as the non-Muslim property was also transferred to Muslims. Late Ottoman economic Turkification would continue in the 1940s and 1950s with Wealth Tax and 6-7 September 1955.

To give a precise figure regarding the Turkification and Islamization of Empire from 1914 to 1924, one has to refer to the fact that while the rate of non-Muslims was around 30 per cent by 1914, it decreased to 3 per cent by 1924 (Ünlü, 2016, p. 139). As this discussion shows, the establishment of modern Turkey cannot be examined without taking into account the essential/constitutive demographic engineering in terms of violence of a wide range including massacres, forced resettlement and dispossession of particularly non-Muslims such as Armenians and Assyrians (Dündar, 2002, 2008; Üngör, 2016). This social and demographic engineering that has been closely detailed by critical scholarship of historians such as Fuat Dündar and Uğur Ümir Üngör is almost always dropped from Turkish nationalist and Islamist accounts which promote Anatolia as if it has been solely Turkish and Muslim since 1071. The renowned cliché statement that appears in Turkish textbooks is as follows: “The gates of Anatolia were opened to Turks in 1071 in Manzikert.” However, as late as a millenium later, i.e. by

the 1910s, a considerable amount of the present-day Anatolian population comprised non-Muslims.

Once the Arab provinces of the empire was also gone with the end of World War I, now mainly Anatolia remained as the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Sevres imposed by the Allies also divided Anatolia among themselves. Islam continued to function as a source of popular political mobilization in the War of Liberation. During this period, the leading rulers excluded Armenians and embraced the Kurds since the unifying power of Islam was needed to keep the state together. For example, in that time, Mustafa Kemal wrote letters to several Kurdish religious and tribal leaders such as Sheikh Küfrevizade Abdülbaki Efendi, Sheikh Mahmut Efendi, Sheikh Ziyaettin Efendi and Cemil Çeto to take advantage of their power and prestige among the Kurds in the region in order to incorporate the latter in the War of Independence. In his letters, Mustafa Kemal underlined the difficult conditions into which the Caliphate and the Sultanate had fallen. A striking feature of these letters is that they point to the “Armenian danger” in case the movement failed. Mustafa Kemal wanted to unification of Turks and Kurds under the roof of Islam during the War of Independence (Atatürk, 1969, pp. 939–941).

The struggle for independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal came to an end in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne. This new era changed the dynamics of Turkish-Kurdish relations since Mustafa Kemal envisaged the new Turkish state on Turkish nationalism and Westernization (Gelvin, 2016, pp. 229–246). This type of secularising Turkish nationalism gradually paved the way for a radical exclusion of Islam as a constitutive component of its discourse (Ünlü, 2016, p. 163). In this context, the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 eliminated the Islamic umbrella that brought Turks and Kurds. Sheikh Said expressed this situation as in the following: “The only thing that we have after the abolition of the Caliphate is Turkish pressure” (cited in Bozarslan, 2017b, p. 109). It is seen that the formal disappearance of Islam’s binding tie of the Caliphate caused concern among Kurdish elites as they were fearful to experience what happened to Armenians in 1915. Nourished by Social Darwinism, Turkish nationalism created its own version of Orientalism towards Kurds. Turkish

nationalism and Orientalism viewed Kurds as barbarian, savages and mountainous (Bozarslan, 2017a, p. 113). Consistent with this degrading view against the Kurds, the 1925 Sheikh Said Rebellion can be seen as the major Kurdish armed response to the new Turkish Republic. The revolt was severely crushed by the Turkish state: its leaders were hanged, the Law on the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu*) was accepted and thousands of Kurds were resettled in Western parts of Turkey (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 199–209).

Following the Sheikh Said Rebellion, the Eastern Reformation Plan was prepared. This plan envisaged the resettlement of the Kurds from Eastern Anatolian provinces to Western parts of Turkey as well as the Thrace. In this way, the Turkification of the predominantly Kurdish-inhabited areas of Eastern Anatolia would be ensured. This process includes the Turkification of state organs. It is ensured that Kurds could not take place in Eastern Anatolian bureaucracy, i.e. Kurds could not be judges and prosecutors. Furthermore, Kurdish families were forced to leave their homes. The members of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*) that had no relation with the Sheikh Said Rebellion and even those that had good relations with Kemalist administration were deported (Üngör, 2016, pp. 193–256). The Sheikh Said Rebellion not only changed Turkish-Kurdish relations but also contributed to the silencing of political opposition. The Progressive Republican Party was closed down on due to the Sheikh Said Rebellion (Ünlü, 2016, p. 179). After the closure of Progressive Republican Party (PRP) (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) in 1925, revival of democracy was severely hampered in Turkey.

The Single-Party Period which had a temporary interval in 1930 when Mustafa Kemal's authorization of Fethi Okyar to establish a political party. Okyar's party called Free Republican Party (FRP) (*Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) committed to principles such as secularism and democracy and attracted considerable mass attention in Anatolia (Ahmad, 1995, p. 88). The growing popular interest towards the FRP was both surprising and disappointing for the ruling RPP. As a scholar of modern Turkish politics notes, the rising attraction to the newly established party could be seen as the reflection of mass dissatisfaction towards the ruling elite (Ahmad, 1995). Local

elections in 1930 became one of the reasons for the closure of the FRP, which accused the RPP of engaging in fraud in local elections. The popular attraction to the FRP and the FRP's accusations of electoral fraud by the RPP led to the closure of the party.

The Menemen Event which occurred one month after the closure of the FRP made the totalitarian regime more oppressive since the RPP viewed the Menemen Event to as the desire of some people to bring back to the Shari'a and the Caliphate (Zürcher, 2017, p. 213). The Menemen Incident was not evaluated as a reaction to the reforms or the RPP. The RPP continued to silence all kinds of different voices within the country. Various organizations such as Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocakları*), Turkish Women's Union (*Türk Kadınlar Birliği*) and Turkish Journalists' Union (*Türk Gazeteciler Birliği*) were closed down (Zürcher, 2017).

Changing and harsh political environment also had an impact on the Kurds, i.e. the only non-Turkish community who comprised a considerable population inhabiting a particular region of the nation-state. Moreover, in the new Middle East in the wake of World War I, the Kurds were inhabiting the borderlands of new nation-states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Therefore, the "Kurdish question" has been viewed as a threat to the territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic. The 1925 Eastern Reform Plan had with an intention to make the whole country a single Turkish nation. Contrary to the Kemalist expectations, Kurds became more dissatisfied in regions such as Dersim where the Kurds and Alevis comprised the majority. The state solution was to increase the pressure on Kurds (Ünlü, 2016, p. 323). After a wave of rebellions from the mid-1920s through the 1938 "Pacification of Dersim", the Turkish Republic for that moment appeared to have completely eliminated the Kurdish "threat" (Bruinessen, 2018, p. 410). However, the so-called "Kurdish question" would re-emerge in the form of another armed confrontation from the 1980s on.

Turkish nationalism not only physically protected its borders against the non-Turkish minorities such as Kurdish people, it also tried to strengthen Turkish nationalism in the cultural field. Büşra Ersanlı's work is especially important to understand the development of Turkish nationalism in that period. She finds it important to examine

the history books written between 1924 and 1932 to understand Turkish nationalism (2003). One of the books written at that time, *The Main Outlines of Turkish History* (Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları) underlines the pre-Islamic Turkish civilizations that lived in Anatolia with no mention of Ottoman history in detail. In other words, while the Ottoman heritage was almost ignored, imagined ancient Turkish civilizations were glorified. This book approached the Turkish race as unique since the Turks were ascribed a racial advantage in establishing states and civilizations (Ersanlı, 2003, pp. 114–119). The Turkish Language Society and the Turkish Historical Society were also making efforts to underline the so-called glorious history of the Turkish nation. In these discourses in which Turkishness was brought to the forefront, unrealistic historical claims were made. For instance, ancient Anatolian, Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamian civilizations of Hittites, Phoenicians and Sumerians were claimed to have been Turkish. The Sun-Language Theory, on the other hand, claimed that the Turkish language lies at the origin of all languages the world over (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 209–241). In early Republican period, therefore, Turkish nationalist discourse acquired a racial characteristic freed from Islamic and Ottoman ties. Nevertheless one should keep in mind that this process was gradual as can best be seen in the fact that in the statement that Islam was the religion of the state was eliminated from the constitution in 1928, while the principle of secularism was inserted in the constitution in as late as 1937 (Zürcher, 2017, p.209-241).

4.3 Turkey in the Cold War

Turkey was neutral during World War II. Only around the end of the war, it declared war to make known its side on the Allies. After the World War II, Turkey opened a new page in its political life. It sought for pluralism in political arena. This new quest stems from two different motivations. Firstly, there was general displeasure rising from the people against İnönü. Secondly, pressure came from the international political community.

Turkey's transition to multi party political life was seen with the foundation of a new political party called Democrat Party (DP) by Adnan Menderes, Celal Bayar, Fuad Köprülü and Refik Koraltan, who left the RPP. Expected rise of DP led to change of discourse of the RPP, since the RPP wanted to prevent the DP from manipulating the public opinion to gather votes using a religious discourse (Zürcher, 2017). Despite the fact that secularism has been underlined for many years, the RPP reported that religious education is permitted in schools yet this move was by no means sufficient to prevent the coming to power of the DP in 1950. During its accession to power, the DP seemed to be no different a political party committed to secularism and nationalism like the RPP. The similarity between the two parties led them to make meaningless accusations against one other. While the DP accused the RPP through Village Institutions, which were seen to be "home of communism" (Zürcher, 2017), the RPP accused the DP for serving the USSR. Political behaviour of RPP and DP can be explained by the politics after the World War II.

The post-World War II world politics is known as a bipolar world order (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012, p. 61). Even though the US considered the outcome of World War II as a gain for democracy and liberalism, the socialist ideology under the leadership of the USSR spread in Eastern and Central Europe. In response to the spread of the Soviet control in the world, the US policy was to contain it. While the US was trying to inject anti-communist ideas into other countries, its main aim was to protect countries such as Turkey, Greece and Iran from the expansive policies of the USSR. This anti-communist approach imposed by the US derived its strength from the dissemination of a real and/or imaginary threat of the USSR (Yılmaz, 2011). Thus, world politics which was shaped by the battle between Soviet-led socialism and American-led liberalism permeated into the political and ideological discourses prevalent in Turkey.

If the historical ties between the Ottoman Empire and Turkey is re-considered, it can be said that Russian image was constructed in the eyes of Ottoman-Turkish identity. The reasons for the negative Russian image in the late Ottoman period can be listed as follows: Annexation of Crimea by Russia in 1779, abandonment of Kars, Ardahan and Batum under the control of Russia in 1878 and the victimization of Muslims by the

Russians as a result of the population exchange after the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913 (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 43–97). Russia's ambitions to reach warm water ports in the Mediterranean and its desire to control non-Muslim population in the Ottoman Empire further contributed to the Russian image. That is, at the beginning of the 20th century, Russia was seen as more dangerous and difficult enemy than Western states (Öztaş, 2016a, p. 79). Hatred for the Russians was interrupted with the withdrawal of Russia from the World War I due to Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the immense Soviet military and economic aid provided for Turkey during the War of Liberation. Nevertheless, this hatred came back after World War II since the interests of the USSR and Turkey did not match. Russia wanted Kars and Ardahan to join the Armenian and Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (Yılmaz, 2011, pp. 236–260). In addition to this, the USSR desired to alter the 1936 Treaty of Montreux to control Dardanelles and Bosphorous (Halliday, 2005, p. 107). In response to these threats, Turkey found the solution in a rapprochement with Western bloc and US, leading Turkey to take an anti-communist stance. Turkey's inclusion in the scope of the Marshall Aid in 1947, Turkey's sending troops to the Korean War in 1950 and Turkey's NATO membership in 1952 were the early steps in this process.

For the first time, under the leadership of the DP, anti-communist, nationalist and conservative organizations such as Federation of Nationalists (*Milliyetçiler Federasyonu*) were founded by the Home of Turkish Culture (*Türk Kültür Ocağı*), Turkish Cultural Studies Association (*Türk Kültür Çalışmaları Derneği*), Turkish Youth Organization (*Türk Gençlik Teşkilatı*) in 1950 and was also Association on Struggle Against Communism (*Türkiye Komünizmle Mücadele Derneği*) established in İstanbul and Zonguldak in 1950 (Kılıç, 2016; Meşe, 2017, pp. 119–121). These organizations had personalities like Peyami Safa, Arif Nihat Asya, İlhan Darendelioğlu and Cezmi Türk among their members. One of the main aims of these organizations was to warn Turkish people against the danger of communism through journals, posters and meetings. These organizations received immense support from the DP government. Although there was frequent mutual support and communication between the DP and these anti-communist organizations, sometimes there were also

frictions between them. For instance, while the Federation of Nationalists supported sending Turkish troops to the Korean War which was seen as an anti-communist struggle, this organization also criticized Adnan Menderes for Nazım Hikmet's remission of punishment (Kılıç, 2016, pp. 91–97). Although disagreements were rare, the popular support for these anti-communist associations is important to understand the level of pro-Americanism during the DP period.

Pro-Americanist attitude of DP also affected the economy of Turkey since actions of DP were also supported by aid from American doctrines such as Marshall and Truman. For instance, from the 1950 onwards, DP achieved a significant modernization in agriculture industry through mechanization (Ahmad, 1995, pp. 147–173). Turkey's economy experienced %13 growth in the early 1950s. This rise would not be long lasting since it was not based on sound economic policies. While DP was desiring economic growth in a short period of time, party's lack of long-term plans would soon have an impact. While inflation rate was 3 percent in 1950, it increased to 20 percent in 1957. Government did not have an established economic infrastructure to prevent this inflation rate since there was no effective taxation system and Menderes did not want to collect taxes from farmers since he did not want to lose rich farmers who voted for him by collecting considerable taxes. This situation led to economic boost without economic development. DP government faced with economic crisis in 1957 (Dodd, 2016, p. 74). Although government was both facing with the economic problems and trying to maintain a stance against communism, these were not the not the only problems of DP. Social unrest also peaked with the "September 6-7 Events". In 1955, Great Britain, Greece and Turkey conveyed the request for a meeting to Greece and Turkey. While Britain wanted to increase its rights over Cyprus, Greece requested granting self-determination to Cypriots. Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu made clear that Turkey was satisfied with the current situation. While the meeting between the three countries was terminated before reaching a certain result, this issue triggered nationalist sentiment in Turkey.

Blast bomb was placed in Atatürk's house by an officer working at the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki. Later, newspapers began to write that Greeks bombed

Atatürk's house. With the spread of news, mobs looted and demolished homes and businesses of non-Muslims in Istanbul and Izmir. 11 people lost their lives and 35 people were injured (Korkut, 2009). Also known as the Istanbul Pogrom, these events show that hatred and hostility against non-Muslims can explode with slightest trigger. Like what happened in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, these events once again demonstrated that non-Muslims and non-Turks were paying the heavy price for political impasses in the country. One of the most important results of the 6-7 September Events was the departure of many Greeks from Turkey, continuing the further Turkification and Islamization of Turkey.

It is seen that the DP aimed to appeal to the religious sensitivity of the practising Muslims who felt dismayed due to the secularizing policies of the Kemalist Republic, the RPP was presented as both communist and atheist. Instead, it was the DP that would function as the protector of Islamic practices in Turkey. Menderes underlined the Islamic dimension of Turkish society and devoted himself to protect this identity. During its rule, the DP completely reversed some of the RPP reforms such as reinstituting the Muslim call for prayer in Arabic, as it was recited in Turkish until 1950. Likewise, courses focusing on Muslim-Sunni interpretations were extended to primary school education, the number of mosques increased, and the autonomous status of religious brotherhoods was accepted. The DP's religion-related policies viewed as a danger for the Turkish military establishment. The Armed Forces believed that the DP betrayed the teachings and legacy of Atatürk. With this motivation, the Turkish Armed Forces put an end to the DP rule on 27 May 1960 (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 257–279).

The 1960 military coup presented a very ironic picture in terms of its consequences. Although it disregarded the will of the people and hampered democracy, the new 1961 Constitution allowed democracy to flourish with new rights and freedoms. By strengthening independent institutions, the new system secured autonomous institutions, such as universities and expanded the fundamental rights and freedoms of people including freedom of expression. Such an expansion of political freedom led to the formation of new political parties and ideologies (Ahmad, 1995, p. 191). From the

1960s onward, one can observe the flourishing of both left and right-wing political mobilization. In 1965, Alparslan Türkeş, one of the leading figures of right-wing, joined the Republican Villagers Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi, CKMP*). Having become more radicalized, this party turned to the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP*) in 1969. The essence of the political ideological framework of the NAP was characterized by its anti-communist and fascist propaganda. Its followers often attacked leftists whom they saw as the representatives of communism. The universities were the places where most of these conflicts were seen.

In this political atmosphere, where the left and right-wing political mobilization was radicalized, there were also more moderate parties (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 279–319). One of these parties was the Justice Party (JP) (*Adalet Partisi, AP*), founded by Ragıp Gümüşpala after the coup. While the JP was increasing its votes over time, the RPP was unable to produce any concrete discourse against its rise. The RPP could not produce a discourse that could win the votes of industrial workers since the votes of the growing industrial proletariat was already taken by the Workers Party of Turkey (WPT) (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP*). At the same time, the discourse of the RPP had to be distanced from communist/socialist ideologies to escape from the JP's accusations of communism. The Turkish right-wing political ideologies were still densely marked by anti-communist stance as in the 1950s. Reconsidering these factors, the RPP created new rhetoric as Left of the Centre (*Ortanın Solu*). The construction of a new ideological discourse did not work either because this time the JP accused 'left of the centre' as the 'road to Moscow' (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, p.131).

In the 1960s, the Cyprus issue once again disrupted the foreign relations of Turkey. From 1960 onwards, there were clashes between Turkish and Greek Cypriots on the island. The defense organization of Greek Cypriots, the Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston, EOKA supported the idea of Enosis, i.e. the union of Greece and Cyprus. On the other hand, Turkish Cypriots were resisting this demand through the Turkish Resistance Organization. In 1964, in response to the increasing clashes, Prime Minister İnönü heading a minority government at the time, decided to send troops to Cyprus.

Even though İnönü received approval from the parliament, his desire was hampered by American President Lyndon B. Johnson, who sent İnönü a letter of warning. He clearly stated that İnönü would not be able to use the NATO forces and inventories to military action. Furthermore, Johnson stated that if an operation would take place in Cyprus, the NATO would not protect Turkey from potential Soviet attacks (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, pp. 125–127).

The US attitude to the Cyprus incident of 1963 and the Cuban missile problem deeply influenced the JP's approach when the JP under Süleyman Demirel won a victory in the 1965 elections. During the rule of the JP, relations with the US lost their old strength. As soon as the JP came to power, it decided to stop the flights of the American U-2 aircraft. In response to the JP's decision, the US increased its pressures on Turkey through the NATO. The deterioration of Turkish-American relations was also affected by Turkey's military responses to potential crises. Turkey's reaction to the events in Cyprus in 1967 can be read in this context. The Cyprus event of 1967 was like those in 1963-1964 with one difference: this time, not only the EOKA but also Greek troops were involved in the conflict. Although the JP authorized by the parliament to use military means, Greece started to remove Greek soldiers from the island with the involvement of the Secretary General of the NATO and the special representative of US. Conflict in Cyprus was again dissolved without Turkey's direct military intervention. However, on this occasion, Turkey realized that there is a lack of ammunition and weapons. As American aid to Turkey affected its military abilities, Turkey came to realize its limitations in case of a military intervention in Cyprus (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, pp. 148–149).

While Turkey was distinguishing itself from the American influence, both right and left-wing ideologies inevitably influenced the unfolding of events. Anti-Americanism and anti-imperialism were rapidly spreading in groups such as Workers' Party of Turkey (WPT) (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*), Federation of Opinion Clubs (FOC) (*Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu*), Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey (*Devrimci Gençlik*). The Turkish left reacted with demonstrations to the so-called American imperialism in 1969. This protest known as the “Event of 6th Fleet”, turned to a bloody

conflict between the supporters of right and left-wing ideologies. This incident among young people adopting two polarized political ideological worldviews can clarify the political atmosphere of that period. Turkey as a country in the middle of the Cold War was not only affected by this war strategically, militarily, or economically but also psychologically. The youth affiliated with right-wing were also psychologically manipulated by the anti-communist newspapers such as *Bugün* and *Sabah*, that used such headlines: “Muslim people of Istanbul come to Beyazıt Square at 14 o’clock to give the necessary answer to red people.” Such headlines seem to have further aggravated the gap between right and left-wing youth (Meşe, 2017, p. 177). At that time, all left-wing people were branded as communist and organizations such as the Turkish National Student Union (Milli Türk Talebe Birliği) under the control of the Association on Struggle Against Communism in Turkey (*Türkiye Komünizmle Mücadele Derneği*) led by İlhan Darendelioğlu, developed a sense of hostility and resentment towards leftist people. Hence, right-wing people attacked left-wing groups with chauvinist feelings. Meanwhile, it is notable that the respective slogans of the two poles such as “Muslim Turkey” and “Independent Turkey” were not necessarily fatally opposed (Ahmad, 1977, p. 381). In other words, both sides indeed acted with nationalist feelings. This sad picture of the left and right-wing ideological polarization in Turkey profoundly shaped by the Great Power conflict of the Cold War points to an increased lack of understanding, tolerance and common sense that dominated social and political life in Turkey in the late 1960s.

By the end of 1960s, political rallies and protests organized by leftist groups continued with burning the car of former American ambassador, Robert Komer in Middle East Technical University in Ankara. Clashes between the right and left groups were taking place in both universities and streets. Polarization in both society and political parties reached a considerable level (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, pp. 164–165). Political polarization and social disintegration were completely out of control of the Demirel government. Demirel could not stop violence and restore harmony within his own party. In 1971, the Turkish military sent a memorandum to Demirel and then with the

approval of the TAF, the government of Erim was brought to power to bring order and peace.

In the post-1971 period, the government was determined not to allow right and left-wing political extremism; yet left and right-wing movements were not treated equally. In fact, the left was seen as the cause of all violence. While the members of the WPT and trade unionists were arrested for the sake of this purpose, right-wing people such as those related to the NAP were ignored. Furthermore, leader of the National Order Party (NOP) (*Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP*), Necmettin Erbakan returned to politics with a new political party called National Salvation Party (NSP) (*Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP*) (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, pp. 203–248). In this regard, NSP can be considered as an extension of NOP since it was closed in 1971 and did not remain on the political scene for long. However, the effect of seeds that NOP and NSP threw in political garden, felt many years since political Islam found a body for the first time since both parties have Islamic tendencies (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 279–319). Although the approach of the TAF and the new government was legitimized for the purpose of social peace and political stability, between 1973 and 1980, there were always weak coalitions unable to produce coherent policies. In this political environment, the NSP and the RPP came together. Although this coalition was like an inappropriate marriage since their ideological difference, they were able to produce a tangible policy for the Cyprus problem in 1974 since nationalist interest of Turkey served as a common ground (Dankwart, 1989, p. 98). Enjoying the support of the Greek military junta, the EOKA dismissed former president of Cyprus Makarios, replacing him with Nikos Sampson and declared the Enosis in 1974. As a response, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit endorsed a military action. The military operation was successful, and forty percent of the island was brought under the Turkish rule. Since this operation made Ecevit a hero in the public eye, Ecevit wanted to take advantage of this by going for an early election, yet he could not receive the vote of confidence from the parliament. Then, the JP formed a nationalist minority government with the NSP and the NMP in 1977 (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, pp. 282–283). Until 1980, Turkish political life was characterized by weak and temporary coalitions. In this process, big parties like the RPP and the JP

made excessive concessions to smaller parties to come to power. This caused corruption to spread within state institutions, and the bureaucracy and police became politicized and polarized (Cleveland, 2018, p. 316).

It can be said that rather than bringing social and political order, the 1971 Memorandum intensified the civil unrest and political crisis. The decade was characterized by not only right and left-wing ideological streams, but also the rise of Kurdish left-wing mobilization that can be traced to 1959 with the “Event of 49ers” and the Eastern Rallies (Doğu Mitingleri) in the second half of the 1960s as well as political Islam under the NSP was on the rise (Cleveland, 2018). Tension within the country increasingly penetrate every area of the public. Massacre of civilians came one after another: Bahçelievler massacre was followed by the Maraş massacre in 1978. Ideological clashes also took on a sectarian color. The Alevis were a particular target in Sivas, Maraş, Çorum and Yozgat. The biased attitude of state officials also exacerbated the crisis. Support for rightist nationalist youth both increased the self-confidence within Grey Wolves (*ülkü ocakları*) and created a legitimization basis for the crimes they committed. For instance, leader of the NMP Alparslan Türkeş saw the nationalist youth as an assistant for the Turkish security forces (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, p. 300). In 1979, Demirel’s following words after the Maraş massacre seems best to epitomize this attitude: “You cannot make me said that right wingers are committing a murder” (“Süleyman Demirel’in Unutulmaz Sözleri,” 2015). The collaboration between political rulers, right-wing criminal gangs and state security forces was revealed after the car crash in 1996 in Susurluk.

Anger and frustration against the state led to the assassination of Nihat Erim by two left-wing militants in 1980. Meanwhile, the NSP-organized rally in Konya about Jerusalem would be the final straw towards the 1980 coup. Although organized to condemn Israel, the mass demonstration soon turned out to be a place where Islamist slogans were chanted to bring back the Shari’a. The TAF perceived these slogans as a threat to the secular nature of the Turkish Republic. Therefore, the TAF once again found the solution to end the deepening crisis in a coup on September 12, 1980.

4.4 The Revival of Political Islam in the post-1980 Period

Like the 1960 coup, the 1980 coup also came with its own constitution. In the first elections held in the wake of the coup in 1983, the Motherland Party (MP) (Anavatan Partisi [ANAP]) under Turgut Özal came to power. Özal introduced major changes in political, economic, and cultural fields. The political restriction of opposition parties such as the JP and the RPP allowed Özal to act freely in terms of policies that he wanted to implement. He changed the economy of Turkey towards neo-liberalism. Moreover, cultural life in Turkey was also undergoing an interesting shift in the Özal period. Although a secular, modernist and nationalist culture in the light of western values was aimed to be created by the Kemalists since 1923, this began to change from 1980s onwards. For instance, Ottoman heritage was dropped and/or deemphasized from Turkish history accounts by the Kemalists (Ersanlı, 2003) since the concepts such as Islam/West, secularism/religion, conservatism/progress and Turkish Republic/the Ottoman Empire were seen as binary oppositions. Yet a new political and cultural trend was on the rise, namely, pro-Islamic bourgeoisie (Yavuz, 1998, p. 29). The impact of the newly rising Islamist bourgeoisies quickly in the field of culture, education, and media. Firstly, the right to open religious schools was accepted by the MP. Between 1984 and 1989, 35 Imam Hatip High Schools were opened, and they were expected to train loyal and faithful citizens to the state and nation. Secondly, the structure of universities was also changed. While left-wing professors were fired from, Turkish nationalist and Islamic-oriented academics took their positions. The academic structure of provincial Anatolian universities was also changed (Yavuz, 1998, pp. 31–32). The interesting point here is that the change of academic staff in universities created an immense effect on knowledge production. Nationalist/conservative/Islamist personalities such as Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, Arif Nihat Asya, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek have become the subject of articles and thesis submitted to universities since changing political and cultural field was beginning to produce its own knowledge. Thirdly, the rise of a conservative class was not limited to religious schools or universities. With the start of private broadcasting after 1990s, Islamic television and radio channels as well as newspapers also came into existence. Before 1980, the share of Islamic media

was 7 percent, while in 1996 it was 47 percent reference (Yavuz, 1998, p. 31). Changing media brought new names to newspapers and screens such as Abdurrahman Dilipak and Fehmi Koru. The secular elites that had created cultural hegemony for many years began to move away from the cultural and political arena. The Naqshbandi Order, the Nurcu Movement and the Gülen Movement began to gain more public visibility (Yavuz, 1998). These associations were commenting on social and political. Although their vision of Islam was differing on various subjects, they provided both material and moral support for the creation of a new Turkish-Islamic national identity. They were mobilizing the masses based on Islam. Finally, Ottomanist discourses and ideas started to rise with Özal's rule. This time, neo-Ottomanism was used by the ruling elite to create a new social memory and erase the traces of Kemalists and build a different discourse (Ongur, 2015, pp. 416–432). Certainly, the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the USSR contributed to the rise of neo-Ottomanism. Turkey was viewed to be the leader of the former Turkic Republics in Central Asia and Muslims in the Balkans.

The effects of neo-Ottomanism were clearly revealed in speeches and writings of Özal, who wanted Turkey to remember its cultural and historical ties with Bosnia, Albania, Thrace and Macedonia since these regions used to be a part of the Ottoman Empire (Yavuz, 1998, p. 24). Özal argued that there was an emotional tie between Turkey and old Ottoman-ruled lands and thus he wanted to re-establish these imperial ties. In line with this understanding, Özal's view of Turkishness differed from that of Kemalists. Özal's understanding of Turkishness contained a component of Anatolianism. According to Özal, old Anatolian civilizations such as Rome, Hittite and Sumerian contributed to the modern European civilization. Since old civilizations were born in Anatolia, Turkey was also part of this European civilization (Copeaux, 1998, pp. 243–306). In other words, Özal was trying to create an emotional link between Turkey and the former Ottoman lands. Özal's discourse envisaged new policies to form his thinking called the Turkish-Islamic synthesis marked by imperial longing and Anatolianism.

The changes introduced by Özal were not only in socio-cultural domains but also covered economic life. Since Özal came to power, parties such as the JP and the RPP were banned, political restriction of opposition parties allowed Özal to act freely in terms of policies that he wanted to implement. Özal had a strong belief in free market economy. He aimed to improve the worsening Turkish economy through neoliberal policies. His economic plan seemed to have been successful in the first quarter of 1980, since international organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF hesitated to give Turkish governments a loan before 1980. However, the Özal government won the confidence of these organizations and loans entered into the Turkish market. Consequently, the national debt rose from 13.5 billion US dollars in 1980 to 40 billion in 1989 (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 336–337). Özal's economic program also achieved to increase export. While export volume was 2.3 billion US dollars in 1979, it reached 11.7 billion in 1988. The Turkish-Islamic synthesis also changed Turkey's export countries. Turkey's export to Middle East and North Africa exceeded the Turkey's export to European countries (Zürcher, 2017, p. 339). Neden bu kadar problem var buralarda? Towards the end of 1980s, while world economy was experiencing recession, export-oriented economies such as Turkey entered a period of economic growth. Özal also tried to transform Turkish social and political life through liberalism and conservatism. (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 355–356). Erbakan was the first prime minister who came from an Islamist and neo-Ottomanist path (Çolak, 2006). His approach to secular Kemalist elites was different from other right-wing political parties. The Welfare Party (WP) (*Refah Partisi, RP*) was against Kemalists since their supporters were feeling that they had been excluded from power for decades. With these feelings, neo-Ottomanism was starting to manifest itself in public sphere.

During the mayorship of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the conquest of Istanbul was celebrated under the name of 'reconquest' (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 70). Reviving glorious old days, keeping the Ottoman heritage alive and creating a new Turkish-Islamic identity were the main motivations of these celebrations. With these celebrations, they were also trying to undermine the meaning and role of Ankara as the capital of the

Turkish Republic while underlining Istanbul as the former capital of the Ottoman Empire. Reflective of their reaction to the de-Islamising Kemalist reforms, these moves appeared to ‘repair’ their feeling of deprivation and resentment. Erbakan felt a sense of duty and responsibility through the celebration of the Conquest. He saw the celebration of the conquest of Istanbul by his party as a re-conquest since Istanbul was finally freed from the enemies of religion, that is, its mayor was from the WP (Çinar, 2001, pp. 364–391)

The WP’s vision of conquest was beyond the “reconquest” of Istanbul. Indeed, the Islamic world at large was viewed as the larger target that would be led by Turkey, like the Ottomans once did. That is why under the rule of the WP, the conquest of Mecca also began to be celebrated in 1994. It is ironic that although the precise calendrical calculation shows that the date of the conquest of Mecca is 11 January, the WP celebrations were deliberately held on 1 January, which was a reaction to invent an alternative Islamic tradition in opposition to the ‘corrupt’ new year’s parties that were completely imitative of Western and Christian traditions. Therefore, the celebration of the two conquests, i.e. the conquest of Mecca and Istanbul served to restore the feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence. For instance, when the conquest of Mecca was for the first time celebrated on the new year’s in 1994, explosives were placed in liquor stores in Konya and Bursa (“Alternatif Yılbaşı ‘Mekke’nin Fethi’ 21 Yaşında,” 2015)

The WP policies to create a new identity and culture through an Islamic discourse was faced with a Kemalist reaction. Events such as Susurluk scandal, Jerusalem demonstration in Sincan, demonstrations of the Aczmendis in support of the Shari’a led to another intervention by the TAF (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, pp. 427–429). Called “a postmodern coup” as it was not an armed intervention, it led to the closure of the WP. However, this closure backfired as these ideals would be put into effect by a cadre of the former WP deputies and mayors who founded the Justice and Development Party (JDP) (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AK Parti or AKP*) that came to power in 2002.

4.5 The JDP Government: The Apex of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (2002-2020)

When the JDP came to power in 2002 by receiving 34.4 percent of the votes, its Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was banned from political activities. Following the 28 February 1997 military intervention also prohibited Erdoğan from public political activism due to a poem that he had read when he was in Siirt for a meeting. Although it is alleged that poem in question was written by Ziya Gökalp, there is a controversy about who its poet really is. Although this issue is discussed from time to time, what makes this case immediately relevant for the purposes of this study is the fact that poetry became a public political tool in mobilizing popular feelings at the service of political ideological mobilization. At this point, it must be noted that in modern Turkish politics, the first name that comes to mind regarding poetry is Bülent Ecevit, who not only was a poet himself but also a translator of poems into Turkish. At the age of 16, i.e. in 1941 for instance, he translated *Gitanjali* of the first Nobel laureate from Asia, namely Indian writer, and poet Rabindranath Tagore (Tagore, 2018). Following Ecevit, most likely Erdoğan ranks second as a contemporary Turkish political leader reciting poetry. Unlike Ecevit's interest in poetry, however, Erdoğan's interest seems to effectively deploy poetry to move popular Turkish-Islamic feelings. As the poem in question created a flood of emotions through religion, patriotism, Islam, and military service, it was seen as reminiscent of political Islam which led to secular reactions. When Erdoğan returned to political scene in 2003, this controversial poem gave him a serious edge since the poem that he read shows that although Muslim Turks wanted to follow an Islamically informed lifestyle, their way of life and political preferences often were denounced and/or prevented by the secularizing Kemalist elites. The four-month imprisonment on account of his recitation of a poem appealing to popular Turkish-Islamic sentiments created a story of oppression and victimization since some newspapers stated that Erdoğan could not even become elected as a village headman. Whether or not related to this experience, however, it is certain that Erdoğan made poetry an inseparable part of his political discourse after this incident. The poems of his selection from the poetry of Islamist and Turkish nationalist poets such as Arif

Nihat Asya, Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 123–124).

When Erdoğan returned to political arena after the end of the ban on his political involvement, Turkey was experiencing a political turmoil in terms of exacerbated political and economic instabilities. The JDP was quite willing to cooperate with the EU, came to power in such an atmosphere since young conservative and liberal democrats were seen as a solution to political and economic problems of Turkey. Thus, the JDP envisaged a trajectory within the framework of conservative democracy (Zürcher, 2017, pp. 375–405).

Following the promises he had made earlier, Erdoğan lifted not only the ban on the use headscarf in state institutions but also the “coefficient barrier” that students of Imam Hatip Schools faced during university entrance exams. Although these changes by the JDP can be considered within the context of human rights or democracy to a certain extent, conservative democratic identity of the JDP gradually started to get more authoritarian. Step by step, with the reforms in the field of education, Islamisation and Ottomanization of Turkish society was put into effect. One can refer to the followings: the introduction of additional religious courses for secondary schools, the reformation of the books of religion courses, the introduction of “4+4+4 system” for primary and secondary education which facilitated the increase of the number of students to be enrolled in İmam Hatip Schools (Kaya, 2015, pp. 47–69)

Accompanying changes in domestic social and political life through Islamizing measures, foreign policies also underwent a shift. When the JDP came to power in 2002, it highlighted its democratic, secular and liberal identity in order not to prevent the EU accession process of Turkey. As the JDP increased its votes, Turkish foreign policy gradually shifted its direction from Europe to the Middle East. Unlike the secularizing and westernizing Kemalist policy, Turkey’s Muslim identity was now highlighted by the JDP government. In this process, Turkey’s relations with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iran increased (Kaya, 2015, p. 51). Furthermore, this change in Turkey’s foreign policy also found its support among academics. The best example in

this regard is Ahmet Davutoğlu, who served as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and recently turned a dissident of Erdoğan with his own party called the Future Party (Gelecek Partisi). A professor of International Relations who taught in Malaysian and Turkish universities, Davutoğlu is known foremost for his book titled *Strategic Depth* which claims a more assertive Turkish foreign policy on the grounds that as the successor of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey could not remain passive in its foreign policy. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey should assess the possibilities beyond the borders of Turkey (Davutoğlu, 2011). In line with this perspective, Turkey has been actively involved in Middle Eastern politics reshaped by the Arab Uprisings from the beginning of the 2010s and the continuing war in Syria.

All these shifts not only in Turkey but also in the Middle East also affected knowledge production. Changing policies needed to a reinterpretation of Ottoman history and Islamic history in order to create a legitimizing basis for new foreign policy. Historian and spokesman of the JDP, İbrahim Kalın is another prominent personality in this regard. In his latest book called *Barbarian, Modern, Civilized* (*Barbar, Modern, Medeni*), he proposes to re-read of the concept of civilization (Kalın, 2018).

Focusing on the debate about the compatibility of Islam with progress, Kalın argues that the reason for decline in Eastern civilizations is not Islam but the problematic understanding of religion. If Muslim societies followed the provisions of Islam, progress would be in a harmony with religion and not against. After giving these advices to the Muslim world, Kalın suggests that the West should not be followed by the East in terms of progress and civilization. According to Kalın, although the concept of civilization has been intertwined with the West for a long time, the history of the West has been tainted with colonialism and barbarism (Kalın, 2018, pp. 58–65). For instance, in another book titled *Me, Other and Beyond* (*Ben, Öteki ve Ötesi*), he establishes an interesting link between European colonialism and the Ottoman Empire. According to Kalın, trends like Pan-Islamism, emerged before the fall of the Ottoman Empire, in fact meant to prevent colonial intentions of Europe over the Ottoman Empire and hamper the manipulation of Christians within the Ottoman Empire (Kalın, 2016, p. 302). Kalın omits the immense body of critical scholarship produced in the

West which highlight Western colonialism. Perhaps one of the most fascinating examples is French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre who, apart from his active participation in the pro-Algerian rallies in the 1950s, also wrote an introduction to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, considered "the Bible of the Third World nationalist movements". Another shining example is American historian Marshall Hodgson who was interned during World War II as he was a conscientious objector. Kalin's analysis is also uninformed by the recent scholarship by Selim Deringil, Thomas Kühn, Ussama Makdisi and Mostafa Minawi who suggest that Ottoman rule in peripheral regions can be called Ottoman colonialism, colonial Ottomanism and Ottoman Orientalism.

A similar but interesting idea also comes from historian İhsan Fazlıoğlu, although Fazlıoğlu is not assigned in the JDP, he is historian of science and philosophy who claims that Islam civilization was literally brought to life by the Saljuk and Ottoman Empires. Europe also took advantage from the Islam civilization which glorified by the philosophy and science (Fazlıoğlu, 2005, pp. 1–57). These selective and self-serving perspectives presented in an academic manner on such issues as the West, Islam, the Ottoman Empire, and civilization provided academic and intellectual justification for the JDP.

Erdoğan paid more attention to collective memory, religious identity, and national identity than any other right-wing party. The JDP was determined to create a new nationalist ideology that was a mixture of both the new and the old. To achieve this, the first thing to be done was to create an ideological shift in the collective memory through a revival of the history of Ottoman Empire since Kemalist version of Turkish history excluded Ottoman history and culture. In response to this, the JDP was determined to revive this history with a quite selective reading. As discussed above, this neo-Ottomanist mission was firstly initiated by Özal but unlike him, Erdoğan was more successful in reflecting neo-Ottomanism in cultural life in Turkey. The celebrations on the conquest of Istanbul on May 29 were now arranged in a way that would attract the masses (Brockett, 2014). For example, popular singers like Kenan

Doğulu and Ferhat Göçer gave concerts in 2005 and 2007, respectively (Koyuncu, 2014, pp. 93–103).

One of the reasons why Istanbul is so meaningful is the Hagia Sophia that Istanbul contains. The narrative of Mehmet II turned to Istanbul an Islamic city based on Hagia Sophia. The fact that Mehmet II turned to church Hagia Sophia into a museum is seen as an actually a victory of the Muslims against the Christian world and self-confidence is pumped over this event because it is the largest church established by the Byzantine Empire in Istanbul. Hagia Sophia is also an indicator of the spirit of conquest and the symbol imperial appetite and desire, as it will seen in Asya's poems. The conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum in 1935 by the RPP reversed this so-called victory and the Muslim world read this event as the defeat of the Islam since the door to the conquests cannot be opened without opening of Hagia Sophia again worship. It is seen that it become a complex for the Islamic world. Therefore, the opening of Hagia Sophia to worship is often included in political discourse by the right-wing rulers and JDP's approach to Hagia Sophia has been based on this symbolic value (Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 172–176). I think that to understand what Hagia Sophia means for the JDP, it is necessary to look at the speech given by Bülent Arınç in 2013:

“We are now almost next to the Hagia Sophia mosque. I believe that even if your ears do not hear, you have something in your heart. Hagia Sophia is telling us something. What does Hagia Sophia say to us?... We are looking to gloomy Hagia Sophia, I hope good days are coming that Hagia Sophia will laugh” (“Ayasofya Açıklaması,” 2013).

Hagia Sophia is depicted as incredibly sad and nostalgic, it is like a creature that kept in a cage and waiting.⁸ It is seen that the importance and meaning of Istanbul have

⁸ On 10 July 2020, the Council of State canceled the decision of the Council of Ministers dated 24 November 1934 regarding the conversion of Hagia Sophia from a mosque to a museum. Thus, the way of opening Hagia Sophia to worship as a mosque was opened (“Danıştay’dan Tarihi Ayasofya Kararı! Ayasofya İbadete Açıldı,” 2020)

been increased by the power of the JDP. For instance, the Panorama 1453: Museum of History was founded in 2009. In 2012, to further strengthen Turkish-Islamic memory, the JDP decided to establish Topçu Kışlası (*Artillery Barracks*) in Istanbul. Firstly, this decision can be seen as the JDP's desire for rent. Secondly, it can be seen as a vengeance for Abdulhamid since soldiers and clergy men in Artillery Barracks made the Revolt of 31 March and this revolt ended by Movement Army (*Hareket Ordusu*) then Abdulhamid II was toppled. That is why Artillery Barracks was seen as a symbol of betrayal of Abdulhamid II (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 193). As this artillery barrack was supposedly demolished to erect the statue of İnönü, this move of the JDP had both symbolic and historical meaning. Although the JDP was determined to establish the Artillery Barracks, however, this decision was met with growing public reaction. This event as known as protests of Gezi Park, turned into a public reaction to authoritarian, rent-making and Islamist policies of the JDP (Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 194–195).

Despite the public reaction to these policies, they continued to be put into effect. The youth would be a particular target. In the period of 2002-2019, the importance attached to youth associations and foundations was increased since one of Erdoğan's greatest goals was to raise "religious youth" ("Dindar Gençlik Yetiştireceğiz," 2012). This was particularly important since Erdoğan made it clear that his government was still unable to acquire power in cultural sphere ("Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: 'Sosyal ve Kültürel İktidarımız Konusunda Sıkıntılarımız Var,'" 2017).

The lack of cultural power was aimed to be compensated for by the increasing neoliberal populist policies of the JDP by continuing the neoliberal economic opening that was started with Özal in the 1980s. The second phase of neoliberalization corresponds to the JDP rule since the JDP reached an agreement with the IMF. According to agreement, neoliberal economic policies would continue until 2008. In line with this, in the period of 2002-2007, Turkey's economy has shown considerable growth, despite the fact that the rate of unemployment remained same. The 2008 financial crisis in the world has also affected Turkey and Turkey experienced a decline in its economy until 2009. Although economic growth started again in 2010, growth has slowed down since 2012 (Özdemir, 2020, pp. 1–3).

As noted by Yonca Özdemir, Erdoğan should be considered as a pioneer of neoliberal populism (reference). The most important part of this neoliberal opening is the social policies and programs that carried out by the JDP. In a way, the JDP is taking advantage of the poor masses which emerged as a result of neoliberal policies that started in the 1980s and 1990s. In other words, neoliberalism itself that open the door for the populist policies of the JDP since these policies increase the affiliation of poor masses with government. For instance, by using clientelistic practices with the involvement of foundations, municipalities, and religious organizations, the JDP targeted certain segments of society. By using the social security system as a charity, they created a bond between the poor people and the government through social aids. Put differently, the JDP's clientalism invented infinite indebtedness through the feeling of gratitude for the government that could be paid with votes (Özdemir, 2020, pp. 1–17).

Although the public assistance in the GDP is increased from 0.3 to 1.4 in the period of 2002-2014, however, the JDP did not make considerable progress regarding the rates of poverty, unemployment and job security for formal workers has decreased (Özdemir, 2020, p. 6). Nevertheless, the JDP benefited from the neoliberal populist policies in terms of conducting relationship between its supporters based on subordination. For instance, it was revealed that the JDP received its votes mostly from the low-income and middle-income people whereas high-income people preferred the RPP. That is why increasing authoritarianism and neoliberal in Turkey can exist without facing increased pressure from the public (Özdemir, 2020, pp. 1–17).

Neoliberal policies of the JDP are also supported by an increasing Islamic ideology that penetrates all over the society including youth. The public visibility and mobility of organizations such as Anatolian Youth Association (*Anadolu Gençlik Derneği*), National Turkish Students Union (*Milli Türk Talebe Derneği*), Union Association (*Birlik Vakfı*), National Youth Foundation (*Milli Gençlik Vakfı*), and Young Unity (*Genç Birlik*) has increased. Although these organizations differ in some respects, they are similar in terms of their activities, which include the followings, among others: celebration of the conquest of Istanbul, celebration of the conquest of Mecca, cursing

Israel over the Jerusalem conflict, the competition of *siyer-i nebi* (a contest of writing essays on Prophet Mohammed's life by the youth), protest rallies [?] condemning the oppression of East Turkistan by the Chinese state, commemoration of the Battle of Manzikert and Sarikamish. Similar cultural organizations were made possible also by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and Turkish Academy of Sciences. For example, the Necip Fazıl Award in Poetry and Novel (*Necip Fazıl Ödülleri*) and Mehmet Akif Ersoy Science and Art Award (*Mehmet Akif Ersoy Bilim ve Sanat Ödülleri*) have been given since 2014 and 2015, respectively. By bringing these figures to the fore, the main aim is to raise religious and patriotic generations.

Although Ottoman-Turkish is taught to young people through these activities, this learning process is sometimes combined with new rentier projects of the government. With the JDP's coming to power, it is also possible to see the effects of neo-Ottomanism in universities. Names such as Fatih Sultan Mehmed, Yıldırım Beyazıt which are given to newly established universities (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 86). Using architecture as a reminder of Ottoman history is not limited to universities. Rentier dimension of neo-liberal system which has been on the rise with the JDP government, continued to support the symbolic values of current ideology. Names such as Ottoman's Life Deluxe and Cihannuma have been given to luxurious residences. While neo-Ottomanism was influencing youth organizations, economic sphere and universities, Turkish media has also been affected by this transformation. Television shows such as *Magnificent Century* (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*), *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* (*Diriliş: Ertuğrul*) and *Mehmed: the Conqueror of the World* (*Mehmed: Bir Cihan Fatih*) have received increasing popular attention within Turkey and in the Middle East (Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 91–92)

The language spoken by Ottoman ancestors also became one of the main elements of the JDP's discourse. The fact that Ottoman-Turkish was not understood by many people, especially by the youth, was viewed by the JDP as a subject of grievance. To address the grievance in question, many Ottoman-Turkish and Arabic courses were opened under the leadership of Ministry of National Education. Although the way for public to learn Arabic and Ottoman-Turkish was opened, these changes did not prevent

the JDP from turning this into a matter of self-victimization. Over time, the rhetoric of the JDP was expanded in a way to contribute to the ontological hostility towards the RPP. Accusing and exclusionary language, which is embedded in discourses of the JDP, became a coverage that made the RPP responsible for every mistake that has been made. In this way, feelings of hatred and vengeance was kept alive during the JDP rule and the RPP became an existential enemy to keep the JDP strong (Tokdoğan, 2018, pp. 114–129)

With the failed coup d'état on July 15, 2016, enemy discourse for RPP has changed its direction since the Fethullah Gülen community and its supporters held responsible for this attempt. After the coup attempt, Turkish people's desire to protect democracy is underlined. For instance, in one of his speeches, Erdoğan read Asya's poem titled *A Flag is Waiting For the Wind* (*Bir Bayrak Rüzgâr Bekliyor*) in commemoration of the people who lost their lives during the coup attempt ("Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Bir Kereye Mahsus Hakaret Davalarını Geri Çekiyoruz," 2016). Erdoğan underlined that status of martyrdom is above everything in Islamic teaching after the status of prophecy. As noted by Tokdoğan (2018), the failed coup also opened the way for new national identity based on Ottomanism since it united the past glories of the Ottoman Empire and history of Turkey and created collective narcissism based on neo-Ottomanism.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to provide a historical survey of the transition from the late Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. From the "long 19th century" down to the present, this historical survey highlights the mainly two essential characteristics in the making of the dominant political life: Turkish nationalism and Islam. The heterogeneous Ottoman social and cultural domains were fundamentally reshaped starting with the demographic engineering and Turkification policies of the CUP, which resulted in the elimination of non-Muslims. Then, early Republican period continued Turkification by forced resettlement of the remaining largest non-Turkish people, namely the Kurds. Multi-party period, on the other hand, witnessed the Turkish

membership of the NATO during the Cold War. Turkish nationalist and Islamic symbols were used at the service of the Cold War conflict. The bloody conflict between the right-wing and left-wing poles in the 1970s, on the other hand, prepared the ground for the adoption of Turkish-Islamic synthesis after the 1980 coup. In other words, Turkish political pendulum once again swings back toward the use of Islam at the service of the “unity of the state with its nation.” The broader regional and global political context of the Islamic Republic’s emergence in Iran and the end of the Cold War in 1989 with the collapse of the USSR, contributed to the rise of Islamism in Turkey in the mid-1990s. The 28 February Memorandum once again showed the force of Islamism. Islam seems to have functioned as an indispensable binding tie even for the staunch secularizing Republican elites.

It was in such a historical and political context that Arif Nihat Asya’s political and literary career took shape. Although this survey includes the period beyond his death in 1975, there is an essential reason behind this choice: his poetry has occupied a crucial emotional role in mobilizing right-wing Turkish youth from the 1970s until the currently ruling the JDP. Indeed as the entry on Arif Nihat Asya in the *TDV Islamic Encyclopedia* notes, his poetry played a significant role in the political mobilization of the generations from the 1950s onward. At this point, it seems essential to note that even the earliest studies on Asya’s poetry date mainly from the late 1990s. As I elaborated in detail on these studies in the previous chapter, these proliferating studies were mainly undertaken by the academics with Turkish-Islamic leanings. The resurgence of the mainly Turkish-language articles in Turkish universities’ academic journals on Asya’s poetry thus cannot be accurately analyzed without also taking into account the fact that his poetic and emotional views were in power.

CHAPTER 4

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ARİF NİHAT ASYA’S POETRY

Leaning on the theoretical framework and political and historical context discussed in previous chapters, this chapter goes into a close analysis of Arif Nihat Asya’s poems. In this analysis, I also draw on his prose where necessary. Following his life story below, this chapter analyzes his poetry under the following sub-headings: the conquest, the Cyprus conflict, struggle with communism during the Cold War, and the reception of his poetry.

5.1 Arif Nihat Asya’s Life Story

Arif Nihat Asya was the only child of a mother, Fatma Zehra Hanım from Tırnova in Bulgaria and father from the province of Tokat. His father Ziver Efendi’s lineage is known as Kapusuzlar and his grandfather was a member of the *ahi* community and engaged in leatherwork. Asya was born in a village by the name of İnceğiz in Çatalca in 1904. Soon after he was born, his father died. Then, his mother married an officer in Palestine when Asya was only three years old. It seems that his longing for his mother would be the topic of some poems as follows:

Shedding tears, a widow tells you
“Cry, oh the dove of my orphaned home”
A grandfather says, sobbing: “he is Arif...
My Ziver’s first and last child”

*Yaş dökerek der sana bir dul kadın:
Ağla ey öksüz yuvamın kumrusu!*

Bir dede der hıçkırıp: Arif'tir o...

Ziver'imın ilk ve son yavrusu

(Asya, 2018a, p. 202)

Since abandoned by her mother, Asya was trying to compensate for her mother's absence by seeing her country as a mother. Aberbach draws attention to the search for wholeness by national poets who have childhood trauma such as being abandoned by family members. Their experience of pain, suffering and loneliness are thus projected onto their perspective of nation, nationalist rhetoric since they search for the unity of their nations. Put bluntly, their personal traumas affected their poetry (Aberbach, 2003, p. 261). This observation seem valid in the context of the poetry of Asya who reflected his sense of longing for her mother by penning poems about the former lands of the Ottoman Empire. He wrote 74 poems in total about the lost lands such as Mosul, Kirkuk and Cyprus since he saw these lands as the orphans of the Ottoman Empire, just like him.

After he was abandoned by his mother, his grandfather took care of him. According to his curriculum vitae, he barely remembers that Asya and his family migrated to Istanbul due to the Balkan War. Asya's aunt was particularly interested in his education when they were in Istanbul. When he was seven years old, he was enrolled in *Gülşen-i Maarif Rüşdiyesi* in Yusufpaşa in İstanbul. After completing it in 1916, he attended free boarding school in Bolu. His earliest known poems appeared in a magazine called *Gençlik* (Youth) around 1920, while he was continuing his education in Kastamonu. His poems from that period are found in his first poetry book titled *Heykeltraş* (Sculptor). After that, Asya attended the Department of Literature in *İstanbul Yüksek Muallim Mektebi* (High Teachers' School in İstanbul), from which he graduated in 1927. From the 1930s onward, Arif Nihat established a close relationship with the last sheikh of the Mevlevi lodge in Üsküdar, Ahmed Remzi Akyürek (1872-1944) and had the opportunity to get to know the Mevlevi culture which is found in his poetry. His book called *Kubbe-i Hadra* are all about Rumi and the Mevlevi culture (Birinci, n.d.). He also penned 55 poems about Rumi.

After his graduation, he was appointed to Adana, where he worked as a teacher and a school principal for 14 years. Then, Asya was appointed to Malatya as a school principal in 1942 but he was dismissed after a conflict with Hasan Ali Yücel, the Minister of Education. After his suspension for 45 days, he continued working as a high school teacher of Turkish Literature in the same school in Malatya. After he worked in Malatya as a teacher for 3 years, he turned to Boys' High School in Adana. While he was in Adana, he underwent an investigation on the grounds of making political propaganda and his conflict with Hasan Ali Yücel reappeared. He was personally warned by Hasan Ali Yücel to not to write political articles, and exiled to Edirne afterwards (Yıldız, 2013, p. 33).

Asya became a deputy of the Democrat Party (DP) in the period of 1950-1954. A glance at the parliamentary records show that he had a harsh critique towards the members of the RPP in regards to communist allegations. In fact, the harsh attitude of Asya sometimes left the DP leader Adnan Menderes in a difficult situation (MMTD, C. 10, T. 3, B. 5: 120). Maybe that is why he did not continue his political life as deputy member. After his parliamentary period ended, he worked as a teacher in Ankara. Subsequently, he worked as teacher in Cyprus between 1959 and 1961. He got retired in 1962 and died in 1974 in Ankara where he was buried (Yıldız, 2013, p.31-32).⁹

Asya penned a total of 2994 poems, of which around 800 have a directly social, cultural, and political theme. The table below shows a rough view of the number of his poems with social, cultural and political themes.

⁹ His short *curriculum vitae* is found in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, when he was elected as a DP deputy. See Appendix I for a copy of this handwritten autobiography.

TABLE.1: Asya's Poetry per Social, Cultural and Political Content

Theme	Number of Poems
Nationalist and Islamist	443
Conquest (Constantinople, Manzikert, Mehmed II, Alparslan)	178
Sexuality	106
Anti-communism	27
Historical Personalities	24
Nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire	19

Asya has a total of thirty-one books: twenty collections of poetry and eleven collections of the pieces he published in different papers and journals over the years. A complete and chronologically ordered list of his books are as follows: *Heykeltraş* (1924), *Yastığının Rüyası* (1930), *Ayetler* (1936), *Bir Bayrak Rüzgar Bekliyor* (1945), *Kanatlar ve Gagalar* (1945), *Rubâiyât-ı Ârif* (1956), *Kökler ve Dallar* (1964), *Enikli Kapı* (1964), *Kıbrıs Rubâileri* (1964), *Duâlar ve Âminler* (1967), *Kubbe-i Hadrâ* (1967), *Terazi Kendini Tartmaz* (1967), *Tehdit Mektupları* (1967), *Kova Burcu* (1967), *Yürek* (1968), *Avrupa'dan Rubâiler* (1969), *Köprü* (1969), *Aynalarda Kalan* (1969), *Onlar Bu Dilden Anlar* (1970), *Basamaklar* (1971), *Divançe-i Ârif* (1971), *Şiirler* (seçmeler 1971), *Top Sesleri* (1975), *Fatihler Ölmez ve Takvimler* (1976), *Rubâiyât-ı Ârif II* (1976), *Ses ve Toprak* (1976), *Aramak ve Söyleyememek* (1976), *Kanatlarını Arayanlar* (1976), *Ayin Aynasında* (1976), *Kubbeler* (1976), *Sevgi Mektupları* (2017).

4.2 Conquest and Conquerors: Manzikert and Constantinople, Alparslan and Fatih

The fall of the Ottoman Empire generated works loaded with sadness, nostalgia, and melancholy in Turkish literature (Aksakal, 2015, p. 59). As a nationalist poet who witnessed the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, Asya, too, got his share from these sentiments. In this respect, Asya's romantic nationalism includes the commemoration of the Ottoman and the Saljuq Empires, which Asya views as the golden ages in

Turkish-Islamic history. That is why he frequently wishes these golden past imperial ages to be restored. In this conceptualization of a Turkish-Islamic golden age, the theme of conquest occupies a central place. While his poetry is filled with feelings of longing to establish the golden age, Asya is also frustrated that the spirit of conquest that once existed among the Turks has now disappeared.

It is thus no surprise that the topic that received his most frequent attention is the topic of conquest. 178 poems are about the two turning points in Turkish-Islamic history: Constantinople (119 poems) and Manzikert (21 poems); Mehmed II (40 poems) and Alparslan (6 poems). His poetic discourse on the topic of conquest is characterized by the following features: gendered and sexualized representation, military might and a victorious spirit clothed in an Islamic symbolism with a specific focus on Hagia Sophia, and the conquest as a guide for future political and military endeavors.¹⁰ By doing this, he reveals his desire to regain the control over the land lost by the Ottoman Empire. This kind of commemoration involves the idealization of the Turkish-Islamic past. Cultural signs, symbols and myths are often used at the service of the romanticization and glorification of this past. Needless to say, this approach is full of mythical and nationalist anachronisms. In the poems related to the theme of conquest, while a total of 27 poems are about the Battle of Manzikert and Alparslan, a total of 159 poems are about the conquest of Constantinople and Mehmed II.

4.2.1. The Battle of Manzikert

The literary interest in the Battle of Manzikert has increased simultaneously with the rise of Turkish nationalist literature. Particularly following the loss of a huge territory in the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913, Anatolia started to be highlighted as the homeland of the Turks. This is perhaps best reflected in the cliché statement of Turkish history

¹⁰ Asya also gave wide place to sexuality, sexual themes, fantasy in his poetry, he wrote 106 poems with sexuality themes.

textbooks and official historical narrative: “The gates of Anatolia were opened to the Turks in Manzikert in 1071.” In line with this, the idea that the gates of Anatolia were opened to the Turks also reinforced the meaning attributed to the Battle of Manzikert (Güler, 2019, pp. 362–363). Asya is no exception to this rule when he writes:

Regarding the Turk who wrote the epic of
Manzikert, I replied to the questioner:
“The doors of conquest have been opened
to him starting with today”

*Malazgird’de destan yazan Türk için
Dedim sorana:
“Fetih kapıları daha bugünden açıldı ona”*
(Asya, 2018a, p. 26)

The Battle of Manzikert is hence seen as the starting point for the Turkish history of conquest. Manzikert is more than a military confrontation between the Byzantine and Saljuq Empires. From this moment on, subsequent history would be read in light of conquests. The Battle of Manzikert also functions as a source of pride and self-confidence that fuels Turkish nationalism. While Anatolia is attributed divine features, its “door opener”, i.e. Alparslan is seen as the link that bridges Turkish Islamic history with pre-Islamic Turkish history as in the following:

“...God created me with care
Saljuq Alparslan opened my door!”

*“...Tanrı, özenerek kurdu yapımı;
Selçuklu Alparslan, açtı kapımı!*
(Asya, 2017b, p. 96)

I heard from an old page left deep [in history]
The Hun history says:

“Oh, Turk! Alparslan is your own son”

Duydum: derinde kalmış bir eski sayfadan Hun Tarihi der ki:

“Ey Türk, Alparslan, öz oğlun!”

(Asya, 2018a, p. 22)

The right of Turks over Anatolia is legitimized on the grounds of Alparslan’s conquest. Indeed thanks to Alparslan, Anatolia became the Turkish homeland forever:

Its land is your land, its clouds are your clouds
I have bought you a homeland that is your home forever!

*Toprağı toprağınızdır, bulutu bulutunuzdur
Size bir yurd aldım ki, bu ebediyyen yurdunuzdur!*

(Asya, 2018a, p. 27)

By defeating the Byzantine Empire, Alparslan in the Battle of Manzikert not only turned Anatolia to the permanent home for the Turks, his victory has also opened the way for future Turkish conquests:

“My grandchildren should go hand in hand all around
They should go the way from Manzikert to Constantinople...”

*“Torunlarım dört yana, kol kol, gitsin;
Malazgird’den İstanbul’a yol gitsin!”*

(Asya, 2017b, p. 105)

Alparslan advises his grandchildren to conquer Constantinople since Alparslan has opened the way for them by defeating the Byzantine Empire.

5.1.1 The Conquest of Constantinople

While the Battle of Manzikert was the opening stage that led the Turks to set foot on Anatolia, the conquest of Constantinople can be seen as a way more and indeed “epoch-ending and epoch-opening” event not only in Turkish history but also world history. It is hence one of the most popular themes in Turkish nationalist prose and poetry. In Asya’s poetry, too, *the* conquest is the conquest of Constantinople. What is interesting about Asya’s poetic illustration of this phenomenal event is its quite plainly sexualized representation: Constantinople is likened to a female body.

To select her valiant
Istanbul tests her willers
With a belt made of walls around her waist,
She says: “Whoever can unbuckle this belt
[Then] I am his”

*Yiğitini seçmek için İstanbul,
İsteklilerini imtihan eder:
Beline surlardan kemer kuşanmış;
“Kim çözebilirse ben, onunum!” der*
(Asya, 2017a, p. 231)

Although Constantinople had been the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire for more than a millennium, it is depicted as a virgin wearing a chastity belt. This depiction is thus dismissive of its prior social, political, cultural, and military legacy. Like in the case of Manzikert, the history of these lands is viewed to start with the Muslim Turks at the expense of making prior legacy invisible or marginal. This undertaking is also a sexualized one as Asya views that the most virile can be the conqueror. In other words, the strongest man can take possession of Constantinople and take away her virginity. Indeed, in one of his essays, Asya likens Hagia Sophia to a bride and Mehmed II to a groom as in the following:

... this legend [i.e. the Conquest] expresses the final resistance of Hagia Sophia that had served as a church for centuries, [and] in line with her understanding of god which is the doctrine of Trinity, before surrendering to the religion of monotheism. *This epic has also the story of a bride's feigning reluctance that expects insistence from her lover to open her veil* (Asya, 2016a, p. 260) (italics added).¹¹

Asya symbolizes Hagia Sophia as a woman desiring to be conquered by Mehmed II. Here there seems a contradiction, however: the “bride” has a “centuries-old” Christian past and it is with this kind of religiosity through which the last “resistance” is shown. Therefore, there seems to be a tension between the resistance and the “bride’s feigning reluctance” for her lover. Furthermore, it is not only Hagia Sophia that desires Mehmed II but also the unhappy inhabitants of Istanbul who have been waiting for his army for a long time (Asya, 2018a, p. 51). It is *Fatih*¹² who can deliver happiness to the inhabitants of the city (Asya, 2018a, p. 51), and together with his troops, he would bring light to the city, not fear (Asya, 2018a, p. 67).

Accompanying this narrative is the view that Mehmed II was tolerant of Christians as he did not change the name of Hagia Sophia after the conquest (Asya, 2016c, pp. 260–261). As such, Hagia Sophia has become a symbol not only through its desire and conquest but also the consent of the city’s inhabitants. Hagia Sophia is a religious symbol through which the Ottoman conquest and the destruction of the Byzantine Empire are represented. Although Hagia Sophia under the Byzantine rule and Christian religion is viewed to be dark and frightening, however, it is incredibly happy and prosperous under the Muslim Ottoman rule. The black dome of Hagia Sophia is now full of lights because the first Muslim call to prayer was recited there (Asya, 2018a, p. 178).

¹¹ Turkish original: “...bu menkıbe, asırlarca kiliselik etmiş olan Ayasofya’nın tevhid dinine teslim olmazdan önce, kendi üçüzlü tanrı anlayışına uygun son direnmelerini dile getiriyor. *Bu menkıbede bir gelinin, duvağını açmak için âşıkından ısrar bekleyen nazının da hikâyesi var*” (italics added).

¹² In Turkish historical narratives and textbooks, Mehmed II is almost always referred to as *Fatih*, which is the Arabic word literally meaning “the opener”, i.e. the conqueror.

Since the beginning of the golden age in Constantinople is most often symbolized by Hagia Sophia, its turning into a museum in 1935 causes a deep frustration for Turkish-Islamic groups, writers and poets in general, and Asya, in particular. His following lines reveal his frustration:

I saw that dear Hagia Sophia is pictured
In a rum magazine without minaret
Nobody has the right to be angry because
There is no need for a minaret in mosque
Where the adhan is not recited

*Canım Ayasofya'nın resmini minâresiz
Çıkarmışlar, gördüm, bir Rumca dergide Rum'lar...
Kızmaya hakkınız yok ezan sesi olmayan
Câmide minârenin, kim demiş lüzumu var?*
(Asya, 2018b, p. 31)

As a researcher notes, with the closing of Hagia Sophia to prayers, the superiority of Muslim East over the Christian West has been destroyed (Özekmekçi, 2016). Hagia Sophia was the symbol of conquest and nostalgic house of golden age (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 72). With this superiority gone, the sense of self-confidence has also been destroyed. Therefore, to Asya, a Hagia Sophia without the adhan and a minaret is nothing but a deep source of humiliation, shame, guilt, sadness, and nostalgia. He expresses this feeling of shame by saying that Fatih would not accept them as his descendants since they did not look after his legacy (Asya, 2016c, p. 260).

Hagia Sophia was the symbol of golden age since the conquest of Constantinople not only demonstrates the sexual power but also shows the military might of the Ottoman Empire. However, it is not only the Ottomans' competence that made the conquest possible. They have also been backed by the support of Islam as *Fatih* is imagined to be reciting the chapter of *al-Fath* (Asya, 2018a, p. 49). This way, the conquest of

Constantinople finds its legitimate Islamic aura.¹³ The idea that Allah was acting together with the Turks in the conquest gave way to a complex of superiority and self-confidence in the Turkish-Islamic nationalist mindset.

As pointed by Asya, moral and religious achievement has been conducted since both the West and Christianity have been severely disrupted with the conquest of Constantinople (Tokdoğan, 2018, p.173). The adhan is highlighted as a symbolic reference, as reflected from the mouth of Hagia Sophia in the following lines:

I heard the first adhan at the end of may
I said: “My sky is now the homeland of the adhan!”
Duyup mayıs aylarının sonunda ilk ezanı
Dedim: “Benim göğüm -artık- ezanların vatanı!”
(Asya, 2017a, p. 161)

Mehmed II prayed for the first time in Hagia Sophia in May and the adhan would be recited (Tokdoğan, 2018, p. 173). Once Constantinople was gone, Istanbul is now full of Islam, i.e. “İslambol” (Asya, 2018a, p. 105). Asya’s claim that Istanbul is now full of Islam and he found it appropriate to make sense of the conquest of Constantinople as a great success of the Turks is clearly the product of a selective historical perspective. In the words of prominent historian of the Ottoman Empire, namely Halil İnalcık: “the Ottoman Empire was not a ‘Turkish empire’” (İnalcık, 2017, p. 35) as it was demographically and territorially speaking based on the Balkans and Arab provinces that were home to quite a diverse population. This is an observation confirmed time and again in the existing scholarship. Another researcher notes, for example: “The cosmopolitan social construction of the Ottoman Empire Islamic tradition, Turkish heritage, the background of Byzantium and numerous ethnic and religious cultures was a synthesis” (Ergül, 2012, p. 629). Although Asya approaches

¹³ The conquest took place on May 29. At this point, one should also note that the commemoration of the conquest can also be seen in the naming of a university in İstanbul: 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi.

the conquest of Constantinople destructive activity over Byzantine culture since it approves the hegemony of Islam over Christianity, however this perspective deeply suffers from nationalist selective approach to history. Instead of destroying or ignoring the Byzantine culture, the Ottoman sultans embraced the word *Rum*, etymologically coming from the word Roman which means of the Eastern Roman Empire. Moreover, calling themselves the heir of the Eastern Roman Empire, Ottoman sultans even used the title of *Kayser-i Rum*. Although the word *Rum* mostly referred to non-Muslims or Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, *Rum* was used to refer to the privileged position of the people living in Istanbul, i.e. the superior status of the people close to the sultan (Ergul, 2012, p. 634). Outside the Ottoman Empire, too, the word *Rum* was used to mean the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the word *Rum* expresses the privileged and hegemonic place and role of Greek identity in the making of Ottoman identity (Ergul, 2012, p. 643).

Another important point to be underlined here is that the “conquest narrative” entirely and, unsurprisingly, exclusively focuses on the presence of the Muslim Turks in Anatolia and İstanbul after the Battle of Manzikert and the conquest of Constantinople. For instance, demographically speaking, until the turn of the 20th century, there have been a large number of non-Muslims in İstanbul. According to a historian of the Ottoman Empire, Kemal Karpat as late as 1897 around 42 per cent of İstanbul comprised non-Muslims, namely Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Serbians, and Christian Arabs (cited in Koç, 2010, p. 193).

Based on the above observations, then, it is clear that it would be problematic to reduce the identity of the Ottoman Empire to merely Turkishness or Islam since it would be overlooking the “polyglot” dimension of Ottoman society (Makdisi, 2002, p. 773). Although the Ottoman sultans were descendants of Oghuz Turks and Ottoman Turkish was the official language, they did not identify themselves as Turks. In fact, the word Turk was used to refer to nomadic Turkmen and it had a derogative meaning (Ergul, 2012, p. 641).

4.2.2. The Conquest as a Future Political Guide for the Turkish Youth

A common theme of his poetry related to the conquest of Constantinople is that Asya accuses himself and other Muslim Turks for not being able to attend to this glorious Ottoman legacy. In other words, a profound feeling of guilt and uneasiness prevails in his poetics of conquest mainly because the grandchildren of the victorious and powerful Ottoman sultans are extremely far from this grandiose past. More specifically, *the* conquest is a guide for a glorious future of the Turks. The shining poem in this regard is his famous poem titled the *Conquest March (Fetih Marşı)*. Like the pioneering Turkish story writer Ömer Seyfettin's short stories with shocking endings that leave little children with complicated feelings of vengeance and indebtedness to the nation (Ogur, 2011, pp. 104–105), the *Conquest March* also indoctrinates young men and women with a sense of duty, self-worth, self-confidence, and pride. *The* model to be emulated is *Fatih*. Below is the entire poem:

Sailcloth will be cupped up; sails will be sewed.
Gallstones brought from the mountains will be drawn.
The teeth of the wall will be pulled out with pincers

Why are you still playing games?
You are at the age when *Fatih* conquered Constantinople!
You, too, can give up your lover, mother, [and your] life
Let us also recite by heart your legend
It seems that you are not aware of the value you carry

We have you, we talk about you, you are in hearts, [you are] the crown of our heads
You are at the age when *Fatih* conquered Constantinople!

Face with the lies of our times!
Show how the rising [waves of] water destroy its barrage?
My young man, do not underestimate yourself, do not contempt yourself
You are enough to raise that broken monument:
You are at the age when *Fatih* conquered Constantinople

These books are Fatih, Selim and Süleyman.
That mihrab is Sinanüddin and this minaret is Sinan, come on, wake up your sleeping legend!

I do not know why you are concerned with everyday matters
My daughter, you, too, are old enough to give birth to Conquerors!

My lad! When you receive the sign from your ancestors,
You will walk [and] the nation will follow you!
I brought greetings from Hasan of Ulubat!

You are of fabric that can be used as a flag for bastions
You are at the age when *Fatih* conquered Constantinople!

Let the broken clocks show the time wrong!
Let the Çelebis spend the wintertime in harems!
Walk, my lion, [and] let the preparation for the conquest begin
Come on, why are you still at war with yourself?
You are at the age when *Fatih* conquered Constantinople!

*Yelkenler biçilecek, yelkenler dikilecek;
Dağlardan çektirilen, kalyonlar çekilecek;
Kerpetenlerle sûrun dişleri sökülecek*

*Yürü, hâlâ ne diye oyunda oynaştasın?
Fatih'in İstanbul'u fethettiği yaştasın!*

*Sen de geçebilirsin yardan, anadan, serden
Senin de destanını okuyalım ezberden
Haberin yok gibidir taşıdığın değerden*

*Elde sensin, dilde sen, gönüldesin baştasın...
Fatih'in İstanbul'u fethettiği yaştasın!*

*Yüzüne çarpmak gerek zamanenin fendini!
Göster: Kabaran sular nasıl yıkar bendini?
Küçük görme, hor görme, delikanlım kendini!
Şu kırık abideyi yükseltecek yaştasın
Fatih'in İstanbul'u fethettiği yaştasın
!*

*Bu kitaplar Fatih'tir, Selimdir, Süleymandır.
Şu mihrap Sinanüddin, şu minare Sinandır.
Haydi artık uyuyan destanını uyandır!
Bilmem, neden gündelik işlerle telaştasın
Kızım, sen de Fatihler doğuracak yaştasın!*

*Delikanlım, işaret aldığın gün atandan
Yürüyeceksin... Millet yürüyecek arkandan!
Sana selam getirdim Ulubatlı Hasandan!*

*Sen ki burçlara bayrak olacak kumaştasın;
Fatih'in İstanbul'u fethettiği yaştasın!*

*Bırak, bozuk saatler yalan yanlış işlesin!
Çelebiler çekilip haremelerde kışlasın!
Yürü aslanım, fetih hazırlığı başlasın
Yürü, hâlâ ne diye kendinle savaştasın
Fatih'in İstanbul'u fethettiği yaştasın!*

(Asya, 2016b, pp. 183–184)

This poem is basically a call for awakening and self-confidence of the Turkish youth. Asya lets his young Turkish addressees know the only way to get inspiration and find self-confidence for future conquests expected in the future is to remember the glorious past full of conquests and conquerors. By mentioning the historical figures of the Ottoman Empire such as Mehmed II, Selim I and Süleyman I, it is not mere accident that Asya refers to the most celebrated sultans of the Ottoman Empire. Asya reminds

the grandchildren of Fatih to remember and feel proud of their glorious imperial past. According to Asya, the spirit of conquest, which was started with the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II, continued with taking under control of the Arab Middle East by Selim I and the subsequent imperial expansion under Süleyman. Asya imagines the past as a golden age in his mind and wishes it to be restored. When the grandchildren of Fatih remember and appreciate this magnificent era, the first step will be taken for this glorious period to be restored. These grandchildren of Fatih should never forget that there is a blood tie binding them; that is why every grandchild is a candidate to become a conqueror like Fatih. Asya's following line reading "You are at the age when Fatih conquered the Constantinople" can be considered in this context. The reference to historical personalities is not limited to the Ottoman sultans, it also includes such figures as Hasan of Ulubat, another well-known name in the conquest of Constantinople. His name is frequently found in the literature related to the conquest. It is rumored that Hasan of Ulubat died after he placed the Ottoman flag on the walls of Constantinople (Öztan, 2016b, p. 366). According to Asya, Hasan of Ulubat both honored his ancestors and became an example for the later generations.

If one remembers the famous the "Poem of the Flag" (*Bayrak Şiiri*) in which Asya also asks the flag where it wants to be placed, then one can understand that there is not a concrete destination to be taken on earth: "...my history, my pride, my poem, my everything. Choose any place on earth, wherever you want to stand, I will place you in there" (*Nereye dikilmek istersen söyle seni oraya dikeyim!*). (Asya, 2016b, p. 25). These lines are revealing the expansionist and militarist approach of Asya, which originates from the wish to restore the Ottoman imperial glory. Those who can bring back the old glorious epochs are the Turkish youth. This way, he tries to awake imperial desires and militarist feelings in his readers since Asya feels sorrow for today's youth. According to Asya, the only way to get inspiration and find self-confidence for the possible conquests in the future is to remember the glorious past full of conquests and conquerors, i.e., and in order to "raise the broken monument" (*kırık abideyi yükseltmek*) it is necessary to remember the past. While Asya talks about the broken monument, he speaks of the missing spirit of conquest. This broken

monument can be corrected only when each boy understands the value he carries for his nation. In this view, an individual is not valuable since s/he is a human being; it is valuable because of its capacity to glorify or serve for the nation.

Asya aspires to awake imperial desires in the minds and hearts of his young addressees. Şerif Mardin notes that from the 19th century onward, the youth has replaced the elderly as the leading political figures. For instance, a reformist-minded group called the Young Ottomans emerged who saw themselves as saviour of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. Later on, Mustafa Kemal was also a member of Young Turks. Indeed from the 19th century on, one can see the leading political groups such as Young Italians and Young Algerians. In the period of 1923-1950, the Turkish youth again was also vital for the new regime in Turkey since young people were seen as the guardians of the new regime. The prominent example is Mustafa Kemal's famous address to the Turkish youth, in which he notes that the first and biggest duty of the Turkish youth is to protect the Turkish Republic (cited in Neyzi, 2001, p. 416). Therefore, Asya's address to the young Turkish boys and girls should be located within this wider context. Unsurprisingly, this nationalist call for future political mobilization that is inspired by the ancestors' glorious past achievements is shaped by a sexed and gendered division of labour. While young men are given the right to represent the nation or act on behalf of the nation, women's duty is to give birth to future *Fatihs*. This is yet again a common feature of nationalist ideological discourses and projects in which women are important as long as they can be used for their reproductive and motherhood abilities (Kandiyoti, 2011, p.47).

This analysis shows that the conquest of Istanbul contains an unprecedented symbolic meaning for both the Turkish right and Asya. The conquest of Istanbul was seen as psychological and political victory against the West and Christian world since this conquest is underlining the power of Muslim Turks. The idea of having Istanbul also overlaps a sense of concupiscence.

4.3. Cyprus: The Orphaned Child of Mother Turkey

From its occupation by the Ottoman Empire in 1571 until its occupation by the British in 1878, Cyprus remained under the control of the Ottoman Empire for almost 300 years (Cleveland, 2018, p. 318). According to Asya, the end of Ottoman presence in Cyprus and the British colonization of the island left Muslim Turks as an orphan. Turkey is like a mother who could not take care of her child adequately, i.e. Turkey abandoned her child while her child was desperately waiting for help from her *mother*, Turkey. That is why Asya believes that the Turkish intervention in Cyprus is natural since the Turks in Cyprus are waiting for Turkey (Asya, 2016c, p. 267). As a mother, Turkey should save her orphaned Muslim-Turkish minority who lived together with Greek Cypriots. That is why Asya frequently penned poetry about the Cyprus issue most likely because he lived in Cyprus in the period of 1959-1961. Indeed, there are a total of 55 poems about Cyprus in addition to his book called *Kıbrıs Rubâîleri* published in 1964 after his return to Turkey. His intense love and compassion for Cyprus as reflected in his poems show that Asya's interest is not only a manifestation of his nationalist sympathy due to the Turks living in Cyprus. It seems also as a relationship of mother and child, i.e. a hegemonic relationship based on Mother Turkey's protection of Child Cyprus.

Three features characterize his poems on the Cyprus conflict: Cyprus as an orphaned child in need of Mother Turkey's protection, a conflict between Islam and Christianity and a critique of the Turkish, Greek and Western political and military leaders in their (in)ability to take a military action. First, given that Turkey had close cultural, political, and historical ties with Cyprus, it is not surprising that Asya asserts an organic bond between Cyprus and Turkey (Firat, 2014a, pp. 600–602). This bond is first and foremost one of a mother and her orphaned child. The child is orphaned because, it seems, the Father, i.e. the Ottoman Empire is long dead but Mother Turkey is still alive. The “orphaned children of Cyprus” are now expecting the Mother's appearance from their coasts (Asya, 2018b, p. 188). This is also a relationship of ownership. The island is expecting its former owners:

Having cut off its ropes in foreign coasts
The ship stunned its victors
Mentioning the past and searching today
For its former owners in the turmoil of the Mediterranean

*Yad el kıyısından koparıp iplerini
Hayrette bırakmış gemi, galiplerini...
Maziyi anıp arar bugün Akdeniz'in
Çalkantılarında eski sahiplerini!*
(Asya, 2014b, p. 132)

Since Cyprus is a loyal child to its mother, it betrays its current owners such as Greek Cypriots, Greece, or Britain by searching for the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman age is longed for in the current times of turmoil. Since the Ottoman loss of Cyprus to the British Empire, Turkey is now seen as the legitimate heir to the island. Yet as he notes in an essay on the topic, Turkey is not powerful enough to reclaim it: “We were not able to add to our maps this piece of land which was removed from our maps. Either we were incompetent, or our sewing needles were dull”.¹⁴ It should be noted that for Asya, Turkey should put in a claim for all the islands in the Aegean and the Mediterranean (Asya, 2016c, p. 267).

With the 1960 London-Zurich Agreement, Cyprus was established as an independent republic. According to this agreement, Turkish Cypriots would have their separate municipalities in Nicosia, Limassol, Magosa, Baf and Larnaka. Yet president of Cyprus, Makarios III (1913-1977) blockaded the Turkish municipalities despite their constitutional right. This blockade then sparked conflicts in 1963 and 1964 (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, p. 123). Upon following these events, Asya published an article in which he addressed the US senator J. William Fulbright asserting that from the Aegean to the

¹⁴ Turkish original: “Haritalarımızdan kopartılmış şu parçayı, haritalarımıza dikmek, elimizden gelmiyordu. Ya biz beceriksiz olmuştuk, ya dikiş iğnelerimiz körelmişti” (Asya, 2014a, p. 32).

Mediterranean, Turkey has a total of 33 Cypruses.¹⁵ Considering all these, the motivation of Asya towards Cyprus can best be seen in the following lines:

April and May bring homesickness as though roses...
Dear mother, we are both close and far for months, for years,
You are Turkey without Cyprus
I am Cyprus without Turkey

*Hasret getirir gül diye nisanla mayıs...
Biz hem yakınız, anneciğim hem uzağınız;
Aylar boyu, yıllar boyu, sen Kıbrıssız
Bir Türkiye, ben Türkiye'siz bir Kıbrıs.*
(Asya, 2014b, p. 77)

It is notable that he projects his personal childhood experience on Turkey and Cyprus. He identifies his mother with Turkey and himself with Cyprus. Visualizing Turkey as motherland and Cyprus as “baby land”, he also views, Cyprus as the “last baby swaddled by its mother” (Asya, 2014b, p. 146). In some other poems, too, Cyprus is referred to as the last son (Asya, 2014b, p. 146). Other than the Ottoman control of the island, to Asya, racial and Islamic bonds are the other elements that connect Cyprus and Turkey (Asya, 2016c, pp. 267–268).¹⁶

The second component of his view regarding the Cyprus conflict is that it is a clash between Islam and Christianity, symbolized through “the church bell and the adhan”

¹⁵ Turkish original: “Bizim Ege’den Akdeniz’e doğru, yukarıdan aşağı, yalnız iriceleri sayıldığı takdirde, 33 Kıbrıs’ımız vardır ki tespitemiz gibidir... senin bildiğin Kıbrıs, bu tespitin yalnızca imamesidir” (Asya, 2016a, p. 18).

¹⁶ “Kıbrıs, durup dururken elden gitmez... coğrafyamız dışında kalmış ırkdaşlarımızdan söz açanı “ırkçı”, dindaşlarımızdan söz açanı “Turancı” diye damgaladığımız için elden gider” (Asya, 2016c, pp. 267–268).

(Asya, 2014c, p. 128). By framing the Cyprus issue from an Islamic perspective, he urges Muslim people to defend Islam against Christian Greek Cypriots. In this perspective, while the Turks in Cyprus and Turkey are viewed to represent Islam, the EOKA under the leadership of Grivas, Greek Cypriots and the Greek Junta symbolize Christianity. Therefore, in Asya's view, the Cyprus crisis in 1967 was as follows: Muslim-Turkish villages were attacked by the EOKA under the leadership of Georgios Grivas with the support of Christian Greece. According to Asya, in Cyprus, Christian people under the name of "living together" were oppressing Muslim Turks. That is why Asya regards the people who died in Turkish villages such as Geçitkale and Boğaziçi as martyrs in a poem called "Martyrs of Geçitkale and Boğaziçi":

Let civilization still play jaz and dance
Let laments come and receive inspiration from us
God, let those who caused this
unimaginable disaster
Remain without a cause

*Hala, medeniyet tepinip caz çalsın!
Bizden de, gelip, ağıtlar ilham alsın!
Tanrı'm, bu hayale sığmayan faciaya
Her kim sebep olduysa, sebepsiz kalsın*
(Asya, 2014c, p. 264)

The West is implied to be complicit in these disasters by its disinterested attitude in this disaster as it continues to play the "jazz" and dance to it, which is identified with the "civilization". What remains for Asya is, by taking shelter in God, to sing laments and curse those who took part in these disasters.

The third feature of the poems on Cyprus is that Asya denounces and/or criticizes Western, Greek as well as Turkish military and political leaders. He claims that the USA, France, and Britain were collaborating against Turkey over the Cyprus issue. Asya recommends in his book called *Aramak ve Söyleyememek* what to be done is to

disregard the “civilization”, namely the United Nations Security Council, the USA and Britain and to take necessary measures such as military intervention (Asya, 2016a, p. 315)

It was not only the implicit and/or explicit Western alliance over the Cyprus issue, however, which received Asya’s criticism as he also criticized and/or attacked Turkish and Greek leaders. In that time, the violence in Turkish villages led Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel to send an ultimatum by declaring that Turkey would intervene if Grivas had not withdrawn from the island. Backed by the RPP support, this ultimatum meant that Turkey was ready to take the risk of going to war with Greece. With the efforts of the NATO and the USA, the possibility of war was ended as Greece declared that Greek troops and the EOKA would withdraw from the island (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, pp. 148–149). It was during these times that Asya reproached Demirel’s attitude to be insufficient:

Our brothers are suffering there
Do vile people understand from words and writing?
Why are you still waiting, Süleyman Demirel?
Our powers flow from hearts and muscles

*Kardeşler, orda kıvranırken sizıdan
Anlar mı elin alçağı laftan yazıdan?
Hala ne durursun, ey Süleyman Demirel:
Güçler taşıyor burda yürekten, pazıdan!*
(Asya, 2014c, p. 257)

By denouncing “words” and “writings”, Asya wants a military action to be taken. His references to “muscles and powers” are clear calls to the use of military intervention. With the attempts of the special US representative, the losses of the villages of Boğaziçi and Geçidkale would be compensated (Fırat, 2014b, p. 734). Asya’s

following poem is a reaction to that insufficient compensation. He sets to motion the feelings of vengeance:

What is warning? I want fire and smoke
I want to land on rather than fly over Cyprus
What on earth is compensation for martyrs
Oh, traveler! If I were you, I would want life to life

*İhtar nedir... ateş, duman isterdim!
Kıbrıs'ta uçan değil, konan isterdim
Neymiş şühedaya karşılık tazminat:
Ey yolcu, ben olsam, cana can isterdim!*
(Asya, 2014c, p. 265)

Dissatisfied with the cowardly attitude of Turkish leaders, Asya took a clearly military stance on the conflict. Asya wishes for a war, which led him also to pen a poem for the commander of the Turkish Air Forces İrfan Tansel, who targeted the Greek Cypriot targets by Turkish jets in 1964. Likewise, the other political and military personalities that Asya focused on in his poems are as follows: Necdet Uran (former commander of the Turkish Naval Forces) and Refik Yılmaz (commander of the Land Forces in 1966). The poems addressed to these commanders aimed to persuade them to take immediate military action (Asya, 2014c, pp. 262–265). According to Asya, if Turkey were agile and courageous, then Greek Cypriots would not be able to resist Turkey. The EOKA leader Grivas, too, was the topic of a poem which belittles his military skills as he does not have even the slightest chance to face Turkey (Asya, 2014c, p. 295).

The 55 poems on the Cyprus conflict reflect Asya's political and emotional views as a nationalist poet. Viewed as the Ottoman Empire's orphaned child that now needs its mother's protection, Cyprus can now be saved only through a direct and immediate military action against the corrupt Greek and the "civilized" West.

4.4. Struggle with Communism during the Cold War

As a nationalist poet who lived between 1904 and 1975, Asya penned poetry, which provides a view on how the Cold War rivalry shaped the Turkish right and left-wing ideological poles in the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, his poetry effectively demonstrates the Turkish right-wing articulation of struggle with communism as an essential component of its ideological discourse.

It is possible to identify the following developments that marked the Cold War period in the Turkish right-wing ideological discourse from the 1950s through the 1970s: the Korean War, the perception of Soviet Russia, student events in the 1970s in their particular relation to communism and the encouragement of cordial relations between Turkey and the USA. This section investigates how the Cold War context is reflected through anti-communist sentiments in Asya's poetry.

From the early 1950s on, with the DP's accession to power, anti-communism has become a state policy in terms of sending troops to the Korean War in 1950 and entering the NATO in 1952. A deputy of the DP between 1950 and 1954, Asya, too, actively joined the parliamentary debates on communism. One of the most important debates about anti-communism was the amendment of Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Criminal Law. These articles were promulgated in 1936 to prevent the spread of communism and anarchism (Örnek, 2014, p. 116). In 1951, parliamentary debates took place to expand the scope of these articles. When parliamentary minutes are examined, Asya's anti-communist stance catches one's attention. He wanted to add the word of "communism" in Articles 141 and 142 to fight communism more effectively. He also wanted death penalty to be adopted for communist crimes (MMTD, C. 10, T. 2, B. 5: 113). Asya envisaged that death penalty should be used for the people who threatened the Turkish state and the Turkish nation (MMTD, C. 10, T.2, B.5: 114). He accused the RPP for having a 'softer' discourse concerning communists/socialists; therefore, it resulted in the encouragement of leftist groups in Turkey. In this respect, Asya blamed Reşat Şemsettin Sirer (1903-1953), former Minister of Education of the RPP, for helping the communists in prison when he served

as a minister (MMTD, C. 10, T.2, B.5: 112). In fact, Asya's claims about the communist convictions of the members of the RPP caused such a heated debate in the Parliament that Adnan Menderes had to intervene and calm down the members of the RPP (MMTD, C. 10, T. 3, B. 5: 120).

Although Menderes seems to have had a softer attitude towards the RPP's so-called communist inclinations, the DP entirely supported the anti-communist struggle. It was during the rule of the DP that such nationalist organizations were established: the Federation of Nationalists (*Milliyetçiler Federasyonu*) founded by the Hearths of Turkish Culture (*Türk Kültür Ocağı*), Turkish Cultural Studies Association (*Türk Kültür Çalışmaları Derneği*) and Turkish Youth Organization (*Türk Gençlik Teşkilatı*) (Kılıç, 2016, p. 88) and Association for the Struggle with Communism (*Türkiye Komünizmle Mücadele Derneği*) (Meşe, 2017, pp. 119–121). These organizations invited such nationalist political and literary personalities as Arif Nihat Asya, Nurettin Topçu and Remzi Oğuz Arık to promote the nationalist collaboration and struggle against communism (Kılıç, 2016, p. 91). In these meetings, Asya delivered talks about the policies of the government such as sending troops to the Korean War. A staunch supporter of an effective struggle against communism, Asya suggested that the people who had negative opinions about sending troops to Korea or those who were reluctant about Turkey's engagement in the NATO should be taken to court for having ties to communism (MMTD, C. 10, T.2, B.5: 116). It should be noted that sending troops to Korea was viewed to increase the chance of Turkey's membership in the NATO and the alliance of Turkey with the free world (Erhan, 2002, p. 545). In other words, it meant being against the USSR. Asya viewed these foreign policies as effective measures in the fight against communism. In his view, Turkish involvement in the Korean War had one more significant meaning: staying out of World War II had damaged the warrior spirit of the Turks. Therefore, sending troops to the Korean War would heal this wounded militarist spirit (Kılıç, 2016, p. 100).

Asya's following lines taken from a poem on the Korean War reveal the promotion of a Turkish militarist spirit from Korea:

In the lands of Far East
Let the roots recognize its branches
Let the sky welcome the voices of “Allah Allah!”
By [crying out] “Allah Allah!”
Let the nations of the world read
As the world rotates:
I have written an epic from Korea:
In Turkish!

*Uzak Asya toprağında
Tanısın dallarını kökler
Ve “Allah Allah!” sesini karşılāsın
“Allah Allah!” diye gökler!
Okusun dünya milletleri,
Dünya döndükçe:
Kore’den bir destan yazdım
Türkçe!
(Asya, 2017b, p. 54)*

In this poem, Turkish military presence in Korea is viewed to be a meeting of the “roots” and “branches”, i.e. Turkey and Korea. Root and branch analogy established between Turkey and Korea in this poem is both interesting and absurd since there is no historical reality to verify this bond between Turkey and Korea.

Alongside government officials, Asya also attended political and cultural events of nationalist organizations in support of the Korean War. For example, the Federation of Nationalists organized a meeting called the “Day of Mehmetçik” (*Mehmetçik Günü*) in 1950 to increase popular support for the Korean War. In addition to Asya, the then Minister of National Education Tevfik İleri was also present. In this meeting, while Asya was expressing his thoughts for the Korean War, Tevfik İleri confirmed Asya with these words: “Today, as a minister, I am defeating the communists from under this blessed roof and glorifying all people like Arif Nihat Asya” (Kılıç, 2016, p. 102).

When it comes to the struggle with communism in the 1950s, renowned Turkish poet Nâzım Hikmet was the symbolic figure who was targeted by nationalist intellectuals. Nâzım Hikmet was in jail for 13 since he was sentenced to prison in 1938 on charges of urging military officers to rebel against their superiors. His release in 1950 through an amnesty caused conflicts between the DP government and anti-communist organizations (Kılıç, 2016, p. 95). Asya was one of those who were not unhappy about the release of Nâzım Hikmet. In one of his columns specifically focusing on Nâzım Hikmet, he clearly states that communists are not worthy of forgiveness (Asya, 2013, p. 20).¹⁷

Although there were occasional conflicts taking place between the DP and anti-communist organizations, anti-communist campaigns with government support were also prevalent. In these campaigns organized by such organizations as Communist Movements in Turkey (*Türkiye’de Komünizm Hareketleri*) and Central Office of Association for Fight against Communism in Turkey (*Türkiye Komünizmle Mücadele Derneği Genel Merkezi*), Soviet Russia was depicted as a reptile, a snake and a spider. Such parallels meant that communists were dangerous with a dark nature and therefore, they can quietly attack one (Özman, 2016, p.105-137). This kind of representation of the USSR can be seen in the following lines:

There is a door that nurtures vipers and
sheds them into the streets.
There is a nightmare saying: “I am a cloud!”
[And] coming upon us
There is a hand that reaches our throat...
Its nails: a thorn!
There is a land: not belonging to foreigners
It is your country, [and] my *oba*, brother!

¹⁷ Turkish original is: “...Onun affı işinde benim ele alacağım tek cephe, hadisenin komünistlerin affa layık olmadığını ispata yol açmış bulunmasından ibarettir.”

There is a voice singing us a lullaby
To have us shot while we are asleep!

*Bir kapı var engerekler yetiştirip
Sokaklara döken;
Bir kabus var: “Ben bulutum!” deyip
Üstümüze çöken!
Bir el var: boğazımıza uzanmış...
Tırnakları, diken!
Bir toprak var: yabanın değil;
Benim obam, kardeş, senin ülken!
Bir ses var: ninni söyler bize,
Vurulalım diye uyurken!
(Asya, 2017b, p. 57)*

Soviet Russia is thus viewed as a source that would produce snakes and spread them to other countries. Asya warns that if Turkey falls asleep with this ‘lullaby’, it would be ruined. Therefore, it must stay awake in order to eliminate the communist threat. To eliminate this danger, one must choose its side in a world divided into two poles. In a world dominated by polarized ideological camps, namely, left/right, liberalism/communism, and democracy/fascism, one must wisely make a choice between what side to take since staying neutral in this polarized setting is the worst. Asya was clearly on the US side. In a 1962 article, he congratulated American President J. F. Kennedy (1917-1963) for his energetic and courageous attitude towards communism (Asya, 2016a, pp. 187–188). He underlined that he expected the same attitude from Turkish politicians. The pro-American attitude of Asya can be clearly seen during the Cuban Missile Crisis at that time. With this crisis, while Turkish politicians thought that the USA could sacrifice Turkey for its own interests, Asya still did not change his pro-American attitude. In fact, Asya expressed his reaction to those who remained neutral in the following lines:

They work hard and strive but
They always remain neutral in the battle of the right and the left
They have no place in heaven or hell, then.
Oh God, you widen the *araf* (limbo)!

*Yaptıkları, uğraşıp didinmek.. ancak,
Sağ – sol savaşında hep tarafsız kalmak
Cennet’le Cehennem’de –demek- yerleri yok..
Tanrı’m, sen A’raf’ı genişletmeye bak!
(Asya, 2014c, p. 196)*

Asya blamed those who were neutral in the anti-communist cause since they do not deserve either heaven or hell. He wished the worst for them: remain in limbo just because they did not express a strong attitude against communism.

Asya also blamed those who adopted a political ideological stance called the “Left of the Center” (*Ortanın Solu*). This stance was adopted by the RPP after 1960 in a move to change its discourse towards the left of the center. However, such an ideological revision received accusations from Turkish nationalist-conservative wing (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, p. 131). For instance, the Justice Party (JP) called the “Ortanın Solu” as the “way to Moscow” since leftist thought could not be thought independently of communism. Asya also thought that the new rhetoric of the RPP would eventually become the center of the left, making it closer to communism. His view can be seen as follows:

I look suspiciously at what seems solid
Because I am more afraid of the disease carrier than the patient of
The disease called “semi-left” by the medical science!

*Uzaktan ve yakından sağlam görüne de
Kuşkularla bakarım;*

*Çünkü tıbbın “Yarımsol” dediği hastalığın
Hastasından ziyade portöründen korkarım!
(Asya, 2017b, p. 189)*

For Asya, communism is not an idea or an ideology; rather, it is a sickness like cholera. Just like Romania, Bulgaria or Greece that became ill, Turkey could also catch the illness of communism (Asya, 2016a, p. 210). According to Asya, the RPP would be the only reason if this so-called disease spreads in Turkey since the RPP had a close ideology to communism. Fearful of such a possibility, he asks for help:

Will there not be a physician
who can treat my nation suffering from half headache?

*Yarım başağrısına tutulmuş milletimi
Tedavi edecek bir hekim gelmeyecek mi?
(Asya, 2017b, p. 186)*

Asya warned the Turkish people about the RPP, since the whole country could get sick because of the RPP. According to Asya, whatever the rhetoric of the RPP was called, it was as dangerous as communism and socialism.¹⁸ That is why he expects someone to save Turkey from this half headache. Considering Asya’s harsh view of communism, his approach towards the RPP makes more sense. He believed that the RPP was providing room for leftist people and these people were nourishing

¹⁸ Later, same attitude of Asya could be seen in the 1970s with the Demirel government. Mentioning Bülent Ecevit as “Allende Büllende” by Süleyman Demirel can also be considered as an extension of anti-communist hatred in the Turkish right. While Süleyman Demirel was trying to draw attention to Bülent Ecevit’s resemblance to the Chilean statesman Marxist Salvatore Allende, he tried to show the public that the democratic left in Turkey was no different from communism or socialism (Aydın & Taşkın, 2015, p. 155). In one way or another, leftist ideas were always identified with communism.

communism by publishing newspapers and magazines (Asya, 2016c, p. 228). The following lines reflect his dislike of the RPP:

He can no longer find the way to the truth.
He can no longer get in the way of the nation...
When he departs from this world,
They'd rather bury him in the left of the center!

*Bulamaz –gayri- gerçeğin yolunu;
Giremez –gayri- milletin yoluna...
Bu diyardan göçüp gidince, onu
Yatırın –bari- ortanın soluna!*
(Asya, 2018b, p. 191)

It is seen that Asya's nationalist and anti-communist stance and his criticism of the RPP is intertwined. Just because the RPP has changed its discourse towards the left of the center, it left the path of the truth and entered the path of lies and communism; therefore, the RPP can no longer serve the interests of the Turkish nation. That is why it would be better to bury the RPP in the left of the center.

Asya was also a regular contributor writing columns for the "Journal for the Struggle against Communism" (*Komünizmle Mücadele Dergisi*). Asya's column in the first page of the journal's first issue depicted communism as in the following: "...No family, no history, no myth, no religion, no faith. There is no honor and dignity: No individual, what remains? Bunch of monkeys ruled by bears. This is what remains.

This is communism” (Asya, 1964, p. 1).¹⁹ Considering his writing in journal, his poems about communism make more sense.

Although it is not known when Asya wrote the aforementioned poems, it is likely that he wrote them before radical student movements in the late 1960s and 1970s since Asya’s discourse became tougher in the beginning of the 1970s. Despite his fears concerning the infection of communism, new Marxist-Leninist groups began to emerge in Turkey from the 1960s onwards. While these leftist groups were basing their discourses on opposing American imperialism, the Turkish nationalist wing was also trying to evolve as a paramilitary commando organization under the leadership of the NMP (Mardin, 1991, p. 259). This was a period when Turkey was witnessing the simultaneous rise of revolutionary and nationalist movements. In fact, Turkish universities became a scene for violent student demonstrations. In accordance with his attitude about communism, Asya had a harsh view towards student events. Humiliating and acrimonious view of Asya on the leftist and revolutionary youth can be seen in the following lines:

Incomprehensible:
why did they take their right hands behind their back
and raise their left fists?
If anyone knows, say
To which garden or vineyard do these scarecrows belong?
I saw that they are alive.
So whose children are these children?

*Anlaşılmaz: neden sağ elleri, ardlarında
Ve ne diye havaya kalkmış sol yumrukları?
Bilen varsa söylesin*

¹⁹ The facsimile of this page is found in Appendix 2.

*Bunlar hangi bahçenin,
Bağın korkulukları?
Gördüm, ki canlıymışlar...
öyleyse bu çocuklar kimlerin çocukları
(Asya, 2017b, p. 139)*

It is not hard to see that Asya was not pleased that some part of Turkish youth was under the influence of the left-wing ideology. Asya does not quite comprehend why the Turkish youth should join in the leftist movement since only the young people who do not have a mother and a father, i.e. only wasteful people can participate in such a movement. According to Asya, leftist youth were both betraying their families, and therefore, their nation. This so-called betrayal can be seen more clearly in his poem called “Protestors” (turkcesi) (Asya, 2018b, p. 164). In this poem, he basically argues that the Turkish youth in the left-wing movement do not deserve the sacrifices that their families made for them since they ignore the efforts of their families. Here, the leftist young people are viewed to be committing treason against the Turkish nation and the Turkish state. In this poem, Asya speaks from the mouth of the nation, grandfather, grandmother and father. They express their frustration with these young leftwingers. The final lines of the poem clearly insult them:

I came and said: “You are just like that, let me spit on your protests”

There is only [a] vile [person]

Who opens his arms to you

Adopting you and calls you my “puppies”

Ben, gelip dedim: “Siz busunuz işte

Ey eylemlerini eylediklerim!”

Vardır bir alçak,

Ki size –ancak-

O, açar kucak;

O sahip çıkarak der, “Eniklerim!”

(Asya, 2018b, p. 163).

The parallels he drawn between the Turkish state/nation and family is notable. Put differently, quite expectedly and in line with his nationalist stance, the nation and state are two entities that the youth are indebted. That is why patriotic youth are loyal and attached to their mother/nation/state and would not engage in treason, i.e. disobedience. To Asya, involvement in left-wing politics is deemed betrayal and ingratitude. Therefore, Asya curses the protests of leftist youth since he views them to be the children of the USSR, but not of Turkey. Only the cursed USSR can promote the ideas of leftist traitors, i.e. revolution:

Every time he opens his mouth, he says revolution, revolution...
We lag behind the age, [then it means] the age is his age!

*“Devrim, devrim...” diyor ağız açtıkça
Biz, çağ dışıyız... devir, onun devri, demek*
(Asya, 2014c, p. 197).

Asya complains that the Turkish youth find people like Asya reactionary and outdated. He is also uncomfortable since the only wish of this youth is revolution. He views them to be only imitative of the USSR (Asya, 2014c, p. 85). Indeed, Asya approaches the left-wing in Turkey to be nothing but the imitation since leftist thought in Turkey cannot be original. According to him, left-wing youth call everything left from ancestors to be bigotry but value those imported from Cuba (Asya, 2014b, p. 240). Moreover, the people on the left are only tools at the hands of their big brothers. Asya wants action to be taken against these:

Tell [me], other than saying “may curse be on their evil”
Oh villages, districts, and provinces, is there not anything else to do?
Do not underestimate them as these are only the trunk [of the elephant]
The elephants are hiding in the back

If it is about patience, then enough is enough; [and] take your hands out of your pockets

Oh you very clean generations [i.e. stop being indifferent]

How can these bustas speak in the name of the Turkish youth,

Whose number is no more than three hundred?

Söyleyin: “Şerlerine la’net” demekten gayri

Yapacak şey yok mu ey köyler, ilçeler, iller?

Küçümsemeyiniz ki, bunlar henüz hortumdur;

Arkada saklı filler!

Sabırsa yeter artık... siz de ellerinizi

Cebinizden çıkarın ey tertemiz nesiller:

Türk gençliği adına nasıl konuşabilir

Sayıları üç yüzü geçmeyen bu kopiller?

(Asya, 2017a, pp. 182–184)

In addition to calling them “busta”, Asya also refers to the leftwingers as “miserable” and “murderers” while also likening them to snakes. By picturing radical students in a humiliating manner and mocking them, he basically vulgarizes the leftist ideology. In this perspective, although it was the Turkish homeland that raised these young people, the leftist Turkish youth betray their mothers, fathers and ancestors as they collaborate with the USSR and therefore are ungrateful to the motherland that did everything for them. In an essay, he states that anyone with leftist thoughts could not be Turkish anymore since a genuine Turkish person could not hold communist views (Asya, 2016c, p. 252) and the source of the misery of holding left-wing thoughts has one clear address: Soviet Russia and its orbits.

As this discussion demonstrates, Asya is a dedicated Cold Warrior in the struggle with communism. In this struggle, by reflecting and mobilizing emotions through poems, he seems to have basically provided a typical example of the Turkish right-wing perspective colored with a categorical dismissal of communism as an outsider ideology

produced and spread by the USSR. The so-called Soviet danger and hostile image of the USSR were articulated in the ideology of the Turkish right. With his works of both prose and poetry, Asya also seems to reflect a typical version of the Turkish right.

4.5. The Reception of Asya's Poetry

Until now, I have analyzed the historical and political ideological themes that most often appear in his poetry. These are the conquest, the Cyprus conflict and struggle with communism. An analysis of the poetry of Asya would remain fundamentally deficient if one did not focus on its reception. As can be seen, neither in his prose nor in his poetry rather than having a theoretically and ideologically sophisticated discussion and representation, he has a very crude and superficial perspective. For instance, particularly in his essays one cannot see any scholarly or theoretical references in his essays. He mostly wrote in a way that merely confirmed nationalist feelings. Such a disinterest in and/or lack of scholarly engagement and treatment thus suggest that his work is appealing mainly for popular emotional and ideological mobilization. It is therefore not surprising that Asya's poetry has been used by Turkish-Islamic-leaning political leaders. A cursory glance at the use of his poetry by such right-wing political leaders as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Binali Yıldırım and Devlet Bahçeli since the 2000s substantiates this observation.

The leading contemporary Turkish political leader is President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is known for his interest in poetry. He frequently recites the poems of Asya in his speeches. Erdoğan in his speech after the failed coup attempt on 15 July, 2016 condemned it and commemorated the people who lost their lives during the attempt by reciting a few lines from the poem called "A Flag is Waiting for the Wind" (*Bir Bayrak Rüzgâr Bekliyor*). One of the lines is as follows: "The hill of martyrs is not empty" (*Şehitler Tepesi Boş Değil*) ("Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Bunların Yaptığını Ancak Kafir Yapar," 2016). After the 15th of July, the quote of "The Hill of Martyrs Is Not Empty" has become an integral part of the political discourse of President Erdoğan. During the Turkish military operation in Idlib, Erdoğan's reference to this line caused

tension between Erdoğan and the RPP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who said that when the RPP comes to power, the hill of martyrs would remain empty (“Kılıçdaroğlu: Millet İttifakı Zamanında Şehitler Tepesi Boş Kalacak,” 2020).

It is also seen that Asya’s poem is often recited in the JDP meetings and ceremonies. Before the general election of November 2015, in the event called “United as a Single Voice against Terrorism” (*Milyonlarca Nefes Teröre Karşı Tek Ses*), Erdoğan recited Asya’s poem named “Prayer” (*Dua*) (“Erdoğan’dan ‘Dua’ Şiiri,” 2015). Erdoğan read one of the most well-known poems of Asya examined earlier, namely the “Conquest March” (*Fetih Marşı*) in various events such as Youth Meetings (*Gençlik Buluşmaları*) of the “Turkey’s Youth Foundation” (*Türkiye Gençlik Vakfı, TÜGVA*)²⁰ and general congress of the JDP’s youth branch (“Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Fetih Marşı’nı Okudu,” 2019). By reading the *Conquest March*, he underlined that the JDP needs young people with the spirit of conquest.

Asya’s poems are also recited by Ahmet Davutoğlu, former Prime Minister and chairman of Future Party (Gelecek Partisi) and current critic of Erdoğan (“Bugünlerde Kimlerin Kimlerle Koalisyon Yaptığına Dikkat Edin,” 2015). Binali Yıldırım, former prime minister of Turkey also recited the poem “A Flag is Waiting For the Wind” in the second extraordinary congress of the JDP and commemorated the representatives of the right-wing political tradition such as Adnan Menderes, Necmettin Erbakan and Turgut Özal (“AK Parti 2. Olağanüstü Büyük Kongresi,” 2016). Devlet Bahçeli leader of the NMP, has also occasionally recited Asya’s poems (“AK Parti-MHP Şiir Savaşları,” 2015).

Unlike prose, poetry provides a convenient medium in line with the popular political mobilization mainly due to the fact that it can be set to music. Indeed, plays through stage performance and poetry through musical interpretation provide two further

²⁰ It is a youth and student foundation based in İstanbul. Bilal Erdoğan, son of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is on the board of the foundation.

potential venues compared to the literary genres of short story and novel beyond isolated individual act of reading. Setting to music of the poetry thus makes it more accessible to the masses. In this respect, the Conquest March was set to music by Yıldırım Gürses in his 2000 album titled *Yelkenler Biçilecek*. The same poem was also set to music by Arslanbek Sultanbekov and Grup Ser in 2020. Likewise, probably due to the frequent recitation by President Erdoğan of the poem “Prayer” (*Dua*), it was set to music by Mustafa Kamacı and Mustafa Yıldızoğlu in 2016 (“Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’ın Okuduğu o Dua Marş Oldu,” 2016).

From the date of their being uploaded on YouTube, these video clips on YouTube provide a useful platform to view the reactions of the audience. The comments generally reflect a sense of extreme pride and self-confidence acquired by the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II. They state that Mehmed II opened a new age by conquering Constantinople.²¹ Some other viewers state that only those treacherous people do not get emotional while listening to this march; indeed only the descendants of the Byzantine Empire would not be moved by this march. Furthermore, some others note that they cry every time they listen to this piece and state that they are proud of being Muslim. While listening to this march, they really feel that that they are the grandchildren of the Ottomans. This song also seems to have fulfilled one of the main goals of Asya: to revive the spirit of conquest in the hearts and minds of Turkish youth. Some of the viewers write that they want to invade Greece since the Turks can conquer the world. Moreover, they wish future conquests for the Turkish state since they want to subjugate the world again just because they are the grandchildren of Fatih. Since their grandfather conquered Constantinople, they wish Turkey to regain the former power of the Ottoman Empire and they want the re-establishment of the Ottoman Empire to rule the world again. In this respect, they express their desire that the entire Turkish world should get united under one single roof since the Turks are the strongest

²¹ It must be noted that the fall of Constantinople was first viewed to be the opening of the modern era by the 17th century German Christoph Cellarius (Brockett, 2014, p. 407)

and smartest race. Another recurrent comment is about the enthusiasm for the future prospect that Hagia Sophia would once again be opened for Muslim prayers. It is seen that Asya's feelings for Hagia Sophia, the spirit of conquest is still appealing to some in Turkey ("Arslanbek Sultanbekov - Fetih Marşı [© 2020 Bozdağ Film]," 2020; "Fetih Marşı," 2008; "GRUP SER - Fetih Marşı," 2020).

To conclude this chapter, one can state that Asya's poetry has an immediately personal dimension. He was orphaned at a little age. Subsequently, his commitment to Turkish-Islamic nationalism, anti-communism and his views on the Cyprus conflict bear the traces of such a traumatized childhood. His poetry's clear and straightforwardly insulting language alongside its rather unsophisticated imagery seem to have increased its reception by the masses. It seems also possible to argue that the masses have felt a satisfaction of different sorts particularly following their musical reinterpretations by Turkish-Islamic musicians.

Conclusion

Analysis of Asya's poetry shows that there are three frequently recurring themes in his poetry. The first conquest: the opening of Anatolia in Manzikert in 1071 and the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. While the Battle of Manzikert "opened the gate of Anatolia to Muslim Turks", the spirit of conquest reached its peak with the conquest of Constantinople. By exaggerating the past victories through the Battle of Manzikert and the conquest of Istanbul, Asya also sees these victories as a future political guide to the Turkish youth. The second common theme in Asya's poetry is the Cyprus problem. Asya views Cyprus as the orphaned child left from the Ottoman Empire and mothered by Turkey. The third theme that is frequently found in Asya's poetry is the theme of anti-communism. A common characteristic of the poetry of nationalism is the presence of an enemy. In Asya's poetry penned during the Cold War, too, there is an enemy: Soviet Russia. Asya used the Soviet threat during the Cold War to reinforce his nationalist discourse. He complained about the inadequacy of the Turkish governments in response to the Soviet threat. Likening Soviet Russia to a snake, he viewed the participation of the Turkish youth in the left-wing movement as a betrayal

against the Turkish state and nation. He also established his perspective on the student movement in the 1960s and 1970s through anti-communism. Asya's poetry characterized with these features have frequently been effectively used in the right-wing political ideological discourses of the political leaders up to the present. Therefore, going beyond the textual analysis of his poetry, the final section of the chapter underlined the reception of Asya's poetry particularly during the JDP rule.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Before I started working on this project, I was only a pastime reader of the works of Turkish literature penned by democratic-minded and internationalist novelists. Studying Asya's poetry has been an enriching experience on several grounds. First, during the research I undertook in this process I have come to better realize the ways in which as a form of art, poetry is a venue for both individual emotional expression and the subconscious of a political ideological discourse in a given historical context. Therefore, a number of remarkable scholarly works on poetry that I have explored during my research led me to the essential conviction that poetry is by no means merely a literary tool to be left outside the research scope of the social and political sciences. Put bluntly, I strongly believe that as an outstanding literary medium, poetry brings together the poetic, the personal and the political at the same time.

Second, prevalent works of social sciences in Turkey do not seem to fully realize the significance of poetry. Likewise researchers in the fields of social sciences do not seem to be interested in the study of neither oral nor written poetry as a tool of social and political research. Thus it is common to see that historians, sociologists and political scientists working on modern Turkey most often tend to disregard poetry. One can hence see that a considerable part of the conventional scholarship in the field of political science appears to be mostly limited to a dry, top-down, elitist and state-centric approach. I believe that it is due to the disciplinary walls built among different social science and humanities disciplines. Since I think that social science research is most often conducted in an extremely limited framework without benefiting from other disciplines, I wanted to go beyond these walls by building my thesis on the poetry of

Arif Nihat Asya since it offered me a unique opportunity to conduct inter- and transdisciplinary research since I have been fascinated about the question of how social, political and historical themes can be most impressively represented through literature.

Third, the crucial observation my thesis makes is as follows: the studies undertaken by Turkish academics most often employed in the departments of Turkish Language and Literature predominantly in Turkish provincial universities are more often than not highly uncritical and lacking in conceptual and analytical depth and sophistication. These studies are deprived of an innovative perspective on social and political issues. That is why in this study, I spent quite some time to go into a close and critical assessment of the origins of the large amount of the highly uncritical Turkish academic production on modern Turkish poetry. As has been noted by Immanuel Wallerstein, universities as well as the production of knowledge in the fields of the social sciences has been tightly tied to and shaped by the dominant political, ideological and economic conditions. The increase in the number of the Turkish-language academic production in mostly university journals on right-wing poets and writers seems to be best explained in reference to political economic and ideological setting of Turkey in the wake of the military coup in 1980. As I discussed in the first and third chapters, it seems that the production of such academic publications cannot be accounted for independently of the dominant ideology. The increase in the study of Turkish right-wing writers, poets and intellectuals from the 1980s on, therefore, should not be viewed as a mere coincidence but rather a product and/or reflection of the broader political and economic restructuring of the country. After the 1980 coup, the military leaders responsible for the coup attached importance to the promotion of Turkish-Islamic values and thoughts in order to ensure solidarity within the country; therefore, they approached Islam and Turkish nationalism as the social glue. Turkish nationalism in its synthesis with Islam was viewed by the military elites to ensure solidarity within the country. The rise of Islamization did not only permeate elementary and high schools, but it also affected universities through a change introduced in the profile of

academic staff. Leftist professors who were dismissed after 1980 were replaced by the academics with conservative and/or Islamic background from Anatolian provinces.

The changing academic structure can explain the subsequent change not only in the subjects studied but also the way of their conduct. These studies also remain far from developing a holistic point of view towards Arif Nihat Asya in all his simplicity and also complexity. As I started to explore the existing literature on Asya, I was frankly shocked to discover that these studies repeat one other in terms of their approach. They generally focus on themes in selected books and do not take into account the political and historical context as deeply shaping the thoughts, ideology and works of the personality under investigation. Lacking in conceptual and theoretical engagement, these studies more often than not have a quite biased rather than contextualized perspective on Arif Nihat Asya. They view Asya only as someone religious, moral, and nationalist. From a research point of view, I believe that such an approach is doing more harm to Asya's legacy than good mainly because it gives a flawed and incomplete picture of his personal, political and literary profile. Whether or not a researcher agrees with the personality of his/her choice for research, s/he should aim to provide as complete and accurate a picture as possible. In contrast to these studies which keep underlining the religious and nationalist aspect of Asya, Asya did not write poems only about the Turkish nation, Ottoman imperial glory, Turkish nationalism and Islam; he also wrote poems about alcohol, cigarette, eroticism and sexuality. In fact, Asya also gave a considerable place in his poems loaded with fantasies about adolescent girls and women. Although none of these poems are mutually exclusive, the existing literature up to now has not been able to develop a non-reductionist perspective towards Asya. As i had to keep the scope of my thesis limited, I was not able to examine his poetry with the theme of sexuality. Although I touched on this topic briefly in the discussion of the Conquest of Constantinople, I should note that Asya penned poems purely sexual in content. Some examples are below:

*Sıktı körpecik belinde,
Çocukluk çağından beri
İlk başka ellere*

Çözdüreceği kemeri (Asya, 2017a, p. 143).

Onu küçük bulanlar, daha

Ne istiyorlar ki, gelinlikleri

Altında iyiden iyiye belli

Kadınlığın bütün zenginlikleri (Asya, 2017a, p. 209)

Hem meyvâsın Gülveren'in, hem gülüsün;

İmrendiriyor, kalkıp inerken, göğsün...

Arkanda büyüklerin habersiz hala...

Senden söz açıldıkça diyorlar: büyüsün!

(Asya, 2014c, p. 65)²²

Fourth, I focus on the poems of Arif Nihat Asya in their political and historical context. Asya's Turkish nationalist poetry blended with Islamic images, symbols and references first and foremost is reflective of the continued synthesis of Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkish nationalism from the late Ottoman Empire through the Cold War period. Thus his poetry demonstrates that they were profoundly shaped by the discourse of Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkish nationalism and it has received most academic and popular attention in the post-1980s in Turkey.

Fifth, his poetry received immense attention from Turkish nationalist and conservative political leaders from the 1980s to the present. Through a focus on both the Turkish-language academic production and online communication platforms such as Ekşi Sözlük and YouTube, my thesis also provides a picture of the reception of Asya's poetry in Turkish academic and popular circles.

Sixth, another interesting point I have discovered during my research on Asya's poetry pertains to the fact that the use of poetry at the service of nationalist ideological discourse as well as mobilization is not a phenomenon limited solely to the Turkish

²² Partly due to the concern that the meaning would get lost in my literal English translation, I leave these lines untranslated.

case; rather, it seems to be a universal phenomenon witnessed during the emergence and taking shape of nation-states. With this consideration in mind, one of the main aims of this thesis has been to locate Asya's poetry in a global context. In this sense, this study shows that the nationalist poetry of Asya and emotions it possesses in these poems are not specific to Turkish nationalism. Almost all nationalisms around the world have nationalist poets, who underline the past historical victories of the past to inculcate in the minds of young generations. In these nationalist projects, there is always a rival state or nation, since all nationalities want to realize themselves or mark their territories through the existence of an enemy. During the Cold War, this was Soviet Russia for Turkey and thus Asya built his own nationalist feelings through the hostility and hatred towards Soviet Russia. Had he seen the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, he would most likely find another rival in the newly shaped political and historical context.

Lastly, the final lines of this thesis were written when Hagia Sophia was eventually turned to a mosque on a July 24, 2020, with Friday prayer. The head of the Religious Directorate led the prayer. During the khutba, he also had a sword on which was written the first verse of the Qur'anic chapter al-Fath ("Ayasofya'da Tarihi Gün: Diyanet İşleri Başkanı'ndan Kılıç Geleneğiyle Cuma Hutbesi," 2020; "Ayasofya'da Tarihi Gün! Diyanet İşleri Başkanı'ndan Kılıç Geleneğiyle Cuma Hutbesi," 2020). Minister of Finance and son-in-law of President Erdoğan also posted a tweet saying that coins would be minted with "Hagia Sophia 1453-2020" on them ("Bakan Albayrak Açıkladı: Ayasofya Camii İçin Özel Para Basıldı!," 2020). Interestingly, Muharrem İnce, the RPP candidate of presidency in 2016 also attended the Friday prayer at Hagia Sophia. These recent developments point to the current hegemonic place of Turkish-Islamic nationalism including the heir to the political party that had turned Hagia Sophia into a museum in 1934. They also show the Turkish-Islamic political and cultural mindset motivated mainly by reviving the so-called age-old traditions rather than future-oriented political projects that aim to address present-day issues in innovative ways. Yet most important of all, these developments testify to the continued relevance and significance of studying Arif Nihat Asya's poetry.

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A. ASYA’S SHORT HANDWRITTEN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

[illegible]

T. B. M. M. CYCLERINE MANUSCRIPTS
SICIL NO = 1852
ZARA NO = 52

9. Dönem

1852
9. Dönner

Olumluk (Kısaca)

[illegible]

B. THE FIRST PAGE OF ASYA'S PIECE "KOMÜNİZM"

Sahibi :
T. K. M. D.
Aydn Şubesi
Başkanlığı
Yası İql. Md.
Orhan
Özgedik

Diği ve Baskı
COŞKUN
Matbaası

Yıl: 1 Sayı: 1
Fiatı 25 kuruş

Komünizmle 1765 SC 144 Devlet Nuşası

Mücadele

Dergisi

TANRI TÜRKÜ VE İNANANLARI MORUSUN

4 - MART - 1964 ÇARŞAMBA 321.805

Büyük
Emir

Şurası: unu-
tulmamalıdır
ki Türk ale-
minin en bu-
yük dümanı
komünistlerdir!
Her görüdü-
ğü yerde ezil-
melidir.
K. Atatürk

Mücadeleye Başlarken

Avk. ORHAN ÖZGEDİK

Evhamlı değiliz. Hayal ile uğraşmıyoruz. 1917 de 20.000 komünist 200.000.000 luk Rusya'ya köle haline sokmasını becerdi. Hürriyetlerini kaybedenler yalana kanmanın ezasını çekiyorlar. 46 senede 1.000.000.000 insanın hayatına ve yalan vâdilere inananın kurbanı olduğunu görüyoruz. Gafletlerin, safca inanmaların, yalan propa- gandalara kapılmanın sonucu hürriyetler, mukaddes inançlar insanca yaşamaya hayal oldu. Şimdi ise, zillet ve sefalet altında acı acı kurtuluş günlerinin hayali ile avunuyorlar.

Komünizm başlangıçtan beri ilan etti ki: Komünizm eihana hakim olmalıdır. Bunun için devamlı savaş içindedir. Lenin, dünyanın 1/4 nün komünist olması için 3/4 nün ölmesini mübah görüyor. Bu savaşta akla gelen ve gelmeyen her türlü hile, vahşet, yalan, ahlâk dışı hareket mevcuttur. Komünist alem devamlı taarruz halinde. hür dünya ise şuurlu bir tarzda savunma lüzumunu bile anlamamış vaziyette. Onun içindir ki şher geçen gün yeni yeni kayıplar ile karşılaşmıyoruz.

Hür Macaristan Başvekili Nagy Macar Meclisinde: Elimdeki bütün esaslı malûmata dayanarak sizleri temin ederimki Macaristan için bir komünist tehlikesi aslâ yoktur.) Diyordu. Fakat bir ay sonra az sayıda vatan haini komünist ajanlarının, Macaristanı kızıl aleme satışına şahit oldu. Hürriyetleri, kızıl komünist tanklarının gelik paletleri altında vatanseverlerin vâcutları ile birlikte esildi. Hürriyetleri gasp edilen hiç bir millet çoğunluğu bu kızıl afeti arzu etmemiştir, ama, mücadele hâzın ve şeklini bilme-

KOMÜNİZM

ARIF NİHAT ASYA

Sigaraletini Çar Stalinin algarısından yakan.. Sigaraletinin dumanını bizim yüzümüze üflileyen millet düşmanlarının a- ramızda bugüne kadar yaşayabilmiş olmasına hayret ediyorum.

Aya kulp takip onu orak haline getirmek istiyen ellerin bu güne kadar kesilmemiş, kırılmamış ve parça parça yapılmamış olmasına hayret ederim ve bunun mes'ul-

derlerinden kurban olmuşlar- dı.

Tekrar ediyoruz.. Kılıç başımızın üstünde.. Pamuk ipliği ile asılı ve sallanıyor.. Bize ise bunu görmeye mecburuz. Komünizmi ve Rus emperyalizminin karşısına asırlardır, dikilen asil milleti çökertmek onlar için başlıca hedef.. Yabancı basına kadar geçen rakamlara göre en az 3.000 faal, durmadan zehir saçan komünist bizde de çalışıyor.. Bunlar milyonlarca ruble ile besle-

Devamı Sahife 4 de



Komünizm başlangıçtan beri ilan etti ki: Komünizm eihana hakim olmalıdır. Bunun için devamlı savaş içindedir. Lenin, dünyanın 1/4 nün komünist olması için 3/4 nün ölmesini mübah görüyor. Bu savaşta akla gelen ve gelmeyen her türlü hile, vahşet, yalan, ahlâk dışı hareket mevcuttur. Komünist alem devamlı taarruz halinde. hür dünya ise şuurlu bir tarzda savunma lüzumunu bile anlamamış vaziyette. Onun içindir ki şher geçen gün yeni yeni kayıplar ile karşılaşmıyoruz.

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Dernek Tüzüğünden Mad.ler

- 1 — Derneğin siyasetle ilgisi yoktur.
- 2 — Dernek: başta komünizm olmak üzere, yıkıcı yıpratıcı ve buzguncu fikir ve ceroyanlarla mücadele etmek, milli kültürümüzü, milli ve manevi değerlerimizi korumak gayesiyle kurulmuştur. Bu maksada ulaşmak için aşağıdaki mevzularla iştigal edilir.
 - a) Tarih, vatan, kültür ve kader birliği şuurunu kışkırtmak.
 - b) Demokratik nizam ve insan hakları fikrini hayretlendirmek

Devamı S. 4 de

Komünizm başlangıçtan beri ilan etti ki: Komünizm eihana hakim olmalıdır. Bunun için devamlı savaş içindedir. Lenin, dünyanın 1/4 nün komünist olması için 3/4 nün ölmesini mübah görüyor. Bu savaşta akla gelen ve gelmeyen her türlü hile, vahşet, yalan, ahlâk dışı hareket mevcuttur. Komünist alem devamlı taarruz halinde. hür dünya ise şuurlu bir tarzda savunma lüzumunu bile anlamamış vaziyette. Onun içindir ki şher geçen gün yeni yeni kayıplar ile karşılaşmıyoruz.

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KOMÜNİZM

ARIF NİHAT ASYA

Sigaraletini Çar Stalinin algarısından yakan.. Sigaraletinin dumanını bizim yüzümüze üflileyen millet düşmanlarının a- ramızda bugüne kadar yaşayabilmiş olmasına hayret ediyorum.

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Tekrar ediyoruz.. Kılıç başımızın üstünde.. Pamuk ipliği ile asılı ve sallanıyor.. Bize ise bunu görmeye mecburuz. Komünizmi ve Rus emperyalizminin karşısına asırlardır, dikilen asil milleti çökertmek onlar için başlıca hedef.. Yabancı basına kadar geçen rakamlara göre en az 3.000 faal, durmadan zehir saçan komünist bizde de çalışıyor.. Bunlar milyonlarca ruble ile besle-

Devamı Sahife 4 de

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

iir hem bireysel duygulara hem de kolektif duygulara geit olan bir edebi trdr. iir bu bakımdan aslında bir toplumun, devletin ve hatta btn insanlıęın yzyıllar boyunca birikmi bilinaltı gibi dnlebilir. İlk olarak iir devlet merkezci anlatılara alternatif bakı aıları sunabilir ve bu haliyle devlet tarih yazımı ve resm ideoloji tarafından susturulmu ya da grmezden gelinmi azınlıklara konumaları iin bir alan yaratabilir ya da dięer deyile sessiz kalmıların sesi olabilir. Yani iktidar ve resmi tarih tarafından grmezden gelinen tarihi olaylara ya da tarihi kiiliklere yer aabilir. İkincil olarak iir; siyaset bilimi, uluslararası ilikiler, sosyoloji ve alan alımaları gibi farklı disiplinleri bir araya getirerek farklı bakı aılarının olumasına katkı saęlayabilir nk iir sz konusu disiplinlere alternatif bir bakı aısı sunabilmektedir. Bu bakımdan iir Trk siyasi hayatına, Trk saęına ve Trk milliyetilięine dair orjinal bir bakı aısı da getirebilir nk sosyal bilimcilere zerinde alıabilecekleri farklı bir kaynak vermektedir. iir hem bireysel hem kolektif duygulara geit vermek ve alternatif bakı aısı yaratmak yanında ncl olarak siyasi liderler tarafından milliyeti mobilizasyon aracı olarak da kullanılabilmektedir. Btn bunlar gz nnde bulundurulduęunda 1904-1975 yılları arasında yaamı milliyeti/muhafazakr bir air olan Arif Nihat Asya'nın iirleri hem siyaset bilimi aısından hem de alan alımalarına katkı sunması aısından bu tezin kapsamı boyunca sosyo-politik analize tabi tutulmutur.

Tezin ilk kısmında Arif Nihat Asya hakkındaki literatr incelenmitir ve literatr taraması gstermitir ki kendisi hakkında yapılan alımalar birbirini  temel noktada tekrar etmektedir. alımaların ilk kısmı Arif Nihat Asya'nın Kastamonu, Adana ve Edirne gibi belli ehirler hakkındaki iirleri hakkındadır. Bu alımalar Asya'nın belirli ehirler hakkındaki iirlerini derin bir analize tutmaksızın direkt olarak yer vermitir, sz konusu alımalar bu noktada birbirini tekrar eder halledir. alımaların ikinci kısmı Arif Nihat Asya'nın karakter ya da kiilik zelliklerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu kısımda Arif Nihat Asya genel olarak sahip olduęu belli zellikler dolayısı ile yceltilmekte ve hatta ilahlatırılmaktadır. Bu alımalar genel olarak Arif Nihat

Asya'yı milliyetçi, dindar ya da muhafazakâr olduğu için övmekte ya da dürüst ve alçakgönüllü bir insan olduğu için yüceltmektedir. Bu çalışmalar Asya'yı belli başlı özelliklere indirgemesi açısından oldukça problemlidir çünkü Asya'nın şiirlerini anlamlandırma konusunda bütüncül bir yaklaşımdan oldukça uzaktır. Oysa Asya sadece milliyetçilik ya da dini temalar hakkında şiirler kaleme almamıştır. Arif Nihat Asya aynı zamanda kadınlar ve ergen kızlar hakkında cinsel imgelerle yüklü şiirler de kaleme almıştır ya da alkol ve sigara teması içeren şiirler de yazmıştır. Bir bütün olarak bakıldığında bütün bu şiirler birbirini dışlayıcı nitelikte değildir ama bazı şiirlerin ön plana çıkarılması ve diğerlerinin yok sayılması Arif Nihat Asya külliyatını bir bütün olarak ele almayı zorlaştırmaktadır. Oysa bir sosyal bilimcinin görevi tarihi bir kişiliği bütün yönleri ile almak olmalıdır. Çalışmaların üçüncü kısmı ise Arif Nihat Asya şiirlerinin ya da şiir kitaplarının biçimsel ya da yapısal analizi üzerinedir. Bu çalışmalar daha çok Arif Nihat Asya'nın şiir kitaplarından birini ya da birkaçını içinde bulundurduğu sıfat, zamir, ikileme, ritim, uyak, kafiye açısından ele almakta ve formel açıdan incelemektedir. Bütün bir literatür göstermiştir ki Arif Nihat Asya'nın şiir külliyatı sosyo-politik bir analize tabi tutulmamıştır. Oysa Arif Nihat Asya'nın duygu ve düşünce dünyası Soğuk Savaş döneminde yaşamış bir şair olarak dönemin siyasi ve tarihi olaylarından derinden etkilenmiştir. Bu tez de bu bakımdan Asya'nın şiir dünyasını tarihsel ve siyasal bağlamında değerlendirmeyi hedeflemiştir. Bunu başarabilmek için de tez kapsamında Arif Nihat Asya'nın yazmış olduğu bütün şiir kitapları ve düz yazı kitapları içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Asya'nın şiir kitaplarındaki en çok tekrar eden temaların bir listesi çıkarılmıştır ve bu liste göstermiştir ki Asya'nın şiirlerinde en çok tekrar eden temalar şunlardır: fetih teması, Kıbrıs sorunu ve anti-komünizm. Buna ek olarak Asya'nın düşünce dünyasının daha net bir şekilde ortaya çıkarılması için Asya'nın milletvekili olduğu 1950-1954 yılları arasındaki meclis kayıt tutanakları da incelenmiştir. Son olarak Asya'nın aktif bir şekilde yazılar gönderdiği Komünizme Mücadele Dergisi de Asya'nın anti-komünist duruşunu net bir şekilde ortaya çıkarması bakımından incelenmiştir.

Tezin ikinci kısmı şiirin kavramsal ve teorik çerçevesinin oluşturulması üzerinedir. Bu bakımdan Arif Nihat Asya'nın milliyetçi şiirini incelemek ve anlamlandırmak için

gerekli olan kavramların ve teorik soruların üzerinde durulmuştur. Öncelikle şiir nedir? kişi neden şiir yazar? gibi belli başlı sorular cevaplandırılmaya çalışılmıştır. Devamında ise literatüre hâkim olan şiir akımlarından bahsedilmiş ve bunlara alternatif olarak Antony Easthope tarafından ortaya konulan ‘‘bir söylem türü olarak şiir’’ bakış açısının altı çizilmiş ve neden şiirin söylem olarak değerlendirilmesi gerektiği üzerinde durulmuştur.

Gösteren ve gösterge arasındaki ilişkinin şiirde düz yazıdan daha farklı olduğu gösterilmiş ve bu bakımdan şiirin söylem olma yönü üzerinde durulmuştur. Şiir bir söylem türü olarak belirli bir düzen içerisinde birbiri ardına gelen kelimelerden oluşmaktadır ve bu kelimeler ard arda sıralanarak cümleleri oluşturmaktadır. Cümleler ise birbiri ardına gelerek belirli bir ideolojiyi beslemek üzere söylemi oluşturmaktadır. Arif Nihat Asya şiiri özelinde ise söylemler bir araya gelerek milliyetçi ideolojiyi ortaya çıkarmakta ve beslemektedir. Bu bakımdan şiirin söylem olarak altı çizildikten sonra siyaset, ideoloji ve şiir arasındaki ilişki ortaya konmuştur. Şiir ve milliyetçi ideoloji arasındaki ilişkinin daha net bir şekilde ortaya çıkması açısından dünyanın farklı yerlerinden uluslaşma süreci ile eşzamanlı olarak ortaya çıkan milliyetçi şiir örneklerine yer verilmiştir. Bu kısımda Arnavutluk, Filistin, Yemen ve Sudan’ın milliyetçi şiirine yer verilmiştir çünkü bu topraklar geçmişte doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak Osmanlı Devleti kontrolünde bulunmuştur ve Arif Nihat Asya şiirlerinde sıklıkla Osmanlı’nın kontrolünde bulunmuş alanların Osmanlı hakimiyetini varlığını aradığını ya da özlediği belirtmektedir. Bu bakımdan Arif Nihat Asya’nın şiirlerine alternatif bir bakış açısı yaratması bakımından eski Osmanlı topraklarının milliyetçi şiirlerine yer verilmiştir. Bu şiirler Asya’nın hayalini kurduğu Osmanlı hakimiyeti özleminin gerçekliğine dair soru işaretleri getirmesi bakımından oldukça önemlidir. Kürt, Arap ve Arnavut milliyetçiliği ile bezenen bu şiirler göstermiştir ki Osmanlı hakimiyetinin bir zamanlar var olmuş olduğu bu topraklar kendi milliyetçi mitlerini oluşturmakta, kendi dillerini ve tarihlerini ortaya çıkarmak için uğraşmaktadır.

Tezin üçüncü kısmı ise Asya’nın şiirlerini analiz edebilmek için Geç Osmanlı Döneminden günümüze değin tarihsel ve siyasi bağlamı vermektedir. Bu bölümdeki bağlam Asya’nın hayatını kaybettiği 1975 yılı ile sınırlandırılmamış ve AKP

İktidarının yükselişe geçtiği 2002-2020 yıllarını da kapsamıştır çünkü Asya'nın şiirleri şu anki iktidarla birlikte sıklıkla alıntılanmaya başlamıştır. Bu bölüm kendi içerisinde beş kısma ayrılmıştır. "Uzun 19. Yüzyılın Mirası" kısmında tarihsel ve siyasal bağlam azınlık bakış açısını göz önünde bulundurularak verilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu bakımdan 19. Yüzyılın son çeyreğinde II. Abdülhamid döneminde uygulamaya konulmuş olan döndürme politikalarının üzerinde durulmuştur çünkü bu politikalar Abdülhamid'in Osmanlı Devleti'ni sünileştirme çabalarının bir ürünüdür ve Nusayri, Yezidi, Kızılbaş ve İstavri gibi Müslüman olmayan azınlıkların İslam dinini kabul etmelerini hedeflemektedir. Aynı zamanda II. Abdülhamid döneminde kurulmuş olan Hamidiye alayını ve bu alayın bünyesine Kürtlerin dahil edilmesinin ve Alevilerin dışlanmasının Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Müslüman kimliğinin altını çizme dolayısı ile yapıldığı vurgulanmıştır. Buna ek olarak İttihat ve Terakki'nin Birinci Dünya Savaşı öncesinde Ermenileri hedef alan tehcir politikasına değinilmiştir çünkü bu politikalar Anadolu'nun Türkleştirilmesini ve İslamlaştırılmasını hedef alan politikalarlardır. Kısaca 19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun fiziksel ve sembolik şiddet kullanarak Anadolu'yu Türk ve İslam çatısı altında dönüştürmeyi hedeflediği gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır.

"Soğuk Savaş Dönemi" kısmında ise Demokrat Parti ve Adalet Partisi gibi hükümetlerin İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasındaki bipolar düzendeki anti-komünist tavrı gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır. Demokrat Parti'nin 1950 yılında Kore Savaşı'na asker göndermesi ve 1952 yılında NATO üye olması gibi politikalarının altı çizilerek tüm bu politikaların Türkiye'nin çift kutuplu düzende kendi konumunu belli etmeye çalışması olduğunun altı çizilmiştir. Demokrat Parti'nin iktidara gelmesi ve devamındaki dönemde Komünizme

Karşı Mücadele Dernekleri'nin zamanla daha çok etkinlik kazanması ve bu derneklerin o dönemde çıkardığı dergilerin Sovyet karşıtlığını nasıl beslediği üzerinde durulmuştur. Devamında Cumhuriyet Halk Parti'sinin 1960 yıllarında söylemini "ortanın solu" olarak değiştirmesinin de beraberinde parti hakkında komünizm suçlamalarını beraberinde getirdiği üzerinde durularak anti-komünizmin nasıl devlet politikası haline geldiği gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu bölümün son kısmında ise 1960

ve 1970lerde Türkiye’de giderek daha çok hareket kazanan öğrenci hareketinin üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu verilen bağlamla Arif Nihat Asya’nın şiirlerine en çok damgasını vuran temalardan biri olan anti-komünizmin arka planı verilmeye çalışılmıştır.

“1980 Sonrası Dönemde Siyasal İslamın Yükselişi” kısmında ise 1980 darbesinden sonra Anavatan Parti’sinin Turgut Özal liderliğinde iktidara gelmesi ve yeni gelen iktidarla birlikte uygulamaya geçen neo-liberal ekonomik politikalar eşliğinde pro-Islamist burjuvazinin ortaya çıkışı ve Türk İslam sentezinin üzerinde durulmuştur. Özal dönemi ekonomik ve sosyal politikaları ile siyasal İslam Türk siyasi hayatına giriş yapmış ve 1995 yılında Refah Partisi’ni seçimlerde birinci yapacak olan kapıyı aralamıştır. Refah Parti döneminde İstanbul’un fethi ve Mekke’nin fethi kutlamalarının sembolik öneminin altı çizilmiştir ve bu kutlamaların aslında reaksiyoner bir tarafının olduğu üzerinde durulmuştur bir anlamda bu kutlamalar Türkiye tarihini Osmanlı tarihi ve geçmişi üzerinden işaretlemekte ve Türkiye’nin Müslüman kimliğinin altını çizmektedir.

“AKP İktidarı: Türk İslam Sentezi (2002-2020)” kısmında ise 1980 darbesinden sonra Özal döneminde vücut bulan ve Refah Partisi ile belirginleşen Türk İslam sentezinin AKP’nin eğitim, ekonomi, sosyal politikalar ve dış politikaları ile nasıl yoğunlaştırıldığı üzerinde durulmuştur çünkü AKP iktidarı kendisinden önce gelen sağ partilere kıyasla neo-Osmanlıcılığı Türk siyasi hayatına entegre etmekte daha başarılı olmuştur. Uygulanan neo-liberal ekonomi politikaları, eğitim politikaları ve kültür politikaları ile Türkiye’nin Osmanlı tarihini kolektif bir şekilde hatırlaması amaçlanmış ve dini kimliğinin vurgulanması üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu sebeple AKP döneminde de devam etmiş olan ve uzun yıllardır Türk sağının söylemini eklemlenen Ayasofya’nın ibadete açılması konusu üzerinde durulmuştur.

Sosyo-politik bağlam verildikten sonra tezin dördüncü kısmında bu bağlam ışığında Arif Nihat Asya’nın şiirleri analiz edilmiştir. Öncelikle Arif Nihat Asya’nın bütün şiirlerinin sınıflandırılması verilmiş ve en çok tekrar eden temalar sayısal olarak gösterilmiştir. Bu sınıflandırma açıkça göstermektedir ki Asya’nın şiir külliyatına

hâkim olan temalar şu şekildedir: fetih teması, Kıbrıs Sorunu ve anti-Komünizm. İlk olarak fetih teması üzerinde durulmuştur. Tezin teori üzerine olan ikinci kısmında belirtildiği gibi milliyetçi şiir evrensel bir fenomendir ve bu bakımdan milliyetçi şiirin belli bir karakteristiği vardır. Bunlardan biri de milliyetçi şiirde söz konusu ulusun geçmişteki zaferlerinin abartılarak yüceltilmesidir. Arif Nihat Asya da yaygın milliyetçi şiirle uyumlu olarak Türk ulusunun başarısı olarak gördüğü iki olayın ısrarla üzerinde durmuştur. Bu olaylardan ilki Malazgirt Savaşı'dır. Asya bu savaşa ekstra bir anlam katmıştır ve Malazgirt Savaşı ile Alparslan'ın 'Anadolu'nun kapılarını Türk milletine açtığı' üzerinde durmuştur. Hatta Alparslan Anadolu'nun kapılarını Türk milletine açmakla kalmamış aynı zamanda yeni fetihler için bir ışık tutmuş ve gelecekte gerçekleşmesini umduğu fetihler için Türklere fetih kapısını açmıştır. Asya bu sebeple Malazgirt Savaşı'nı Türk ve İslam tarihi için büyük bir zafer olarak görmektedir. Asya'ya göre Malazgirt Savaşı aynı zamanda İstanbul'un fethine doğru giden şanlı Türk İslam tarihinin de başlangıcı olmuştur. Asya'nın Türk İslam tarihi için hayati ve unutulmaz olarak gördüğü bir diğer olay da İstanbul'un fethi olmuştur. Asya'nın İstanbul'un fethine yüklediği anlam sömürgeci ve cinsiyetçi temaları da beraberinde getirmektedir. Asya hem İstanbul'u hem de Ayasofya'yı bakire bir kadın bedeni olarak hayal etmektedir. İstanbul belinde bekâret kemeri bulunan bakire bir kadın olarak kendisini elde etmek için uğraşan bütün 'yiğitleri' test etmekte ve kendisini en çok hak edenin kim olduğuna karar vermeye çalışmaktadır. Karşısındaki bütün erkekleri sınavan İstanbul kendisini en çok hak eden kişinin Fatih Sultan Mehmet olduğuna karar vermiştir çünkü Fatih bütün diğer erkekler arasında en adil, en dürüst ve en merhametli olandır. Hatta Asya'nın İstanbul'un fethini anlamlandırışı yapılmış olan fethin meşru oluşu üzerinden kendisini belli etmektedir. Fatih Sultan Mehmet İstanbul'u fethederek aslında gönülleri fethetmiştir çünkü Bizans'ın zulüm ve yozlaşma dolu Hristiyan yönetimine son vermiş ve İstanbul halkını huzur ve mutluluğa kavuşturmuştur. Asya bu bakımdan bu huzur ve güven tahsisini nurlu olarak görmektedir çünkü aslında Fatih yozlaşmış İstanbul halkına ışığı getirmiştir ve onları kötü yönetimden kurtarmıştır. Asya aynı zamanda bu fetihle İstanbul'un artık 'İslambol' olduğunu belirtmiştir çünkü Hristiyan zulmü sona ermiş ve İslam dini İstanbul topraklarına girmiştir. Bu noktada tez Asya'nın İstanbul'un fethinden sonra

bütün Osmanlı İmparatorluğunu sadece Müslümanlığı kabul etmiş Türklerden ibaret gören anlayışını yapışöküme uğratmaktadır. Bu bölümün son kısmında Rum kelimesinin tarihselliği ve çağrışımları üzerinde durularak Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun çok dinli, çok dilli ve birden fazla mezhebe ev sahipliği yapan kozmopolit yapısı üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu bakımdan Asya'nın Osmanlı İmparatorluğunu kavramsallaştırma şekli milliyetçi bir fanteziden ibarettir.

Arif Nihat Asya'nın şiirinde sıklıkla rastlanan bir diğer tema ise Kıbrıs'tır. Milliyetçi bir şair olan Asya Türk siyasi hayatına ve dış politikasına bir dönem yön vermiş olan Kıbrıs sorununa oldukça büyük bir önem atfetmiştir. Asya'nın Kıbrıs'a yüklediği anlam ise çok yönlüdür. Asya öncelikle Kıbrıs'ı Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan miras kalmış olan bir hazine olarak düşlemektedir. Hatta bu hazine Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye kalmış olan son hazinedir yani bir bakıma veliahttır ve öncelikle bu yüzden Türkiye'nin yoğun ilgisini ve korumasını hak etmektedir. Bu bakımdan Asya Kıbrıs'ı Osmanlı'nın son torunu, Türkiye'nin ise küçük kızı/oğlu olarak görmektedir. Oysa Kıbrıs küçücük bir çocuk olmasına rağmen annesi olan Türkiye tarafından terkedilmiştir yani yetimdir ve yalnızdır. Terkedilen Kıbrıs yine de Akdeniz'in sularında Osmanlı Devleti'nin ve dolayısı ile Türkiye'nin varlığını aramaktadır.

Kıbrıs hakkında yazdığı şiirlerde Kıbrıs'ın korunmasının hem ırkdaşlık hem de dindaşlık açısından da önemli olduğunun altını çizen Asya Kıbrıs'ı korumanın hem Müslümanlık hem de milliyetçilik görevi olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bu bakımdan Grivas'ın Yunanistan, Fransa ve İngiltere ile iş birliği yapmasını Müslüman birliğine bir saldırı niteliğinde görmektedir çünkü Asya'ya göre medeniyetin beşiği olarak görülen bu batılı ülkeler Kıbrıs'taki Müslümanlara zarar vermektedir. Bu bakımdan Asya aslında Kıbrıs'ın korunmasını İslami bir çatıdan da okumaktadır. Kıbrıs sadece Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun mirası değildir Müslümanların yaşadığı bir topraktır ve bu yüzden de korunmalıdır. Yani Kıbrıs hem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan kalan son toprak parçası olduğu için hem de içerisinde Müslüman Türkler olduğu için korunmayı hak etmektedir. Fakat Asya 1963-1964 yılları arasında yaşanan Kıbrıs Krizi sonucunda Türk hükümetinin aldığı aksiyonları da yeterli bulmamaktadır. Diplomatik yolların kesin sonuç getirmeyeceğine inanan Asya yazdığı şiirlerde Süleyman Demirel, Rauf

Denktaş gibi dönemin siyasi liderlerini eleştirmekte ve askeri çözüm aranması için liderleri teşvik etmektedir çünkü siyasiler Kıbrıs için ellerinden geleni yapmamaktadırlar. Siyasilerin yanında Asya aynı zamanda Kara Hava Kuvvetleri Komutanına, Deniz Hava Kuvvetleri ve Hava Kuvvetleri Komutanına da şiir yazmış ve Kıbrıs konusunda aksiyon alınmasını bu isimlerden rica etmiştir. Görülüyor ki Kıbrıs meselesi Asya'nın duygu ve düşünce dünyasında oldukça büyük bir etmiştir.

Asya'nın şiirlerinde sıklıkla vücut bulan bir diğer tema ise anti-komünizmdir. Arif Nihat Asya 1904-1975 yılları arasında yaşamış milliyetçi bir şair olarak Soğuk Savaş'ın çift kutuplu atmosferinden etkilenmiştir ve yazın dünyası da bu etkilenmeden nasibini almıştır. Asya dönemin Soğuk Savaş dönemindeki Türk sağ ile uyumlu olarak anti-komünist bir tutum izlemiştir. Asya'nın milletvekili olduğu dönemdeki meclis kayıtları incelendiğinde görülmüştür ki komünizm konusu parlamento müzakerelerinde geniş bir yer tutmuştur ve Asya bu tartışmalarda aktif bir şekilde yer almıştır. Komünizme ve komünistlere karşı daha aktif ve şiddetli bir tutum izlenmesini isteyen Asya komünistler için idam cezası getirilmesini istemektedir. Asya'ya göre Türkiye'de komünizmi savunan ya da bu ideolojiye karşı sempatisi olan kişiler hem Türk ulusuna hem de Türk devletine karşı en büyük suçu işlemekte ve vatanlarına ihanet etmektedirler. Bu yüzden Asya bu kişilerin Türk milleti tarafından beslenmemesi gerektiğini düşünmektedir. Asya anti-komünist tavrını sadece mecliste göstermemiş aynı zamanda kendi duygusal ve düşünsel dünyasına da yansıtmıştır.

Asya yazdığı şiirlerde Sovyet Rusya'yı oldukça tehlikeli bir canlı olarak betimlemiştir. Asya Sovyet Rusya'yı sinsice hareket etmesi ve düşmanını en hazırlıksız anda zehirlmesi dolayısı ile engerek yılanına benzetmiştir. Asya'ya göre Sovyet Rusya bir yılan dağıtım merkezidir ve uyumakta olan bütün ülkelere yılanlarını göndermektedir. Bu yüzden Asya Türkiye'nin bu küçük yılanlar yani komünistler konusunda çok dikkatli olmasını istemektedir. Oysa Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi aynı dönemde kendi siyasi söylemini "ortanın solu" olarak değiştirerek Asya'ya göre komünist düşünceye hizmet etmektedir çünkü ortanın solu aslında Moskova Yolu demektir ve Sovyet Rusya'nın ideolojisi ile aynı tabanı paylaşmaktadır. Asya bu sebeple Cumhuriyet Halk Parti'sini oldukça sert bir şekilde eleştirmektedir çünkü CHP bu yeni söylemi ile

Türkiye sınırları içerisinde komünizmin yayılmasına imkân tanımaktadır. Aynı dönemde Asya'nın Komünizmle Mücadele Dergilerine gönderdiği yazılara bakıldığında anti-komünist tavrının sürdüğü gözlenmektedir. Asya'ya göre komünistler ayılar tarafından idare edilen maymun sürülerinden başka bir şey değildir çünkü komünistlerde iman, şeref, namus, haysiyet yoktur. 1960'ların sonu 1970'lerin başında Türkiye'de öğrenci olaylarının artması da Asya'nın anti-komünist tavrını pekiştirmiştir. Asya'ya göre sol düşünceye yakınlığı olan Türk gençleri kendi ailelerine, ülkelerine ve devletine ihanet etmektedir. Asya bu bakımdan sol gençlik örgütlenmelerine oldukça aşağılayıcı bir anlam yüklemektedir. Asya'ya göre bu gençler sefilden başka bir şey değildir ailelerinin onları büyütmek için harcadığı emeğe ihanet etmektedirler. Özetlenecek olursa Asya'nın anti-komünist tavrı hem CHP düşmanlığı hem de sol gençlik örgütlenmelerine duyduğu nefret olarak yüzeye çıkmaktadır.

Analiz kısmının son bölümünde ise Asya'nın şiirlerinin Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Devlet Bahçeli, Ahmet Davutoğlu gibi sağın siyasi liderleri tarafından alıntılanmasına yer verilmiştir. Bu kısımda gazete haberleri taranmış ve bu liderlerin Asya'nın şiirlerini hangi siyasi bağlam çerçevesinde alıntılıdığı üzerinde durulmuştur. Görülmektedir ki Asya'nın İslami referanslar, vatan, millet gibi temalarla çevrili şiirleri sağın liderlerinin siyasi söylemlerine entegre edilmektedir. Bunun yanında Asya'nın bestelenmiş olan Fetih Marşı ve Dua gibi şiirlerine değinilmiştir. Bestelenen ve klip çekilen bu şiirlerin dinleyici kitlesinde nasıl duygular oluşturduğunun incelenmesi için bu videoların altındaki YouTube yorumları incelenmiştir. Bu inceleme sonucunda görülmüştür ki Asya'nın şiirlerini yazarken hissettiği Osmanlı torunu/ Fatih'in torunu olma ve bu durumdan gururlanma hali dinleyicilerde de mevcuttur. Dinleyiciler Fetih Marşı'nın altına attığı yorumlarda Osmanlı torunu olmaktan gurur duyduklarını ve Ayasofya'nın ibadete açılması ile Fatih'i onurlandırdıklarını düşünmüşlerdir. Ayrıca Ayasofya'nın açılışını Osmanlı Devleti'nin tekrar canlanması olarak görmüşler ve Türklerin tekrar tüm dünyaya boyun eğdirebileceğini söylemişlerdir.

Sonuç olarak bu tez göstermektedir ki şiir kişinin kendi iç dünyasında yaşadığı duygularla ilgili olduğu kadar da politiktir. Bu bakımdan Arif Nihat Asya'nın şiirleri

de sosyo-politik analize tabi tutulduğunda Türk sağına ve milliyetçi mobilizasyona dair çıkarımlar yapmaya müsait bir araç haline gelmektedir. Oysa Asya hakkındaki literatür göstermektedir ki Asya hakkında yapılmış çalışmalar analitik ve teorik bakış açısından oldukça uzaktır ve birbirini tekrar eden niteliktedir çünkü Asya sadece din, vatan, millet konuları hakkında şiir yazmamıştır Asya aynı zamanda erotizm, fantaziler ve cinsellik hakkında da şiirler yazmıştır. Bu şiirler birbirini dışlayıcı nitelikte olmadığı için Arif Nihat Asya hakkında yapılmış çalışma Asya'ya bütüncül bir bakış açısı yaklaşmalıdır ve bu tezin yaklaşımı da bu yönde olmuştur. Bu tez Asya'nın şiirinin analizini bu şiirlerin günümüzde sağın siyasi liderleri tarafından alıntılanması konusuna da değinerek genişletmiştir. Bu bakımdan bu tez şu sonuca varmıştır: milliyetçi şiirin milliyetçi mobilizasyonu sağlayacak şekilde kullanılması sadece Arif Nihat Asya ya da Türk milliyetçiliği özelinde değildir çünkü milliyetçi şiir aynı zamanda evrensel bir fenomendir. Bu açıdan tez Arif Nihat Asya'nın şiirini global bir bağlama oturtmuştur çünkü Asya da dünyanın diğer yerlerindeki milliyetçi şairler gibi kendi ulusunun hatırlaması gereken Malazgirt Savaşı, İstanbul'un Fethi gibi zaferlerin altını çizmiş ve kendi ulusunun varlığını devam ettirmesi için var olması elzem olan bir 'diğer' ya da diğer bir deyişle hayali bir düşman kavramsallaştırmasına girişmiştir. Soğuk Savaş döneminin yeni politik düzeninde de bu düşman Sovyet Rusya olmuştur. Son olarak bu tezin son kısmında değinilmiş olan Ayasofya'nın Cuma namazı ile ibadete tekrar açılması göstermektedir ki İslamcılık ve Osmanlıcılığın etkileri gözlenen Türk milliyetçiliği ve Türk sağı geleceğe odaklı siyasi projelerle günümüz sorunlarını çözmektense geçmişe dönük ve geçmişteki gelenekleri canlandırmaya yönelik bir yaklaşım izlemektedir.

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