Writing of(f) Hunger, Life, and the Self: Biopolitics and Poetics of Nâzım Hikmet's Hunger Strike

Emre Keser

A thesis presented to the

Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
at Boğaziçi University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

July 2021

Approvals

"Writing of(f) Hunger, Life, and the Self: Biopolitics and Poetics of Nâzım Hikmet's Hunger Strike," a thesis prepared by Emre Keser in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, has been approved on 27 July 2021 by:

THESIS ADVISORS

Assistant Professor Kutluğhan Soyubol _____
Department of Sociology
Boğaziçi University

Professor Cengiz Kırlı _____
Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
Boğaziçi University

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Assistant Professor Seda Altuğ _____
Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
Boğaziçi University

Associate Professor Bülent Küçük _____
Department of Sociology
Boğaziçi University

Associate Professor Berna Zengin Arslan _____
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Özyeğin University

Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

Copyright © 2021 Emre Keser.
Some rights reserved.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

Abstract

Writing of(f) Hunger, Life, and the Self: Biopolitics and Poetics of Nâzım Hikmet's Hunger Strike

Emre Keser, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute
for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2021

Assistant Professor Kutluğhan Soyubol, Thesis Co-Advisor
Professor Cengiz Kırlı, Thesis Co-Advisor

In this thesis, focusing on his hunger strike in 1950, I try to problematize the present image of, and discourse on, Nâzım Hikmet. Drawing on a wide variety of fields including intellectual history, critical theory, social and political thought, and literary and cultural studies, I embark on a critique of the modern author/human as the unified and single authority over its life and thought.

I examine hunger strike as a biopolitical protest, considering biopolitics to be a modern discourse in which the nation-state is defined by its prime duty of "social defense" and is necessarily linked to the human life. Speaking to the spheres presumably lying outside the state, hunger striker suggests that the violence inflicted on her body is what the state does to her and, thus, that the state deviates from the biopolitical norms that define itself.

In this sense, I try to understand what happens when Nâzım Hikmet, a renowned literary and political figure, a communist from Turkey, and a modern author, becomes a hunger striker. What is the significance of this event in the larger contexts of Nâzım's life as "Turkey's world poet," of the Turkish politics, and of the modernity? I try to illustrate that Nâzım's hunger strike can be taken as a "synecdoche" of Nâzım's life as a modern author who inscribes and asserts himself in his writings vis-à-vis the others' gazes that watch him. It is in this sense I see an analogy between the modern author and the modern state, as both are constructed as self-generating entities with a definite outside and the gazes

that monitor them. Historically, the modern state has been conceptualized closely following the model of the modern individualist self that owns itself and vice versa in the Western political discourse.

It is these inside/outside, gaze/object binaries through which Nâzım Hikmet (and the overly positive existing Nâzım Hikmet scholarship) constructed himself that I aim to problematize in the thesis, by drawing a provocative similarity as well as a connection between the modern author and the modern state. Yet, while doing this, I also underscore the fact that inside always needs outside to be able to become inside and, thus, outside is already in. What makes the modern author (im)possible, then, is the gazes that watch him. There are unconscious fragments of this (im)possibility where Nâzım Hikmet writes off himself, especially in what I term his late style. Thus, I try to show that it is this instability that might help us find still new possibilities in Nâzım Hikmet in an age marked by human-made catastrophes that are now beyond human.

79,696 words

Özet

Açlığı, Yaşamı, ve Kendini Yazma(ma)k: Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevinin Biopolitikası ve Poetikası

Emre Keser, Yüksek Lisans Adayı, 2021
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Kutluğhan Soyubol, Tez Eş Danışmanı
Prof. Dr. Cengiz Kırlı, Tez Eş Danışmanı

Bu tezde, Nâzım Hikmet'in 1950'deki açlık grevini odağa alarak, hâlihazırdaki Nâzım Hikmet imajı ve söylemini sorunsallaştırmaya çalışıyorum. Entelektüel tarih, eleştirel teori, siyasal ve toplumsal düşünce, edebiyat çalışmaları ve kültürel çalışmalar gibi farklı alanlardan faydalanarak, yaşamı ve düşüncesi üzerinde bütünleşik ve tekil bir otorite olarak kavranan modern yazar/insan kavramının bir eleştirisini yapmaya çalışıyorum.

Açlık grevini biyopolitik bir eylem olarak ele alıyorum. Biyopolitikayı ise, ulus-devleti "toplumu savunma" işlevi üzerinden tanımlayan ve onu kesin bir şekilde insan yaşamıyla ilişkilendiren bir söylem olarak inceliyorum. Devletin dışında kaldığı söylenen alana seslenerek, açlık grevcisi bedenine uygulanan şiddetin ona devletin yaptığı bir şey olduğunu ve, böylece, devletin devleti şekillendiren biyopolitik normlardan saptığını göstermeye çalışır.

Bu anlamda, bilinen siyasi ve edebi bir figür, Türkiyeli bir komünist ve modern bir yazar olarak Nâzım Hikmet'in, açlık grevcisine dönüştüğünde ne olduğunu anlamaya çalışıyorum. Bu olayın "Türkiye'nin dünya şairi" olarak Nâzım'ın yaşamı, Türkiye siyaseti ve sol siyasi pratikleri, ve modernite bağlamlarında önemi nedir? Bu açlık grevinin Nâzım Hikmet'in yazılarında sürekli kendisini ve yaşamını işleyen ve yeniden üreten modern bir yazar olarak yaşamının bütününü açıklayabilecek bir kesit olduğunu göstermeye çalışıyorum. Bu anlamda, modern yazar ve modern devlet arasında bir analoji gözlemliyorum. Her ikisi de kendi

kendini üreten ve belirli bir dışarısı ve onları izleyen gözlerle çevrelenmiş şeyler olarak inşa edilir. Tarihsel olarak da Batı siyasi söyleminde modern devlet ve modern bireyci kendilik birbirlerinin ardından modellenmiştir.

Modern yazar ve modern devlet arasında bu provokatif benzerliği kurarak sorunsallaştırmayı amaçladığım şey Nâzım Hikmet'in kendini inşa ettiği (ve çoğunlukla eleştirellikten uzak Nâzım Hikmet çalışmalarının da devam ettirdiği) bu gibi içerisi-dışarısı, gözleyen-gözlenen gibi ikiliklerdir. Ama, bunu yaparken, aynı zamanda "içeri"nin içeri olabilmek için her zaman dışarıya ihtiyaç duyduğunun ve dolayısıyla dışarının içeride olduğunun altını çiziyorum. Modern yazarı (na)mümkün kılan şey onu izleyen "dışarıdaki" gözlerdir. Bu imkân(sızlık)ın, Nâzım Hikmet'in kendisini yazmadığı bilinçdışı fragmanlarda, özellikle de onun geç dönem üslubunda bulunabileceğini tartışıyorum. Bu içkin dengesizliğin bizi hâlâ Nâzım Hikmet'te yeni imkânlar aramaya iten şey olduğunu göstermeye çalışıyorum, özellikle de insanın sebep olduğu ama artık insan-ötesi olan yıkımlarla damgalanmış çağımızda.

79.696 kelime

Naz'a

"denizi ilk defa uçakla geçer gibi"

Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms *xv*
Note on Turkish Names and Words *xvi*
Acknowledgements *xviii*

INTRODUCTION 1

I The Present 1
II The Autobiographer 8
III The State Analogy 17
IV The Plan and Method 22

1. WRITING OF LIFE: BIOPOLITICS, HUNGER STRIKES, AND THE PERSON OF THE STATE 27

1.1 Biopolitics 30
1.2 Genealogy of the Modern State 35
1.3 Legitimacy, Gaze, and the Outside 42
1.4 Hunger Strikes 45
1.5 Being Like the Turkish State 57
1.6 Person of the State 62

2. WRITING OF THE SELF: "NAZIM HIKMET" 69

2.1 Encounters with "Him" 70
2.2 A Birth to Forget and Re-Births 75
2.3 OrigiNation 96

3. WRITING OF HUNGER: POETICS OF THE HUNGRY GAZE 107

3.1 Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* 112
3.2 Franz Kafka's "Hungerkünstler" 118
3.3 Nâzım Hikmet's "Eyeballs of the Hungry" 125

4. WRITING OFF HUNGER: NAZIM HIKMET'S HUNGER STRIKE OR "L'AFFAIRE NAZIM" 131

4.1 The Concentration of Fascism in Late 1930s 132
4.2 The Military Trials 134
4.3 The Dreyfus Affair 136
4.4 The Navy Trial 137
4.5 The World War II and After 139
4.6 Toward the Hunger Strike 143
4.7 Hunger Strike Unleashed 151
4.8 The "Turkish Dreyfus Affair" and Coming of Democracy 161

5. WRITING OFF LIFE AND THE SELF: LATE STYLE AND THE RHYTHM OF TRANSIENCE 165

5.1 Late Style 165
5.2 Things Nâzım Didn't Know He Wrote 170
5.3 Destructive Memory 176
5.4 The Fable and the Rhythm of Transience 182

CONCLUSION 189

I Critique 189
II The Present, Again 193
III Summary 196

BIBLIOGRAPHY 201

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIJD	L'Association Internationale des Juristes Démocrates (International Association of Democrat Jurists)
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
CNE	Comité National des Écrivains (National Committee of Writers)
DHKP-C	Devrimci Halkın Kurtuluşu Partisi-Cephesi (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front)
DP	Demokrat Parti (Democrat Party)
EU	European Union
IUS	International Union of Students
İYTGD	İstanbul Yüksek Tahsil Gençlik Derneği (İstanbul Higher Education Youth Organization)
İTC	İttihat ve Terrakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress)
MTTB	Millî Türk Talebe Birliği (National Union of Turkish Students)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
TKP	Türkiye Komünist Partisi (Communist Party of Turkey)
UN	United Nations
US/USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
PCF	Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party)
TBMM	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (Grand National Assembly of Turkey)
WPC	World Peace Council
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union

Note on Turkish Names and Words

Throughout the thesis, I did not anglicize the Turkish words and names even when it is conventional. For example, instead of "Nazim," "Istanbul," "pasha," I opted for "Nâzım," "İstanbul," "paşa." If the English translation of a work in Turkish does anglicize, I modified the translation accordingly when quoting, except the titles in references and bibliography, which are cited as in the original, whether they anglicized the Turkish names or not.

Until the passage of the Surname Law in 1934, individuals in Ottoman Empire and Turkey had no official surnames. Thus, between 1902 and 1934, Nâzım Hikmet, too, was without one. Between 1934 and 1951, Nâzım Hikmet's surname was Ran which he had always been reluctant to use. When his Turkish citizenship was revoked and he was given a Polish passport in 1951, his official surname became Borjenski which he had virtually never used. For this reason, throughout the thesis, including bibliography, I refer to him as either Nâzım Hikmet or Nâzım. The latter might sound irritating and even disrespectful, but I could not come up with a better solution. In other cases, I often indicated the surnames adopted in 1934 in parentheses as in "Ali Fuat (Cebesoy)" and sometimes leave them as they are as in "İsmet İnönü."

Acknowledgements

MA students are spectral beings. They are there, but not really. They are expected to do research, but not so much. They might be paid, but not invested in. MA theses are equally spectral: they are limitlessly free, because nobody will read them except the hapless thesis committee (and the equally unfortunate partner), but they are also fully constrained by the underdevelopment of knowledge and skills, by a "not-yet." I try to turn this spectrality into an advantage in this interdisciplinary study. I formulate some ambitious arguments and yet most of the time do not take them to their ends. Rather, I leave them as a series of provocative gestures. I owe thanks to those who has helped me sustain this work of spectrality and gesturing.

I want to thank my advisor Kutluğhan Soyubol. Most of the gestures here are thought and re-tought under his critical guidance and mentorship without which this would be a shallow(er) piece. Cengiz Kırlı's encouragement for the interdisciplinarity at the Atatürk Institute as a whole help me dare to write such a thesis.

I want to express my gratitude to Meltem Ahıska. She cares about her students, she reads them, she trusts "untrustable" MA students. The Chapter 5 of the thesis was first written for the experimental seminar she taught on aesthetics and politics. In a sense, the whole thesis is designed and written to be able to finally reach that chapter.

Berna Yazıcı taught me how much care and attention an ethnography requires and how to do one. She also introduced me to the anthropology of the state literature, from which I highly benefit in this study. Similarly, Ayfer Bartu Candan taught me how to read an ethnography and, more importantly, how to read theory in and through ethnography.

Seda Altuğ introduced me to the history of the modern Middle East. I am also thankful to her for her comments and feedbacks on the initial thesis proposals as well as accepting to participate in the thesis committee. For reading and commenting on the proposal and a draft, thanks also to Ramazan Öztan.

Last summer, I attended the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University. Though held online due to the coronavirus, it was a superb experience of learning and thinking together. Some of the courage in this thesis was derived from this uncommon space. I want to thank Hent de Vries, Caroline Levine, Marina Rustow, Matthew Engelke, George Yancy, Heather Love, Stanley Fish, and the fellow participants.

Banu Bargu has read and commented on a different version of the Chapter 1 that I have sent along without even meeting her. I am grateful for the succinct feedback she provided and the encouragement to keep going.

Nergis Ertürk encouraged me about the Chapter 5, which was very important, as the literary studies is a field I am illiterate of and yet terribly attracted to.

I am thankful to Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson for her nice comments on an earlier version of the Chapter 1. Her own work also helped me find my way around genealogical discussions.

I want to thank Alex Freed, Oriana Tang, and Shaun Terry for drawing my attention to Fredric Jameson's work on the national allegory and the debate around it. It helped me spell out some of my arguments much better.

Thanks also to Berna Zengin Arslan and Bülent Küçük for kindly accepting to take part in the thesis committee and for their questions, criticisms, and suggestions.

For the financial support I received in my last semester at the Atatürk Institute, I am grateful to the ATA Burs Komitesi. It has helped me stay in İstanbul to reach the necessary sources and complete the thesis.

I want to send my sincere thanks also to the research assistants and the staff of the Atatürk Institute.

The cats of Boğaziçi—each sui generis—and a pair of green parrots I have been seeing all around İstanbul helped me see the beauty "in this world of calamity." I could not miss the opportunity to thank them.

Sevim and Yavuz Oktay opened their home to me with no hesitation, supported me ceaselessly, and always treated me as their own. I am

beyond grateful. Thanks also to Oytun, Hayal, and little Ekin for their support, friendship, and play.

My uncle Hasan Can is the first person who introduced me to Nâzım Hikmet and many other books that have had a certain impact on me. In a way, it was his books, which always come with a particular humidity of the basement he lives in, that inspired me to read further and further. He will never know this, I will never tell him.

I should thank my parents. I have learned, unlearned, relearned in and through their difficult experiences and lives, however painful they have been to understand and deal with.

And Naz. No theses, dissertations, or books would be sufficient to express my gratitude, love, and debt to her. But, still, humbly, with the merry knowledge of this, I dedicate this thesis to her, with love and care.

NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made detailed recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, syntax, and style of this thesis.

man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.... one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.

—Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*

The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.... We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied.

—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

we project the outside that's inside us.

—Fred Moten, "the gramsci monument"

Akşam nerde bitiyor nerde başlıyor
şehir nerde bitiyor sen nerde başlıyorsun
ben nerde bitip nerde başlıyorum?

—Nâzım Hikmet, "Şehir Akşam ve Sen"

Introduction

Only that which has no history is definable.

– Fredrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

The whole is the untrue.

– Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

§ I The Present

"In recent decades, interest in hunger artists has greatly diminished. Where it once paid to organize major performances of the kind, under the personal direction of the performer himself, nowadays it is completely impossible. They were different times."[1] This is how Franz Kafka begins his "Ein Hungerkünstler" (A Hunger Artist), a short story he published first in 1922 in the German literary magazine *Die neue Rundschau* and then included in the collection *A Hunger Artist*, the last book he

1 Franz Kafka, *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, trans. Joyce Crick, ed. Ritchie Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 56.

prepared for publication, which was published shortly after his death in 1924.[2] Like Kafka's, my initial puzzlement in the beginning of this study was about "different times," but rather than hunger artists, mine was concerned with hunger strikers in Turkey: both of today and of the past. Similar to Kafka, it seemed to me, at least prima facie, a reasonable conclusion that the interest in hunger strikers and the socio-political unease that they are capable to divulge have significantly diminished over the last decades.

In the summer of 2017, having newly received my BA in philosophy, broken by ahistorical methods of analytic philosophy and the free-floating liberal subject it operates on, I was in search of "concrete" issues and "real" human beings that I can study further to give a historical shape to my research and perhaps "redeem" myself. And "before my eyes," as Ludwig Wittgenstein suggests, a hunger strike had been going on for almost three months at the time.[3] It was the period of a widespread purge in Turkey following the failed coup d'état on July 15, 2016. In an effort of getting the "parallel state" out of the "real" state, the government of Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) and the president Erdoğan declared a state of emergency that granted the government a right to issue decrees having force of law. It continued for almost two years and, as a result, hundreds of academics, teachers, government officers and workers were sacked from their jobs with the standard accusation, and most of the time only with a purported suspicion, of the membership to various "terrorist" or "parallel" organizations. Among those

2 As widely known, Kafka ordered his friend Max Brod to burn all the manuscripts he left behind after his death. Many of his writings available today had not yet been published at the time of his death. *Ein Hungerkünstler* is a book, a collection of four short stories, he must have considered finished and worth publishing. I make a larger discussion of the story along with Knut Hamsun's novel *Hunger* and Nâzım Hikmet's poem "The Eyeballs of the Hungry" in the third chapter of this thesis.

3 In *Philosophical Investigations* (§129), Wittgenstein suggests, "One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes." In Turkey, for long, perhaps arguably ever since Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike, there has always been hunger strikes before one's eyes, and, as they have become everyday occurrences, they maybe become difficult to notice.

who lost their jobs were Nuriye Gülmen, an academic, and Semih Özakça, a high school teacher. To protest the state of emergency and get their jobs back, they started a hunger strike preceded by a series of public demonstrations and protests in Ankara. However, on the seventy-fifth day of fasting, they were arrested by the police and imprisoned with the accusation of inciting people to rebel. They continued their fast inside the prison. After almost ten months of fasting, when their state of health reached a debilitating point, on January 26, 2018, they ended the hunger strike. Yet they were neither able to get their jobs back nor provided any reparations.

Three years later, when I begin my initial research for this study in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, this time another hunger strike was on the news. Certain newspapers and digital media outlets were full of news and photos of two musicians from Grup Yorum, a folk-rock protest band from Turkey, as these two hunger strikers were rapidly approaching death in the middle of quarantine and lockdown measures.[4] In June 2019, İbrahim Gökçek, the bass guitarist, and Helin Bölek, the singer of Grup Yorum, started their hunger strike inside the prison, demanding the end of the concert ban on the band (and other state activities trying to deter them from public appearance) and the release of the imprisoned band members, most of whom had been allegedly linked with the outlawed "terrorist" group Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C or alternatively known as Halk Cephesi) by the

4 Also, simultaneously, another hunger strike was being undertaken by Mustafa Koçak. Koçak was arrested in September 2017 and then sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment for "violation of the constitution" based on the statements of two secret witnesses who later revealed that they were forced and threatened with torture to make false allegations against Koçak. According to these allegations, Koçak helped the DHKP-C militants who killed a public prosecutor in his office. In demand of fair trial, Koçak started a hunger strike which after a while turned into a death fast. He died on April 24, 2020, the 297th day of his fast, when he was twenty-eight years old and twenty-nine kilos. See "Mustafa Koçak Dies on the 297th Day of Death Fast," Bianet, retrieved May 16, 2020, https://bianet.org/english/human-rights/223392-mustafa-kocak-dies-on-297th-day-of-death-fast.

government.[5] When Bölek and Gökçek were released from the prison in November 2019 and February 2020 respectively, they did not end their starvation which had been turned into a death fast in early January, since the concert ban had not been lifted. On April 3, 2020, the 28-year-old Helin Bölek, died on the 288th day of her fasting. What remained is a much-circulated photo of her from the funeral: dead in a coffin, her emaciated body lost in red, except her face, and her eyes fully open. Approximately a month later, on May 7, 2020, 40-year-old İbrahim Gökçek, too, passed away after 320 days of fasting. He had in fact ended his hunger strike two days before his death and had been under care in a hospital, but he could not survive as his health had been irrevocably deteriorated during the starvation.[6] The ban on their band has not since been uplifted or eased but remains intact.

When I compared these recent Turkish hunger strikes and their ends to the one undertaken by Nâzım Hikmet in 1950, nothing but, just like Kafka's concern with the decline of the interest in hunger artists, a

5 Labeling any kind of oppositional groups or protestors as terrorist is the fundamental rhetoric the government of AKP has been relying on since a while. This rhetoric constantly produces terrorists and security threats to Turkey, and then, based on this justification, the state embarks on elimination and exclusion of these terrorists and so its insecurities. Studying the cases of Northern Ireland and Nepal, Priya Dixit calls this practice of labeling "terroristization" in her *The State and "Terrorists" in Nepal and Northern Ireland: The Social Construction of State Terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 183. Although this "terroristization" is mostly seen as a product of AKP's recent authoritarian politics in Turkey, as I will try to show in this thesis, terrorism is a modern discourse that the biopolitical nation-state as "a mechanism of social defense" operates on to be able to kill, exclude, and eliminate. Put differently, it is a mechanism that enables the biopolitical state to kill in the name of defending society and life. This is a long-rooted structure that is especially legible (post-)colonial, and "near-colonial" contexts like Turkey, where there is always already a security threat and thus perpetual insecurity problem. See Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson, *Genealogies of Terrorism: Revolution, State Violence, Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 9–11.

6 Bethan McKernan, "Lonely Death of Grup Yorum bassist highlights Turkey hunger strikes," *The Guardian*, May 8, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/08/lonely-death-of-grup-yorum-bassist-highlights-turkey-hunger-strikes

diminishment of interest in hunger strikers initially seemed evident to me. For it took only eighteen days of fast for Nâzım, an internationally renowned poet, writer, and a pioneer in Turkish literary modernity, to be released from the prison, which was his only demand, supported by a large public campaign underlining the unlawfulness of the 1938 military trials that sentenced him.[7] However, even though the duration was much longer and the harm done to the fasters was much more serious in the aforementioned recent cases of hunger strikes, none of these strikes could be considered "successful"—if, of course, by success we mean hunger strikers' demands being met by the state.

Following this line of thinking, one might inquire the differences between the cases of Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike and the aforementioned recent hunger strikers, as I am tempted to do initially. Was Nâzım, as an appraised literary and public figure, able to manage the publicity that the recent strikers were not capable of? Was he successful because the success of hunger strike largely depends on a notion and scale of "who may be let die" in society? Was Hikmet, as an acclaimed and well-known figure, one of those who could not be easily disposed? One could of course further argue that Nâzım lived under different times and conditions. Today it is not plausible for hunger strikers to gain such a large public attention. This is almost impossible in the age of neoliberalism where human life, if not profitable, can easily be rendered disposable. These might be reasonable positions to argue for, but only if we presuppose the essential instrumentality of hunger strike and reduce it to a matter of success or failure.

---

7 In the more recent hunger strikes in Turkey, the interval of fasting time is much larger, usually much more than two hundred days. Even merely in this sense these hunger strikes differ from Nâzım's, almost as two different phenomena. In the former, death becomes a becoming, as hunger strikers by time turn into neither living nor dying beings. Paradoxically, they dissolve the moment they establish their full sovereignty over life. For a superb critical analysis of these prolonged hunger strikes specifically based on the questions of sovereignty and temporality, see Özge Nadide Serin, "Writing of Death: Ethics and the Politics of the Death Fast in Turkey" (PhD diss. Columbia University, 2013) and her article in Turkish "Egemen Çöküş: Ölüm Orucu ve Siyasal" *Kampfplatz* 3, no. 9 (2015): 69–100.

Instead, we can start with the problematization of the approach that defines hunger strike as a matter of success or failure. Are hunger strikes really nothing but simply instruments to achieve certain ends and to satisfy particular demands? As Hannah Arendt, who likes to "define" things and concepts, suggests in her account of violence, is violence—and here I consider hunger strike an act of (self-inflicted) violence—solely instrumental, mute, and expressionless?[8] My answer is not in the affirmative. Thus, rather than Arendt, following Walter Benjamin's suggestion that violence can well be an expression or manifestation, I take hunger strikes as events which express, manifest, reflect, and illuminate.[9] Each hunger strike can be read as an expression of particular practices, discourses, narratives, and cultures. As Ian Hacking suggests, it seems neither plausible nor desirable to formulate a general theory of identities, practices, discourses, and subjectivities.[10] This applies to hunger strikes

8 Arendt says, "violence is distinguished by its instrumental character" and "where violence rules absolutely... everything and everybody must fall silent." See "On Violence" in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt, 1972), 145, 150 and *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1963), 18.

9 Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence" in *Selected Writings vol. 1*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 247–248. Similarly, citing Benjamin, Banu Bargu places an emphasis on the "expressiveness" of the acts she called "weaponization of life" including practices of hunger strikes. *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 17–18. Here I do not use a terminology like "weaponization of life" or "human weapons," because, first, I feel that it "defines" the act or the event beforehand and, second, Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike seems to me not to be intended or construed as a weapon(ization) or meant to be a deadly struggle in the first place.

10 Ian Hacking, "Making Up People" in *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). In the essay, Hacking points out that there could not be a universal conception of how people are made up, that is, how selves are constructed. Different selves require a historical elaboration of their own. However, with this, he does not mean that nothing general or no historical generalizations can be said or made about subjects, selves, and identities. Though not about hunger strikes, in another piece, Hacking provides an example of how one can make generalizations about the ways suicide bombers and their practices have emerged as part of modern and transnational asymmetric warfare and insurgence discourses. See "The Suicide Weapon" *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2008): 1–32.

and hunger strikers. Rather than give a general definition of hunger strike based on the instrumentality of the act and then apply it to the every case of hunger strike, here I want to understand what Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike manifests and expresses, what are the specificities and complexities in it, and what it means in the context of Nâzım's life as "Turkey's world poet," as a political figure whose legacy historically looms large in the imagination of leftist politics in Turkey, and as a modern author. However, this does not mean that hunger strike is not an instrumental act at all or that one can make no generalizations about hunger strikes. Rather, I want to highlight that each hunger strike and hunger striker require separate and dynamic historical elaboration that must treat them as expressive and manifesting practices of resistance as well as goal-oriented actions.

In her work on the death fast struggle in the early 2000s in Turkey, Banu Bargu uses what she terms "political ethnography" as her method "combining contextual immersion, personal observation, and in-depth interviews" to be able to "trace the trajectory of the death fast in a way that appreciates and conveys the rich details and paradoxical complexities of the situation."[11] For ethnographic method of this kind makes possible the exploration of an event, a case, or even a period in its particularity and peculiarity without isolating it as a unique occurrence or subsuming it under a supposedly larger phenomenon or definition. Each event of hunger strike, then, requires a separate elaboration and delineation. It is in this spirit that here I focus specifically on Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike and interrogate what it expresses, reflects, and manifests in the context of his life, in the larger contexts of Turkish politics and culture and of the discourse of modernity within which he cultivated himself. Once again following in Kafka's footsteps, I delve into a particular act of hunger strike, that of Nâzım Hikmet, rather than compare different hunger strikes belonging to different periods on the assumption that one is an example of "success" whereas the other is "failure."

11 Banu Bargu, *Starve and Immolate*, 28.

In doing so, I still keep Kafka's notion of "different times" (*andere Zeiten*) in mind. Although I do not seek to answer it explicitly, the question of how today differs from the past in the sense of "history of the present" as Michel Foucault used the term is in play in the background of the thesis.[12] A history of the present, or genealogy, is a critical approach to the present concepts, practices, and discourses that we take for granted and seem to us to be beyond question. It is an approach that "explicitly and self-consciously begins with a diagnosis of the current situation. There is an unequivocal and unabashed contemporary orientation."[13] Taking Nâzım Hikmet's life and hunger strike of 1950 as an iconic moment and image that has historically given way to a tradition of the political practices and discourses of the Turkish left, including a tradition of hunger strike, I aim at a critique of the present and of the ways in which today's hunger strikers have been constructing themselves based on a purported lineage between Nâzım Hikmet and themselves. Additionally, but perhaps more directly, I attempt at a critique of the present image of "Nâzım Hikmet," depicted and valorized as a unified and autonomous self by the overly positive Nâzım Hikmet scholarship.

§ II The Autobiographer

The recent studies on Nâzım Hikmet usually begin by complaining that most of the works on Nâzım is shallow and unable to do justice the rich literary and aesthetic dimensions of his works, in that in most cases they talk about his polemics, turbulent political life, and his love affairs, or, worse, create an ideological battlefield over Nâzım's life and works. Then, they go on to assign this "still remaining very difficult work" to

12 Foucault for the first time used the notion in the opening chapter of *Discipline and Punish* to explain why he is interested in writing a history of the prison: "Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present." *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995 [1971]), 31.

13 Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 119.

themselves. Yet, I want to argue, distinguishing these categories is an attempt that is doomed to fail from its beginnings, since Nâzım was an autobiographical writer who wrote all his life, politics, love into his literary works and vice versa.[14] If these studies assume that literary or aesthetic aspects of Nâzım's work and his "real" life, polemics, and the ideological battles fought over his image, effect, and legacy can be distinguished or isolated, then they are self-contradicting at best. For all such works, in order to reach a "meaning," and to offer a novel scholarly interpretation of his works, have to spare large spaces at least to a number of these categories and involve in one or more ideological battles themselves.

But what does being an autobiographical writer mean? As Paul de Man points out in his critique of autobiography as a separate literary genre, "autobiography... is... a figure of reading or understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts"[15] as soon as they are associated with a name that claims to compose it. In this sense, there seems to be no work or text that is not autobiographical. By reading a writer enough, one can find autobiographical elements in all his works. However, I think that authobiography is a figure of writing as much as it is a figure of reading. This is evident from that it varies how much reading is enough to find autobiographical elements in different authors. In the case of Nâzım's works, one does not have to dig much deeper to find the autobiographical; they are plainly and sometimes nakedly there. In a sense, it is the way Nâzım Hikmet writes. Therefore, there might be some autobiographies which give themselves away without a need for much reading or overreading. However, it is still not clear what is exactly the autobiographical in a literary work. Scholars of Nâzım Hikmet usually make their case based on a commonsense conviction that life and identity precedes autobiography. That is to say, what is put into the text is who the person already is or what already happened in his life at the moment of writing. However, this

14 Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Nâzım Hikmet: The Life and Times of Turkey's World Poet* (New York: Persea Books, 2013), 11.

15 Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement" *Comparative Literature* 94, no. 5 (1979): 921.

misses fruitful and critical possibilities through which to deal with an autobiographical writer.

The first is the possibility that writing can be seen as a performance: the writer might be something or someone as he writes. That is to say, while writing, he can perform a certain identity. Is not writing, after all, an intense process throughout which one works on oneself and/or convinces oneself of one's oneness, no matter what one writes? Then, identity does not precede the writing, but it comes out as the writer writes. Second, the writer might become someone/something after writing, most of the time to live up to what he has written, more accurately to cohere what he has written and what he will do. Then, the writer might be said to write in order to become something, which becomes a public promise, even a contract perhaps, by him to become something or to have an effect on the other.[16] This contract opens his future actions to the public gaze that would watch and check whether he fits the written words. Whether the gaze or maybe an assemblage or effect of written words watch and check, or not, after writing, the writer feels it on himself in any case.[17] In the aforementioned article, De Man suggests,

> We assume the life produces the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of its medium?[18]

16 In a different context concerned with Nâzım's poem "Mavi Gözlü Dev, Minnacık Kadın ve Hanımelleri," Memet Fuat (1926–2002), Nâzım's son-in-law immersed in the dissemination of Nâzım's work, insists that most of the time Nâzım wrote his poems to affect others' future behaviours rather than reflect on their past behaviors. See his essays "Minnacık Kadın" [1986], 113; "Mavi Gözlü Dev" [1986], 118; "Gene Mavi Gözlü Dev" [1994], 214. All from *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar* (İstanbul: YKY, 2017).

17 Here when I mention the writer, I use the masculine pronoun "he" rather intentionally. This is because the term "writer" in this context is the abstract way of referring to Nâzım Hikmet and, more importantly, to the modern author as a male figure who constructs himself as a unified subject at the center of the world.

18 Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," 920.

Then, we have at least three different senses of the autobiographical, where the second and third has usually been ignored by the biographers of the openly autobiographical writers like Nâzım: first, the work contains what the writer has already lived before the moment of writing (i.e., life precedes autobiography); second, the writer becomes someone, crafts a self and subjectivity, as he writes (i.e., writing as working on oneself and performance); and, third, the writer writes of a self that he aspires to become or endorse in the future, perhaps an ideal or fantasy (i.e., autobiography precedes life).[19] These are not mutually exclusive options.

There is another feature of the autobiographical I would like to highlight here: the autobiographical is confessional, in the sense that the writer in a poem or a novel announces what he sees as his weaknesses, faults, and "sins." By explicitly naming and counting these sins, the writer wants to achieve two things. First, he wants to take his audience, the gazes that watch or read him, under control in that, by confessing, he deprives them of the opportunity to investigate, find, and tell those sins in the way that they want them to be transmitted. It is in this sense a way of governing the others' impression of himself, at least a way of having a chance to affect the circulation of the image of themselves. Second, it is also through confession that the writer wants to portray himself as a fragmented whole, by which I mean that he wants to present himself as a whole that is aware of his "weaknesses" and "sins," in that he is as virtuous as he is able to be cognizant of and confess them.[20] Therefore, he

19 This last option carries an importance for the thesis in the sense of a more general notion that "writing precedes life." That is why, in the Chapter 3, I try to demonstrate that Nâzım's writing of hunger precedes his act of hunger strike. Yet this preceding is not a passage from the realm of signs to that of materiality, as, in Nâzım, writing is as material as the hungry eyeballs. In her critical autobiography of Nâzım Hikmet, Mutlu Konuk Blasing points out this feature of the autobiographical in Nâzım, saying that "in Nâzım's case... the actual person *is* the phantasmagoria" and "[Nâzım's] life writes always of his poems." *Nâzım Hikmet: The Life and Times of Turkey's World Poet*, 6, 7.

20 For example, in a 1961 poem named "Autobiography," Nâzım confesses: "I deceived my woman/.../ I lied so as not to hurt someone else / but I also lied for no reason at all." And then he concludes: "I can say I've lived like a human being." This is to say that although

portrays an image of him who has become a whole that knows that he is not a whole.[21] I think that this is an essential feature of modern writers and hence of Nâzım Hikmet.[22] This is also results from an awareness concerning the historical quality of their works.[23]

---

he had done bad things and committed sins, he knows them and dares to confess them, as a unified human being would and should do. "Autobiography" in *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet*, trans. and ed. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk. (New York: Persea, 2002), 257.

21 This practice of confession, as Foucault argues, is in fact a technique of governmentality and the self. By confessing, one establishes oneself as a unified and conduct the other's gaze and the ways in which that gaze see the one. This is mostly expressed through confessional narratives concerned with sexuality that is curiously thought of as "repressed." Foucault traces this practice back to the Medieval Christianity and a modality of power which he terms as "pastoral power," where the pastor looks after his flock to make sure that they confess to stay pure and help them guarantee a good life in the afterworld. With modernity, the work of this pastoral power has been assigned to the secular biopolitical state that guarantees health, security, and well-being of its subjects in this world. See *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990 [1976]), "The Subject and Power" in Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), *About the Beginnings of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Lectures at Dartmouth College, 1980* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

22 In his opening speech of the Nâzım Hikmet Institute at Boğaziçi University in 2014, critiquing the taboos surrounding Nâzım Hikmet, the Nobel-prize winning Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk underlines the humanly sins/mistakes Nâzım might have committed. This is not surprising, since most of Pamuk's works, too, rely on such autobiographical-confessional elements including wicked and yet humanly sins. This seems to be the technique through which the modern male writers construct themselves as wholes. In his autobiographical work *İstanbul: Memories and the City* (2003), for example, as Pamuk tells his memories and dreams of İstanbul from his childhood to adolescence, we witness incidental scenes of his masturbation and ejaculation. He confesses the sins that broke him, but underscoring awareness of these sins, he builds himself as a humanly a whole, a self-identical being. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbTX7vqrfvY retrieved May 15, 2021.

23 For example, Orhan Veli (Kanık) wrote in his 1942 autobiographical poem "I, Orhan Veli": "I have an esteemed lover / I could not tell her name / Let the literary historian find." *Bütün Şiirleri*, (İstanbul: Can, 1982 [1951]), 89. Translation mine. Orhan Veli (1914–1950) was the pioneer of the 1941 poetry movement called *Garip* which also includes Oktay Rifat (1914–1988) and Melih Cevdet (1915–2002). In the polemical opening manifesto of

Taking for granted that life or identity precedes autobiography, those who have written on Nâzım seems to overlook this multiplicity of the senses of the autobiographical. Most of the time in tune with (or entrapped by) Nâzım's own portrayal of himself, critics (and biographers—who are many) tend to talk about a Nâzım Hikmet that manages to cohere in one way or another.[24] They even force it to cohere as though there could be only one Nâzım Hikmet, embracing too readily the categories within which Nâzım defined himself, hence they end up creating a depiction of Nâzım Hikmet that falls short of any critical edges. This might be the reason that all of the attention and energy have been directed at a few "critical" questions regarding Nâzım's life: his relationship to and attitude towards Atatürk and the Kemalist regime, his views concerning the Stalinist USSR, and his secularism or religiosity. Concerning the first, for example, Ece Ayhan (1931–2002), a Turkish poet who was one of the pioneers of the poetry movement known as the Second Novice (*İkinci Yeni*), argues that in principle Nâzım Hikmet never had a problem with the Kemalist Republic but rather he and his poetry always revolve around the

---

the movement, Orhan Veli stated that the poetry is the right of the working masses. However, perhaps to distinguish theirs from Nâzım's poetry, he said that they do not want to defend the needs of these masses but look for and try to establish their taste in poetry.

24 There is a huge pile of the biographical works and memoirs on Nâzım Hikmet, most of which was written by those who were his friends, in his immediate circles, or his sympathizers. To name a few: Vâlâ Nureddin, *Bu Dünyadan Nâzım Geçti* (1965); Radi Fiş, *Nâzım'ın Çilesi* (1969); Ekber Babayev, *Nâzım Hikmet: Yaşamı ve Yapıtları* (1975); Zekeriya Sertel, *Mavi Gözlü Dev* (1977); Kemal Sülker, *Nâzım Hikmet'in Gerçek Yaşamı* (1987); Memet Fuat, *Nâzım Hikmet* (2000); Haluk Oral, *Nâzım Hikmet'in Yolculuğu* (2019). There are the two biographical works written in English and primarily for the international audience: Saime Göksu and Edward Timms, *Romantic Communist: The Life and Work of Nâzım Hikmet* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1999) and Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Nâzım Hikmet: The Life and Times of Turkey's World Poet* (New York: Persea, 2013). Though different than the above Turkish literature and critical biographies (especially the latter), they, too, still could not resist to cohere Nâzım's story, which is also conditioned by the biography, as Mutlu Konuk Blasing aptly notes in the beginning of her book.

Kemalism.[25] Ece Ayhan further argues that Nâzım might have even replaced İsmet İnönü, the second president of the Republic after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death in 1938, and this would not be a problem.

In response, Erkan Irmak, in his book *Kayıp Destan'ın İzinde* suggests that although it is true that Nâzım wrote *Kuvâyi Milliye* (National Forces), an epic poem telling the story of the Turkish War of Independence "from below," where he made explicit references to Atatürk and cited his *Nutuk* (*The Great Speech*), he might have penned it solely for the purpose of being let out from the prison in late 1930s.[26] Implicitly addressing the state officials, in *Kuvâyi Milliye*, Nâzım tried to show that he is not an enemy of the regime and support the revolutions. Yet, at the same time, he reconstructed the story of the Turkish War of Independence in ways that could fit, or at least would not detract, his Marxist political formation. Anyway, Irmak supports his conclusion with the fact that when this work has been re-written and re-used into Nâzım's *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (*Human Landscapes from My Country*, the *Landscapes* hereafter), all the citations and references to *Nutuk* and Atatürk had been carefully removed and the techniques of narration has been accordingly regulated in a way that would turn the work into a critique of the regime based on the post-war conditions that had let down the real heroes of the preceding war. Relying on Nâzım's references to the

25 Ece Ayhan, "Nâzım Hikmet'i Yeniden Bir Düşünelim" in *Kürt Çiçekleri: Özgür Gündem'den Yazılar*, ed. Uğur Yanıkel, (Pasaj.org, 2016), 11–13. First published in 1992. For a recent discussion that touches on Ece Ayhan's take on Nâzım in Turkish, see, Barış Özkul, "Ece Ayhan Düzyazısında Avam ve Havas" *Birikim Haftalık*, February 23, 2020 and Erdem Özgül, "Ece Ayhan Haksız mı?" *Birikim Güncel*, February 26, 2020.

26 Erkan Irmak, *Kayıp Destan'ın İzinde: Kuvâyi Milliye ve Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları'nda Milliyetçilik, Propaganda ve İdeoloji* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011). The poem depicts ordinary soldiers, peasants, and officers as heroes of the War. In this sense, it tells the story from below, but its from-belowness comes from above, as some of the heroic examples was taken, with proper citations, from Atatürk's *The Great Speech* which covers and reconstrues the events between 1919 and 1923. It is a speech delivered by Atatürk at the second congress of the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) in 1927 and since then constitutes a single most important source for the "official" historical account of the War and the foundation of the republic.

Nutuk, Irmak further argues that while *Kuvâyi Milliye* speaks top-down with the language of the state, the *Landscapes* talks the language of common people, who waged, suffered the war, but was later let down, therefore, reaching the conclusion once again that Nâzım was critical of the regime. Irmak invites us to take a 500-page work where all the references to Atatürk, his regime, revolutions, or any of his "ideas" or "ideals" are intentionally left out as an evidence that Nâzım had definitely had problems with the Kemalist regime.

There are several issues with these accounts. Irmak seems to miss the point he himself made. If *Kuvâyi Milliye*, as he suggests, was written for the state officials to read, it is only natural that Nâzım told the story in the way they would want it to be told, in their own tone and language. (And, as Irmak himself underscores several times in the book, it was written for and sent out to the state officials through Nâzım's uncle Ali Fuat (Cebesoy), especially İsmet İnönü, to be read by them, and not exactly intended for publication). Likewise, if the *Landscapes* were written for the ordinary Turkish citizens and/or the lower classes, a change in tone, narration, and language (and, perhaps, "cited works" section) of the poem would be nothing but expected. However, the fundamental issue here concerns how we can ever be sure that a literary work is written solely for practical purposes. Put differently, how can we ever be sure that a work is written for such-and-such purposes? What if, while writing *Kuvâyi Milliye*, Nâzım founds ways of coming to terms with the regime; that is, what if he was cultivating (wittingly or unwittingly) a republican identity, was being transformed, and getting attuned to the Kemalist regime and its revolutions? He might be crafting, "revealing" a self that comes to terms with and maybe conscripted to the official narrative of the War of Independence. Had not Nâzım been already acceptant of various fundamental aspects of the regime, especially its strictly secular and "progressive" projects? Had not he seen in the Kemalist transformations and reorderings aspects of a "bourgeois revolution" which would bring the real revolution of proletariat one step closer, as the traditional

Marxist historical materialism envisions the evolution of revolutions?[27] Was Hikmet interpreting the Kemalist revolution and its official narrative of the Turkish War of Independence as an anti-imperialist victory, also a significant theme in the official discourse of the USSR? More importantly, can all these not be true together at the same time? Do we have to resolve whether Nâzım was supporting Kemalism or not (as Ece Ayhan and Irmak seem to do) at once? Do we have to admit that Nâzım can be only one thing but not others? Should he always be constructed as a unified self and subject, as if he made all his choices at once when he was a prior "I," as if there was a time that Nâzım created himself and only then started to write, as if there was a pre-writing "Nâzım" that is in certain sense omniscient.[28]

This seems to result from what Foucault calls the "absolute character and founding role" that the author/subject constructs for himself and the critics attribute to him "in undertaking the internal and architectonic analysis of a work (be it a literary text, philosophical system, or scientific work)."[29] Yet this is not only a fault on critics' and biographers' behalf, but also the way Nâzım makes himself as a modern author, as the discourse of modernity has been very much marked by self-identity and self-assertion. In writing, Nâzım asserts himself, the "I," so forcefully that

27 These are Nâzım's own descriptions mostly informed by the doctrines of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) that see the establishment of the Turkish Republic as a bourgeois revolution, a progressive step taken toward the coming of socialist/communist revolution, as there would not be such revolution without being preceded by a bourgeois revolution. To cite a few early essays where Nâzım argued along these lines: "Türkiye'de Amele Sınıfı ve Amele Meselesi" [1924], "Muddei Umumi Bey İstical Buyurmayınız" [1930], "Çocuğun İsmi" [1930]. All from *Yazılar (1924–1934)* (İstanbul: YKY, 2017). Following this line of thinking, it would not be wrong to argue, Nâzım Hikmet and the leftist politics in Turkey has adopted an overly secularist outlook, labeling most of the resistance movements that contain Islamic tones and elements, including the Kurdish Sheikh Said rebellion in the early 1925, as "reactionary" (*mürteci* or *gerici* in Turkish), resisting the progressive elements of the bourgeois revolution.

28 Mutlu Konuk Blasing, too, suggests that Nâzım "himself played a major part in creating the myth of 'Nâzım'." *Nâzım Hikmet: The Life and Times of Turkey's World Poet*, 19.

29 Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 117–118.

he elevates himself to a level of the sole agent of his own action and thinking.[30] It is for this reason that the critics usually thinks of him as a source of all the significations which fill his work and as a complete, absolute character that is either one thing or another, that can never be split or mutliple. This kind of indivisibility and autonomy is the principle behind almost all of the pieces he wrote, in which he was elevated to the role of the "hero" fighting a war of one man against all, against the rest of the world, against the outside. That is why one can never plausibly manage to forget or ignore Nâzım's presence while reading a poem or a novel of his, even when the narrative is not in the first person or when he was most realist.[31] Nâzım is thus always either *against* or *for*. To the multiple gazes, in both metaphorical and literal senses of the term, that watch him, he tries to prove that he is *this* or *that*. Yet it is in fact those gazes that make him speak as an author and that make him exist and prevail one way or the other, that is to say, make him (im)possible at all. (These are mainly the points I make in the Chapter 2).

---

30 In his study of historical origins of the autobiography and the modern individualist self in the West, Michael Mascuch defines autobiography as "a performance, a public display of self-identity, even when composed secretly for an audience of one." And the individualist self, coming out of this performance, is "a producer and a consumer of stories about himself and other selves which place the self at the center of the system of relations, discursive and otherwise." *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591–1791* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 9, 21.

31 At the dawn of the realism, Gustave Flaubert wrote that "[i]n my book I do not want there to be a *single* movement, or a *single* reflection of the author" (Letter to Louise Colet, February 8, 1852); "No lyricism, no comments, the author's personality is absent. It will make dreary reading." (February 1, 1852). *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*, 1967, 91, emphasis in the original. Although Nâzım's realism is informed more by Balzacian realism, he was also planning to diminish the voice of the author in his realist experiments. In early 1940s, while working on the *Landscapes*, he noted that if readers are to be shaped by a realist writer who is an engineer of the soul (*ruh mühendisi*), this would be much easier and without opposition if they do not notice the presence of author. Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 13, February 13, 1942, in *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusane'den Mektuplar* (İstanbul: YKY, 2019), 50. Despite this, as I try to demonstrate in the Chapter 2, Nâzım was most of the time present in his texts, especially in the *Landscapes*, his realist opus magnum.

§ III The State Analogy

It is in this sense his hunger strike expresses and manifests Nâzım himself, since what makes a hunger striker (and a hunger artist, as in Kafka's case) possible is the gaze itself. Both hunger strikers and artists can exist as long as there is a gaze (or gazes) that watches their performances. This fragment of Nâzım's life, thus, illuminates that while, paradoxically, constructing himself as a complete, autonomous, and uniform subject, he always needed to speak to the gazes emerged in and through the power relations he was involved in. That is to say, he would not *be* in the absence of the gazes he speaks against. Without these gazes and relations, or his relationship to the other, there would not be Nâzım Hikmet as a literary-political figure, and his life would neither be a public concern nor a public spectacle at all. I argue that Nâzım Hikmet as an eminent poet, writer, and a political figure was the outcome of a complex process of subjectivity formation embedded within the constitutive effects of multiple and mostly indivisible gazes. It is this mode of being under and with the gaze that is manifest in his hunger strike or his choice of hunger strike as a method of resistance.

Hunger strike is an act that has appeared when human life for the first time has come to be at the center of politics, or when human life has become the central occupation of the modern state. More accurately, the modern state is defined fundamentally through its relationship to human life. It is the discourse of biopolitics that defines the modern nation-state primarily based on its relationship to human life (i.e., what it can do and what cannot do with it), because the existence of the state is justified in its ability "make" and "foster" life and in its defense of the society. The state is supposed to protect its citizens from each other and external threats, concern with their health, life expectancy, and well-being, and not inflict violence on them unless it is justified by a more and better life. For this reason, a gaze, most of the time called public (sphere), or simply society "outside" the state, is put to work, and the work is to monitor, keep an eye on, the state all the time, in case it violates these conditions and thus deviates from the norm of being a state. It is this inside/outside,

state/gaze, binary that has made possible hunger strike as a form of resistance, because hunger strikers, talking to the gaze, either suggest that the state inflicts violence on them through certain acts and politics or provoke an image of the state that is unable to look after its citizens based on modern signification of hunger as a social problem, a problem that concerns the entire society and at most the state that is supposed to make life and prevent hunger.

It is intriguing that, just as the modern author, the modern state is thought to be a unified entity and is monitored by the multiple gazes, and that human life can be conceived only through its relationship to the state, as the state is defined through its relationship to life. This mode of thinking-like-the-state is rather apparent when we consider that hunger strike in principle is an attempt to usurp the state's monopoly over sacrifice by forming a resistance in which they take the decision on sacrifice of their bodies in their own hands; that is, it is no more the state that decides the sacrifices to be made. And, paradoxically, hunger strikers in a certain sense still let the state decide whether they are going to live or not, because in the vast majority of the cases of hunger strike, the demands of the strikers ultimately require the action of the state.

There seems to be a strange relation and analogy here. The author makes his life subject himself to the gazes. And the modern state justifies itself in being subject to the gazes that watch for its violations of human life, in being constantly checked out. Both make themselves as autonomous, indivisible objects. Speaking to the gaze, hunger strikers suggest that the state deviates from the norm of human life, but at the same time, acting like the state, they usurp the state's monopoly over sacrifice. What seems to give life to these three modes of being is the gaze. However, they have gazes of their own. The state have wide surveillance mechanisms. The gaze of hunger striker relies on the gaze of hunger as a social problem, and the author is the gaze that look at, speaks to, the other gazes. It is this modern relationship of the gaze that binds three modes of being: being an author, being a hunger striker, and being a state. This is the relation and analogy that I problematize in this thesis.

In his "infamous" essay, Fredric Jameson discusses that the "third-world" literatures rely on an allegory between the individual and the nation conflating the private and public, unlike the "first-world" literatures:

> Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*.[32]

The problems associated with his notions and generalizations like "all third-world texts are necessarily... allegorical" notwithstanding,[33] Jameson's comments are not without merit but require some qualifications and reconsiderations. First, among other things, he simply points out that the "non-Western" ("third-world" in his language, or, "Global South," as it is now called) literatures and texts establish a necessary and visible connection and conflation between the person and the nation, the individual and the nation-state, the private and the public. However, while pointing this out, he seems to miss the fact that this connection and conflation is a result and/or side-effect of colonial processes bringing the Western humanism and civilization to the "anti-human" and "uncivilized" culture of the East. These colonial humanizing practices are mostly established through the formation and transfer of the modern state apparatus as the defender of life and society into the "non-West," which must replace the alleged Eastern despotisms where human life has no importance or value whatsoever. It is at this point that the individual story becomes

32 Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" *Social Text* no. 15 (1986): 69, emphasis in the original.

33 The most well-known criticism of Jameson's essay comes from the Marxist Urdu critic and poet Aijaz Ahmad. Although Ahmad dislikes any sort of identity talk, his criticism relies on the idea that the one mentioned and whose specificities overlooked with a desire of generalization in Jameson is the postcolonial subject, namely Ahmad himself. See Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'" *Social Text* no. 17 (1987): 65–88. For another take on the discussion, also see Imre Szeman, "Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (2001): 803–827.

"necessarily" the national story in the East. Placing (or leaving behind) the biopolitical modern nation-state in the East but at the same time, with its very existence, constituting the perpetual security issue to it, the Western colonial humanism brings about this necessary conflation. For the biopolitical nation-state that the colonizer left behind (or, alternatively, the one that is constructed through self-modernizing nationalist projects, as in Turkey), turns into a paranoid security state that constantly produces its own terrorists and enemies as a threat to the society. This enables the biopolitical state to kill in the name of fostering life and defending society. As life is always under threat in the "East," individuals must (or are forced to) act and see like the state to defend it, even in their practices of resistance. This is reinforced by the colonial introduction of the notion of human as the author who owns and produces itself with definite inviolable borders and boundaries.

Second, unlike Jameson, I do not use allegory. For, although the allegories under consideration are not "an elaborate set of figures and personifications to be read against some one-to-one table of equivalences" but rather "in constant change and transformation at each perpetual present of the text,"[34] Jameson appears to suggest that all our narratives are in fact allegorical as a way of defending the much-criticized notion of "totality" and its importance in our critical practices, especially in his recent revisit of the essay.[35] This is the Marxist narrative structure that Jameson celebrates and refashions in most of his works. According to this narrative structure, all events can be ordered into a narrative, as they all can fulfill a certain function in it. It seems to me that the narrator in such a narrative structure is all-seeing outside being that can put every event after its occurrence into a pre-given narrative form by assigning it to function/role in the story. Suspicious of the narrator of this kind and of the related notion that all narratives are necessarily allegorical, here I opt for "analogy" in the very loose sense of the term: there is just an historical similarity (an analogousness) between the state and the human. (In the

34 Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," 79.

35 Fredric Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology* (London: Verso Books, 2019). Though not substantially, I engage with this work more in the Chapter 2.

Chapter 1, I try elaborate on both of these points emphasizing the connection between the biopolitical nation-state, colonialism, the social, and humanism.) More specifically, I discuss that there is an analogy between the "Nâzım Hikmet," the main character of Nâzım's writings and the state, between the author and the state. That is to say, first, the hunger striker-author reproduces the state by reiterating it as the protector of the life; second, the author-hunger striker acts like the state in the sense that both are determined with the gazes, the outside, that watch them. Simply, the autobiography of the author is the (auto-)biography of the state.

More generally, in the thesis, I try to ask in what ways do our modes of thinking of ourselves and our lives emulate the thinking of the state? That is, in what ways do we construct ourselves, like the state does or is constructed, as an indivisible and autonomous unity under and with the gaze, and in what ways do we think our lives solely in relation to the state embracing the mechanisms of the state and vice versa? And in what ways do the gaze/object, outside/inside binaries play a paradoxical role in this construction? For it is against the gaze, as a performance, we construct ourselves as a unity, but at the same time it is only through the gaze that our existence can be recognized. Put differently as a question, although we always need the help or simply the gaze of others, how come it is that we construct ourselves indivisible unities? And how is it that these anthropocentric and state-centric discourses posit(ion) us against the "outside," the nonhuman, or what is supposedly outside the human? Are there possible ways of thinking unlike ourselves, unlike the state, and unlike the human? These are the questions I attempt to pursue in this study.

§ IV The Plan and Method

To be able to do so, throughout the thesis, I draw on multiple fields including intellectual history, critical theory, social and political thought, literary and cultural studies, and postcolonial studies. Though it is impossible to say that I am able to do the justice to the subtleties in all these fields. In elaborating Nâzım's hunger strike in 1950, I pay attention to the historical details of the event with a particular emphasis on how Nâzım's

hunger has been publicized, circulated, and narrated before, during, and after the strike. This is the work I undertake in the Chapter 4. As I have already hinted at in this introduction, the Chapter 1 lays out the theoretical groundwork upon which most of the subsequent chapters are based.

Overall, I primarily read what Nâzım Hikmet wrote and his act of hunger strike, proposing a different and somehow unsettling reading strategy. First, reading literally, I take him as part of a discourse, the discourse of modernity, which is largely marked by the self-identity and self-assertion rather than approach him hagiographically as the current literature mostly tends to do. This is what I try to do in the Chapter 2 where I aim to demonstrate the ways in which Nâzım constructed and asserted himself as a unified self despite all the precarity he had been exposed to and all the multiplicity he had come to embody.

Second, my reading lets him contradict, fragment, and break, rather than cohere as a whole. Related to this, I do not attempt to distinguish the myths from the facts. For it is the inseparability of the two that opens up new possibilities in reading Nâzım Hikmet as an autobiographical writer in the multiple senses of the term autobiography that I have tried to show above. For Nâzım Hikmet writes himself in retrospect as much as he writes it as a fantasy and a promise. I read him against the grain. I put him together with the others that are prima facie seen as disparate figures, texts, modes, in order to find the other, the strange, the unknown in him. This is what I mainly try to achieve in the Chapter 3 and 5. The Chapter 3 brings together Nâzım's "The Eyeballs of the Hungry" with Kafka's "A Hunger Artist" and Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* to shed light on the modern discourse of hunger through the notion of the gaze. I investigate the ways in which not only hunger in many different forms has come to be an object of the gaze but also how it has come to be an object to have its own gaze directed at the other. I attempt to show that the discursive construction of hunger strike through the significations that the issue of hunger gained with modernity can be found in these three works written by three different literary figures who are otherwise unlikely to be thought under the same light. This lends support to my argument that Nâzım's writing of hunger precedes his hunger strike.

The Chapter 5 suggests that Nâzım Hikmet had a "late style" by drawing upon Theodor Adorno's and Edward Said's discussions of the concept. I argue that this unruly, unfitting, and lyric late style Nâzım had developed towards the end of his life negates the indivisibility, unanimity, and autonomy of Nâzım by decentering, or even unmaking, the self, as he explores how fleeting, contingent, minute, and precarious a human being is in the face of the sublime earth. This time I read Nâzım Hikmet together with Fredrich Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin.

So, to repeat, I employ a dual reading strategy: the first is literal while the second is what I call "reading against the grain." On the first, reading literally, I try to show the ways in which Nâzım Hikmet, as a modern author, constructs himself as a whole, as the sole authority over his words and acts, speaking against the gazes that supposedly monitor him, à la the modern state. He wants to subject himself to the objectifying gazes of the others to be able to become a unified subject with a definite inside and outside. On the second, reading against the grain, I point to the sheer impossibility of this subject, as what makes it (im)possible is its constant need for the gazes of the other. Put differently, it needs the outside to be able to become inside. Building on this instability, I read Nâzım Hikmet against the grain by putting him together with the ones that is strange to him, to find the unconscious marked by this impossibility of the unified subject, an impossibility that opens up new critical possibilities.

The tone and mode of my critique is negative throughout. In addition to what I have learned from Adorno—"[negative dialectics] is suspicious of all identity"[36]—this choice is conditioned by the overly positive Nâzım Hikmet scholarship that is even detrimental to the Nâzım it valorizes, as I have tried to emphasize thus far. In an oversimplified way, my negative critique might sound like that Nâzım Hikmet is a modern author-subject shaped by the Western post-Enlightenment discourse/epistemology. In his recent perceptive critique of the postcolonial criticism, Fadi Bardawil points out that the postcolonial criticisms of the

36 Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 2007 [1966]), 145.

nonmetropolitan intellectuals and thoughts, which are done in the metropolis and shaped by the "metropolitan unconscious" that take an implicit or explicit opposition to the West, are overwhelmingly based on what he terms as "epistemology critique."[37] That is to say, in our critiques, we keep identifying the ways in which the intellectuals and texts are structured by the Western/Eurocentric epistemologies. Bardawil's critique might well apply to the oversimplified version of my argument in this study. However, I hope that my negative critique—which is directed at the ways Nâzım Hikmet's thought and agency is shaped by the post-Enlightenment Western notions of the self, subjectivity, and authorship—is justified by the fact that it runs against the stagnant literature. Also, and more importantly, the above dual reading might save me from the charge. For, on the one hand, I read Nâzım as a modern author that construct himself as a whole, that is, I do the usual epistemology critique, on the other hand, I point to the sheer impossibility of this modern Western ideal, focusing my attention on the novelties, nuances, rhetorical and narrative techniques in Nâzım's oeuvre. In the concluding chapter, I revisit this discussion in more detail.

37 Fadi Bardawil, *Revolution and Disenchantment: Arab Marxism and the Binds of Emancipation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 1.

1

Writing of Life: Biopolitics, Hunger Strike, and the Person of the State

> *The political state everywhere needs the guarantee of spheres lying outside it.*
>
> – Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*

> *the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state.*
>
> – Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power"

> *İnsanı yaşat ki devlet yaşasın.*
> *[Make the human live so that the state can live.]*
>
> – Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

The Turkish edition of Foucault's 1976 lectures at the Collège de France *"Society Must Be Defended"* omits the quotation marks in the title of the original French edition and the preceding English translation,

and more curiously the back cover of the edition reads: "This important thinker of twentieth century, analyzing race war discourses and conquest narratives, embarks on a protection of society from 'bio-power' and state racisms."[1] But, wait a minute. Does Foucault really want to "protect society" in these lectures? Does not he rather argue that the discourse on the defense of the society is what leads to the idea of the modern nation-state and biopower and, thus, justifies state racisms—society and nation being modern constructions and the new subjects of history? Why then the blurb claims that Foucault wants to defend society and, perhaps more importantly, emphasizes that society must really be defended without quotation marks? What would be the source of this "misinterpretation"? What kind of a problem of cultural and political mistranslation is this? What is it that turns Foucault into a defender of society in Turkey?

In this chapter, I do not exactly look for answers to these questions, but I travel around, offer some hints on, and make several gestures toward them. Here my primary goal, working mostly through Foucault's own formulations, is to discuss biopolitics as a modern discourse that places human life under the protection and guarantee of the modern state, that urges the state to defend the society by all means and at all costs, and grounds its existence on this prime duty of social defense. Then, I move on to argue that hunger strike is a modern biopolitical resistance, as it capitalizes on this discourse of the state as the protector of life and suggests that the state is unable to do so as evident in the suspended body of hunger strikers. It calls for those who are "outside" the state to look at them and, thus, look at the state deviating from the norm of being state. With this, I try to discuss that hunger strike is a practice of resistance that reiterates the notion of the biopolitical state but at any moment, especially as the striker turns toward death, is able to escape from the reaches of biopower. Yet, paradoxically, the hunger striker dissolves when becomes the sovereign over life. Despite this latter aspect, I

1 The original Turkish version reads: "Yirminci yüzyılın bu önemli düşünürü, ırklar savaşına ilişkin söylemleri ve fetih anlatılarını çözümleyerek, toplumu 'biyo-iktidardan'dan ve devlet ırkçılıklarından korumaya girişiyor." See *Toplumu Savunmak Gerekir*, trans. Şehsuvar Aktaş (İstanbul: YKY, 2018).

predominantly argue that it is a practice that is closely connected to and reinforces the modern state as the defender of life and society. (As I said in the Introduction, this choice is conditioned by the nature of Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike. Still, I mention what the other options might be while elaborating on this below.) This makes up the first two parts of the chapter.

In the third part, I try to inquire into a potential resemblance between the idea of the author in particular, the individual in general, and the modern state. In what ways the individual is constructed as the sovereign, the autonomous and self-producing entity, and in what ways this is similar to the discourse of the modern nation-state, the self-enclosed entity with borders, with a definite inside and outside, and as the sole rationality and authority of life. To be more specific, I try to interrogate the ways in which the modern author is constructed analogous to the making of the modern state, the ways in which the modern political and literary authors/authorities interact with each other and are modeled after one another. As I have discussed briefly in the Introduction and will discuss more substantially in the next chapter, as a modern author, Nâzım Hikmet tends to establish himself, strives to be or appear as, the indivisible authority over his life, word, and action. Keeping this in mind, on a more general level, here I attempt to investigate, or once again make a gesture toward, the ways in which modern individuals practice state and the modern state is imagined as a person, as an author through a series of anthropomorphisms and personifications in Western political thought that permeated the colonial practices. In conclusion, I try to discuss that we tend to be like states in two senses. First, we are like states in the sense that we call the state to arms to safeguard life and reinforce this everywhere, even in our resistance practices. That is, we constantly reproduce it. Second, we are like states in the sense that we define ourselves as single unified entities, individuals, self-producing wholes with definite inviolable borders and boundaries vis-à-vis others outside. In conclusion, following Foucault, I attempt to show that "the state is a

practice"[2] or, differently, our practices defined by the discourse of the human are "stately."

§ 1.1 Biopolitics

What does it mean to say that biopolitics is a discourse that places human life, society, population under, and fundamentally links these to, the modern state? There are different elements to dissect here: state, society, population, human, modernity. First of all, this is to say that the notions state, society, population, and human are modern constructions. To oversimplify, the human has come to be the principle of the order of things, or the ordering principle, starting from the seventeenth century. This is the issue Foucault deals with in *The Order of Things* in detail, charting the archaeology of the human sciences, that is, biology, linguistics, and political economy: man as a species being, man as a speaking being, and man as producing and consuming being. With this centering of the human in our discursive practices, the human life has come to be the ordering principle of our politics as well.[3] The state has been grounded on its duty of protection and guarantee of the inviolable human rights, of which "right to life" is the most fundamental. Thus, everything that relates to the human life has come to be put under scrutiny and has made their ways into our discourses: rates of mortality, longevity, average life expectancy, child mortality, reproductive and sexual health, etc. And the object these notions speak through and about has come to be identified as the "population" by which we often refer to a generality or totality, an organism of its own. These issues also make up the notion of what is called "the social." This is one of the most important works of the dividing and

2 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Michel Senellart. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 277.

3 It might be fruitful to trace Foucault's notion of biopolitics emerged in the mid-1970s to his earlier works written in 196s like the *Order of Things* (1966) and the *Birth of the Clinic* (1963). For an example of such attempt, see Catherine Mills, *Biopolitics* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 20–23.

compartmentalizing modernity. The category "the social" has been a realm often distinguished from the political, the realm of public discussion, parliament, democracy, etc. and the economic, the realm of distribution, needs, and trade. The social has come to constitute the realm concerned with phenomena such as the crime, disease, poverty, disasters, household, etc. The issue for the state, then, has become how to govern the social and population in the most efficient way, how to optimize life, as the emergence of the modern state is by no means separate from the development of capitalism.

And soon it has been discovered that it is the norm and normalization that are the most suitable techniques to govern society. To protect the human life, the state has come to be the regulative force, which is supposed to bring, for example, mortality rates, poverty and disease figures, to a balance. That is to say, the state has to account for the health and well-being of the population measured through statistical and demographic facts and descriptions shaped around a norm and a level of normality. If these carefully measured and recorded facts and descriptions suggest an anomaly in the population, for example, if the child mortality rates are observed to increase too much, the state has to make the necessary regulations that will bring those rates to a normal, an acceptable level. Thus, the population and society are the objects that the state constantly interferes with, make regulations and adjustments, applies its forces on to bring them to a level of normality, to improve the life in the general and biological sense of the term, "man-as-species."

There is also more individualized workings of this biopolitical state. Or, to put it in a way that is more congruous with the Foucault's own terms, there are two poles of biopower.[4] The first pole is what I have told

4 Foucault explains "two poles of biopower" as follows: "One of these poles... centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls.... The second... focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and

in the previous paragraphs. He gives this pole two different names: biopolitics or regulatory power. The second pole, however, is individualizing: it is called disciplinary power and sometimes referred to as anatomo-politics by Foucault. It applies to the individual body to shape it, to discipline it, to make it docile and normal. This second pole is what Foucualt mostly deals with in *Discipline and Punish* where the contrast is mainly between the disciplinary power and the sovereign power. Sovereign power runs within the limits of law, within a legal/illegal framework. The question its punitive mechanisms rest on is whether an act is legal or not, whether a particular person is guilty or not. That is, the focus is on the crime and the aim is bodily public punishment and exclusion. On the other hand, disciplinary power operates more widely through its ability to make nuanced distinctions, since its basis is norms rather than the law. It is capable of making distinction between the healthy and the sick, the normal and the abnormal, the heterosexual and the homosexual, the delinquent and the docile (i.e., dividing practices). Its punitive focus, therefore, is on the criminal rather than the crime, and its aim is to correct, rehabilitate, normalize, set the criminal right by the existing norms. Therefore, while sovereign power is exclusionary, violent, and based on visible bodily punishment, disciplinary power is corrective, carceral, rehabilitating, and normalizing.

In Foucault's account of biopower, however, there are two related points that he does not develop or rather leaves underdeveloped. First, when he talks about biopower, or about the state as the protector of life, the life he is talking about is not only biological life, especially when it comes to the practices of resistance emerged within biopower. In the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, he says,

---

longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary." This means that biopolitics is one of the poles of biopower. That is, the latter refers to a larger phenomenon in Foucault's language. Yet throughout the thesis I use them interchangeably and refer to the biopower in Foucault's use. Also, note that according to Foucault, the first (disciplinary) pole first appeared in the seventeenth century, while the second (biopolitical) pole "formed somewhat later." *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 139.

> against this power... the forces that resisted relied for support on the very thing it invested, that is, on life and man as a living being.... One no longer aspired toward the coming of the emperor of the poor, or the kingdom of the latter days, or even the restoration of our imagined ancestral rights; what was demanded and what served as an objective was life, understood as the basic needs, man's concrete essence, the realization of his potential, a plenitude of the possible.... The "right" to life, to one's body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or "alienations," the "right" to rediscover what one is and all that one can be, this "right"... was the political response to all these new procedures of power which did not derive... from the traditional right of sovereignty.[5]

This passage is of vital importance, because it shows that, unlike what is usually thought, Foucault does not think that the life that is the object of biopower does not just refer to biological life, but it includes other senses of life such as a happy life, an authentic human life with various possibilities, and socially, politically, or spiritually meaningful life, and a life that is worth living, and so on. That is, unlike Giorgio Agamben's take, Foucault's notion does not rely on a distinction between animal life and qualified life.[6] As my discussion of hunger strikes below will clarify,

5 *The History of Sexuality*, *Volume 1: An Introduction*, 145.

6 This is one of the reasons why I think that Agamben's account is futile and rather follow Foucault more closely. In the *Homo Sacer*, Agamben distinguishes between bios and zoē. The former, according to him, is a politically meaningful life, a qualified and perhaps an authentic life, while the latter is the animal life, or life in the most basic and biological sense, that is produced by the states and the world order. Stripping off the individuals of their social and political attachments, qualities, possibilities, this order is based on the logic of zoē that constantly produces bare lives, mere biological existences. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995). That is, Agamben implicitly suggests that we have to look for politically meaningful lives that is beyond the minimum biological existence. However, as Foucault appears to suggest, the biopolitical state works to do the same thing, to improve their lives beyond the mere biological existence. That is, the state fosters life in all the senses of the word, just as resistance practices capitalize on the multiplicity of the senses. The use of these different senses of the life, or conflation of the bios with the zoē, is also important for making connections between Foucault's notion of biopolitics and his late works on the technologies of the self and ethics.

biopolitical practices of resistance tends to challenge the state by strategically employing these different senses of life, and benefitting from the ambiguity between them, to be able to prove that the state is unable to protect life.

This is related to the other underdeveloped idea of Foucault: resistance. Although he famously suggests that where there is power, there is resistance, and vice versa,[7] he most of the time devotes his works to the analyses of power or government rather than practices and forms of resistance.[8] Even when he suggests "taking the forms of resistance... as a starting point" and "using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used,"[9] he continues to be preoccupied with the power part. Yet I think this is crucial for the kind of investigations undertaken and inspired by Foucault, both because they help better understand how power operates and because they might provide insights into the ways in which human beings turn themselves into subjects, which is what he seeks to investigate in his late works. Here I am interested in the former, because, I think, different forms of resistance are ways of understanding how different forms power can take. This helps us understand that resistance practices are not in fact against power but themselves are power relations and notice how certain power relations are subverted, expanded, stolen, and nuanced by resistance practices. For instance, when hunger strikers put their body and life in suspense, they claim that the state is unable to protect its citizens by willingly enacting the hunger that the state is supposed to prevent. This particular form of resistance is shaped around the discourse of the state as the protector and guarantor of life and society. Relying on this, individuals invent

7 *The History of Sexuality*, *Volume 1: An Introduction*, 95.

8 Nonetheless, as Allen Feldman and Banu Bargu suggest, these resistances internal to power were not sufficiently analyzed by Foucault himself. See, respectively, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 144 and *Starve and Immolate*, 59–60.

9 "The Subject and Power" in Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Hermeneutics and Structuralism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 211.

themselves as subjects such as hunger strikers relying on the discourse of biopower but at the same time they reinforce the state as the mechanism of social defense. Moreover, employing different formulations and conceptions of life, hunger strikers both challenge the state and yet extend its possible fields of operation on life. This will be clearer when I discuss hunger strikes below, but now I want to briefly trace the genealogy of the modern state to be able to show how the state has been developed as the perpetual security apparatus against perpetual insecurities and threats the society is surrounded by.

§ 1.2 Genealogy of the Modern State

The emergence of the modern state, and of the concept of the state, can be traced back to sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, since then there has never been an agreed concept with a clear definition. Rather, what the state is has always been a matter of contention and debate. For this reason, as Quentin Skinner points out, genealogy might be the appropriate method to understand and trace the idea of the state. This does not mean, however, that there is no commonalities, persistent and recurring themes among these contested and contingent definitions of the state. Genealogy charts similarities as well as differences, longue durée as well as short periods, disruptions and breaks as well as continuities. Here loosely following Skinner, admitting that the discourse concerning the state never stays the same, I discuss that the modern state has been fundamentally conceived as the protector and guarantor of human life as well as the rights and common good of its population.[10] Its existence is grounded on the fact that it is there to provide, safeguard, and improve life.

To begin with, in 1556, John Ponet wrote that the duty of the state is "to see the whole state well governed and the people defended from

10 Quentin Skinner, "The State" in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball, James Farr, Russell L. Hanson, 90–131, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and "A Genealogy of the Modern State" *Proceedings of the British Academy* 162 (2009): 325–370.

injuries."[11] Similarly, perhaps the earliest theorist of absolutist state, Jean Bodin suggested in the *Les Six Livres de la République* written in 1576 and translated into English in 1606: "their sovereign has a duty to care for 'the health & welfare of the whole state'." More importantly, he continues, "princes and other governors have an obligation not to inconvenience but to protect both 'the subjects in particular' and 'the whole bodie of the state'"[12] This already echoes the "two poles" of biopower Foucault speaks of: individualizing, looking after the individual bodies, and generalizing, observing, protecting, and regulating the whole social body, population. Just as Machiavelli warns the prince that he ought not to do any evil to be able maintain his state, according to the legal theorists of the same period, the rulers "must preserve the welfare of the body politic, and... they cannot hope to maintain their own status unless they keep this body in security and good health."[13] Evident from the discourse of these remarkably different theorists is Foucault's distinction between sovereign power and biopower. While sovereign power manifests itself only through the death it is able to order, biopower is obliged to foster and multiply life. In contrast to the sovereign power's right to "take life and let live," biopower is based on a new right to "make live and let die."[14] In both cases, there is an asymmetry in favor of the former rights; namely, taking life in sovereign power and making live in biopower. Thus, roughly starting in the sixteenth century, what we see here is the retreat of the sovereign power and advance of the biopower that centers the state as the safeguard of life and securer of society and the common good. This, however, does not mean that biopower replaced the sovereign power and that the state no more takes life. On the contrary, as I will try to show, the aim of the notion of biopower is to understand how the state kills when it is supposed to make live.

11 Quoted in Skinner, "The State," 111.

12 Quoted in Skinner, "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 329.

13 In Skinner, "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 328.

14 *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 241; *The History of Sexuality*, 136–138.

I want to continue with the thinker whom Skinner refers to as "*the* theorist of the state"[15] while Foucault calls him "a false paternity."[16] In his infamous book *Leviathan*, first published in 1651, Thomas Hobbes describes what he calls a state of nature. This state, he says, is a state of war. All are equal to one another in their capacity to kill each other and totally free to do so. Even in cases where one is apparently weaker than one's rival in strength, one can always form coalitions and alliances with others to defeat the rival. Therefore, this is a state of total insecurity and fear for everyone. Everybody can virtually kill everybody. They are completely open to all internal and external threats. To save themselves from this fear and insecurity, Hobbes suggests, these people come (or should come)[17] together to form a social contract that irrevocably transfers their power of killing to an indivisible authority that will protect them from each other and external threats. This is, according to Hobbes, what put an end to the ever-present state of insecurity defining the state of nature. The principal of this authority, Leviathan, or the state, "consisteth in the end for which he was trusted with the sovereign power, namely the procuration of the safety of people."[18] The state must "procure the common interest"[19] and it must be judged by its "aptitude to produce the peace and security of the people, for which end they were instituted."[20] The fundamental duty and the ground of existence of the state is to make people live and improve their life. While making people live, the state makes itself live. "Those who institute a state... make it live 'as long as Mankind',

15 Skinner, "The State," 121.

16 *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 59, 270.

17 It is not exactly clear whether Hobbes describes how states or the political authority have been historically formed, or he guesses that this is what must have happened, or he formulates a normative theory saying that this is how it ought to be. From the text of *Leviathan*, one find evidence for all three options.

18 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson, (London: Penguin Classics, 1985), 376. Right after this, he adds that "by Safety" he does not only mean "a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawfull Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Commonwealth, shall acquire to himselfe."

19 *Leviathan*, 241.

20 *Leviathan*, 241.

thereby establishing a system of 'perpetual security' that they can hope to bequeath to their remote posterity."[21] (I will come back to this idea of "perpetual security" in a moment).

In John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), the state of nature is not as fearful as Hobbes's, but still, he thinks, some people can interpret the freedom and equality in this state as the license to do whatever they want to do and obtain as much as they can. To prevent this situation of insecurity stemming from the potential misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the God-given equality and freedom, the state needs to be founded "as a trust established by the members of a community for the more effective promotion of their own good, 'the peace, safety and public good of the people'."[22] The state thus exists for "the attainment of the common good."[23] In Hobbes, what is done or what needs to be done is the absolute transfer of fundamental rights and liberties. So, for him, the state, the sovereign, does not act in the name of the people, but on their behalf. What the state does is what the people does. For Locke, "we never 'deliver up' our fundamental liberties in establishing a commonwealth, but merely depute or delegate a known and indifferent judge to safeguard them more effectively on our own behalf."[24] However, in both cases, the state is founded out of an insecurity and fear.

Against Hobbes and perhaps Locke, Rousseau argues that in the state of nature, or in their natural, "prepolitical," state, human beings by no means compete with each other or are enemies to one another. They just want to preserve their lives and since each of them by nature knows that the God orders them to preserve their lives, they act in the way that their actions do not harm anybody. What corrupts this nature of human beings is in fact the formation of the political society which fosters competition and envy. Thus, the reason why Hobbes and Locke want to exit the state of nature, because they look at it from the standpoint of the political society, that is, these theorists project their present into the past

21 Quoted in Skinner, "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 346.

22 Quoted in Skinner, "The State," 115.

23 Quoted in Skinner, "The State," 115.

24 Quoted in "The State," 115.

state of nature. However, despite this criticism, the need for the social contract and the emergence from the state of nature is necessitated by the individuals who seek peace and security. Thus, in Rousseau, too, the state is put in place to preserve the citizens' life. In this regard, though in different way, he comes close to Hobbes and Locke, despite the fact that his account is usually thought to diametrically oppose the former.[25]

Similarly, definitely influenced by Rousseau, Kant and his constructivism imply that human beings are endowed with a rational capacity and yet they are not able to make effective use of it in all circumstances. It is in this sense remarkably similar to Rousseau whom he once called "Newton of the mind."[26] Thus, in Kant, too, the state is based on reason that is able to identify universal laws, laws that can be valid for everyone everywhere all the time. But according to Kant, the state can never be based on a principle like preservation of the common good and providing welfare of the citizens. Rather, he thinks, the basis of the state is freedom, being free from a constrain by another's choice. However, it seems that the freedom is only possible if the state is committed not to violate and protect the freedom and autonomy of citizens, which seems to be the case, as Kant suggests that the revolt against the state is not allowed. Therefore, it would not be wrong to suggest that the primary duty of the state is to protect citizens from external coercions and one another's violations that violate freedom and autonomy. It must then defend society against all threats to their freedom and autonomy and, more importantly, it must not do anything that interferes with their freedom.

To continue with other examples, William Blackstone, for instance, suggests that "a state is a collective body, composed of a multitude of individuals, united for their safety and convenience and intending to

25 For a similar argument saying that Hobbes's and Rousseau's conceptions of the state might be closer than they are usually thought to be, see Peter J. Steinberger, "Hobbes, Rousseau and the Modern Conception of the State" *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 3 (2008): 595–611.

26 Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 89.

act together as one man."[27] Similarly, according to what Skinner calls the fictional theory of the state, including Hobbes's *Leviathan*, "the conduct of government is morally acceptable if and only if it serves to promote the safety and welfare of the person of the state, and... the common good or public interest of the people as a whole."[28] Here the state, or "the person of the state," is identified with the people as a whole. Quite similar to Hobbes, Samuel von Pufendorf[29] says "the general Rule which Sovereigns are to proceed by, is... *Let the Safety of the People be the Supreme Law*."[30] (Here also note the notion "person of the state," I will return to it in the last part). All in all, the accounts of the Western political and legal theorists, despite their remarkable differences, are based on the discourse of the modern state as the protector and guarantor of life, society, and what is called common good. This permeates our everyday discourse in many respects and aligns with other discursive formations. This is, I argue, what Foucault calls biopower.

Foucault's account is often found insufficient for several reasons though. First, it is said to distinguish premodern sovereign power and modern biopower so smoothly that they seem to be completely separate phenomena. Second, due to this, it is unable to account for the wide-ranging violent, murderous, and arbitrary actions of the modern state.[31] This

27 In Skinner, "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 354.

28 In Skinner, "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 362.

29 In the very beginning of the last chapter of the *History of Sexuality*, "Right of Death and Power over Life," Foucault, too, refers to Pufendorf's idea of sovereign as the new juridical being composed of very union of individuals but having rights which none of those individuals could claim. That is, it is a different "person." 136.

30 In Skinner, "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 362.

31 For example, Yael Navaro-Yashin suggests that Foucault's clear-cut distinction between the "violent versus the manipulative or the enforcing versus the rationalizing," the formers being the premodern while the latter ones modern, forms of power does not help study contexts like Turkey where both forms of power have been enmeshed. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 225, 189. Similarly, in her influential essay in Turkish, Meltem Ahıska seems to argue that Foucault's historical narrative is unable to account for the contexts like Turkey where the arbitrary and the rational have been intricately connected. See

is why scholars seem to feel a need for alternative conceptual constructions to explain the modern state's appeal to violence: necropolitics, thanatopolitics, biosovereign assemblage.[32] However, it seems to me that Foucault's intention with the invention of this notion is to explain the killings of the modern state rather than show that the state protects life. In the last lecture of *"Society Must Be Defended"* and the last chapter of *History of Sexuality, vol. 1*, he seeks an answer to this question: how can a state whose prime duty is the preservation of life kill? His answer is that it kills in the name of making live. It is perhaps even more violent and murderous than sovereign power, but unlike sovereign power, it kills to make live. Killing is the only way sovereign power can manifest itself, while it is only a means for the biopower to make live, to foster life, to exclude threats to society. It kills to defend the society. Sometimes it even kills the same group of whose life it wants or claims to defend. And to defend the society, there has to be a state of perpetual insecurity. For this reason, the state must be there as the perpetual security apparatus. In order for the state to exist as the perpetual security apparatus, as Hobbes desires, there needs to be a state of perpetual insecurity.

This is why Foucault insistently underlines the fact that in Hobbes's state of nature, there is no war at all, it is just "a state of war." There is a threat of war, there are representations of war, but no war. Perhaps due to specific historical conditions from which Leviathan emerged, Hobbes wants to take war out of the picture. In the state of nature, since all are equal, they are not at an actual war. Rather, they present themselves in such a way to deter the rivals from starting a war. What Foucault

---

"Türkiye'de İktidar ve Gerçeklik" in *Türkiye'de İktidarı Yeniden Düşünmek*, ed. Murat Güney, (İstanbul: Varlık, 2009 [1998]).

32 For "necropolitics," see Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40. For "biosovereign assemblage," see Bargu, *Starve and Immolate*, 26. Both find Foucault's notion of biopower lacking due to the lack of "sovereign" element in it, implicitly equating the sovereignty with killing. For example, Bargu says, "Foucault views only the affirmative pole of social and political struggles... [and] he tends to neglect the sovereign element of contemporary power formations." 62. Drawing on Agamben, Mbembe underlines the "states of exceptions" where "terror" reigns as missing in Foucault's account of biopower.

implies is that there must be such a state full of fear and insecurity, a pretext, in order for the state, the fundamental security apparatus, to exist. Therefore, Foucault suggests, the formation of the state does not end the war, as there was already no war whatsoever, but there is always a fear of war, a constant insecurity, a presentation of war. That is why Foucault calls Hobbes a "false paternity." His discourse is juridical and ahistorical, as the state of war is always already there. But there is no real historical war, but only perpetual pretensions of war. It is conditioned to suppress "historico-political" discourses of war.[33] If we want to explain power relations in terms of war, Hobbes is not the person we must turn to.[34] However, the point here is rather that Hobbes's case explains very well how biopower kills: it kills because it always produces security issues, internal and external threats and terrorists to the body of the people, there is always a presentation of a war-to-come. These are what the society must be defended against by the state. This is a mobile and polyvalent discourse, as eloquently highlighted by Ann L. Stoler,[35] which I think might be applied to many different phenomena including colonialism, sexuality, race, and international politics, which are related to the relative notions I have identified above such as human, humanism, society, the social, population, etc. I will turn to this later but now want to go into another related discussion.

33 *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 92–93, 269–270.

34 Hobbes is usually taken to be the father figure of what is called "realism" in political theory and international relations theory, emphasizing conflictual and warlike nature of politics and international system, vis-à-vis "idealism" that argues for the consensus-oriented, rational, harmonious political systems. See, for example, critical political theorist Raymond Geuss's *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 22–23. If Foucault's account is somehow correct that there is no war in Hobbes at all, it would be interesting to see the twist this would add to this discussion.

35 Ann L. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010 [2002]), in particular, the Chapter 6 of the book, "A Colonial Reading of Foucault: Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves," 140–161.

§ 1.3 Legitimacy, Gaze, and the Outside

This discourse of the state always comes with a problematic of "legitimacy." Put differently, the emergence of the modern state is marked by a question of legitimacy. Though the human life is placed under the guarantee of the state, the discourse maintains, the state might fall into the hands of the corrupt, or those who are in power might get corrupted, so there needs to be a mechanism or mechanisms to check, to monitor the state concerning its treatment of, and dealings with, human life and rights.[36] Therefore, there must be something non-state, outside of the state, a gaze that must watch it against its possible ill treatments of human life and thus its deviations from the norm of biopolitical state. This gaze might take many forms and names such as public sphere, civil society, media, non-governmental/non-state organizations, etc., which are willingly designate themselves as an outside of the state and place themselves in that outside.

The concept of "watchdog" brilliantly captures the sense I want to convey here. These "outsider" gazes monitor, hold accountable, and legitimize the modern state. Thus, as Marx aptly suggests, "the political state everywhere needs the guarantee of spheres lying outside it,"[37] because the outside is in fact what makes the inside, the outside of the state is what makes the inside of the state. The condition of possibility of the state is the existence of the spheres that are said to stay outside of it and the constant monitoring of these spheres.

We usually assume that the state is an entity that is watched out by non-state bodies, in case it diverts from its prime duty of making live or starts to kill. That is why most of the modern resistance practices try to make the case that the state is unable to protect the life, inflicts

36 Skinner points out that as early as the Renaissance Italy, power was seen as liable to corrupt, based on the idea that "all individuals or groups, once granted sovereignty over a community, will tend to promote their own interest at the expense of the community as a whole." "The State," 104.

37 Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970 [1843]), 115.

violence on people, that is, it is unable to fulfill the role for which it exists: the outside is called for to look at the state. For this reason, these practices appeal to something outside the state, they try to convince the outside to that the state is not able to fulfil its duty, it uses its authority illegitimately, it stops being state. In doing so, they want to produce certain effects on the state actions, limit its force on them, and where possible direct it toward the direction they want to lead. However, by trying to adjust the state, every time they produce it anew.

This is not limited to national or local politics. On the contrary, it is the defining feature of the international or global power relations. There are international "non-state" organizations that claim to watch the states to see if they violate the human life and rights. They position themselves in the outside, as having nothing with the states, as independent organizations that reject receiving help or funding from the states. As in, for example, *Human Rights Watch*, an international organization "watching" the human rights violations of the states, staying outside the states, they watch and report the human rights violations to the public, which usually results in a kind of humanitarian interventions of the other "liberal" states, which are said not to violate human rights, to end the illegitimate political regimes and the human suffering they cause. That is to say, the state has both nationally and internationally is watched. It has both local and global outside and inside. When necessary, the local outside appeals to the global outside to stop the inside, the state, practices of taking life. The state attempts to justify by showing that its killings are to make live, and its outside, the practices of resistance, strives to make the case that the state violates the human life and is unable to defend the society. Therefore, the supposed outside of the state also act like another state, therefore, as inside.

This is not dispensable from, or rather has been rooted in, the practices of colonialism. The colonizer comes to humanize, to make the people of the colonized regime live in a humane way, who are said to have lived, until the arrival of colonial humanist forces, under arbitrary, violent, murderous, and personal regimes of certain despots, tyrants, and autocrats. Thus, colonialism colonizes to make live, to humanize, to give

the colonized a decent human life on a global level.[38] When faced with resistance, it does not hesitate to kill, because nothing should stand before the human and humane life. If they resist the life, they are already dead, so there is in fact no killing whatsoever, only making live, making people live better and in properly human ways. As Stoler suggests, this is how biopower operates as a mobile polyvalent relation and structure cutting across gender, race, sexuality, imperialism, colonialism.[39] It moves across boundaries, different insides and outsides, states and non-states, local and global, national and international. It creates complex relationships among them but never hurts the binaries, never violates the borders and boundaries. It positions and repositions them over and over again. It ultimately operates on the discourse of the state as the protector of life, life in many senses of the term, and make it possible for certain states to intervene in other states to make people under the latter states live, improve their life, and turn them into proper humans as they deserve. This means that outside the state is also the state or non-state bodies calling the other states for intervention in another one. I will revisit a related point below. Now I want to turn to hunger strikes as modern biopolitical practices of resistance.

§ 1.4 Hunger Strikes

Where does hunger strike stand here? It is a biopolitical practice of resistance, as it strictly depends on the discourse of the state as the safeguard of life and the outside of the state as there to check it. The history

38 For a whole study on this, Samera Esmeir, *Juridical Humanity: A Colonial History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014). Esmeir studies the colonization of Egypt through the introduction of the notion of the human as a juridical category and convincingly argues that it is this "humanization" of the colonized is at the core of colonial processes.

39 Ann L. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 149. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson, too, underlines that how nation is a mobile, adaptable, and modular concept and practice that can be made fit in very different contexts. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), 140–162.

of hunger strikes as political resistance practices can be traced back to the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Here I will not, and in fact cannot, examine the entire history of it, but once again attempt a partial genealogy predicated on brief, fragmentary descriptions and examples within this history. Such an attempt aims to show how varied a practice it is, which might be taken as the reason why a history of hunger strikes would not possible, but at the same time how it is practice of resistance that help us understand the workings of biopower as I have tried to describe thus far.

Hunger strikes have a curious historical and trans-regional trajectory. One of the very first examples appears in Tsarist Russia at the end of nineteenth century. This hunger strike undertaken by the political prisoners in Kara Katorga, a high security penal labor facility located along the Kara river, resulted from the abolishment of the relative privileges the political prisoners had been enjoying in the prison. In addition to this, the Katorga prison administration started a harsh treatment of political prisoners, especially the women members of the *Narodnaya Volya*, a political organization conducted the (mostly unsuccessful) assassinations of governors and politicians to overthrow the autocratic Tsarist regime. In 1889, after the beginning of the hunger strikes, the women prisoners were exposed to the severe corporal punishment by the prison administration. Following this, some of the prisoners started to take their own lives by taking poison, which resulted in the death of six. The events have come to be known as the "Kara Tragedy." They stirred a public outcry, the Kara Katorga was closed and the corporal punishment against women was forbidden.[40]

What is started mostly by women prisoners in Russia was then taken up by another group of women in a different context, namely the suffragette movement in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century. In fact, as the historian Kevin Grant argues, there is a historical connection between these two series of hunger strikes. Some of the Russian

40 Mariam Betlemidze, "Suicidal Activism in Siberia: Femina and Homo Sacers of Kara 1889" *Russian Journal of Communication* 9, no. 1 (2017): 71–86.

women political exiles linked with the Kara events and Narodnaya Volya fled to Britain at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth centuries. And they made connections with and inspired the British suffragettes with their ideas and methods of resistance. Of course, in the Russian context hunger strikes were more of means of suicidal, anarchist, or "terror" activity. Now in the British context they were appearing in a more democratic form as part of a series of struggles, tactics, and strategies undertaken for the women's right to vote.

Another importance of this translation and import is that these hunger strikes undertaken by different women in Britain attempted to represent the British state as emulating the Tsarist regime and, therefore, as a despotic and autocratic government. This image of the British government grabbed a considerable public attention and led to a public pressure on the state in both national and international contexts. Thus, the British suffragettes, capitalizing on the newly emerging humanitarian sympathy for the hungry and the discourse of the state as the protector of them, attempted to corrode the power of British government.[41] Simply, they evoked an image of the British government as violent and despotic as the Tsarist regime in Russia. As Kevin Grant delineates, "the suffragettes articulated their constitutional claims by using the hunger strike to liken themselves to starving Russian revolutionaries and their own Liberal government to the tsarist regime."[42] While the strike in the first instance was a means to overthrow the autocratic government or head-on confrontation with the Russian state, in the second one, borrowing from and building on the former's image, it turned out to be a means of representing the government as authoritarian, as taking life and using

41 Kevin Grant, "British Suffragettes and the Russian Method of Hunger Strike" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 1: 111. Also see Grant's recent book on the hunger strikes in the British Empire: *Last Weapons: Hunger Strikes and Fasts in the British Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019).

42 Kevin Grant, "British Suffragettes and the Russian Method of Hunger Strike," 117.

illegitimate violence.[43] Thus, the threat for the British state was to be seen as similar to the Russian state.

What does it mean though? Does this confirm Mohandas Gandhi, who perhaps made the most effective use of hunger strike as part of his satyagraha, saying that "you cannot fast against a tyrant"? Nicholas Michelsen takes this claim of Gandhi to mean that he rightly assumed societal conditions affected the use of hunger strike, namely the presence of a liberal democracy.[44] To a similar effect, in her essay on violence, Hannah Arendt writes that that if India had not been invaded by the "liberal democratic" British state but "a different enemy—Stalin's Russia, Hitler's Germany, even prewar Japan, instead of England—the outcome would not have been decolonization, but massacre and submission."[45] That is, his nonviolent forms of resistance would have been complete nonsense. Gandhi's choice of hunger strike had been influenced by his encounter with the British women's suffrage movement. As it turns out, all three cases succeeded each other by somehow affecting one other. And yet in each case hunger strike has been reformulated, readjusted according to the context it appeared and the needs and demands of the strikers. (Nâzım

43 The British suffragettes adopted the method of hunger strike at the very beginning of twentieth century. In July 1909, Marion Wallace Dunlop, a member of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) undertook a hunger strike in the prison protesting her treatment as an ordinary criminal in the British penal system. Demanding political prisoner status and her transfer to the first division, she started refusing food. She was released after ninety-one hours of fasting because of the fear that her death might lead to a large-scale political crisis in the country. Grant, 117. After this, the method of hunger strike became a common practice among WSPU members. Many suffragette militants, who were imprisoned due to their political activities, adopted the method with the same demand of a political prisoner status. They were strongly emphasizing political nature of their acts and offences, which, is as we shall see below in play in many other cases of prison hunger strikes. In many cases, this turns into a demand or claim for political life over mere biological life.

44 Nicholas Michelsen, *Politics and Suicide: The Philosophy of Political Self-Destruction* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 17.

45 "However," continues Arendt, "England in India and France in Algeria had good reasons for their restraint. Rule by sheer violence comes into play where power is being lost." "On Violence," 152.

Hikmet was also watching closely what happens in India at the time and has interesting comments on Gandhi and pacificism, to which I will come in a minute). However, does this mean that fasts against the autocratic Russia is necessarily suicidal and non-instrumental while those against the British is life-affirming, instrumental? I will argue against such a schematic, binary approach. Although the political regimes are definitely different, the hunger strikes in both cases seem to be conditioned by the power of the claim that the state is unable to look after its citizens or that it directly inflicts violence on them.[46] Both the Tsar and the British were scared by the possibility of being seen as unable to defend the society, to protect human life. They were threatened by the death they cannot control.

There is also a question as to Gandhi's *satyagraha*. Some argues that his practices are by no means instrumental and cannot be aligned with the other nationalist, anti-colonial struggles in the early twentieth-century India. Since Gandhi was an ardent "anti-modernist," his practices were rather moral and spiritual practices that do not necessarily serve an end, especially the end of creating an independent modern nation-state. Rather, they were ends in themselves, spiritual practices for the purification of the soul.[47] Others, on the other hand, suggest that independent of Gandhi's intentions, his hunger strikes and broader politics of nonviolence had both served and been "hijacked" by the nationalist movements which turned him into the symbol of the struggle leading up to the

46 Also, the historian İlber Ortaylı points out that at the end of the nineteenth century, self-modernizing regimes like Tsarist Russia and Ottoman Empire started committing to, and defining themselves through, their ability to make their subjects live. See *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003 [1983]), 41.

47 In this sense, Bikhu Parekh's comments suggesting that Gandhi's fasts were not hunger strikes, "nor forms of moral or emotional blackmail, nor ways of evoking and exploiting others' pity, but form of self-sacrifice and represented a perfectly moral method of action because of its underlying commitment" seem to miss the point by concentrating on Gandhi's own formulations about his hunger strikes. *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 15.

independence and the nation-statehood.[48] Yet these are not mutually exclusive alternatives. As recent studies suggest, Gandhi's politics of nonviolence neither has to be considered purely instrumental nor purely spiritual. It can be understood as doing both at the same time.[49] Spiritually, his hunger strikes were means of achieving self-rule, self-sovereignty, while, instrumentally, they had been directed at achieving certain ends. (For example, in 1932, he launched a "fast unto death" to protest the British backed new Indian constitution that gave the "untouchables" their own distinct political representation, as he believed that this would irrevocably divide the social classes in the country. The strike lasted six days ending after the British government reversed the separation decision). However, both spiritually and instrumentally, Gandhi appealed to the outside of the state. He wanted to establish his own self-sovereignty as he critiques the state and Western discourse of human rights but at the same time addresses the eyes, international audience, watching the British state and claimed that what happens to his body is a product of certain state actions. That is, there was a double discourse in play in Gandhi's satyagraha: a method of purification of the soul as well as of resistance, an instrument as well as an end in itself.

"Is the famous Gandhi a hero or a traitor?" asks Nâzım Hikmet in a 1930 essay anonymously published in *Resimli Ay*. For him the answer was obvious at the time: Gandhi is definitely traitor who betrays the great Indian revolution, because the local bourgeoise supported him, used him as face of the national struggle, as a way of blocking violent movements

48 Gyan Prakash, for instance, suggests that nationalist politics during and the after the decolonization of India hijacked Gandhi "in its drive to create a nation-state devoted to modernization" and turned him into a symbol of the nationalist struggle. "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 2 (1990): 391.

49 There is an ample number of recent works that point to this duality in Gandhi's satyagraha. Among others, see Karuna Mantena, "On Gandhi's Critique of the State: Sources, Contexts, Conjectures" *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (2012): 535–563; "Another Realism: The Politics of Gandhian Nonviolence" *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 455–470; and Alexander Livingston, "Fidelity to Truth: Gandhi and the Genealogy of Civil Disobedience" *Political Theory* 46, no. 4 (2018): 511–536.

of the workers and peasants, and because for the British administration he played a role to relieve the violent pressure that might come from the Indian people. Serving as the front of the national struggle, his pacifist protests prevented the real struggles of the lower classes. Obviously, these remarks of Nâzım was informed by the official attitude of the USSR toward the Indian nationalist and anti-colonial movements shaped by the Third International supporting the violent means of fight with the British colonial administration as the only viable way of defying imperialism.[50] Disliking Gandhi's call for pacificism as a surrender and as playing into the hands of both Indian bourgeoisie and the colonial administration, Nâzım Hikmet seems to have disregarded hunger strike, the method which he will appeal to in a very different context to take himself out of the jail by successfully turning his unlawful imprisonment by the state into a national problem and drawing the attention of the international public opinion on the Turkish state for his release.

It seems that all these hunger strikes are somehow connected to one another. Another connection is between Nâzım Hikmet and the 1981 Irish Republican hunger strikes. The title of Dennis O'Hearn's book that tells the detailed story of Bobby Sands, IRA, and 1981 hunger strikes, *An Unfinished Song,*[51] comes from a verse of Nâzım's poem "Letter to My Wife" that he wrote to his wife, Piraye, from prison in 1933. Of course, Irish Republicans were also well aware of the fasts of the suffragette movement and Gandhi against the British state, as well as previous hunger strikes undertaken by Irish republicans. As in the Kara and suffragette strikes, the 1981 Irish hunger strikes began as a protest against the British

50 See Zafer Toprak, "Nâzım Hikmet, Üçüncü Enternasyonel ve Mahatma Gandhi" *Toplumsal Tarih* 264 (2015): 58–66. Also, see Murat Belge, "Nâzım Hikmet ve Sabiha Sertel'den 'Hint Masalları'" *Kitap-lık* 67 (2003): 36–45. Belge discusses that both Nâzım's writings, especially his "Why Did Banerjee Kill Himself?" and his friend Sabiha Sertel's "unfortunate" novel depicting a story of Indian anti-colonial, nationalist movement and militant, both written from afar and deeply shaped by the doctrines of the Third International. Nâzım's attack on Gandhi, too, was seemingly informed by the Third International's take on the South Asian national independence movements.

51 Dennis O'Hearn, *Nothing But An Unfinished Song: Bobby Sands, the Irish Hunger Strike Who Ignited a Generation* (New York: Pluto Press, 2006).

government's withdrawal of the Special Category Status that differentiates political prisoners from ordinary criminals providing them with some rights and privileges such as right to refuse prison work, freedom of association, and right to wear their own clothes instead of prison uniform.[52] Irish republican prisoners underlined the political nature of their offenses and wanted to be treated accordingly. They aimed to re-establish their political prisoner status based on five demands: the right not to wear a prison uniform, the right not to do prison work, the right of free association with other prisoners, the right to one visit and one letter per week, and full restoration of remission lost through the protest. When it became clear that these demands will not be satisfied by the Thatcher government, the prisoners declared their intention to fast on the basis that the government is unable to manage and resolve the crisis in its prison/penal system. In this case, instead of making live by forcing hunger strikers to live, Thatcher choose to let them die, and after Bobby Sands's death, she rendered it a "choice": "Mr. Sands was a convicted criminal. He chose to take his own life. It was a choice that his organization did not allow to many of its victims."[53] Here Thatcher makes a biopolitical claim; more accurately, she utilizes the method of "letting die" instead of "making live" and "taking life." Note that Thatcher here prefers the rarely used option. She suggests that the person who chooses death did not give such a choice to the people whose deaths he is responsible for. She lets him die but he can still live *if* he chooses. And the hunger strikers choose to insist on the claim that it is the state that is responsible for their death and others.

In case of the Turkish death fast struggle starting in the beginning of 2000s, however, the state chose to force hunger strikes to live, even killed them to make them live however paradoxical this might sound. Similar to the Irish republicans, the reason why prisoners in Turkey

52 Megan O'Branski, "'The Savage Reduction of the Flesh': Violence, Gender and Bodily Weaponisation in the 1981 Irish Republican Hunger Strike Protest" *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7, no.1 (2014): 101.

53 "What happened in the hunger strike?" *BBC*. May 5, 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/4941866.stm

launched a hunger strike was the introduction of a new penal system that is based on prisons built in the form of a system of cells constructed for one or three people, where prisoners are not permitted to contact and communicate with each other most of the time. The strikers' aim was to demonstrate that solitary isolation is against human rights, because human beings "by nature" are social animals. They were, at least in the first instance, able to attract a considerable public attention and media coverage, especially from human rights organizations in both Turkey and Europe. Thus, they achieved to threaten the legitimacy of the state with national and international negative public opinion they were able to attract.[54]

Then, the political prisoners, vast majority of whom are members of outlawed Marxist-Leninist armed organizations that might be said to embrace the legacy of the communist Nâzım Hikmet in one way or another, in different prisons all over Turkey launched a hunger strike demanding the immediate abolishment of the F-Types, because, as they declared, the F-Type isolates them from all human attachment, qualities, interactions, and, thus, is nothing other than their death in this world. This line of argument concerning "how human and humane life should look like" aligned with a human rights discourse received a considerable amount of attention from human rights organizations, legal advocacy groups, foreign, especially European, committees, and intellectuals among others.[55] This is curious, because the introduction of this prison system, advertised as the modernization of the Turkish penal system, was part of the Turkey's European Union accession policies surrounded by the anxiety of catching the European train in the early 2000s,[56] but with the hunger strikes launched against this system, the state was now subject to another test by the European gaze (and gate) with regard to how it takes care of the new crisis.

---

54 Patrick Anderson, "'To Lie Down to Death for Days': The Turkish Hunger Strike, 2000–2003" *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 6 (2006): 817

55 Bargu, *Starve and Immolate*, 4.

56 For now a classical critique of this, see Meltem Ahıska, "Occidentalism: Historical Fantasy of the Modern" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (2003): 351–379.

However, labelling the prisoners as terrorists who need to be rehabilitated in and by isolation, the Turkish government advocated that as long as these individuals are kept together, their "ideological perversion" would only progress, continuing to threaten the very existence and integrity of the Turkish state and its sovereignty and the Turkish people. In a sense, the biopolitical Turkish state presented itself as the healer of a collective perversion, mental disorder or a disease. As a regulative-disciplinary mechanism, the state wanted to normalize the prisoners, to treat them individually, and, at the same time, wanted to prevent them from posing a threat to the larger population.

This was reflected in other forms of justification for the introduction and maintenance of the F-Type. For example, it was widely disseminated that ward-type prison conditions were unhealthy, unhygienic, and insecure for the prisoners as citizens, because a high population of prisoners were living together in a very small space and the state was not allowed in the wards by the highly crowded and organized prisoners.[57] Nobody knew what was going on inside, and, in the discourse of the state officials, it was certain that people were being tortured and brainwashed in there. As guarantor of their security and welfare, the state was supposed to do something. As such, the Turkish state presented itself as the agent that is supposed to "take care of" its citizens/prisoners, no matter what crime they committed against the state and Turkish people in the past. Note here that the discourse of the state is truly biopolitical committed to make live, make prisoners live better, even save them from themselves. This discourse was being played out both for the national and international outsides of the state.

It is used to tell the reasons why the state showed no willingness to accept prisoners' equally biopolitical demands which were also being produced for the outside, the gazes that are supposed to monitor the state. The state wanted to bring an end to the hunger strike and its effects on itself, which apparently put a great deal of burden and pressure nationally and internationally. To put it differently, the state's biopolitical

57 Bargu, *Starve and Immolate*, 2, 120.

justifications for a violent intervention in prisons was aimed at trumping over the hunger strikers' biopolitical demands threatening the state with a likely loss of legitimacy and power.

For this reason, on December 19, 2000, the Turkish government staged a military operation in twenty prisons across the country. The operation was ironically named "The Operation Return to Life" (*Hayata Dönüş Operasyonu*) during which thirty prisoners were killed, many more were seriously injured, and more than a thousand were dragged out of the prisons and transferred to the F-Type prisons.[58] As suggested, the operation was held in the name of the prisoners' well-being and health, *to return them to life*, but forced, coerced, inflicted violence on them, and even led to the death of thirty. It also included occasional practices of force-feeding. This is how the biopolitical state exercises its power of making live by killing, let alone forcing and coercing. Since this coercion and killing were exercised in the name of life (i.e., making live or making life better), it was justified, because nothing can stand before the defense of the human life and society at large. And at least in the local outside of the state, the hunger strikers were accused of valorizing death.

In response to this, the hunger strike turned out to be a mere self-destructive practice, a fast and run unto death.[59] Some strikers stopped taking vitamins and drinking water to accelerate the coming of their deaths, and the transferred prisoners started to set themselves on fire whenever possible.[60] Denying the biological life which they thought is the only thing granted to them by the state, the strikers were liberating themselves from the biopolitical through a determinateness to die sacrificing themselves for their cause, the community, and becoming martyrs of the upcoming revolution. Since the biological life granted to them by the state was not the politically dignified life in the way that they formulate it, they chose not to live it both to free themselves from and perhaps do one last harm to the biopolitical regime. That is why the paradoxical slogan of the

58 Patrick Anderson, "'To Lie Down to Death for Days': The Turkish Hunger Strike, 2000–2003" *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 6 (2006): 830.

59 Bargu, *Starve and Immolate*, 28.

60 *Starve and Immolate*, 204.

Turkish hunger strikers was "Long Live Our Death Fast Struggle!" (*Yaşasın Ölüm Orucu Direnişimiz!*).[61] For as long as their dying lives, the workings of biopower is somehow interrupted, because, as Foucault suggests, "this determination to die [is] strange and yet so persistent and constant in its manifestations, and consequently so difficult to explain as being due to particular circumstances or individual accidents." [62]

Hunger strikers attempt to dispossess the state of its right to decide who may die and make possible for themselves a truly political life through death "by negating bodily existence as the basis of the particular form of life that is allowed, securitized, and sanctified by the state's political rule."[63] They violated the state's monopoly over life, but only by being and acting like a state. As Allen Feldman suggests, "starvation of the flesh in the hunger striker was the inverting and bitter interiorization of the power of the state... [a] transfer [of] power from one topos to another."[64] At the end, acting like the state, they steal the state's authority over life, and when they wish to transcend the politics of life, they turn to death, because "death is power's limit, the moment that escapes it; death becomes the most secret aspect of existence, the most 'private'"[65]

What all these brief transregional genealogy of hunger strikes suggest is that, despite all the differences, multiplicity, wide variety of methods, tactics, and strategies among them, is that hunger strike as a biopolitical form of resistance claims that the state fails to protect the life or directly harms it, thereby deviating from the norm of biopolitical state. With this claim, they address the outside of the state, the gazes that monitor it, and try to cast a doubt on the state's legitimacy. The state responds by making live at the expense of killing, chooses to let die by rendering it a choice, tries to justify its murderous practices. However, what these hunger strikes reinforce are also multiple: the central value of human and human life, the state as the protector of life, or to put it differently, the

61 *Starve and Immolate*, 259.

62 *The History of Sexuality*, 139.

63 *Starve and Immolate*, 330.

64 Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 237.

65 *The History of Sexuality*, 139.

reproduction of the biopolitical state as the fundamental security apparatus, and objectification or solidification of the state by leading it to be defined through definite categories of inside and outside, the gaze and the object, or simply the seer and the seen. (The only time hunger strike strips off the state, bring a shock to the biopolitical is when it turns out to be a necroresistance as Bargu formulates. This is important, but I do not go into this direction, as I said in the beginning of this chapter, due to the not deadly nature of Nâzım's hunger strike). Below I try to argue that there is a close connection between this reproduction and reiteration of the modern state as the definite unity, a whole, and the modern author's construction of himself as the autonomous and indivisible authority over his life, action, and thought. Before going into this, I want to briefly mention the ways in which this polyvalent structure of biopower connects with the practices of the nation-state building, colonialism in the historical context of Turkey.

§ 1.5 Being Like the Turkish State

To continue with the inside/outside binary, the designated outside, as it gazes, seems to objectify as well as legitimize the state as the protector of life against internal and external threats and encroachments, which paradoxically unify the inside and the outside. More accurately, the purported external threat tends to unify, make one the local inside and the local outside. Put differently, the state as a whole is able to expand its field of killing possibilities *only* in the presence of the external security threats. The outside subjects the inside to a control, to a legitimacy test, but simultaneously it brings it to a concretion, give it a solid body with definite boundaries. The external/foreign threat to the state and the gaze objectifies the state together make it a concrete, uniform entity, while at the same time subjecting it to control. When there is a possibility of intervention and encroachment, the biopolitical state as the social defense mechanism is able to kill widely, not only externally, but also internally, as there constantly emerges parts of the inside that cooperate and collaborate with the outside. Also, the outside gazes might be made into threats

and security issues. Those who call for the Western intervention from the inside against the human rights violations of the state might be an example of this. They are killable or at least excludable, because they pose a threat to the life and person of the state that is all the persons within the state, therefore, life of all within the state by bringing the outside in. That is, the existence of the outside turns the inside, the state, into an author, a person who owns his own word and action, the single author of and sovereign over life.

What is the connection between the person and the state, the author and the state? Here a brief engagement with the literature on the anthropology of the Turkish state is in order: "Faces of the state," "personal states," "state-society."[66] These are some of the titles and key phrases of the political-historical ethnographic works on the Turkish state written in the last two decades. The commonality is that they all signal an intertwinement between the state and people/society, the state and the non-state, the inside and the outside. However, what is more striking is that almost all of them either personify or anthropomorphize the state. Whether they discuss bureaucratic institutions as concrete sites of encounter with the Turkish state or take the state as an idea and/or ideology, all seem to imply and converge on the idea that the Turkish state is constantly reproduced in and through practices and discourses of the Turkish citizens and, more importantly, the Turkish state has a personal aspect, a "face." All also seem to imply that the Turkish citizens act and think like and sometimes in lieu of the state. And the state acts like a single person to defend the citizens, the society, from constant

66 The works pointed: Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Catherine Alexander, *Personal States: Making Connections Between People and Bureaucracy in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002). For a comprehensive review of the anthropology of the state literature in Turkey, which also connects with the introduction of anthropology as "the state's anthropology" (devletin antropolojisi) in Turkey as part of the racial nation-state making projects, see Berna Yazıcı, "Devlet Antropolojisi" in *Kültür Denen Şey: Antropolojik Yaklaşımlar*, ed. Ayfer Bartu Candan and Cenk Özbay (İstanbul: Metis, 2018), 51–81.

threats. Yet this is hardly peculiar to the works concerning the Turkish state. "Seeing like a state," "acting like a state," "states of imagination," "maddening states," are the some of the phrases and titles of the anthropological-ethnographic-historical monographs and anthologies that do not specifically focus on the Turkish context.[67] Why seeing or acting like a state? More properly, why think state as something that sees and acts, something similar to human with a memory and imagination? I want to try to explain this through the Turkish case.

From eighteenth to twentieth century, Ottoman Empire and Turkey somehow managed to remain "independent," "non-colonial," mostly negotiating it with Western/European forces and officially embracing their discourse of progress and modernization which required the "humanization" of those who are deemed Turkish and said to have previously lived under arbitrary, Islamic, despotic, inhumane rule of the Ottoman Empire. That is, as now a commonplace, Turkey was founded on a rejection of the Ottoman imperial legacy. The fundamental reason for this is to avoid a potential colonization, that is, to fight against the Western colonial forces by holding the Western standpoint, emulating the West as the highest form of civilization.

Yet this has brought with itself an ever-present fear of colonizability and encroachment, because, whenever the project of being like and catching up with the Western modernity is interrupted for some reason, there emerges a danger of intervention. However, this is also the case when the Western modernity is seen as not the only option, when it is believed that there can be alternative modernities, an authentic Turkish modernity, for example. In this case, because there is always an anxiety of both being authentic and modern, both local and universal, the anxiety

67 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Thomas B. Hansen and Finn Stepputat, ed., *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Lisa Weeden, "Seeing Like a Citizen, Acting Like a State: Exemplary Events in Unified Yemen," *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 45, no. 4 (2003): 680–713; Begoña Aretxaga, "Maddening States" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32 (2003): 393–410.

is translated into a security regime anew, an anxiety that sees and feels everywhere "foreign" interventions: the alleged authentic element should by no means be contaminated with the Western penetration. Therefore, this historical foundation has brought the ever-present threat of colonizability and encroachment, which seems to have forced the Turkish people to think and act like the state and even sometimes in lieu of the state, equating their life with the life of the Turkish state. For whenever the state is said to be at stake, the life of the Turkish society is also put in jeopardy. It is a situation of perpetual insecurity. Like Hobbes's state of war. There is no real war, perhaps no external threat, but there is a constant insecurity issue, an issue that unifies mostly inside and outside against the global outside. Therefore, there is a constant threat coming from the outside of Turkey, against which the state should defend the society. Thus, the current president Erdoğan's oft-repeated imperative "make the human live so that the state can live" (*insanı yaşat ki devlet yaşasın*) says not only that the state is to make its citizens live but also that the life of the state is once and for all identified with the life of the human.

From the standpoint of the resistance inside, there is also always a security issue, because the Turkish state has been historically violent and killing. What the resistance try to show, then, is that the state is unable to protect society and even inflict arbitrary violence on it. It strives to prove the illegitimacy of the Turkish state, the violent and bloody nature of it. And the state works to prove the terrorist and "foreign" nature of the resistance inside, that they are the enemies of life and society, and of the authenticity of our culture, of our own modernity. It calls for the foreign to intervene, to penetrate. And this discourse is usually aligned with the purported ever-present danger of colonizability and encroachment.

The discourse of "non-coloniality but ever colonizability" serves also as a marker of difference from Turkey's once colonized Middle Eastern and North African "others" like Lebanon and Egypt and, for them, Turkey plays the role of an ambiguous object of difference through which

to (or not to) define the self.[68] Yet both the colonized and the "non-colonized" are similarly marked by the emergence of the human, a legal subject of natural rights, correlative with the introduction of the modern state in their territories. That is to say, whether colonized or non-colonized, in these regimes, there is a perpetual security problem. The society must always be defended, because it is always under threat. Perhaps it would be said that just as post-colonialism does not mean the end of colonization in the region but its (re-)colonization by the remaining paranoid security regimes, being non-colonized does not mean that a country is not colonized. Colonialism is not exactly about establishment of a colonial administration by the Western forces in certain regions of the Orient, but rather it is polyvalent mechanism that is, at least in some aspects, based on the defense of society, perpetual (in)security, and humanization.

Perhaps that is why the Turkish edition of "*Society Must Be Defended"* without quotation marks renders Foucault the protector of society, ironically giving him the role of the state. Because for the cultural imagination and formation from which it emerges society is something that is always under attack and that must always be defended at all costs. But in this case, it must be protected from the state. But who will defend it

68 For a nice elaboration of this (or of a similar point), the penultimate chapter of Wilson Chacko Jacob's *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870–1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011) might be helpful. There, based on the 1932 "tarbush incident" where the Turkish president Atatürk made Egypt's ambassador of Turkey take off his tarbush/fez upon his arrival at the Ankara Palace for the celebration of the Republic Day, Jacob discusses conflicting reactions to the event in Egypt. For example, while some characterized Turkey as independent, masculine nation embodied in Atatürk's masculine act vis-à-vis the colonized, feminine Egyptian president, others see this as Turkey's loss of authenticity and complete surrender to the Western culture through dress code. This shows, according to Jacob, how national subjects, selves, and identities are formed in international, interactive, comparative contexts. In similar ways, as I try to argue here, Turkey's proud "non-colonialism" most of the time are employed to form a national consciousness and subjectivity vis-à-vis the "colonized Arabs." Though rarely, reverse also might be true, that is, Turks might also describe themselves based on their loss of authenticity due to the pro-Western, secularist foundational reforms of the Kemalist state vis-à-vis the "authentic Arabs."

against the state? Against the inside? It is probably the outside, the global outside that must protect the inside from the inside state. However, when the outside is called for, the inside tightens up, solidifies against the outside, and becomes one, undetachable entity which is able to kill widely in the name of making live.

Lastly, this brings us back to the discussion of Frederic Jameson's debate on the national allegory. Jameson argues that all postcolonial literature are national allegories. Characters in a postcolonial novel, for example, reflects the emergence of nation as an independent, self-generating entity, indivisible nation. As Aijaz Ahmad discusses, Jameson's account is overly generalizing and reductive, talking about "all" "postcolonial" "Third World" literatures at once, in contradistinction to the "first world." As I have said, however, I think, this is not the fundamental problem in Jameson's analysis. Where he seems to be mistaken is when he talks as though this is a peculiar to the third world, to the postcolonial condition, or, more accurately, his inability to point to the sources of the obviousness of this allegorical situation in the third world. Although in his recent revisit of the essay he wants to show the interdependence of the nations and their understanding of each other through stereotypes, he is still unable to explain how this interdependence operates and in what direction it asymmetrically moves. Equating with the state with the person is a deep-rooted tradition in the Western political thought and carried to "third world" through colonial practices permeated by this thought. Also, it is not the nation that is analogical, or "allegorical," to the person or the author, but rather the nation-state. It is analogy between the state as author and the author as the state when both the state and the author appears as the single, indivisible, and self-producing authority over life. In what follows, I briefly try to show how this is one of the founding analogies in the modern Western political thought that invents the state as the author of life.

§ 1.6 The Person of the State

In *Perpetual Peace* (1795), Immanuel Kant, for instance, argues that "A state.... is a society of men whom no one else has any right to command or to dispose except the state itself." And he continues with a biological metaphor: "It is a trunk with its own roots. But to incorporate it into another state, like a graft, is to destroy its existence as a moral person, reducing it to a thing."[69] For him, the state is a person and when its inviolable body is violated, when it is multiplied or incorporated into a "foreign" thing, this means that its rights are violated like a violation of human's rights which are also inalienable, a violation of human's indivisibleness, individuality, and authority. The state is a society of men only the state can command and only the state can dispose. Therefore, the only authority over life is the person of the state. It owns itself, like an individual owns himself or herself, his or her actions and thoughts, and the moral responsibility brought by those actions and thoughts.

This idea of the individual owning himself or herself is also central to Locke's thought. An individual is defined by the definite and inviolable borders of its body. It is the sole authority over his own life and body. For him, the body is the first property. And when the individuals mix their labor with the objects in the world, they are entitled to own the fruits of that work. The state, thus, is to protect that body, both the individual body and the body of the people owning their selves. The idea of modern individual and individualism is in this sense intricately connected to the making of the modern state owning the life it produces and, by the same right, it can dispose.

This is manifest in Hobbes's and Rousseau's social contract accounts. For Hobbes, the social contract establishes a "commonwealth," which he defined as the "Multitude so united in one Person... of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutuall Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author," and this is done for the purpose

69 "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld, trans. David L. Colclasure (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 68.

that "he may use the strength and means of them all... for their Peace and Common Defence."[70] Out of a social contract of a multitude emerges a single unified entity, an "Author," to defend the society. The covenants, thus, say to each other, "*I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner*."[71] Therefore, this is a process of authorization that everyone agrees on. When a single individual does not join or agree with this authorization, the commonwealth cannot be established. For this reason, the moment all authorize "this Man," there is no return, because they permanently granted him the authority to speak and act in their name and own its words and actions. Therefore, the actions and words of this author equal their own actions. But this author is not a covenant or somewhat included in the contract, it is independent from the contract and yet emerges out of it. It is in this sense an "artificial person."

This is how multitude of men, are united in "One Person." The result is "a reall Unitie of them all, in one and the same Person, made by Covenant of every man with every man."[72] Skinner suggests that the contract may be said to produce two persons who have not existed in the state of nature. The first is the artificial person to whom the Authority is granted to speak and act in the name of all participating in the contract. This is the sovereign. The second

> is the person whom we bring into being when we acquire a single will and voice by way of authorising a man or assembly to serve as our representative. The name of this further person, Hobbes next proclaims in an epoch-making moment, is the Commonwealth or State. 'The Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMON-WEALTH," and another name for a commonwealth is a CIVITAS or STATE'.[73]

70 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 228.

71 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 227. Italics in the original.

72 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 227.

73 "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 345.

That is, the state is the author/person who acts in the contractors' name and yet who owns its words and actions.

Skinner argues that according to Hobbes the state does not act on behalf of the people but rather in their name. It is a person both fictional and real. And Foucault makes the same point concerning Hobbes's account of the state:

> The sovereign who is so constituted will therefore be equivalent to all those individuals. He will not simply have part of their rights; he will actually take their place, and the whole of their power. As Hobbes puts it, they appoint him 'to beare their person.'.... Insofar as he represents individuals, the sovereign is an exact model of those very individuals. The sovereign is therefore an artificial individuality, but also a real individuality. The fact that this sovereign is a naturally individual monarch does not alter the fact that he is an artificial sovereign; and when an assembly is involved, the sovereign remains an individuality, even though a group of individuals is involved.[74]

What is important here is the idea that the sovereign is an exact model and/or copy of the individuals who granted their rights to him. The state, then, is an individual, it is inviolable like an individual, it has rights like an individual. And moreover, like an individual, it is all about the preservation of life. In many works of the modern political thought, the driving idea is that humans want to preserve their life. It is based on this "anthropological fact," the first principle, from which the political emerges. Like individual, the state has boundaries, a definite outside and inside. When the outside "illegitimately" interferes with the inside, inside has every right to defend itself, even kill the outside and outsiders. It is like individual; it has a moral responsibility of its actions. So, it is also a moral person.

That Kant, Rousseau,[75] and Vattel[76] all called it a moral person (*personne morale*) is not a coincidence in this sense. For in the Western political thought, the idea of individual comes with the idea of the state

74 *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 94.

75 "Purely moral person" in Skinner, "The State," 125.

76 In "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 350.

and vice versa. This is why individual is the author of his life just as the state is the author of life in general, the only authority that can produce and dispose life that is put under its control, guarantee, and ownership. Furthermore, like individuals interacting with each other, states also interact with one another. As Vattel suggests, they "are bodies politic, societies of men united together to procure their mutual safety and advantage" and as such a union, "the state is the name of a distinct 'moral person' possessed of 'an understanding and a will peculiar to itself."[77] Thus, different states can be seen as "moral persons who live together in a natural society... every nation that governs itself, under what form soever, without any dependence on a foreign power, is a sovereign state."[78] Therefore, the state seems to be modeled after the ideal of autonomous, self-sufficient/self-producing individual, because it is independent of any outside force and it is sovereign of itself, it inviolably governs itself, authors its own life. Like an individual living in a society and among others, they take responsibility for their willing actions.

According to Pufendorf, too, the state exists "like one Person, endued with Understanding and Will, and performing other particular Acts, distinct from those of the private Members" who creates it. Giving credit to Hobbes, he echoes him by saying that the state is "a compound Moral Person whose Will... is deem'd the Will of all."[79] Similarly, William Blackstone, too, defines the state as "a collective body, composed of a multitude of individuals, united for their safety and convenience and intending to act together as one man... with one uniform will."[80] In both Pufendorf and Blackstone, the feature of "will" is not stressed for no reason. The state has a will of its own, like every individual, every author, is thought to have. In his 1899 *Philosophical Theory of the State*, Bernard Bosanquet goes on to say that the state is not a legal fiction or "an empty fiction" at all. "The state possesses its own substantial will, the contents of which are equivalent to what we would ourselves will if we were acting with complete

77 In "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 352.

78 In "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 352.

79 In "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 351.

80 In "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 354.

rationality."[81] That is, what he proposes is that the state is not like the individual, it is the individual who has a real will, when operates rationally as the individual, it is exactly what the individuals authorizing it would do or "will." This is "the identification of the State with the Real Will of the Individual in which he wills his own nature as a rational being." Therefore, the will and freedom of citizens conform to the will of the moral person of the state.[82]

In sum, in the discourse of the Western social and political thought, the state is almost identified with the individuals, even though the individual thinkers usually differ from each other in their elaborations of the notion of individual and person. The state is modeled after the individual and the individual after the state. The author is paradigmatic here, because author acts and wills rationally. He writes his own life. He owns what he writes, what he says, and what he does. He is the owner of his body and life. He owns his own person. This person has definite borders and boundaries, an inside and outside. And it is inviolable. When violated, he has every right to defend those boundaries and borders against those who violate them. He can kill them whenever necessary, because, when violated, its moral personality is destroyed. The modern biopolitical nation-state is constructed on the basis of this authority. It is the authority of life. It is in fact the author of life, because within its boundaries, nobody but the state itself can make live or let die. And it is the only one who can take life to make live, to make life better, to improve life. It writes life over and over again by defending it against internal and external outsides. It writes life by taking life of the enemies of life. It writes life by defending the society, by taking life of the enemies of society. That is, there is always a need for enemies. To write the life, the state needs to write enemies simultaneously. To write the life, outsiders must be there watching the state and the author. Writing of life is then writing of enemies. Writing of life is writing of terrorists. Producing life is producing terrorists.

81 In "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 357.

82 In "A Genealogy of the Modern State," 357–358.

So, why is this a problem specifically for the "post-colonial" and the "non-colonial" like Turkey—where the post-colonial does *not* refer to the end of colonization and the non-colonial not to the absence of colonization? Because for them there is a danger of constant violation from outside, an anxiety of what is yet to come, what is about to come, and what has been somehow avoided in the past but can revisit at any moment. And there is always an inside that collaborates with the outside. These are paranoid security regimes, of the Middle East, in this context, that have replaced the colonial administrations or somehow prevented colonization by being like the colonizer. It is thus the beginning and re-beginning or renewal of colonialism. It is the beginning of colonialism where it never started and yet was always already there. Colonialism, a foreign, outside intervention, is always already there. Perhaps that is why Foucault, a "foreign" figure, an outsider, when translated into Turkish, wants to defend the society from the state.

In the next chapter, I attempt to show how Nâzım Hikmet as a modern author writes his life as the indivisible author over his actions, thought, and words, how he strives to present himself as a unified entity, despite the multiplicity he had been, despite the brokenness of his life and self. This will be continuation of my argument pointing to an analogy between the modern nation-state and the modern author, marked by the (non-)colonial practices and structures, and introduction to my attempt at situating Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike as a fragment, a synecdoche, of his life.

2

Writing of the Self: "Nâzım Hikmet"

> *Meçhûle tapma, akl ü izâna tap, dedim*
> *Hayvâna tapma, insana tap, dedim*
> *[Don't worship the unbeknown but the reason, I said*
> *Don't worship the animal but the human, I said]*
>
> – Abdülhak Hamit, quoted in Orhan Selim [Nâzım Hikmet], "83 Yaşında Delikanlı"

Having briefly laid out the autobiographical kernel of Nâzım Hikmet's poetics as the author of his thought and action, and the continuation of this tendency in his critics and biographers in the introductory chapter, in this chapter I try to point to some recurring themes, images, origin stories, beginnings and re-beginnings, through which Nâzım and the discourse on him constructed "Nâzım Hikmet" in his poems and other works. This might be seen as a biographical sketch. However, rather than attempt to establish a linear, factual, and coherent biographical narrative, I play with fragmentary stories and myths that have been surrounding and constituting the still present discourse on Nâzım Hikmet. The argument I will try to make is that despite the fact that Nâzım is many and multiple, he tends to portray himself as one, an

identity, always positioning himself vis-à-vis the gaze of others, always responding and reacting to their presence whose objectification, in turn, makes possible Nâzım as a self-producing and unified authority over his own life and thought. Beyond the biographical sketch, this will serve as one of the building blocks for my argument that his hunger strike is a synecdoche of Nâzım's life and poetics; that is, it is a fragment of his life that explains the "whole," the whole that both Nâzım himself and his biographies claim for him. Yet at the same time this will demonstrate the paradoxical nature of such a work in which the "man" needs the presence/gaze of others to be able to construct himself as the one.

§ 2.1 Encounters with "Him"

There are three main myths/stories about Nâzım's encounters and confrontations with Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). These are where one of the main contentions over the figure of Nâzım take place. If one is a Kemalist or nationalist, one strives to have a Nâzım that got along well with Mustafa Kemal, the one that Mustafa Kemal had "secretly" protected all along, or one wants to see them as the two figures doing the same thing through different ways. If one is a leftist/communist/Marxist, one wants to have a Nâzım that was against the atrocities of Kemalist regime and perhaps Mustafa Kemal himself. The degree of the disagreement or opposition to be demonstrated varies in accordance with which end of the leftist spectrum one occupies. For instance, if one is on the radical end of the spectrum, one can argue for Mustafa Kemal and Nâzım as diametrically opposed figures to illustrate how a committed communist Nâzım was and how a fierce anti-communist Mustafa Kemal was. Thus, there are three popular stories I could manage to identify concerning this relationship, each of which can be employed in different ways. I will try to summarize them as they appear here and there.

2.1.1 *The First Encounter*

Nâzım's journey to Anatolia with his friends to join the national forces in the initial days of the War of Independence is another recurring theme in

both his own discourse and that of his biographies. It is narrated as a series of birth moments. I will try to briefly summarize them. They went secretly to Ankara to join the national forces led by Mustafa Kemal and his friends. It seems that their intention was to go to the front or somehow join the war. Four young men (Nâzım Hikmet, Vâlâ Nurreddin, Yusuf Ziya, and Faruk Nafiz), all nationalist poets, had to go to İnebolu first, a town in the western Black Sea region, and from there to Ankara. When they arrived at the town in January 1921, the town was full of people waiting to be permitted to go to Ankara and join the war. Among them were the Spartacist Turkish students who were just deported from Germany, perhaps after the *Spartakusaufstand* in January 1919, where they had come under the influence of the German Spartacist movement spearheaded by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. During their stay there, they were talking about concepts that were strange to Nâzım such as class war and the proletariat. This is usually cited as the first time Nâzım came in touch with Marxism/communism.[1] When Nâzım and Vâ-Nû are permitted to travel to Ankara, they chose to walk from İnebolu to Ankara. Their journey lasted almost two weeks and, in the meantime, they had to pass through and sometimes stay in the villages of Anatolia. The two young men who grew up in their relatively safer and privileged environments in İstanbul was for the first time witnessing the poverty, "backwardness," and "ignorance" in those villages. According to the most accounts, this experience also contributed to the developing "consciousness" of Nâzım, to what Nâzım will be or have to be.

The encounter with Mustafa Kemal took place when they arrived at Ankara after walking about a hundred kilometers from İnebolu in two weeks. According to Vâlâ Nureddin's memoir, when they were introduced to him as "two young poets," Mustafa Kemal recommended them to write "poems with a point, a purpose" (*gayeli şiirler*), because, he says, youth tends to write poems without content, just because they think this is modern.[2] We do not know what Nâzım did with this advice, but it would

1 Saime Göksu and Edward Timms, *Romantik Komünist: Nâzım Hikmet'in Yaşamı ve Eseri*, trans. Mehmet B. Gümüşbaş (İstanbul: YKY), 47–50.

2 Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 52–53.

not be wrong to say that he had always written poems "with a point" afterwards. Whether Mustafa Kemal agreed or would agree with that point is matter of contention that still shapes "Nâzım Hikmet." These two young poets had waited for weeks to learn whether they will be sent to the front or not and, in the end, they were rather appointed to Bolu as teachers. They are appointed to the "war of education," a war that was fought to enlighten the Turkish people in Anatolia, to save them from the mindset of traditional society. He seems to have always stand for the project of enlightening and educating the Turkish people. But still, this seems to be not what Nâzım Hikmet expected to do initially. He wanted to join the front, to fight a war for his nation and his people, and yet he was returned by Mustafa Kemal. This encounter shapes one of the recurring themes in his poetics. This is a duality: on the one hand, a mourning, as there an "intellectual" who is unable to fight or prevented from being part of the struggle; on the other hand, a fantasy, as the intellectual (i.e., Nâzım) imagined and placed himself as the one being able to be part of the fight, the struggle for beautiful-days-to-come such as equality, freedom, independence. The first part seems to be informed by this encounter with Mustafa Kemal who first denied him to fight was Mustafa Kemal who rather told him write poems with a point.

2.1.2 *The Second Encounter*

Nâzım Hikmet recorded some of his early poems such as "Salkımsöğüt" (Weeping Willow) and "Bahri Hazer," and the vinyl copies of these records were quite popular almost until the distribution of his poems was banned in late 1930s. According to the story, or rather one version of the story, one night, at the dinner table in the Dolmabahçe Palace, Atatürk listened to these records and enjoyed them. He then ordered his men to find and bring Nâzım to the palace. That is, according to the story, Atatürk wanted a live performance from Nâzım. At midnight the men found Nâzım at his house and told him that Atatürk is waiting at the dinner table. Pissed off, Nâzım told the men, "I am not Efthalia the Mermaid!" ("Ben Deniz Kızı Eftalya değilim!"). Efhalia the Mermaid (Deniz Kızı Eftalya)

(1891–1939) was a Greek-origin popular women singer of the time who often performed before Atatürk and his guests in 1930s. Both Nâzım's poems and Eftalya's songs were distributed by the Columbia Records that started to operate in Turkey in 1927. According to this gendered story, Nâzım rejects "being served" at Atatürk's dinner table like a woman singer whose job is to entertain men. And according to another version of the story, when Atatürk's men came to him, Nâzım told them, "It's past midnight. If this is a state order, I will come. If I need to volunteer, it is too late, I cannot honor the invitation!" In any case, in any version of the story, Nâzım confronts Atatürk, he stands upright before his power and orders, but at the same time he makes sure that he would never escape from serving his country, his people, his state: "If this is a state order..."[3] Here Nâzım originates as a true communist and yet never the one who shies away from the national service, a figure that can be embraced as the pioneer, whose footsteps can be followed, for communists and others.

2.1.3 *The Third Encounter*

There is a much-circulated letter Nâzım is said to have written to Atatürk just before Atatürk died and just before Nâzım was sentenced to the twenty-eight-year long imprisonment. It is short but subtle:

> I received fifteen-years long heavy imprisonment with the charge of inciting the Turkish Army to rebel. And now I am being judged also with the accusation of inciting the Turkish Navy to rebel. I swear on the Turkish revolution and your name, I am not guilty. I did not incite the army to rebel... I am not mad, drifter, reactionary, sold, or a traitor of the revolution and nation, who could think of

3 Memet Fuat, "Deniz Kızı Eftalya" in *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar* (İstanbul: YKY, 2017), 130–131. Originally written in 1987, in the essay, Memet Fuat argues that nothing like this ever happened, so it is fabricated, on the grounds that if Atatürk had invited Nâzım, he would have somehow known or heard this occurrence. For Atatürk's invitation was not just an everyday event that would easily go unnoticed. Also, he supports this by saying that that the event is fabricated is evident in the idea of Nâzım saying "I am not Efthalia the Mermaid," because, Memet Fuat says, Nâzım would "never" say things like that. Nor would he degrade artists like Efthalia in this way.

> this even for a moment. I did not incite the army to rebel. I am poet of the sacred Turkish language who believes in your monument and in you. I could be as patient as to serve all the time I received. I would not want to keep away you from your great works with a Turkish poet's catastrophe. Forgive me. If I keep you busy for a moment, this is because I believe that only your hands can remove the stain left on me by this defamation of "inciting the army of the revolution to rebel." You are the most revolutionary head I can appeal to. I demand justice from Kemalism and you. I swear on the Turkish revolution and your head, I am not guilty.[4]

It seems that it was written before the second trial or during the trials going on in 1938. (It is suggested that it was the Minister of Interior Affairs of the time, Şükrü Kaya, advised Nâzım to write this letter.[5]) In his Marxist take on the letter, literary critic Orhan Koçak suggests that it must have been written in "a moment of weakness" and the content of the letter had been shaped by the discourse of Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) in the early years of the republic that sees Kemalism as a bourgeois revolution, a revolutionary movement, a progress toward the socialist revolution-to-come. This is also a discourse that blames, for example, Kurdish rebellions as reactionary (*mürteci*). Yet, more curiously, Koçak goes on to argue that this is the first and only time Nâzım could *not* manage to stand upright before the bourgeoisie. For him, it was written in a moment of

4 The Turkish original reads: "Türk Ordusunu 'isyana teşvik' ettiğim iddiasıyla 15 yıl ağır hapis cezası giydim. Şimdi de Türk Donanmasını 'isyana' teşvik etmekle töhmetlendiriliyorum. Türk inkılabına ve senin adına and içerim ki suçsuzum. Askeri isyana teşvik etmedim... Deli, serseri, mürteci, satılmış, inkılap ve yurt haini değilim ki bunu bir an olsun düşünebileyim. Askeri isyana teşvik etmedim. Senin eserine ve sana, aziz olan Türk dilinin inanmış bir şairiyim. Sırtıma yüklenen ve yükletilebilecek hapis yıllarını taşıyabilecek kadar sabırlı olabilirim. Büyük işlerinin arasında seni bir Türk şairinin felaketi ile alakalandırmak istemezdim. Bağışla beni. Seni bir an kendimle meşgul ettimse, alnıma vurulmak istenen bu 'inkılap askerini isyana teşvik' damgasının ancak senin ellerinle silinebileceğine inandığımdandır. Başvurabileceğim en inkılapçı baş sensin. Kemalizm'den ve senden adalet istiyorum. Türk inkılabına ve senin başına and içerim ki suçsuzum." Quoted in Orhan Koçak, "Nazım Hikmet: Şiirden Siyasete, Siyasetten Şiire…" *Bianet*, June 23, 2009,

5 Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 201; A. Kadir, *1938 Harp Okulu ve Nâzım Hikmet*, 124.

weakness with the discourse of TKP that had later decided to end its existence, or "decentralize" itself, concluding that there was no more a need for a communist opposition within the Turkish revolution.[6] That is, since this was the only moment of weakness and the guilt can be attributed to the misconceptions of TKP, we can still consider Nâzım a true Marxist/communist who had almost always stand against the Kemalism and bourgeoisie. As I also noted in the Introduction, according to such takes, there is only one Nâzım, it is communist Nâzım in this case. For such a take, Nâzım could never think of the Kurdish rebellions as reactionary. If he had been reasoning by himself, he would not definitely conclude that Kemalism is a revolutionary movement. However, in many of his writings, he seems to have seen the Kemalism as revolutionary movement and never shied away from supporting secular politics of Kemalism that renders "reactionary" (*irticai*) the events such as the 1925 Kurdish rebellions which had definitely an Islamic aspect. Yet from Koçak's standpoint, Nâzım the communist could never willingly accept these, he must have either been tricked or had "a moment of weakness." Man confronting "the man" should not and could not have many moments of weakness, especially if he was coming from bourgeois background.

§ 2.2 A Birth to Forget and Re-Births

In 1902, Nâzım was born into a well-to-do family in the Ottoman Salonica where almost twenty years earlier Mustafa Kemal was born too. Both of his grand fathers were Ottoman paşas in relatively important positions. His mother, Celile Hanım (1880–1956), was a painter. His uncle Ali Fuat Paşa (later Ali Fuat Cebesoy) (1882–1968) was among the notables of the Turkish War of Independence and until his dead he served in significant positions as a general, bureaucrat, and politician, despite the fact that there had been times Mustafa Kemal and him parted ways. The

6 Orhan Koçak, "Nazım Hikmet: Şiirden Siyasete, Siyasetten Şiire…" *Bianet*, June 23, 2009, https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/107371-nazim-hikmet-siirden-siyasete-siyasetten-siire. The essay was originally published in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1988).

immediate friends around the family mostly consisted of similarly educated people that consist of writers, bureaucrats, doctors, generals, lawyers, artists etc. Nâzım was educated in Galatasaray High School in French and later Ottoman Naval School. That is, he was cultivated in the upper echelons of the Ottoman-Turkish society.

In his poetics, this birth usually appears as a moment to forget or something to undo. He imagines himself as someone who could and should leave behind his bourgeois background and join the struggle for and with the working class, as someone who could not be in real fight "by nature" but who could endure any kind of pain to be part of this fight and struggle, and as someone nobody could take away from the fight. This act of forgetting is a fantasy that permeates his poetics. It appears in writing as an inscription of an ideal self that is able to participate in the struggle of the working class for a better life by overcoming all the obstacles before doing so. But also, at times it turns into a bewailing confession for being unable to or not let join the fight, an apologetic insertion, a mourning for the lack of "natural" (or rather social) dispositions to be part of the fight.[7] There usually appears two main obstacles. The first is a doubt concerned with his upbringing or social predispositions: can he, as intellectual coming from the privileged part of society, really be part of the class struggle? The second is about the politics that constantly takes him away from the fight in one way or another: imprisonments, attempts of deterrence, exiles, or simply being not allowed to join the front by "him."

This is definitely connected to what I mentioned above, that is, writing of an ideal self that is able to be part of the fight, the struggle, constant yearning for it as well as constant mourning for being unable to

7 For example, intervening with the authorial voice from the Bursa prison in a long parenthesis, he says in the *Landscapes*: "—I'm ashamed to say it— / I've never once / Put my life on the line / in seven years of war and live perfectly fine, / even in prison." 398; 463. For the *Human Landscapes*, throughout the thesis, I cite both English and Turkish versions. The first page number is the English translation while the second is the Turkish original. The editions I use are as follows: *Human Landscapes from My Country: An Epic Novel in Verse*, trans. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (New York: Persea Books, 2002) and *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (İstanbul: YKY, 2020).

join. This is one of the autobiographical driving forces in Nâzım's poetics. He writes in such a way that the figures that he aspires to become always appears to be scattered all around his writings. Nâzım, or more properly Nâzım-to-be is always there in his writings and in the writings on him. This usually takes place as journey, births and re-births, and as origin stories. In every turning point of the journey, he comes to the world anew, re-originates.

As I pointed above, his story is usually told retrospectively in the form of how "Nâzım" emerged in the sense that all the disparate facts somehow contribute to the creation of the ultimate and unified Nâzım figure. Drawing from Sartre's *Nausea*, in his work on the allegory, Fredric Jameson says that stories "always involve a chronological reversal and illusion. We start with the ending and reorganize the aimless facts into a telos, a sequence of events that is going somewhere and in which something happens: here the aleatory is turned into necessity." Jameson sees this as the necessary form through which our stories are told: "narrative is a ghostly allegory into which a given set of events is reorganized."[8] The reason why Jameson sees this allegorical narrative everywhere is the grand Marxist narrative he clings to, which is the narrative that explains every event after it takes place and places into a functional schema where the event in consideration is anticipated. This is the narrative structure Nâzım's story is usually told as well. One of the origins is found in his journey to Ankara. He met the Spartacists fleeing Germany. They plant the first seeds of consciousness in him. Then, he witnessed the poverty and ignorance in the Anatolian villages on his way to Ankara. He grew even more consciousness. Then, he met Mustafa Kemal. He told him to write poetry with a point, with an aim. However, he did not let Nâzım go to the front, join the national forces, fight for the people. These were the first origins of Nâzım. Now there is also the rest of the journey: to the Soviets this time. What I want to say is that whatever happened or not in Nâzım's life in one way or another find its way into the narrative of Nâzım as whole.

8 Fredric Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology*, 206.

2.2.1 *Blindness?*

While teaching in Bolu, he and his friend Vâ-Nû decided to go to Russia to see the revolution for themselves. They planned to go to the port of Batum through Trabzon. But not long ago, on January 28, 1921, in this region Mustafa Suphi (1882?–1921), the Turkish communist leader and the first president of the Communist Party of Turkey, and his comrades, were assassinated in the Black Sea.[9] Being able to escape this fate, in the fall of 1921, they managed to get to the Batum. Nâzım was nineteen and the Bolshevik revolution was as young. In the meantime, the relationship between Turkey and Russia has been settled down by the Treaty of Moscow signed on March 16, 1921. With this treaty, the USSR has become the first country recognizing the Ankara government of Mustafa Kemal and the borders of Turkey.[10] Then, after their arrival, they decided to join the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP). Nâzım narrates the moment of decision as follows in the novel *Life's Good, Brother*:

9 Concerning the instigators of this assassination, there have been differing opinions. Some claim that it was done by the orders of Mustafa Kemal and others close to him such as Kazım Karabekir, while others point to Enver Paşa and other members of the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terrakki Cemiyeti, İTC) in exile. Also, there are claims that it was realized by a secret collaboration between Turkey and the USSR. The 1922 poem "Onbeşler İçin..." (For the Fifteens) is written by Nâzım Hikmet and Vâ-Nû for the memory those who were murdered in the event. "Fifteen" probably refers to the number of communists who, they think, were killed in the event. Yet this, too, is a matter of contention. See Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 62–63.

10 One of the representative of Turkey during the negotiations of the treaty was Nâzım's uncle Ali Fuat Paşa. Also, these were the time Mustafa Kemal was making important diplomatic maneuvers to strengthen his hand internationally. Although he is said to have prevented the spread of communist movements like that of Mustafa Suphi's and his comrades, he was at the time addressing Lenin and the other Russian leaders as "comrades." In the early 1920s, the two regimes were on good terms, when both were still under construction and going through tumultuous times. In the Allies this aroused a fear of "Muslim communism." See Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 86–129.

> *Decide*, son, I say to myself, *decide*. The decision was made: death before turning back. Wait, don't rush, son. Let's put the questions on this table, right next to Anatolia here. What can you sacrifice for this cause? What can you give? Everything. Everything I have. Your freedom? Yes! How many years can you rot in prison for this cause? All my life, if necessary! Yes, but you like women, fine dining, nice clothes. You can't wait to travel, to see Europe, Asia, America, Africa. If you just leave Anatolia here on this rococo table in Batum and go from Tbilisi to Kars and back to Ankara from there, in five or six years you'll be a senator, a minister—women, wining and dining, art, the whole world. No! If necessary, I can spend my whole life in prison. Okay, but what about getting hanged, killed, or drowned like Mustafa Suphi and his friends if I become a Communist—didn't you ask yourself these questions in Batum? I did. I asked myself, Are you afraid of being killed? I'm not afraid, I said. Just like that, without thinking? No. I first knew I was afraid, then I knew I wasn't. Okay, are you ready to be disabled, crippled, or made deaf for this cause? I asked. And TB, heart disease, blindness? Blindness? Blindness... Wait a minute—I hadn't thought about going blind for this cause. I got up. I shut my eyes tight and walked around the room. Feeling the furniture with my hands, I walked around the room in the darkness of my closed eyes. Twice I stumbled, but I didn't open my eyes. Then I stopped at the table. I opened my eyes. Yes, I can accept blindness. Maybe I was a bit childish, a little comical. But this is the truth. Not books or word-of-mouth propaganda or my social condition brought me where I am. Anatolia brought me where I am. The Anatolia I had seen only on the surface, from the outside. My heart brought me where I am. That's how it is...[11]

He tries to decide once and for all. There is no return. He puts the questions on the table. He asks himself whether he is ready to lose limbs in the fight and whether he is ready to lose his sight, to be blinded. A similar passage appears in the *Human Landscapes from My Country*, where the communist prisoner and intellectual Halil, the main character in the book, whose eyesight is gradually deteriorating faces the same question:

> Süleyman asked:

11 Nâzım Hikmet, *Life's Good, Brother: A Novel*, trans. Mutlu Konuk Blasing (New York: Persea, 2013), 30–31.

"What's the matter, Halil?"
"Nothing.
Just a little matter of darkness."
"I don't understand."
"Darkness is bad, Süleyman,
to see only darkness—
nothing but darkness—is bad."
Süleyman laughed:
"Why don't you just say 'blindness'?
I agree it's the worst handicap."
Fuat joined in:
"Losing an arm or a leg beats going blind."
Halil, as if he'd just remembered something, asked Fuat:
"If you struggles demanded your eyes, would you give them?"
"I've never thought about it.
If it's absolutely necessary, I'll give them, too.
Why did you ask this now?"
....
"No.
[Halil turned to Fuat]
I was two years younger than you, Fuat, when I got into this business of
Imagining the impossible,
ready for the highest sacrifice,
full of compassion,
utterly pitiless,
and an enemy of lyricism
and more than a bit of a romantic—
in short, a young intellectual
with all his strengths and weaknesses.
You won't understand—
thankfully, you're a worker—
but Süleyman will.
Young intellectuals are full of contradictions
when they get their first whiff of the people,
when they first join the masses:
on the one hand, they totally deny themselves as individuals;
on the other, they're self-absorbed.
I used to ask myself:
'Are you ready to give your all, Halil?"
'Yes.'
'Your eyes?'
'Yes.
After I'm blind, I can still speak and others can write it down;

After I'm blind, I can still fight...'"
Fuat laughed:
"You're right," he said,
"but even the Devil couldn't think something like that out of the blue."
"An intellectual could."[12]

"An intellectual could," because he does not "naturally" belong to *the* class, he is not "organically" attuned to making decisions that require sacrifices for others, especially sacrifices from his privileges. It is not his "social condition" that brought him where he is. The intellectual is paralyzed by thinking too much and thus by not being able to do what the masses can do organically, at ease. There is also the problematic of an intellectual who is constantly suspicious of himself, of whether he can do it, whether he can irretrievably commit himself to the fight. It is this doubt that make him self-contradictory and self-absorbed at times. He needs to check himself, needs to remind himself that he is ready to sacrifice even his eyes. As I try to show throughout the thesis, the "eyes," the gaze, is one of the most significant devices in Nâzım's poetics. It figures not only as the organ that sees, but also what monitors the surrounding, controls the looks upon the author or how the author is seen. Furthermore, they are also the author itself, more accurately that which is seen by the other. Being seen is important, because this doubt is not only a self-doubt, but a doubt that is brought on the author by the other gazes directed at him with a suspicion, these are the gazes the author always feels on himself. Thus, both being able to see and being seen are equally crucial, because the author must see how he is seen. For this reason, it is dreadful for him to lose his vision but it is equally terrifying to be lost in the darkness.

Halil has drawn eyes in the margins of his map.
Some frontal views, some profiles.
From a gashed eyebrow, blood
Trickles down the lid
of a bold, glaring eyeball.

12 *Human Landscapes*, 227–228; 265–266.

Some eyes are in pairs, some single.
There are single eyes as sneaky as a submarine periscope.
Some eyes are jumbled together,
all over one another.
Some open wide,
Their fate frightfully legible.
And some are closed tight, like locked walnut boxes:
what are they hiding?
There are eyes
of mothers.
There are eyes: just two pupils gleaming
with hate and rancor.
There are eyes
of love.
There are eyes
like a wheat harvest in the sun.
And over and over,
that same eye:
the gashed eyebrow, the blood
trickling down the lid,
the bold, glaring eyeball.[13]

Halil, through which Nâzım speaks, in the face of losing his eyes, knows that he is being watched by all different kinds of eyes everywhere: the loving ones as well as the hostile ones, the inquisitive ones as well as the sincere ones. To be able to present himself as the one, as a whole, Halil needs to keep seeing.

2.2.2 *Making* the *Decision: "Ağaç Yaşken Eğilir"*

To go back, despite the superiority of being an organic intellectual and having the natural class inclinations, Nâzım still believes in the change,

13 *Human Landscapes*, 383; 446–447.

because such a change, such a moment of decision, is his origin. He was re-born from such a decisive moment. The earlier one has this moment, the more decisive the change will be. Once again from the *Landscapes* Halil speaking:

> "This is why, Faik Bey:
> because you are alone in life,
> you are alone in death.
> If you'd stayed a doctor for the police
> and kept your ties,
> if you hadn't cut the strings between you and your class,
> or if you'd gone over to the other side
> after this operation
> and become attached to other people with other ties,
> then this chronic disease that now grows unchecked
> would flare up but rarely..."
> Faik Bey laughed out loud:
> "You sound like a doctor," he said,
> "but look, rarely or not, it would still flare up."
> "Yes, it would flare up, Faik Bey.
> A tree bends only when it's green,
> and it's not that easy to change headquarters:
> we carry inside us something from the cradle.
> And then..."[14]

In this passage, Halil tries to diagnose a depressed doctor, Faik Bey. He tells him what the problem in his life is. He works for the people, but he is not *with* them. He does not belong with them. But he also seems to have left behind his original class like Nâzım (or Halil) and yet could not be able to attach to the people entirely. He says that it is a difficult task and it is even more difficult when it is not done in the youth: "a tree bends when it is green." And if it is not done, if one is struck in the void, this is dangerous. And, at the end of this section of the book, I guess not so

14 *Human Landscapes*, 318; 371–372.

surprisingly, the doctor commits suicide.[15] And Halil knows why. Note here that even though sometimes he is self-contradictory and self-absorbed, Halil is in fact already a whole, he is in peace with himself, because he seems to have decided what needs to be decided long ago, hence in better position than the doctor whose suicide, for Halil, is no surprise.

This is the end that waits for the one if one has to make a committed class decision, just like Nâzım did in his nineteenth year. In his 1930 poem "My Nineteenth Year," he personifies his nineteenth year as a moment of decision, a moment he changed his class, and addresses it as his teacher and comrade. This is obviously one of the most important turning points in his self-narrative. Nâzım pictures his arrival at the Soviets and his decision to become a communist as a moment of rebirth and personifies his "nineteenth year" calling it "my first child, my first teacher, my

15 In 1930, Nâzım Hikmet wrote a short essay on the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky's taking his own life for the magazine *Resimli Ay* under the pseudonym Süleyman: "Why the Great Poet Mayakovski Commit Suicide?" In this essay, he mainly argues against those who claim that Mayakovsky's suicide is the failure of the communist ideas like materialism, belief in the future, and the beautiful-days-to-come. Rather, drawing on the words of the Russian poet Demyan Bendy (Yefim Alekseevich Pridvorov), Nâzım suggests, there is a certain individualism that had made Mayakovsky lose his touch with the working masses, which sometimes had led him see himself as the standing man against the society as a whole. Mayakovsky's suicide is a result of this individualism catching him in "a moment of weakness," coupled with a disease and an accidental loneliness. It seems that this is what happens to Faik Bey who is an individualist and lonely doctor and, just like Mayakovsky, all of a sudden, who commits suicide. The moral of both stories seems to be that this is what happens when one is detached from society and is unable to make the decision to be the masses. See [Süleyman], "Muazzam Şair Mayakofski Neden İntihar Etti?" *Resimli Ay* 5 (1930): 28–29. See also Zafer Toprak, "Mayakovski'nin İntiharı ve Nâzım Hikmet," *Toplumsal Tarih* 260 (2015): 22–31. This "moment of weakness" discourse is familiar from Koçak's points that I cited above. It constitutes a crucial part of the communist movements in contexts like Turkey where lots of courage, discipline, strength, and selflessness are required to fight the state. Thus, there is not much room for moments of weakness, a discourse and practice that still imbues with Marxist politics in Turkey, most of the time turning the organizations into counter-states.

first comrade": "I respect you like I respect my mother / I follow and will follow the way you first tread."[16]

He respects this moment just as he respects his mother that gave birth to him. He originates at this moment and, he says, he will follow this origin all the way to the end, even if it requires his eyes from him. In Moscow, Nâzım attended the Communist University of the Tailors of the East from 1921 to 1924.[17] This period is also the one when, as he implies, he started to work to reach the full consciousness, to become a "hafiz" of Das Kapital in a 1923 poem called "Şair."[18] That is why he writes in "My Nineteenth Year": "BOOK, BOOK, BOOK..." It is period that the first seeds of consciousness planted in him during his journey in Anatolia has come to fruition, to a full consciousness, following an extensive reading of Marxist-Leninist literature at the time. It is a moment that he decisively changed his class, with the exception of a few doubts that come and go. "He'd entered the fight through his mind and books / but he'd been as true to it as an honest laborer [*namuslu bir amele*]."[19] In his 1947 poem, too, he emphasizes this change of the class. The poem's name is "In the Era of Sultan Hamit":

16 "19 Yaşım" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 228. Translation mine.

17 For a recent account of Nâzım's student years there, see James Meyer, "Children of Trans-Empire: Nâzım Hikmet and the First Generation of Turkish Students at Moscow's Communist University of the East" *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 5, no. 2 (2018): 195–218.

18 "Şair" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 113–114. One of the recurring practices in Nâzım's poetics is that, to underline his secular and materialist convictions, he often provocatively replaces the Islamic concepts, forms, and discourses with Marxist-materialist content. For example, as in here, he takes the concept of being hafiz, which in Islamic tradition refers to those who completely memorize the Qur'an and can recite it from memory in order to protect it from being forgotten as the "guardians." Nâzım, in this sense, replaces the Qur'an with *Das Kapital* and wants to become a hafiz of the latter. There are many other examples of this. For example, he also changes the suras about the resurrection in Qur'an with the resurrection of the working class. See Nedim Gürsel, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Rubaîleri" *Birikim* 15 (1976): 6–20 and "Nâzım Hikmet'in Kıyamet Sureleri" *Birikim* 17 (1976): 11–24.

19 *Human Landscapes from My Country*, 402–403; 468.

In the era of Sultan Hamit, my father had not served in the army in Yemen for ten years,
he was from the class of high officers, a son of a paşa (*paşazadeymiş kendisi*)
I changed my class and became a communist,
imprisoned for nine years
—and this time—
in the sweet era of the Republic,
and it is not known
how much longer
this national service (*vatan hizmeti*)
will last.[20]

The message is clear: he changed his class and became a communist. He gave up his position in the upper echelons of society. And he calls this a national service. Perhaps one of the most obvious element here that permeates the discourses of many factions of the left in Turkey is the discourse of communists being the real nationalists or patriots. This is at once a defensive discourse against the one that labels communists as traitors of the nation and an inclusive (or perhaps populist) one that addresses the people with national sentimentalities. However, this should not be understood as that Nâzım Hikmet was communist more than he was nationalist. This speaks against the right-wing nationalist politics, saying that the most patriotic people is in fact communists, because they care for their people, they want them to live in better conditions and they want them to be happy. They love their nation not as a symbol or a piece of land but as where people suffer and yet deserve better. Loving nation is loving people inhabiting that nation, according to this discourse. Once again, here is a relevant passage from the *Human Landscapes*:

"Kerim," Halil said,
"praised be the glory of the Turkish people and humanity
...
praised be the glory of the Turkish people and all people
and, thanks be, I'm a Communist—
to the core
and more so every day,

20 "Sultan Hamit Devrinde" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 887. Translation mine.

each day a little more of a Communist,
a *Communist*...
[As he repeated Communist,
he felt he could breathe easier.]
Thanks be, I'm a Communist.
That much is true, Kerim.
And like all Communists, I'm a true patriot,
with a love for my country more real, more advanced,
than any in all history,
encompassing a whole era,
and all of humanity...[21]

He suggests that communists are true patriots full of love for their countries, nations, and people. They are patriots more real and more advanced than everyone else. Just before that, Halil (or Nâzım) repeats that he is a communist over and over again. As he repeats it, he relieves, he starts to "breathe easier." He inscribes and asserts his identity: "I am a communist." He inscribes and asserts it as if it became even more real as he repeats it.

All this is because there are gazes that watch him and ready to see his digressions from communism and concessions, and to see that being communist is just a guise through which Nâzım advertises himself and his works. Perhaps the most important expression of this gaze was spelled out by Hikmet Kıvılcımlı (1902–1971), the influential leader and theorist of the Communist Party of Turkey. In a piece he wrote, Kıvılcımlı suggests,

> Among the types who have rubbed themselves on the Marxist movement in Turkey, there are the ones like Nâzım Hikmet. Since this type of people gained their identities, their status, in the bourgeois society by disguising themselves under Marxism, they cannot abandon this disguise. Rip off the "so-called Marxist" form the poet Nâzım Hikmet wants to give with his poems like a shirt that is not close-fit: under it, you will find a petit-bourgeois poetry that we are able to come across on the streets of Babıâli every minute... This type of people, for sure, is more harmful to Marxism than

21 *Human Landscapes From My Country*, 452–453; 525.

> anybody else. Nâzım's desire is to be always on the stage by using some radical "Marxist" terms due to his anxiety of mystisizing and protecting his "literary identity" by masking it. We do not even want to talk about those who were once fervent communists like Şevket Süreyya, Vedat Nedim, Ahmet Cevat...[22]

This is from a piece Kıvılcımlı wrote in 1936. Apparently, ever since, it had had a massive impact on Nâzım's poetics in the way that I have tried to explicate so far. According to Kıvılcımlı, Marxism is a front Nâzım put up and used as an identity through which he promoted himself.

To go back to the organicity of the working masses vis-à-vis the clumsiness of the intellectual in being part of the struggle, in his first novel *Blood Doesn't Speak* (*Kan Konuşmaz*), first serialized in a newspaper in 1936, Nâzım tells the story of an adopted child, Ömer, raised by a working man Nuri Usta. The child was from a wealthy Ottoman paşa who had an affair with the maid Gülizar serving in his mansion. After the discovery of the affair, the maid was fired from the palace. Upon seeing the desperate maid and the child in the neighborhood and their bad treatment by the neighbors, Nuri Usta decides to marry Gülizar and look after

22 The Turkish version reads: "Türkiye'deki Marksist harekete sürtünüp geçen tipler arasında, bir de Nazım Hikmet gibileri vardır. Bunlar burjuva toplumundaki kimliklerini, konumlarını, Marksizm kılığına bürünerek elde ettiklerinden, bu kılıktan bir türlü ayrılamazlar. Şair Nazım Hikmet'in şiirlerle vermek istediği "sözde Marksist" şekli, eğreti bir gömlek gibi soyup atınız: Altından, Babıâli kaldırımlarında her dakika rastladığımız bir küçük burjuva şairliği fırlayıp çıkacaktır. İşte Nazım'ın bazı radikal "Marksist" terimlerle sahnede yürütmek isteyişi, hep o "edebi kimliği"ni maskeleyerek mistikleştirmek ve korumak kaygısındandır. Bu tipler, muhakkak ki, Marksizme herkesten daha zararlıdırlar. Bir zamanlar ateşli komünist geçinen Şevket Süreyya, Vedat Nedim, Ahmet Cevat... gibilerinden söz bile etmek istemiyoruz." Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Marksizm Kalpazanları Kimlerdir? Kerim Sadi* (Köxüz Yayınları, [1936]), 11. Kıvılcımlı is arguably the most prolific and the most original thinker of the twentieth-century Marxist-revolutionary movement in Turkey, despite the fact that his works are hardly studied. Unlike most figures of the Turkish left, Kıvılcımlı was not born into a wealthy family. However, he learned different languages on his own, translated some works of Marx and Engels into Turkish, and attempted to construct a Marxist theory and practice attentive to practices, values, and conditions of Turkish, and mostly a Muslim, society. See Canan Özcan Eliaçık, *Barbarın Tarihi - Ezilenin Dini: Hikmet Kıvılcımlı'da Tarih ve Din* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2021), 15.

the child as if he was his own. The child does not know that Nuri Usta is not his real father but a wealthy Ottoman paşa and grew with a working class habits and consciousness. This consciousness is even sharpened after the World War I and the Turkish War of Independence, as the poor gets even poorer and the rich gets even richer in the post-war period, despite the fact that the war of independence is fought and won by the poor. That is, while the child's biological father gets even richer, his working father gets even poorer. (This is the way in which Nâzım was accustomed to tell the story of the war, which is also explicit in the *Human Landscapes* and *Kuvây-i Milliye*). However, together they try to fight against the regime that exploits them as much as they can. Toward the end of the book, there occurs a confrontation between him and his real father. His biological father needs the child to support himself, telling him that they are from the same blood. However, the child tells him that "blood does not speak" and this how the novel ends.[23] This is, first of all, a critique of fascist/racist discourse based on the blood ties, as the Nazi ideology was on the rise at the time the novel was serialized and had supporters inside Turkey. Yet there is also an important aspect to our discussion here. Remember that Halil was saying that a tree bends when it is green. Being able to fight *with* and *for* the class is guaranteed when the class consciousness is put in place as early as possible or when the decision to side with the class is made decisively at some point. Though biologically from a wealthy man, the child was raised and cultivated by the working man and in a working class environment. He was organically thrown into the class struggle. Even when he learned about his biological father in his adolescence as a young lawyer, this changes nothing for him, because the blood does not speak, what speaks is upbringing: a tree bends only when it is green. That is, once the decision to be with and for the class is made—and the earlier it is made, the surer its outcomes are—one can change one's social class and status. Therefore, this proves, though an intellectual coming from upper echelons of the society, Nâzım, too, can change his class and make the decision, which he had already made in his nineteenth

23 *Kan Konuşmaz* (İstanbul: Ararat Yayınevi, 1976), 324.

year. There needs to be a re-birth, a moment (more accurately, multiple moments, as the seeds of consciousness are planted in different times and places) where one originates. Once this is done, the rest is a matter of self-government to ensure that one does not digress.

In "Why Did Banerjee Kill Himself?" (Benerci Kendini Niçin Öldürdü?), Nâzım, this time seemingly speaking and acting through Banerjee, shows that he is ready to sacrifice himself when he is no more of help in the fight or a burden on the shoulder of his comrades. The Indian anti-imperialist Banerjee takes his own life without a doubt when he realizes that he is nothing other than an obstacle before the fight, probably in the form of an emotional and moral weight on his comrades. He does this while others betray the fight and side with the enemy to live comfortably. If one wants to join this fight seriously, one needs to be selfless and disciplined in order to be able to make the most important sacrifices for the better days to come, even if this means that one will not see those days. This is also a theme in his early poem "Salkımsöğüt." While the red horse riders go to the revolution, they are not concerned with the fall of a comrade on the way. And the comrade who fell, too, is not saddened by this, he is calm and collected, as the future better days are on the horizon even if he will not live them.

2.2.3 *To Be Read by the Class and the Necessity of History*

As all these suggest, "Nâzım Hikmet" is expressed by and through multiple characters. There is no one single representative character in Nâzım's oeuvre and even in a single book. It usually speaks through more than one characters as well as by entering the narrative with his own authorial voice. At times these characters, as the narrative moves forward, change direction and suddenly stop or fall short of representing "Nâzım," while at others they stick to the ideal, the phantasm that represents the values and beings Nâzım longs to attain, originates toward, is reborn for over and over again, that makes up the principled core of "Nâzım." Despite this multiplicity of characters and speakers (or spokespersons), they are all put to work to accomplish a single unified task, which is to unify the idea

of Nâzım by reconstructing the past and extending and asserting him into future with no rupture, break, fissure, excursion, and no moment of weakness, but as a whole, as an authority vis-à-vis the gazes of the other watching him to see his digression and renunciation.

But he continuously crafts, inscribes, and asserts an ideal self that he is, or that he is going to be, in his writings as well as a self that mourns for not being able to join the fight organically. Even in the latter case, he places himself in the narrative as a poet who is read by the working classes and makes them conscious about their conditions. This is another version of the fantasy to be with and, more importantly, to be read by the class. This is legible in the move he makes in the *Human Landscapes* to place parts of *Kuvây-i Milliye* into it. The working men on the train's dining car, the cook, the maître d'hotel, the waiter, happened to have an epic written by "the poet in prison."[24] Before beginning to read, the waiter Mustafa tells the chef Mahmut Aşer that it is a different kind of epic. Rather than talking about trenchant struggles of the prisoner life, it talks about those people who fought the Turkish War of Independence, whose names usually go unnoticed. As the men reads the epic and the train keeps moving, they start getting conscious about their own conditions and then, at some point, the waitress Mustafa starts to look at the people (like Hikmet Alpersoy, "the cannery owner and arms dealer"[25]) he serves in the dining car with a certain disgust and revenge, because they are the rich who took advantage of the war. He starts to see being waiter as being a servant.[26] The new neoclassical cuisine the chef Mahmut Aşer cooks

24 The epic is brought and read to others (that is, maître d' and the Chef Mahmut Aşer) by the waiter Mustafa. Mustafa's worker (*amele*) brother is a friend of the poet in prison and Mustafa himself met him once. *Human Landscapes*, 164; 194. The friendship between the poet and the worker is significant here. It appears in the book once more in the friendship between the intellectual Halil and the thirteen-year-old child worker Kerim whom the narrator calls "the heart of my heart" ("canım, ciğerim... İşçi Kerim"). 337; 393.

25 *Human Landscapes*, 155; 184.

26 "Besides, for the past year / (since the day he visited the man in prison), / being a waiter had felt like wearing a sticky, dirty undershirt.... / Whatever it was, / Mustafa was no longer considered waiting on table respectable. / It was like being a servant." 154–155; 184.

suddenly starts to feel strange to Mustafa.[27] And Mahmut Aşer, who himself fought in the war, knows İsmail from Arhave whose story is told in the epic.[28] Here what we see is that Nâzım places himself as a poet of the class, who is able to make them realize their own conditions and raise in them a class consciousness. This is how Nâzım imagines "Nâzım" or simply what/who he wishes to be: "the poet in prison" who, though unable to join the fight, is read by the class and help them raise a consciousness. Although the *Human Landscapes* is the perfection of his realist turn and the attempt to "portray the complex reality with all its contradictions,"[29] what we hear out loud in this portrayal is the central place and voice Nâzım occupies: the author, as a fantasy, is always present in it, speaking and responding to the gazes.

One last and interesting example for this might be taken out from Nâzım's earlier work, the Epic of Sheikh Bedreddin (Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı) written and published in 1936. The Epic was about a fourteenth-century Ottoman sheik, mystic, and his "socialistic" ideals of sharing everything which led to the multicommunal rebel that brought together Muslim, Jewish, Greek communities around the Aegean

27 "Chef Mahmut Aşer, / the "neoclassic" type of our new reformed cuisine, / suddenly appeared completely different to Mustafa, / down to the shape of his nose." 164; 193

28 *Human Landscapes*, 162; 192.

29 During 1930s, Nâzım's poetics took a realist turn after his so-called constructivist/futurist period. This turn might be seen as a part of Nâzım's never-ending experiments, but it was also a project crystallized in the wake of the dissemination of Engels's famous remarks favoring Balzacian realism that is capable of "portraying complex and concrete totality with all its contradictions," and the Soviet state's embrace, and perhaps dictate, of it as the true art form and genre. Toward the end of 1930s, Nâzım often expressed that he wanted to apply Balzacian realism to the poetry to express society with all the elements including the wicked and uncanny facts included in it. It would not be completely wrong to generalize that most of what he writes in 1930s and 1940s was realist experiments in this regard, the apex of which was the *Human Landscapes from My Country*, which was initially intended to be a social, economic, and historical portrait of Turkish society in the early 1940s, written and re-written in his prison years and afterwards over a period spanning more than ten years. However, as I discuss here, while portraying the society, Nâzım's realism was never lacking in the authorial presence and his voice is most of the time one of the central speakers/narrators.

region and its eventual loss against the Ottoman state and the Sultan Mehmed I. He reads Bedreddin's revolt as a national and proto-socialist struggle that is bound to fail, because, as any historical materialist knows, the class struggles cannot succeed in places where capitalism is not fully or at least partially developed, or where there cannot be classes or class consciousness. Nâzım knows this very well and makes it explicit in the poem. It is exactly at this point of the poem that he feels that adding a footnote to the epic would be in order. First, here are the verses that require the footnote: "Don't say / this is the necessary consequence of / the historical, social, economic conditions! / I know! / And I bow down to that object you mentioned. / But this heart / it does not understand this language, / It says, / 'Oh cruel fate, / oh fickle fortune.'"[30] These words are the narrator's mourning for the loss of Sheikh Bedreddin, but the narrator knows very well that this is the necessary consequence. Still, he mourns, because knowing what has to happen does not exclude the sadness that comes out of what happened. This is what Nâzım told in the footnote. He says that there will be those who call themselves "left" and, upon reading this, they will accuse me of making a distinction between his "head" (*kafa*) and "heart" (*yürek*): "What a Marxist!" So, this footnote is a response to this type of people. But, no, Nâzım announces right after, this digression or parenthesis (*istidrad*) is not for them but for those who has newly started to read Marxism and are far from left snobbishness (*sol züppelik*). That is to say, he adds a footnote to the poem, to one of the peak points of the narrative, just to educate the young Marxists. Then, he continues, with a hypothetical example: think of a doctor who knows that his child will die soon, he also knows that this is a physiological, biological necessity, and is he not allowed to cry, be sad when his child is dead eventually? Similarly, did not Marx probably feel sorrow after the fall of the Paris Commune despite the fact that he knew in advance that its fall is a historical necessity. Therefore, Nâzım concludes the footnote, "Marxist is

30 "Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 499. Translation mine.

not 'a machine-man', a ROBOT, but a historical, social, concrete human being with his flesh, blood, nerves, head, and heart."[31]

I want to draw the following conclusions from this. First, Nâzım's poetics is shaped by an authority, or his auto-production of himself in writing, by speaking to and responding to the gazes. He intentionally makes himself the object of these gazes to become the secular subject-author of his life and self without, however, realizing that it is in fact those against which he speaks that enable him to construct himself as a consistent whole: a truly secular, Marxist, materialist, nationalist, (class-)conscious self. Second, in constructing himself as a whole, he in fact misses being as such. As he inscribes and asserts himself as a selfless and disciplined communist right into the class war (organically, just like a "namuslu amele") through a strong authorial voice present in almost all his writings, he in fact misses being as such and rather asserts the self-absorbed intellectual from which he strives to release himself. (Here unlike, for instance, Nergis Ertürk's deconstructive reading that focuses on the narrative techniques and points out that what she calls Nâzım's "ghostwriting" where "the singularity of the writerly self is willingly given up,"[32] I argue that the singularity of the author is overly present in Nâzım's writings by focusing on the "message" of his writings and thereby doing mostly a "literal" reading of his writings. However, the conclusion I reach similarly is about the impossibility of this singular author.[33]) Third, as I have said above, the way Nâzım and the discourse of Nâzım Hikmet construct him as a consistent whole is the Marxist-functionalist narrative that puts all the past events in a meaningful and linear

31 "Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı," 499. Translation mine.

32 *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey*, 174–175. Unlike Ertürk, I argue that the authorial voice and presence of the author is never lost in the *Epic of Sheikh Bedreddin*.

33 However, I employ two strategies at the same time as I have pointed out in the Introduction. On the one hand, I do the literal reading to illustrate how Nâzım constructed himself as a unified, singular author of his life and the self. On the other hand, I read Nâzım against the grain to be able to show the impossibility of such an author and the narrative through which he is constructed. That is why, for example, I try to show that it is also the case that writing precedes life and that Nâzım has a late style that defies, or undoes, this construction.

form of explanation. In this kind of narrative form, one can place every past event into a function that helps the story cohere as a whole and infinite additions are always possible in such a story. Every event can be put in a form that fits in the final coherence of the narrative. For example, as I said previously, Nâzım's story is told in such a way that everything that has happened to him turns out to be a contribution to the "Nâzım," or fulfills a vital function in the making of him. Formally, this is on a par with the idea that Sheikh Bedreddin's revolt was bound to fail, because it was "untimely": a not-yet. It thus failed to change the social order, because, according to the laws of historical materialism, there could not be a socialist revolution where there is no class society and class consciousness. Told this way, Bedreddin's epic revolt stops posing a challenge to the Marxist narrative/theory. Here is another example of this narrative that Fredric Jameson likes to tell: there are racial, religious, ethnic conflicts and, for this reason, the identity politics is prevalent, because they help the capitalist world order continue by taking people away from the class struggle and dividing the working class in this way.[34] The presence of such conflicts is explained by being explained away, by the function that they fulfill in the capitalist system after their presence is observed. That is to say, every event can be subsumed under such a narrative, because there can be found a function for every event in the narrative, especially autobiographical constructions like Nâzım's where every incident takes its place as a historical necessity, another distance covered to reach the final consciousness, which composes the consistent whole.[35]

34 *Allegory and Ideology*, 190–214.

35 Also, we must note here that the construction of the whole vis-à-vis external enemies is compatible with the secular Marxist content positioning the "man" at the center of the world as its prime creator. And, not so surprisingly, nature is one of the most recurring themes and figures in Nâzım's writings, but, most of the time, as an outside thing, an external enemy, to change, conquer, tame, exploit, and as a fecund woman that serves as the element providing the background tension that moves the poem forward to the explosion, as in *The Epic of Sheikh Bedreddin*. This is in direct conflict with the "ecocritics" rendering Nâzım "environmental-friendly" citing the profuse references to nature in his poems. See, for example, Kim Fortuny, "Nâzim Hikmet's Ecopoetics and the Gezi Park

§ 2.3 OrigiNation

Nâzım's construction of himself as a secular whole and the author of his life is in no ways unrelated to the emergence of the modern Turkish nation-state as a self-originating entity with definite borders and boundaries and the producer of human life inside (and out). Rather, they are analogous processes that affect one another. Nâzım not only serves as a model human that the Republic was set out to build, he also constitutes a formal model that is embraced in the making of the state itself and vice versa. As Nâzım originates, the modern Turkish nation-state originates. Put differently, Nâzım's story can be interpreted as the story of the Turkish nation-state, as in both cases the occurrences in the lives of two entities turned out to be historical necessities. This is akin to what Jameson calls the national allegory. As I have noted in the Introduction, I am not sure if this is allegory or analogy, but here what is important is that there are parallelisms between these constructions and the narrative through which the their story is put into a whole. As he insistently underlines the fact that he is the poet of the sacred Turkish language in his letter to Atatürk, the fate of Nâzım turned out to be the fate of the Turkish language. This is one of the images through which "Nâzım Hikmet" is produced and reproduced as *the* Turkish itself.[36]

Protests" *Middle Eastern Literatures* 19, no. 2 (2016): 162–184. Also, in arguing that every collective, to achieve the cohesion, need an external enemy and threat, Fredric Jameson says, or confesses, "as human mortals, nature always was our enemy in the first place." *Allegory and Ideology*, 198. In the Chapter 5, I argue that Nâzım has a late style that diverts from this understanding of nature as an external enemy.

36 During the 1930s, Nâzım Hikmet penned articles which he called "clean/pure Turkish essays" (*temiz Türkçe denemeleri*) under the pseudonym "Orhan Selim," mostly in the newspaper *Akşam*. He described himself as "Orhan Selim who writes essays on clean Turkish." These writings were instructing and proposing new ideas about how to use Turkish language clearly and purely, how to bridge the gap between the oral and the written language, the latter being the supplement in the sense that the written language must be as close as possible to the spoken language. As I will try to show below, these attempt at the purification of the language was also a part of the modernizing projects of the republican state. Orhan Koçak calls these types of writings "dil yazıları" (language

For example, in a conversation with Haluk Oral, Gündüz Vassaf suggests comparing writings of Atatürk and those of Nâzım Hikmet from the same period. What we will see, he says, is that most of what Atatürk said and wrote when he was alive is difficult to understand today, as he used extensively Persian and Arabic words common in Ottoman Turkish, one needs a dictionary to read him, while there is no difficulty in understanding Nâzım today.[37] That is, in such a discourse which is quite prevalent, Nâzım is almost the origin of the modern Turkish that is one of the most important building blocks of the making of the Turkish nation-state, given that a nation-state is founded upon a language that is understandable for everyone and a written language, as a *supplement*, must be as close as to the speech. The sounds the people make while speaking and is able to understand while listening must be the way in which writing is ordered. Writing is an auxiliary that helps the original sounds appear uniformly.[38]

Nâzım's iconoclastic experiments during 1920s and early 1930s were not also far away from the nationalist projects of purifying language, cleaning it up from the foreign and traditional effects of the Arabic and Persian. As Nâzım Hikmet radicalizes his experiments with form and content, as he breaks up with the established norms of Turkish literary scene, he also breaks up with the old, imperial, and traditional ways of speaking and writing. It is in this sense not surprising that just as the founding Republican elites, Nâzım Hikmet, too, saw the Ottoman Empire

writings), or at least a version of them. He says that the first examples of such writings had been given in Turkish by Nurullah Ataç during 1940s, a critic about whom Nâzım had often had positive opinions. However, Nâzım Hikmet, under the name Orhan Selim, had seemingly embarked on these writings a little earlier than Ataç. See "Ataç'a Saygı" *Birikim Haftalık*, July 3, 2018.

37 Gündüz Vassaf and Haluk Oral, "Nâzım Hikmet İçin Bir Sohbet Denemesi," in Haluk Oral, *Nâzım Hikmet'in Yolculuğu*, xiii–xxi. İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019.

38 In her book, Ertürk calls this vernacularization and defines privileging of speech and oral language as "phonocentrism."

as the backward regime and a symbol of decline.[39] His strong secularism is also in line with the projects of modernization/Westernization of the Turkish state. The publication of his *835 Satır* (*835 Lines*) in 1929, only a year after the alphabet reform in Turkey, is considered to be a revolution in Turkish language and literature. It marked the birth of a modern Turkish literature and the single most important example of how to use the Turkish language at its best.[40] The book was also the event that helped Nâzım establish himself in the literary scene definitely. Mostly written under the effects of Russian constructivism and futurism (in particular, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Vsevolod Meyerhold), most of the poems in the book are now well known and each one of them was considered to be running against the established norms and habits in the Turkish literary scene. For example, instead of syllabic meter and verse, Nâzım was writing in free verse and in lines rather verses, and those lines are ordered in different shapes and sizes with plays of typography and thereby are directed at the eye of the reader, which gives writing a materiality, as I briefly explicate in the next chapter.[41]

39 In the *Human Landscapes*, for example, Ottoman dynasty is said to have collaborated with the banks of London and the Greek leader Venizelos to conquer the Anatolia and dispossess the Turkish people, because, just as capitalists in other parts of the world, for them, too, the love of nation is just about their personal gains and profits. 223; 262.

40 It was celebrated as a "book-event" by the various names of the Turkish literary and intellectual circles of the time, including Ahmet Haşim and Yakup Kadri, with whom Nâzım Hikmet was going to decisively fall apart soon. Yakup Kadri, for example, said that *835 Lines* is "the first line in Turkish poetry and even Turkish language... [Nâzım Hikmet] is not only a literary revolutionary who marked a new epoch but also a brand-new type of poet that we are not accustomed to see." Quoted in Memet Fuat, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Türk Şiirindeki Yeri," 103, translation mine. On the importance of the 835 Lines in Turkish poetry, also see Nergis Ertürk, "Nâzım's Ghostwriting" in *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 162–166.

41 There are sixteen poems included in *835 Lines*, some of which were either known previously or already published somewhere else. Some of the notable poems in the book that still defines the Nâzım Hikmet imagery are "Güneşi İçenlerin Türküsü" (1924), "Salkımsöğüt" (1928), "Piyer Loti" (1925), "Makinalaşmak" (1923), "Açların Gözbebekleri" (1922), "Berkley" (1926).

The year 1929 is also important in the discourse of "Nâzım Hikmet," because, following the great revolutionary impact *835 Lines* had had, being the "first lines" of the Turkish literature, as Yakup Kadri called, in the summer of 1929 Nâzım launched an anonymous campaign called "We're Breaking the Idols" in *Resimli Ay*[42] where he started an open attack against the two established figures of the Ottoman-Turkish literature Abdülhak Hamit and Mehmed Emin, and he got into conflict with others who objected to him afterwards. In the spirit of the 1912 Russian futurist manifesto *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, one of the authors of which was Mayakovsky, which suggests throwing the figures like Dostoyevsky, Pushkin, and Tolstoy overboard from the ship of modernity,[43] in his own manifesto Nâzım argued that the times of the aforementioned figures in the Turkish literature has long passed and most of them are in fact "overrated." Therefore, they do not deserve the titles attributed to them: "the great genius" (*dâhi-i âzâm*) to Abdülhak Hamit and "national poet" (*millî şair*) to Mehmet Emin who, Nâzım Hikmet thinks, was not even writing in Turkish. As I pointed out above, he says that Mehmet Emin is far from the Turkish language peasants, workers, merchants, and intellectuals

42 *Resimli Ay* [Illustrated Monthly] was one of the first popular and literary magazines in the wake of the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Founded by the progressive couple Zekeriya (1890–1980) and Sabiha (1895–1968) Sertels, holding degrees from Columbia University, the magazine is best known as an organ for radicalizing the Turkish revolution by providing a space for socialist, feminist, and avant-garde artists and writers such as Nâzım Hikmet, Sabahattin Ali, Suat Derviş. In fact, initially, it was intended to be a popular American magazine and yet the involvement of these writers and political activists, especially Nâzım Hikmet's young idol-breaking energy, turned it into a leading oppositional space for intellectuals during the late 1920s. It was, for this reason, censored and shut down by the Kemalist regime from time to time. On this, see Mehmet Fatih Uslu, "*Resimli Ay* Magazine (1929–1931): The Emergence of an Oppositional Focus Between Socialism and Avant-Gardism," MA Thesis, (Boğaziçi University, 2004). During his lifetime, Nâzım and Sertels had stayed as close friends and together in the opposition. Just before Nâzım fled the country, Sertels had to leave in September 1950 due to the intensification of the political pressure on them. For a recent comprehensive account of Sertels' lives in Turkish, see Korhan Atay, Serteller (İstanbul: İletişim, 2021).

43 Ertürk, too, points to this similarity. See *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey*, 165.

speak. Similarly, he was refusing to call Abdülhak Hamit genius on the grounds that his works are so unclean or impure that they could hardly be translated into and understood in another language than Ottoman—here he appears to use "Ottoman," instead of Turkish, rather intentionally to draw attention to the outdated nature of Hamit's writing and language, bound to disappear just like the Ottoman regime.[44]

This was one of the breaking points or rather another moment to forget for Nâzım. For, by attacking these figures, he was indirectly, and sometimes directly,[45] attacking and breaking with Yahya Kemal (Beyatlı) (1884–1958), his first mentor who helped him write his first poems while he was a student in the naval school. Yahya Kemal was also one of the most influential and respected poets of the time, Nâzım definitely admired him in his youth, but at the same he was a lover of Nâzım's mother, the painter Celile Hanım (1880–1956), in the late 1910s. According to Orhan Koçak's account, one of the driving urges behind Nâzım's young and iconoclastic experiments with Turkish language and poetry results

44 "Putları Yıkıyoruz No. 1: Apdülhak Hâmit" *Resimli Ay (*June 1929) and "Putları Yıkıyoruz No. 2: Mehmet Emin Beyfendi" *Resimli* Ay (July 1929). See also Zafer Toprak, "Nâzım Hikmet'in 'Putları Yıkıyoruz' Kampanyası ve Yeni Edebiyat" *Toplumsal Tarih* 261 (2015): 34–42. However, while writing as Orhan Selim in *Akşam*, seemingly Nâzım, all of a sudden, turned into a fan of Abdülhak Hamit and kissed his hand, upon meeting him and learning his secularism/atheism embodied in his words: "meçhule tapma, insana tap" (don't worship the unbeknown, worship the human) at the very end of 1934. Also, he was noting that those who were in the past attacking Hamit was not in fact attacking himself but breaking the "idol" made out of him, which prevented the real Hamit from being seen and understood. See his writings: "Öptüğüm El" (December 17, 1934), "83 Yaşında Delikanlı" (December 20, 1934) "Bu Böylece Biline!.." (December 31, 1984). All from *Yazılar 1* (İstanbul: YKY, 2018), 75, 76, 80.

45 For instance, in "Why Did Banerjee Kill Himself?," Roy Dranat, who is trying to make Banerjee give up the fight and convince him to enjoy the life as it is, suggests Banerjee to take a walk and modernize (*asrîleştir*) Yahya Kemal. Then, he cites a verse supposedly written by Yahya Kemal: "'we take refuge in such a comfortable corner / we are happily in love with this tumult of the age'" ('Şöyle rahat bir küşeye sığındık da biz / Dehrin bu hayı huyuna meclubu handeyiz...'). *Bütün Şiirleri*, 302. In another quadrant, called "Comparison" (Mukayese) (1947), Nâzım compares Yahya Kemal, fat and in pain, to the English romantic poet Lord Byron who joined the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire and died of a disease he had during the war in 1824. *Bütün Şiirleri*, 882.

from his desire to forget Yahya Kemal and his anxiety to be somehow influenced by him. Thus, implicitly drawing upon Harold Bloom's notion of "anxiety of influence," which already implies the Freudian family drama, Koçak claims, Nâzım, the emerging writer, was strongly shaking himself to get rid of any influence Yahya Kemal, the literary precursor, might have exerted on himself, to liberate himself from this father figure that looms large both in the unconscious of Nâzım and that of the Ottoman-Turkish literature. On this, Koçak gives an account of the Oedipal anxieties of influence.[46] He suggests that Nâzım's radical and constant experiments with poetry during the 1920s and early 1930s was an expression of his desire to forget, to break up with the tradition, to get rid of any influence of the kind of figure like Yahya Kemal, and eventually to overcome it.[47] However, Koçak suggests, after this work of forgetting, after perhaps Nâzım has established himself and found his own voice, he starts to remember without realizing doing so. Koçak suggests that mellowing and settling in Nâzım's poetics during 1940s that brought his poems a certain calmness, ease, and rhythm are a result of this unconscious remembering, or perhaps overcoming of the anxiety of being influenced and, for this reason, of being open to the influences.[48]

Nâzım's avant-garde experiments running against the existing Ottoman-Turkish literary tradition on the one hand, were in line with the state's purification and vernacularization of the Turkish language, but, on the other hand, were equally unsettling, as the figures he run against were either deployed and favored by the state and bureaucracy or already among the state elites or the officially supported institutions like

46 Orhan Koçak, "Yahya Kemal'le Mayakovski Arasından Nâzım Hikmet" in *Kopuk Zincir: Modern Şiir Üzerine Denemeler* (İstanbul: Metis, 2012 [2000]), 9–23.

47 For another account underscoring Nâzım's iconoclasm, see Talât S. Halman, "Nâzim Hikmet: Lyricist as Iconoclast" *Books Abroad* 43, no. 1. (1969): 59–64.

48 This is similar to what I argue in the Chapter 5. My argument there in brief tries to point out that Nâzım has a late style where he starts to remember what he forcefully forgot while working to inscribe and assert himself as a whole and the single author of his life. However, unlike Koçak, I do not argue that this is legible only in a certain period of Nâzım's work but rather consists of scattered moments of remembrance intensified toward the end of his life.

the Turkish Hearths. Also, there were others changing their opinions about Nâzım due to the idols he broke and the communist politics most of the time he did not step away from. In fact, he went into one of the most severe conflicts with Yakup Kadri who celebrated the *835 Lines* as the first lines of modern Turkish literature, Ahmet Haşim who also praised for its multivocality but noted that it plays the same song all the time initially, and Hamdullah Suphi. In his response to Yakup Kadri, this time he was writing by using his name, Nâzım published an extremely furious poem in *Resimli Ay* where he addresses Yakup Kadri as "black jack of spades" (*kara maça bey*)[49] and says, "you put your soul on sale like a black slave (*zenci bir esir*) / you turned your skull into a whore's room / stealing the khaki jacketed dead's money / from their pockets / you bought yourself / the air of / the Swiss mountains."[50] As in his many accounts, here, too, he says that the intellectuals and the state elites like Yakup Kadri are the beneficiaries of the Turkish war of independence, despite the fact that the war is fought and won by the poor. He does this by referring to Yakup Kadri's earlier visit to the Switzerland to be treated for his tuberculosis. We are already familiar with this much, but there are also racist comments. As it turns out, born in Cairo, Yakup Kadri was a dark-skinned and hairy man. The blue-eyed and white Nâzım attacks him on this fact by charging him of putting his self on sale like a black slave. I do not think that we can skip this as just an angry incident. It is more than that. In a 1933 letter-poem he wrote to his wife, he says, "if a miserable gipsy's / hairy hand that looks like a black spider / is going to put the execution rope / around my neck, / they will look at Nâzım / in vain / to see the fear in my blue eyes."[51] The contrast between the dark, hairy gipsy and the

49 "Maça" in Turkish slang also refers to "ass." It is not fully clear to me in what sense Nâzım used the phrase here.

50 The Turkish version reads: "Behey! / Kara maça bey / behey, yüzü kara. / Ruhunu zenci bir esir gibi çıkardın pazara, / bir orospu odası yaptın kafa tasını… / Hâki ceketli ölülerin ceplerinden / çalarak parasını / satın aldın kendine / İsviçre dağlarının havasını." "Cevap" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 116.

51 The Turkish: "zavallı bir çingenenin / kıllı, siyah bir örümceğe benzeyen eli / geçirecekse eğer /ipi boğazıma /mavi gözlerimde korkuyu görmek için / boşuna bakacaklar / Nâzıma!" "Karıma Mektup" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 420.

blue-eyed Nâzım, and the opposing values they represent, is apparent here as well. This is not far away from the upcoming racial projects of the Turkish state to prove that the Turkish race is white. Perhaps Nâzım served the exemplary civilized white man that the state wanted to create.

However, as I have been insisting, there is no one single Nâzım: racist Nâzım or anti-racist one. The above comments are definitely racist and not free from or unrelated to the racial projects of the state. Yet he was also anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-imperialist, when almost no one could dare to be one. During the 1930s, when the fascism and racism was on the rise all over Europe and the world, and while Nazi ideology has had ardent supporters in Turkey, he was one of the rare figures to write against them. In 1935, upon Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), he wrote "Letters to Taranta-Babu" where the fascist and imperial expansion of Italy is subject to critique and condemnation. This kind of critique was in fact evident in, and preceded by, his previous works, namely, "Why Did Banerjee Kill Himself?" (1932) and "La Gioconda and Si-Ya-U" (1929).[52] In 1936, he also published the pamphlet "German Fascism and Racism" against the prevalence and free circulation of fascist and racist ideas as well as the aforementioned serialized novel *Blood Doesn't Speak* where he openly criticized the importance of biological/blood ties and implicitly defended the idea that human beings are malleable, they are shaped by all the other factors such as upbringing, family, education. And during the 1940s and 1950s, he wrote against anti-black racism. He was friends with Paul Robeson. In his poem 1949 "Fear," dedicated to Robeson, he writes: "they are afraid of hope Robeson... / they are afraid, my eagle-winged canary / they are afraid of our songs Robeson."[53] As early as 1925, way before the scholarly criticisms of Orientalism and/or postcolonialism, he wrote in "Piyer Loti" against the Western "friends" of the Orient, who finds mystery, harem, faith, submission, and authenticity in the East, and told them that the Orient is where the slaves die from

52 For a fine account of these anti-colonial writings in Turkish, see Öykü Terzioğlu, *Nâzım Hikmet ve Sömürgecilik Karşıtlığının Poetikası* (Ankara: Phoenix, 2009).

53 "Korku" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 936. Translation mine.

hunger.[54] However, this multiplicity of Nâzım is most of the time is overlooked or explained away to build the narrative of "Nâzım Hikmet."

To sum up, in this chapter, I have attempted to show that Nâzım was present in his works and never hesitated to intervene even when he embarked upon the project of Balzacian realism to portray the complex reality with all its contradictions. He strives to appear as a unified self with a narrative form where every past event can be shaped and reshaped in such a way as to be included and to fulfill a function in the "grand" narrative of "Nâzım Hikmet," which is the form on which the unifying Nâzım Hikmet scholarship and politics operate.

In the first part, I have tried to sketch out Nâzım's encounters and confrontations with Mustafa Kemal, "the man" of the Turkish Republic. It is one of the most fundamental driving forces in the unifying Nâzım Hikmet scholarship and politics to be able to determine, conclude whether Mustafa Kemal (and/or Kemalism) and Nâzım were allies or foes. I have tried to demonstrate, beyond this friend-foe binary, that the main theme from this confrontation that permeates Nâzım's poetics is Mustafa Kemal's and his regime holding Nâzım away from the fight in different ways. Coupled with his social background as intellectual from a wealth family background, this "being unable to join the fight" as a mourning/bewailing for it, as a condition that is changeable and was in fact changed by the author, and as a fantasy of its reversal marked his writings. This is what I have mainly dealt with in the second section. In its first form as a

54 See "Piyer Loti" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 34–37. Finally, recently, a work that considers this poem of Nâzım as a critique of orientalism "from the East" has been published recently: Zeynep Çelik, *Europe Knows Nothing About the Orient: A Critical Discourse From the East, 1872–1932* (İstanbul: Koç University Press, 2021), 197–220. Çelik brings together passages from different Ottoman-Turkish writers in the late eighteenth and early twentieth century, which criticized the Western perceptions of the East as its authentic, mystic, irrational other. (This might be considered a part of the shift of emphasis in the humanities that critique and theory can also be found, or emerge, in "the Orient" or the Global South.) I must also note Sabri Ateş who uses the relevant part of Nâzım's "Piyer Loti" as an epigraph, on a par with other critiques of Orientalism, in his essay where he discusses Orientalisms inside the Orient and Kurds as the Orient of Turkey. See "Oryantalizm ve Bizim 'Doğumuz'" *Doğudan* 1, no.1 (2007): 1–20.

mourning/bewailing, it takes the form of a shameful confession of being taken away from and being unable to join the struggle. In the second form, Nâzım, in retrospect, attempts to show how he changed his class and joined the class struggle. And in the third, perhaps to reiterate the second, it appears as a fantasy, as an ideal Nâzım, "the poet in prison" who is read by the class and help them get conscious of their situation, and as a selfless, disciplined communist ready to give whatever the fight demands from him, even his eyes. In fact, all three, including the confessional form, are put to work to construct this ideal unified self: a truly and purely secular, materialist, communist, nationalist "Nâzım Hikmet," the sole author of, and authority over, his life and self.

By his presence in his writings, he speaks and responds to the different gazes that supposedly watch him. This is the way in which he establishes his authority as a whole. In a sense, he objectifies himself, "inside," in the sense of a unified object, in the presence of an "outside," to be able to turn himself into a subject. That is, the outsider gazes solidify "Nâzım Hikmet" while Nâzım objectifies them by placing them in definite viewpoints. It is in this way that he produces himself, writes, inscribes, and asserts his life and self. Yet it is exactly at this point that this inscription turns into an impossibility, because to be able to construct himself in this way, he always needs the others. Put differently, it is the others that make "Nâzım Hikmet" (im)possible, as there is no clear-cut separation between inside and outside. Lacking this realization, the discourse of Nâzım Hikmet, drawing upon a Marxist-functionalist narrative which turns everything into a historical necessity *post hoc*, seems to keep producing and reproducing this distinction.

In the next chapter, I will focus on a figuration of the gaze in his poem "The Eyeballs of the Hungry." First, I will try to show how the paradoxical nature of the gaze appears in one of the earliest poems of Nâzım Hikmet, where the hungry is an object of gaze, a spectacle, as well as wants to be under the gaze to be able to be seen and cared. But this brings a certain dread on the gaze. Second, I want to show that writing is not just representation, a means of communication, mere signs, but rather has a materiality in Nâzım. Third, I want to connect this to Nâzım's hunger

strike which is shaped by the gazes, the international and national audience, outside and inside, how the writing of hunger precedes the act of hunger strike.

3

Writing of Hunger: Poetics of the Hungry Gaze

if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee.

– Fredrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Fed up with everyone and everything.

– Stanley Yortis, a British prisoner and his reason of refusing food in 1920

To speak, and above all to write, is to fast.

– Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*

Coming from the previous chapter, I want to continue with another favorite origin story associated with Nâzım Hikmet: the biographical stories as to how the poem "The Eyeballs of the Hungry" (Açların Gözbebekleri) was composed. It is the poem from where "Nâzım" emerges, originates as intrinsically humanist poet who had been deeply touched, shaken, by the scenes of poverty and starvation he had to witness

throughout his journeys to Anatolia, Batum, and finally Moscow. According to the story, Nâzım wrote the poem upon having witnessed the mass poverty in Anatolia and the Russian famine of early 1920 as well as having seen a film called "The Hungry" in his early days in the Soviets.[1] This is one of the events that led to the emergence of Nâzım and his so-called humanist/romantic communism, an ideal where no one ever starves. Once again following from the previous chapter, I want to suggest that another importance of the poem, another origin story, stems from the fact that it is the first poem that Nâzım wrote in free verse and, perhaps more importantly, the first Turkish poem written in free verse. It is, or has been, thus, also an origin of the modern Turkish literature. Furthermore, it is for the first time that *content* determined and gained a logical superiority over *form*, because, as it is often told, Nâzım could not manage to fit the poem to given, traditional forms of poetry. He was not able to write it using syllabic meter, for instance. As Nâzım himself often indicated, the true poetry is the one whose form is shaped, forced, by its content, as the form for the sake of form can only produce shallow, pointless poems—as Atatürk once suggested to him to write "poems with a point" rather the ones formed for the sake of form just to seem modern. It is also told that he was influenced by the ladderlike form of a poem he saw in a Russian daily written by Mayakovsky when he had not yet learned Russian. This is how modern Turkish literature was born, originated, by and through Nâzım Hikmet, overcoming the traditional forms by giving the priority to the content.[2]

1 See, for instance, Halman, "Nâzim Hikmet: Lyricist as Iconoclast," 59–60; Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 72–73. It can be found in almost any other account on Nâzım.

2 For instance, criticizing Oktay Rifat, Nâzım suggests that he could not figure out that the poetry must move from content to form, not vice versa. Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 203. Undated. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 359. Memet Fuat, too, states that the most genuine form is the one that is determined, forced, by the content, which is manifest in Nâzım's poetics at its best. Others rely on form for the sake of form. That is why modern Turkish poetry starts with Nâzım Hikmet. And curiously, he points to a similarity between the base/superstructure and the content/form: those who appeal to form

In this chapter, I read this poem along with Knut Hamsun's early novel *Sult* (Hunger, 1890) and Franz Kafka's 1922 short story "Ein Hungerkünstler" (A Hunger Artist).[3] My goal is to demonstrate that in all these seemingly disparate figures and works of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, hunger figures as something to be looked at as well as something having a gaze of its own. Another point is to make a gesture toward the idea that Nâzım's writing of hunger equipped and surrounded with gazes preceded his act of hunger strike, which is a form of resistance itself shaped by the visibilities. Reading together these disparate works and writers is part of the larger methodology of the thesis which I name as "reading against the grain." What brings Hamsun, Kafka, and Nâzım Hikmet, and a novel, a short story, and a poem, together is the idea of reading them against each other's grain to be able to go beyond what is immediately given and what is considered clearly distinct.

Hamsun and Kafka, Hunger and "A Hunger Artist," have been in many cases taken and thought together, so there is not much novelty in putting them together.[4] The novelty, if any, stems from putting Nâzım Hikmet, and his poem, together with them. As I have argued so far, Nâzım's literary oeuvre is overwhelmingly shaped by his experiments in realism, or realist poetry, and an urge to represent the injustices and inequalities the working masses were subject to as well as the wicked parts of the

---

to satisfy their personal rebels only stay on the level of superstructure, but the real change starts on the level of the base, that is, the content. See Memet Fuat, "Serbest Nazım" in *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar* (İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [1976]), 84–86.

3 For *Hunger*, I use the second edition of George Egerton's English translation, first published in 1899. The second edition was published in 1921, right after Hamsun won the Nobel prize and come to a prominence. For "Hunger Artist," I rely on Joyce Crick's English translation as part of the book *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, edited by Ritchie Robertson. For "The Eyeballs of the Hungry", I refer to the Turkish edition of Nâzım's collected poems published by YKY. English translations of the poem is mine.

4 Even the works that do not specifically focus on *Hunger* and "A Hunger Artist" but Hamsun and Kafka in general underlines the similarity between each other and the influence the former had on the latter. For instance, Walter Benjamin, too, mentions Hamsun in his reflections on Kafka. See "Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 127.

social reality. And Hamsun and Kafka are usually considered to be the "great writers" of modernist European literature, which is, to oversimplify, characterized by an attention to the individual consciousness, imagination, brokenness, and equal inattentiveness to the social issues. Put this way, there is no way in which these two "camps" can be brought and read together. They are "clearly distinct": Nâzım is a romantic/humanist communist who wanted to represent the social reality as a whole and advance the causes of the downtrodden in his works, while Hamsun and Kafka are enigmatic and "timeless" figures of modernism, they had nothing to represent and speak for, and there is no historical context their works emerge from, speak for or against.[5] Thus, the gesture, in this chapter, is to read them against such a clear distinction; that is, to contaminate Nâzım with modernism and timelessness, and Hamsun and Kafka with historical representations and the social.

In his article "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative," Thomas Laqueur points out that the humanitarianism that emerged in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is based on what he calls the humanitarian narrative. This narrative speaks about the details of the bodies of the suffering people and describes them in ways that are very realistic, medical, and even sometimes shocking, tries to arouse a sympathy and compassion for them, and eventually expects this to translate into actions aiming to remedy these sufferings.[6] In the origin story concerning how Nâzım wrote the poem and in the poem itself, too, the signs of such a narrative can be found. It is written in free verse, because, as widely discussed, it was the only way for Nâzım to describe the suffering of the hungry in such a way that their hunger can be "felt" or "seen" by the audience. It is not surprising that Laqueur sees a convergence between the

5 See, for instance, William C. Rubinstein, "Franz Kafka: A Hunger Artist" *Monatshefte* 44, no.1 (1952): 13–19. According to him, Kafka's story would have nothing with hunger strike and its emergence at the end of the nineteenth century. It is rather a story about how hopeless and far from being understood the artist is by others—one of the cliché interpretations of the story.

6 Thomas Laqueur, "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative" in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 176–204.

emergence of this humanitarian narrative and the realist and naturalist novel form where the bodies, details, pains, and ordinary people would be described and represented in depth. Given that Nâzım's poetics tend to be prosaic and vice versa from the beginning, according to the origin story above, Nâzım's poem can be seen as a humanitarian narrative in this sense, which I believe is also related to the emergence of biopolitics, where human life has come to be central object and objective of politics and placed under the guarantee of the newly emerging modern state invested in the biological and corporeal details of the population and the individual. It is then no surprising that this narrative is thus closely interested in hunger and starvation as bodily processes. However, as I will try to show below, Nâzım's writing might not be seen merely as a tool of representation, consisting of immaterial signs.

James Vernon suggests that it is a relatively recent phenomenon that hunger has turned into a social question. For long it has been seen as a fault or failure of the hungry, or "inevitable part of the human condition... sent as divine retribution for man's sinful ways"[7] or as, for example Marx argued, what spurs the lazy to continue to work. With eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, it has come to constitute a social problem, a problem that needs to be taken care of, or at least paid attention to, by the modern state, because it has begun to be thought as the evil caused by the economic system. This development is closely linked to the emergence of the modern state as well as "the social" and the social question: "phenomena such as poverty, crime, and disease, which were seen as neither economic nor political in origin or character, but which were thought to similarly transcend the control of individuals, while shaping their lives."[8] As I discuss in the Chapter 1, these phenomena have been subject to the observation, statistical analysis, regulation, and normalization of the state. That is to say, the emergence of the social and that of the modern biopolitical state as the defender of society, concerned

7 Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern* History (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 10.

8 Vernon, *Hunger*, 13. This is what I have already discussed in detail through Foucault. For the emergence of the social and it connections with the emergence of the "nation," see Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended"*, 34.

with health, well-being, and robustness of the population have conditioned each other. Thus, hunger has turned into a question that is necessarily related to the state as well as into a spectacle that attracts a public attention and that puts the regulative capacities of the state to work.

Within this framework, hunger and the hungry has come to be both something that looks and something that needs to be looked at and paid attention to. It has been registered with and through gazes. As a problem, the hungry threateningly gazes at the society and the state, as a creature that is dangerous, liminal, and vulnerable at once. It is also subject of the gaze, because society needs to pay attention to the human suffering and the state is supposed to take care of society, protect it from the dangers and wrongs of the socioeconomic system. This means that hunger as the social question can only exist when the audience to look at it is assumed to exist and the hungry is supposed to throw a demanding gaze at the audience, society, and the state. It is in this sense that the fundamental point of this chapter is to illustrate that in all three aforementioned works, hunger figures as, with, and through gazes. It is not surprising that the publication of these works coincide with the emergence of the hunger strikes in different places of the world at the end of nineteenth century, cited in the Chapter 1.

§ 3.1 Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*

Hamsun's novel[9] depicts an anonymous writer who often finds himself suffering from, experiencing, and experimenting with, hunger due to his unemployment and, also for this reason, he lives either in the streets of Christiana, today's Oslo, or in the occasional places he finds in the city,

9 Note that Hamsun rejected to call *Hunger* a novel in the first place on the grounds that what was known as novel, as pointed by Laqueur as well, was in fact the realist novel that has definite beginning and end as well as objects (or reality) to represent. Timothy Wientzen, "The Aesthetics of Hunger: Knut Hamsun, Modernism, and Starvation's Global Frame" *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 48, no. 2 (2015): 208.

especially when he earns some money from his writings.[10] The events in the novel take place circa 1890, the present of the novel. However, to live up to the social mores of his time and society, where ostensibly the effects of the Victorian era are intact or somehow persist, he could not ask for help. Whenever he comes across a friend or an acquittance, he pretends that he is doing well and everything works fine. He does not want to be "seen" hungry, poor, and indigent, but at the same time, as he wanders the streets, he seems hope to be "seen" by someone who is kind, perhaps truly Victorian,[11] enough to understand the situation and help him without offending him. In a scene where the protagonist's hunger becomes almost unbearable, he describes the situation as follows:

> It was three o'clock. Hunger began to plague me in downright earnest. I felt faint, and now and again I had to retch furtively. I swung round by the Dampkökken [Steam cooking kitchen and famous cheap eating-house],[12] read the bill of fare, and shrugged my shoulders in a way to attract attention, as if corned beef or salt pork was not meet food for me. After that I went towards the railway station.[13]

10 Even though at the present of the novel Oslo was only a peripheral city in Europe, it was still in the process of becoming a central/capital(ist) city of Norway and of being incorporated into the world economy. The protagonist's strolling in the streets of Norway is both a pioneer of the flâneur of the modernist literature and a trans-regional experience of the capitalist city and migration. The distinction between the rural and the city is underlined by Hamsun. In a scene, the blind man understands that the protagonist is a stranger to the city. Timothy Wientzen, for example, aptly discusses that *Hunger* depicts "a history of the economic development that endowed the starving body with transnational significance... making macroeconomic structures legible." "The Aesthetics of Hunger: Knut Hamsun, Modernism, and Starvation's Global Frame" *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 48, no2 (2015): 209. Also, as Peter Sjølyst-Jackson points out, being a migrant to the city, the writer (and Hamsun) seems to be always on the edge of the city, about to relocate and dislocate. *Troubling Legacies: Migration, Modernism, and Fascism in the Case of Knut Hamsun* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 21.

11 It seems not to be a coincidence that one of Hamsun's later novels was named *Victoria*, which was also his daughter's name.

12 The translator's note.

13 Hamsun, *Hunger*, trans. George Egerton (London: Duckworth, 1921), 66.

As an "honest soul," an "upright sort of person,"[14] the protagonist almost always (or when hunger is not yet to start to kill him) tries to present himself as a proud, self-contained individual, a conceited man who does not want to seem weak or indigent in any way. This has a strong hold on him, especially when he makes some money out of his writings accepted for publication. In a particular scene, having read the editor's letter of acceptance of his manuscript, he starts to see the room he stays as a wreck, something that a person of his caliber, a great and accomplished writer like himself, by no means deserve: "On no account would I keep it. I had held my peace, and endured and lived far too long in such a den."[15] The room that he could do everything not to lose a moment ago turns into a den all of a sudden.

Taking his blanket, he abandons the room. Then, the blanket becomes a trouble: "in the meantime, the green blanket was a trouble to me. Neither could I well make myself conspicuous by carrying such a thing right under people's eyes. What would anyone think of me?" (51) This is the manifestation of the mood in the text: the (im)possibility of being seen, catching attention, being under eyes, making the self conspicuous. He wants to evade the gaze everywhere, because he thinks that his poverty, unemployment, and hunger is his own fault (or perhaps God's fault, a curse, a divine injustice). As an "upright" man, he cannot stand the idea of being seen as needing help from others, but at the same time, he desperately needs them, needs to be seen by them. Hamsun seemingly plays with the idea of the autonomous individual constructed vis-à-vis others based on a problematic of visibility.

To provide another example, in one of the early scenes of the book, a beggar wants money from the protagonist while wandering the streets. Even though he is hungry himself and has no money, to be able to help the man, he tells him to wait and sells his vest, and brings the money to the man. After getting the money, the man starts gazing at him, in particular he examines the knees of the writer's trousers. And upon seeing how

14 *Hunger*, 50.

15 *Hunger*, 49.

miserable he is, he wants to give the money back. Needless to say, the protagonist finds this very rude, feels uncomfortable by this examination and doubt that he is looking poor and gets angry at man: "My good fellow, you have adopted a most unpleasant habit of staring at a man's knees when he gives you a shilling."[16] He is constantly disturbed by the gazes, always tries to escaped from an "inquiring look," feels eyes on his back. But, in order not to die, he needs to be paid attention, helped, observed. It is this molestation of the individual authority by hunger that Hamsun plays with in the text.

According to Arnold Weinstein, the writer seeks "a mad kind of autonomy," a freedom from hunger, from biological bounds of the human. It is not surprising that at certain points he willingly embraces the hunger. The performance of hunger, done for the passersby, for the other gazes, is embraced by the individual as a kind of liberation from the bounds of natural, physiological laws. Thus, the madness, light-headedness brought about by hunger is celebrated by the hungry as way of freedom from the "clutches" of the body.[17] However, this seems to reduce *Hunger* to a book where the psychological effects of hunger is narrated based on individual experience, which gives it (and hunger) an ahistorical and asocial quality. However, as Weinstein himself notes very well, there is a great nod, a gesture, toward the sociohistorical formation of the work, manifest in the protagonist's dealings with the date "1848."

One of Hamsun's parables in the text seems to draw attention to the absurdity of the protagonist's thinking of hunger either as his own fault or as a divine curse. The absurdity, the mad desire for hunger, points to that hunger is a social problem and the "upright man" vis-à-vis others is an impossibility. Therefore, madness does not only result from hunger but also it results in hunger. Even in a Marxist sense, it is the ideology, the delusion that keeps us hungry, or differently, it is the ideology that prevents us from seeing hunger as social problem but leads us to seek its

16 *Hunger*, 11.

17 Arnold Weinstein, "Hamsun's Hunger and Writing" in *Northern Arts: The Breakthrough of Scandinavian Literature and Art, From Ibsen to Bergman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 218.

causes in the individual mistakes. In a scene, waiting for inspiration to write his article, the protagonist, "involuntarily" and "mechanically" wrote the date 1848 in every corner of his paper: "I am sitting on the seat, and I write, scores of times, 1848. I write this date criss-cross, in all possible fashions, and wait until a workable idea shall occur to me."[18] After a while he sends in a job application for an accountant position and mistakenly dated the application 1848, which later becomes the reason why he loses the job he could otherwise easily have as told by the employer. What does the failure of 1848 cost him? What are the results of writing and re-writing 1848? Would he still be hungry had the 1848 upheavals in Europe succeeded?

"Was there now any reason whatever that absolutely every one of one's earnest and most persevering efforts should fail? Why, too, had I written 1848? In what way did that infernal date concern me?"[19] That infernal date concerns the protagonist as a missed possibility which might have brought an end to hunger and starvation in the society. In the text, it is a nod to the hunger as a social problem. That is why we keep following the hungry seeking the gaze by the very act of evading the gaze. It is a problem that concerns the society. But at the same time, it is a problem that scares the society. That is why the writer wanders the streets of the city always under the eyes and control of the police. He is constantly watched and followed by the police. When he wakes up on a bench, the first thing he sees the "the flash of shining buttons" of a police uniform.[20] The buttons seem to gaze at him everywhere. When they are the buttons of Ylajali, the lady he fell in "mad" love,[21] "even the very buttons on her

18 *Hunger*, 41.

19 *Hunger*, 71.

20 *Hunger*, 80.

21 In the beginning of the novel, while walking in the street, he came across two ladies. He accidentally touches one of them while passing by and turn around to apologize. Upon seeing her lovely face, he is taken by her and seized with a desire to annoy her: "I overtake her again, pass her by, turn quickly round, and meet her face-to-face in order to observe her well. I stand and gaze into her eyes, and hit, on the spur of the moment, on a name which I have never heard before—a name with a gliding, nervous sound, Ylajali!" *Hunger*, 15–16.

gown seem to stare at me, like a row of frightened eyes."[22] Thus, the hungry is frightening, a security issue that requires a policework. Also, it perhaps gets more frightening, on different occasions, the protagonist mocks the police officers that want to keep him under control. For example, in an encounter, he asks a police what time it is. It is ten o'clock, says police. The writer objects immediately: no, it's two.[23] This perplexes the police, puzzles the security work.[24]

The hungry is scary, while evading the gaze, it threatens the gaze. It is seen to the gaze as a threat, a security issue, and perhaps a future version of itself. It is looking hungry. For this very reason, it needs to be monitored and put under control. Uncontrolled hunger terrorizes the society. But, as we know already, society must be defended. As a work of literary modernism, in the Adornian sense, *Hunger* is then against the society by embracing hunger. It wants to put hunger under eyes as a social problem and at the same time against eyes as a threat to them, a threat society cannot lock down or "stomach" easily. But, on the other hand, hunger is social problem only insofar it is seen. It needs to be paid attention to and taken care of. It disturbs the eye. It utilizes the visibility of hunger as a social issue, an issue of security, but threatens the society by hungering. I will come back to this, but now want to turn to Kafka's story.

22 *Hunger*, 17.

23 *Hunger*, 93.

24 On another occasion, relatedly, the protagonist claims that what he sees is not potatoes but cabbages. As Weinstein argues, he wants the reality to be different or rather he wants to be free from reality. But at the same time he still plays with the reality, as the potato, the fundamental part of the workers' daily meal, is almost the single most important symbol of the social movements and protests for the hungry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is also inscribed into the reimagining of 1848, especially in the materialist imaginations that inform the social movements and the perception of the hungry. On this, see Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, "The Potato in the Materialist Imagination" in *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 110–135.

§ 3.2 Franz Kafka's "Hungerkünstler"

In Kafka's story, the protagonist is a hunger artist who performs starvation in a cage for forty days. Unlike Hamsun's protagonist describing his own experiences himself, what happens to Kafka's hunger artist is told by the third person narrator. As I noted in the Introduction of the thesis, the story begins with the present condition of hunger artists: there is a historical decrease in the interest in the hunger artists, they are no more paid attention as they used to before. And then the narrator seems to go on to describe what it was like in the past and then turns back to the present situation of our particular hunger artist who is at the moment the greatest hunger artist of all times.

In good old days, the hunger artists would starve in a cage periodically for forty days at most. This is the upper limit, both because the artist's life comes under risk beyond it and because the attention span of the spectators usually tend to decline after the fortieth day of the "show." Therefore, it is deemed the best way to limit the performance to around forty days by the "authorities," especially the hunger artist's impresario/manager. However, the protagonist always thinks that he could go much farther than that but could not manage to convince others that he could do so.

The performances are held in a little cage. The audience gathers around the cage every day to watch the artist. There are even subscription-holders who watch the starving artist through the end of his performance. There are also observers, "permanent watchmen elected by the public."[25] They are placed there to make sure that the artist does not cheat by secretly eating anything and these watchmen most of the time are selected from butchers. The narrator tells us that there are two kinds of watchmen. The first type is those who intentionally avert their gaze from the artist often to create the impression and suspicion that the artist secretly eats. On the contrary, the second type is those who closely monitor the artist. Our hunger artist prefers this second type of watchmen

25 "A Hunger Artist," 57.

"who sat close to the bars, who were not satisfied with the dim lightning in the hall at night, but shone a light on him with the electric pocket-torches the impresario put at their disposal."[26]

This desire for light is present in Hamsun's *Hunger* as well. Escaping the gazes, Hamsun's protagonist is afraid of darkness, of not being seen. The lightlessness for him means almost death. Out at night, police wants him to go home or a hotel. He makes up some excuses as to why he cannot go to those places. "Well then, you must go to the guardhouse and report yourself as homeless!" says the police. He is locked in a cell in the guardhouse. "'The gas will burn for ten minutes,' remarked the policeman at the door. 'And then does it go out?' 'Then it goes out!'" Then it goes and the hungry protagonist starts to feel darkness. "The darkness had taken possession of my thoughts and left me not a moment in peace. Supposing I were myself to be absorbed in darkness—made one with it?"[27] He tries to sleep but could not manage to drop off the thoughts the dark brings to him, afraid of being dissolved in darkness:

> The same darkness brooded over me; the same unfathomable black eternity which my thoughts strove against and could not penetrate. I find the most despairing efforts to find a word black enough to characterise this darkness; a word so horribly black that it would darken my lips if I named it. Lord! how dark it was! and I am carried back in thought to the sea and the dark monsters that lies in wait for me. They would draw me to them, and clutch me tightly and bear me away by land and sea, through dark realms that no soul has seen. I feel myself on board, drawn through waters, hovering in clouds, sinking—sinking.[28]

Both Kafka's hunger artist and Hamsun's hungry writer is deeply scared by the darkness, in the face of being absolved in the darkness. It is not coincidence, then, that the hunger artist is "happiest of all when morning came,"[29] when light is fully there, and dies when people does not look at,

26 "A Hunger Artist," 58.

27 *Hunger*, 99.

28 *Hunger,* 104.

29 "A Hunger Artist," 58.

pay attention to, him anymore. This is equivalent to the hungry writer who, despite constantly escaping the gaze, needs the light to be seen by the gazes, as it is the condition of possibility for him to continue living and being a security threat. Thus, to go back to my argument concerning hunger strike in the Chapter 1, hunger strike is possible only when there is light, spectators to watch the shrinking bodies of the strikers.

To continue with Kafka's story, despite all the suspicions as to his cheating, the hunger artist knows that suspicions are inextricable part of his performance, implying that they are in fact what sustains his performance, what creates curiosity and suspense about it. He says that the only true spectator of this spectacle is himself. But our hunger artist is never satisfied with this performance, because he can go much longer but is not let do so. It is in fact this dissatisfaction that make him lose much more weight than he would otherwise lose in a forty-days-starvation period. But the impresario uses the immense loss of weight as an evidence of the fact that he could not fast more than forty days. But hunger artist thinks that it is the result of the forty-days-limit, not the reason of it.

When the fortieth day of the fast comes, fans fill the salon, military band plays marches, doctors enter the cage ornated with the flowers to examine the body of the artist. And then the results are declared through the megaphones for the audience in the salon. Then, two happy ladies comes to take the hunger artist to the food table. But the artist is too obstinate to move from his place, as he believes it is too early to end the fast. Why these people could not keep their attention beyond forty days? "Why did this mob, who claimed to admire him so much, have so little patience with him; if he could endure hungering still further, why wouldn't they endure it?"[30] At this moment, thinking of food makes him nauseous and tired. And then the impresario comes and holds up this miracle, this "pitiful martyr."[31] He moves delicately, "with the exaggerated care to make them [the audience] to believe what a fragile he had to do with here."[32] Then, he hands him over to the ladies who are terrified and disgusted by

30 "A Hunger Artist," 59.

31 "A Hunger Artist," 60.

32 "A Hunger Artist," 60.

the emaciated body of the artist. They do everything to escape the touch of the hunger artist. Upon seeing the ladies turn "deadly pale," a servant comes and grabs the body. Then, the artist starts having his food almost by force. (Perhaps Kafka's gesture toward force feeding). While this is happening, the impresario works hard to divert the audience's attention away from the dissatisfied mode and eerie look of the hunger artist and the band supports this playing the fanfares even more loudly. Then, the audience starts to leave the salon. Among all these happenings, the only dissatisfied being is the hunger artist.

His life, the narrator tells, is in fact incredibly sad, no matter how glorious it seems from outside. The moment somebody tells him that the reason of this sadness is his starvation, he loses his auto-control, gets mad, tries to attack the person who uttered these words beyond the barns of the cage. The impresario, by way of apology, tells the audience that these are the effects of long-term hunger: hunger maddens. Yes, hunger maddens, but also madness of the society brings about hunger. Hunger artist in a sense restages this social madness. He refuses food, because he is fed up with the order of society who cannot endure even watching hunger beyond forty days. For perhaps hunger artist becomes a security issue after a while. It becomes unbearable, unendurable after certain point. But hunger artist calls for the audience to be looked at, just as Hamsun's writer never wants to stay in dark, he everywhere searches for the light. However terrifying he is, he wants to be seen by the society. He wants to look at them in the eye, terrify them. As we will see below, this is what Nâzım tries to achieve in his poem. He wants the readers to feel the "mad eyeballs" of the hunger on themselves, as the eyeballs reflected in the materiality of writing.

For Kafka's hunger artist now comes the decay. Due to the deep-rooted reasons nobody cares to discover, the hunger artist observes the number of audiences gradually declining, and they start to search for the joy somewhere else. People no more pay attention to the hunger artists. All they (the hunger artist and the impresario) do to prevent this decline do not work. It is too late. This results in the hunger artist leaving the impresario and starting work in a circus. He demands from the circus to

place his tent next to the animal cages rather than focal points of the circus, because he thinks that those who come to visit the animal cages would see him as well. His tent is furnished with billboards informing the audience about the hunger artist and his performance. His idea was that the visitors of the animal cages will necessarily pass by his cage and at least some of them will stop and pay attention. However, whenever someone stops to watch the artist, the people behind them impatiently pushes them forward to be able to reach the animal cages. So, he "found himself deserted by the pleasure-seeking masses, who preferred to go in their droves to gaze at other spectacles."[33]

As the time passes, even the workers in the circus forget about the artist. As his body shrinks, he becomes illegible under the straw in the cage. The billboards are no more renewed, nor the cage is cleaned. Even the billboard informing the audience and showing the number of fasting days have not been touched by anybody since a while. The people assigned this job got tired and sick of doing it every day. In the meantime, the hunger artist was achieving what he has always dreamed of: he was fasting indefinitely, enduring hunger beyond the limits. As he always claimed, he can easily fast beyond the fortieth day. But no one, even himself, was not aware of what he achieved. This is the source of his sadness. "If once in a while some idle stroller stopped and made fun of the old figures and spoke of fraud, it was in this sense the most stupid lie it was possible for indifference and inborn malice to invent, for it was not the hunger artist who cheated—he laboured honestly—but the world cheated him of his reward."[34] It was the world, the society that cheated the hungry, not the other way around.

In the finale comes the resolution. Someday a supervisor in the circus notices the empty cage while doing an inspection. He wonders why this perfect cage that could be put to good use is empty. Nobody knows why it is empty until one of the old employers remember the hunger artist. They poke at the straw with poles and find the hunger artist below

33 "A Hunger Artist," 61.

34 "A Hunger Artist," 64.

them. "What, are you still hungering?" the supervisor asks the hunger artist. "When are you going to stop?" "Forgive me everyone," whispers the hunger artist. The supervisor, with a gesture that means that the hunger artist lost his mind due to starvation, said "Of course, we forgive you." "I always wanted you to admire my hungering," says the hunger artist. Supervisor assures him that they do admire it. "But," the artist said, "you shouldn't admire it." "Well, then we won't admire it. Why shouldn't we admire it?" And the hunger artist said that because he cannot do otherwise, he has to hunger. "Because I could not find the food that was to my taste. If I had found it, believe me, I would not have caused a stir, and would have eaten my fill, like you and everybody else."[35] His last words.

The supervisor orders the employer to empty and clear up the cage. "Let's have some order!" Then, they put a young panther into the cage. The narrator describes the robust body of the animal in opposition to the crippled, abnormal, and perhaps abominable body of the hunger artist as follows:

> It was a recovery that even the bluntest of senses could feel, to see this wild beast leaping around in the cage that had been desolate for so long. It lacked for nothing. The keepers did not have to reflect for long about bringing it the sustenance that was to its taste; it didn't even seem to miss its freedom; this noble body, equipped nearly to bursting with all the necessaries, seemed to carry its freedom around with it too; it seemed to have it hidden somewhere in its teeth; and its joy of life came with such fiery breath from its jaws that it wasn't easy for the spectators to resist it. But they held out, surged around the cage, and wouldn't stir from the spot.[36]

What a truly living being, especially when contrasted to the emaciated, ill-functioning body of the hunger artists and hunger strikers. This is the body and shape people would want to be in and enjoy seeing around rather than threatening body and dreadful madness of the hungry. Curiously, in Hamsun's *Hunger*, there is a similar passage concerning

35 "A Hunger Artist," 64–65.

36 "A Hunger Artist," 65.

the wild animal bodies. Yet, unlike Kafka's narrator, the writer thinks that the caged animals do miss their freedom and, thus, not enjoyable objects to see:

> On the whole it did not interest me in the least to see animals in cages. These animals know that one is standing staring at them; they feel hundreds of inquisitive looks upon them; are conscious of them. No; I would prefer to see animals that didn't know one observed them; shy creatures that nestle in their lair, and lie with sluggish green eyes, and lick their claws, and muse, eh? [....] It was only animals in their native wildness, in their fearfulness and peculiar savagery that possessed a charm. The soundless, stealthy tread in the dread darkness of night, the hidden monsters of the woods; the shrieks of a bird flying past; the wind, the smell of blood, the rumblings in space; in short, the regaining Spirit in the kingdom of savage creatures brooding over savagery.... The poetry of the Unknown![37]

The savage creatures brooding over savagery are what one wants to see.[38] That is why the idea of going to a menagerie with Ylajali deeply

37 *Hunger*, 181–182.

38 With the knowledge that Hamsun had later become a Nazi collaborator, one would certainly find in this passage the seeds of that act such as the thrill before the savagery, power of the "native" wilderness, and the desire for "the submission to the stream of incomprehensible and incalculable forces." This is how, for example, Leo Löwenthal chose to read Hamsun's oeuvre. Peter Sjølyst-Jackson, *Troubling Legacies*, 9–13. This form of critique of aestheticization is quite common. For example, based on the case of Leni Riefenstahl, the director of a Nazi propaganda film, Susan Sonntag argues that the signs of fascism in Riefenstahl's entire works might be found, especially her aestheticization of wilderness, bodily forces, submission to the nature, etc. That is, Sonntag says, fascism fascinates with an aestheticization of politics, by making even the most wicked politics look good, even appealing. "Fascinating Fascism" in *Under the Sign of the Saturn* (London: Penguin, 2009), 73–105. The problem here is that with the foreknowledge of a writer's or artist's Nazi affiliations, you can read all of his or her works as always carrying an underlying fascist aesthetics. There is nothing easier than this, as in the reverse case of Nâzım Hikmet always reproduced as an unmistakable singular figure. Another problem with this kind of critique is the idea that modernist (and postmodernist) works always tend to aestheticize issues like hunger by depriving its materiality and sociality. But they too readily assume that writing has no materiality, it is just a communicative,

scares the writer, because going into "that blaze of light, with the crowd of people"[39] will definitely reveal how miserable he is, especially when he is compared to the robust animals, even when those animals miss their freedom in their cages and are not in their best form. Yet still, once again, neither the hungry writer nor the hunger artist would want not to be seen, because they live as long as they are looked at. And as they are looked at, it gets harder and harder to look at them.

§ 3.3 Nâzım Hikmet's "The Eyeballs of the Hungry"

This is what Nâzım's "Eyeballs of the Hungry," too, tells us. In the poem, he manipulates the typeface, uses italics, numbers, and arranges the lines in a ladderlike form. It begins as follows:

Not a few
not five or ten
thirty million
hungry
ours![40]

The hungry is ours, because they are part of the society and the result of the inequal and unjust organization of the society. Needless to say, it registers the hunger as a social problem.

The hungry lined up!
Neither man, nor woman, nor boy, nor girl
skinny stunted
with crooked branches
crooked trees!

representative means. As I try to show here, writing may not just be a representative means but a materiality as much as hunger is.

39 *Hunger*, 181.

40 All references to the poem: "Açların Gözbebekleri," in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 40–43. Translations mine.

Neither man, nor woman, nor boy, nor girl
the hungry lined up!
These are!
the walking parts
of those arid
soils![41]

They are nothing but hungry. They have no identity other than being hungry. They are crooked trees and the walking parts of the parched lands. Interestingly, the hungry is not outside the nature but rather its walking parts. The words are bolded and shocking, and the description gets even more "realistic." They are almost dead, "nothing but skin," the only living part of them is their eyes which are maddened. They "overfunction" due to the hunger.

mad eyeballs,
eyeballs!

They have such a pain,
They,
look in such a way!....

Our pain is great!
great!
great!
....
30,000.00
mad eyeballs!
mad eyeballs![42]

41 "Açların Gözbebekleri," 40–41.
42 "Açların Gözbebekleri," 41–42.

The only living part of the hunger is their eyes and those eyes are maddened. Their pain is great. And this makes them look madly, terrifyingly. The mad eyeballs (*deli gözbebekler*i) turned toward the society; the hunger and the hungry has a gaze. That gaze is turned toward the society and the state as the defender of the social, but their gaze also constitutes a security issue. They are looked at but after a while they turn into mad eyeballs. They need to be looked at carefully. They are and want to be always under light, as in Kafka and Hamsun's works. They are the only legible parts of the arid lands. For this reason, Nâzım wants the reader not to avert their gaze from them and in the meantime, typeface gets bigger and bigger:

Oh
man
who listens to me
with a mouth wide open!
The man who
calls me
behind my back
"insane"
for pouring my heart out!

If, like others,
you are
a
goose too,
if you can't
grasp the meaning of my words
Just look at my eyes;
They are:
Mad eyeballs
eyeballs!

If the words are not enough, look at the eyes of the hungry to see their pain and to see the social causes of their great pain. In fact, he does not say look at the eyes of the hungry but look at *my* eyes. Of course, at this point of the poem, the narrator speaks through the mouth of the hungry, but still the eyes of the hungry and of the writer/poet are in fact the eyes of writing.

The technical aspects of the poem here is important. By arranging the stanzas and lines in a ladder form, manipulating the typeface, bolding and italicizing words, and ordering the size of the words in a gradually increasing way, Nâzım wants the mad eyeballs of the hunger to be felt in the eyes of the reader as if they were the eyes of the hunger directed at them. Here I would like to go back to a passage from Hamsun's *Hunger*, wherein the protagonist is afraid of dissolving in darkness in the cell. There he works despairingly "to find a word black enough to characterise this darkness; a word so horribly black that it would darken my lips if I named it."[43] In an earlier part, he says, "I weigh my writing in my mind, and value it, at a loose guess, for five shillings on the spot."[44] In both Hamsun and Nâzım, writing and words seem to have a materiality. It is not just what represents or means for communication of the suffering of hungry or the psychological effects of starvation on the hunger.[45] Rather, it is as concrete as the mad eyeballs of the hungry or the thing that darken one's lips and have weight. As Nâzım wants the delirious eyeballs of the hunger to be felt in the eyes of the reader, it is not surprising that

43 *Hunger*, 104.

44 *Hunger*, 47.

45 To a similar effect, Arnold Weinstein says "*Hunger* is stunningly prescient text because of its achievements in this area. It is a book about the anarchic power of words, the demiurgic power of words to engender their own World, a World that has not truck with trivial and vulgar details such as 'proof' or 'verisimilitude' or even 'reality.'" Therefore, "can it be surprising that a good piece of writing is something you could weigh in your hands, to determine its value?" "Hamsun's Hunger and Writing," 261, 263.

Hamsun's hungry writer argues for the materiality of words. Remember also that the writer's struggle is to write while hungering.[46]

One last commonality between Hamsun, Kafka, and Nâzım is that in their works the hungry constantly watches out, monitors the other, the audience, the society. This requires a careful work: while continuous attempting to evade the gazes that embarrasses, inquiring looks of the others that crushes one, the hungry works hard to be seen in the correct way. The hungry writer acts weirdly, the hunger artist wants his cage to be put alongside the animal cages to catch the attention of passersby, Nâzım's hungry writing tries to madden the eyes of the reader. However, these are not ahistorical writings, and it is not coincidence that all of these works are written during the same period. The hungry's ability to see and be looked at comes from the fact that hunger has become a social problem. Then, it is no surprise that all these works historically aligns with the emergence of the hunger strike that restages the hunger as a social problem and derives legibility from it.

In conclusion, I have argued that there is a similarity among the ways hunger figures in Knut Hamsun's Hunger, Franz Kafka's "A Hunger Artist," and Nâzım Hikmet's "Eyeballs of the Hungry," all written at the end of nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when the hunger strike as a political protest has emerged. They configure hunger as a matter of visibility. It emerges as a social problem that needs to be paid attention by the society and the state as the defense apparatus of the society. This equips hunger with a gaze of its own. It calls for other gazes. But at the same time it poses a threat to the society, both because it represents what they may become and because it is against the society. All of the works I discuss here position hunger in a way that it is both a problem of the society and security problem against the society. They are looked

46 Deleuze and Guattari say "writing is to fast." Kafka died from hunger, as he was unable to eat due to his illness. In a similar vein, Maud Ellmann, in her book on "hunger artists," argues that the longer hunger lasts, the greater the volume of writing becomes. This is especially significant for the bodies of prison literature emerged at times of hunger strikes. See her *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, and Imprisonment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

at but become unendurable to see, to face with, from a certain point on. The society cannot stomach the hunger after a certain moment. That is why the city shines bright at night while Hamsun's protagonist leaves the city: "out in the fjord I dragged myself up once wet with fever and exhaustion, and gazed landwards, and bade farewell for the present to the town—to Christiana, where the windows gleamed so brightly in all the homes."[47] The maddened and maddening hungry leaves the city and then the city starts to gleam. Before it was darker in order to make the hungry illegible or less disturbing. That is partially why "non-state" bodies are always already disposed to press the state from outside to cure the hunger in society. For it is a threat, a great security issue. Otherwise, the state is seen as deviating from the biopolitical norms that define itself through its capacity to make live, to defend society. This is the very ground on which hunger strike as a biopolitical protest is formulated. It is in this regard that in the next chapter I will discuss that Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike is preceded by his writing of hunger through gazes. Yet this does not mean a mere passage from ideas to action, but rather, as I have tried to show thus far, that writing of hunger is as material as the hunger itself.

47 *Hunger*, 310.

4

Writing off Hunger: Nâzım Hikmet's Hunger Strike, or, "L'Affaire Nâzım"

> *when truth is buried underground, it grows and it builds up so much force that the day it explodes it blasts everything with it. We shall see whether we have been setting ourselves up for the most resounding of disasters, yet to come.*
>
> – Émile Zola, *I Accuse!*

In this chapter, I give a detailed historical account of Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike while underscoring its two aspects in particular, that are related to the theoretical groundwork I have undertaken in the previous chapters. The first aspect is concerned with the idea that hunger strike is possible only when there are outside gazes that pay attention to the strikers and watch the state for its potential violation of human life. In Nâzım's hunger strike, this is evident from the international audience he addresses in the poem he wrote on the fifth day of his fasting. He brings the outside *in*, both the international gaze and the negative public opinion of Turkish intellectuals and people weary of the single-party regime despite the post-WWII atmosphere of relative political and economic liberalization. The second aspect I want to underline is connected with how this

event is shaped around images and imaginations of the Dreyfus Affair and the figure of the public intellectual emerged in this affair in the nineteenth-century Europe with Émile Zola's monumental intervention and involvement in the affair. Even long before Nâzım's hunger strike, the Dreyfus events and Émile Zola's role in them had been lurking in the background in the actions and minds of both Nâzım himself and others around him. This has turned the event into a "Turkish Dreyfus affair," or "L'affaire Nâzım," which are even taken so far as to be a sign of Turkey's "real" democratization, as the state is said to have put under public pressure for the first time in the history of the republic.

§ 4.1 The Concentration of Fascism in Late 1930s

In the second half of the 1930s, all over the world nationalist, fascist, authoritarian regimes and ideologies were on the rise. In 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany. Since the early years of 1920, Mussolini was advancing the fascism in Italy affecting all others abroad. In 1935, he invaded Ethiopia. In late 1936, Franco came to power in Spain and, like Hitler and Mussolini, embarked on creating a party-state apparatus to collect all forces in his own hands. This "family resemblance" could not be expected not to affect Turkey where the authoritarian Kemalist regime were already dominating politics singlehandedly ever since the 1925 Law on the Maintenance of Order that followed the Sheikh Said Rebellion. The blood ties and the supremacy of the white race were the fundamental discourse that determined the practices of these states. During the 1930s, the Turkish state were at pains to show to the West that Turks are essential member of the fully civilized white race through Turkish History Thesis (*Türk Tarih Tezi*), Sun Language Theory (*Güneş Dil Teorisi*), and the state-funded anthropological studies that largely relied on the phrenology, craniometry, and physiognomy. Also, during 1937 and 1938, the Turkish air forces were dropping bombs on Dersim, and evacuate villages in the region, to suppress another Alevi-Kurdish rebellion.

Another family resemblance among these regimes was their strong anti-communist politics that repressed any kind of communist or

leftist activities as a "foreign" element. In Turkey, perhaps the greatest representative of this politics was Fevzi Çakmak (1876–1950), the second and last Field Marshall (*Mareşal*) after Atatürk and the president expected to succeed him. At the time, a fan of the German militaristic discipline and perhaps a supporter of collaboration with the Third Reich, he was the Chief of General Staff and had no tolerance for the existence of left-wing ideas and sentiments in the army. Similarly, racist and Turanist sections of the Turkish right-wing politics were finding themselves an enormous space to operate. All in all, all kinds of nationalist, racist, fascist, authoritarian elements had somehow consolidated their presence in politics of Turkey and abroad when we came to late 1930s.

Undoubtedly, as perhaps the most famous "face" of communism in Turkey (even though he was earlier dismissed from TKP), Nâzım was feeling this growing fascist pressure on himself, as he was already arrested, put in custody, deterred several times, his books were tried and banned. Perhaps to avoid further pressure and to prove that he is not a "foreign element" or "traitor" as thought by the right, he added a postscript to the *Epic of Seikh Bedreddin* in 1937, one year after the work was published, in which he tried to reformulate the rebel of Sheikh Bedreddin as a matter of "national pride." (Still, he formulated the concept of "national pride" by drawing upon Lenin's "On the National Pride of the Great Russians" (1914)).[1] Also, no more a member of the Communist Party, Nâzım was avoiding the open political conflicts and confrontations.[2] He was writing newspaper columns under different pseudonyms, most notably Orhan Selim,[3] and working for the İpek Film Studios in İstanbul as a script writer and editor. It is at this period that he was invited (or somehow brought) to Ankara by the minister of interior affairs and the general

1 The original title of the postscript: *Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı'na Zeyl: Milli Gurur*. As Nergis Ertürk notes, this might also be a response to the internationalist left accusing him of "regressive nationalism," presenting himself as siding with Lenin on the matter. *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey*, 175.

2 Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 186.

3 Though it is not hardly true that he avoided political comments and that people did not know the pseudonyms under which he was writing.

director of security, and was suggested (or rather "blackmailed") by them to write an epic of the national struggle emerged in the Turkish War of Independence. It is highly likely that this is how the idea of *Kuvây-i Milliye* was conceived for the first time.[4] Yet despite these precautions and measures, however reluctant, Nâzım had taken to avoid the attention, his arrest in January 1938 could not be avoided.

§ 4.2 The Military Trials

In January 1938, Nâzım was arrested. Soon it became evident that the charges made against him is based on his interactions with a few military academy students and on his books found among those students' belongings. He was accused of inciting the cadets and the army to rebel and of the communist propaganda. Nâzım met some of these students. In October 1937, Ömer Deniz visited Nâzım in the film studio he was working at and told him that he and his friends were enormously influenced by his works. Having suspected that he was an agent, he called the police directorate and told them to stop sending spies to him. However, three months later, Ömer Deniz visited Nâzım's home once more and tried to ask some questions about the Marxist literature he and his friends from the school had being reading. Pissed off, Nâzım rebuffed to answer and wanted him to leave his house. The rumors of this contact with Nâzım started to circulate in the military academy, but apparently these did not stay on the level of the cadets. The source of the rumors was also Nâzım's own call to the police directorate. Making the call, he drew attention to both himself and the military students who were just left-leaning and affected by Nâzım's works. In January 1938, all these students who were connected with Nâzım and was reading/possessing his works were arrested, put in custody on the campus of their school in Ankara, and questioned about their relationship with Nâzım. On January 17, 1938, Nâzım, too, were arrested and his house were searched tediously. After the initial investigation, he, too, was transferred to Ankara and there he learned that he was

4 Erkan Irmak, *Kayıp Destan'ın İzinde*, 43–50.

being charged according to the Military Penal Code No. 94 for inciting the cadets to rebel against their superiors.

In March 1938, the trials began in the military court in Ankara Military Academy where the students were held. Outside the court, there were terrifying anti-communist slogans. There were three main charges against Nâzım: first, inciting more than one officer to rebel together against their superiors; second, provocation for doing harm to the military equipment and/or staff; third, inciting mass mobilization for riot. One of the fundamental evidences was a document penned by Ömer Deniz and other students called "A Good Lifestyle in an Organized Way" in which the students set rules for themselves such as getting up early, working out, making friends, etc. Although the initial evidence was not sufficient to lock Nâzım up, the initial testimony Ömer Deniz gave in custody was troubling. According to the testimony, Nâzım told him that the real danger in Turkey comes from fascism and suggested him and his friends to teach the students first the republic and then communism when they make their way into the army. Ömer Deniz later changed this testimony, but the judges still considered it valid. At the end of March, the judges had come to a conclusion. Nâzım was sentenced to a fifteen-year imprisonment for inciting army and cadets to rebel. Some of the military school students including Ömer Deniz received similar sentences and others lost their right to work in the army. In a letter he wrote to his wife upon hearing the decision, he was saying that "I was sentenced to fifteen years with a decision that is similar to the one given in the Dreyfus affair."[5] In his memoirs of the trial, A. Kadir (originally İbrahim Abdülkadir Meriçboyu, 1917–1985), who was one of the military students tried and convicted with Nâzım, and later became a poet influenced and highly praised by Nâzım himself, cited that when the trial had newly begun, Nâzım was hoping to be released soon due to the lack of serious evidence. However, A. Kadir then told him that the situation does not look good, they will be locked up. Surprised, Nâzım asked why. "Think about the Dreyfus trial,"

5 Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 191–192.

said A. Kadir.[6] This suggests that as early as 1938, the Dreyfus affair was shaping the imaginings of Nâzım's situation as a model. Thus, perhaps here it is in order to briefly remind the Dreyfus affair.

§ 4.3 The Dreyfus Affair

The series of events known as the Dreyfus Affair lasted more than ten years and deeply divided the Third French Republic throughout. Everything began in the late 1894 when the Captain Alfred Dreyfus, of Jewish descent, was sentenced to life imprisonment for treason, namely, for communicating French military secrets to German Embassy in Paris. He was imprisoned in the French penal colony of Cayenne, commonly known as the "Devil's Island." Two years later, through an investigation undertaken by the army officer Georges Picquart serving as the head of counter-intelligence, a counterevidence came to light, which identified the real culprit as another officer named Ferdinand Esterhazy. However, high-ranking military officials suppressed the new evidence and immediately found Estherhazy unguilty. On top of it, additional charges are laid out against Dreyfus based on some made-up documents. In all these, antisemitism played an important role, as antisemitic sentiments and ideologies were on the rise all over Europe and the Jews were often seen as "betrayers" and hostile groups within different nation-states. On January 13, 1898, the influential French writer Émile Zola published an open letter titled "J'Accuse...!" in the newspaper *L'Aurore*. Having convinced to the unlawful imprisonment of Dreyfus, Zola addressed the French president and accused the government of antisemitism and injustice by pointing out judicial errors and lack of evidence in the trials leading up to the imprisonment of Dreyfus. Printed on the front page of the newspaper, the letter immediately caused a public stir in France and abroad. Zola, too, was judged and found guilty immediately. He fled the country for England to avoid the imprisonment. In 1899, both Zola and Dreyfus returned to France. Dreyfus was tried anew and sentenced to a ten-year

6 A. Kadir, *1938 Harp Okulu Olayı ve Nâzım Hikmet* (İstanbul: Can, 2009 [1966]), 61.

imprisonment, but he was pardoned and released from the prison. In 1906, Dreyfus was finally exonerated and reinstated as a major in the army. He served during the WWI and ended his army service as a lieutenant-colonel.

Ever since, the Affair has become a symbol of resistance to the injustice instigated by the governments and marked the beginning of an era in which the intellectual as a political figure has come to a prominence. Zola's participation in the events and the popularity of his letter inspired and shaped the imaginations of many other struggles, resistances, and protests, especially the ones included the active participation of intellectuals. "I accuse" turned out to be the slogan of protests. It is in this sense that even long before the start of hunger strike and surrounding protests the Dreyfus Affair was shaping the imagination of Nâzım Hikmet and the military trials leading up to his imprisonment. It is not surprising, then, that biographical accounts often narrated the event as the Turkish "L'Affaire" and sometimes even an affair that almost brings democracy to Turkey. I will return to this further below.

§ 4.4 The Navy Trial

In May 1938, Nâzım's sentence given by the Military Academy Trial was approved. And in June, he was transferred to İstanbul and included in another court that were going on for the same set of charges.[7] At a time when the power struggle in Ankara were heated in favor of the right-wing politics, Fevzi Çakmak was determined to hold a radical operation to eradicate all communist activities in the country, but particularly in the army. In June 1938, Çakmak sent a note to all the army members, in which he suggested that the communist propaganda is organized through a corrosion of the officers' respect for their superiors and, thus, diminishment of the discipline in the army. This served as the reason for the expansion of anti-communist purge in the army and, more importantly, led to the

7 Turgay Fişekçi, "Nâzım Hikmet'i Açlık Grevine Götüren Yol" in *Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi*, ed. Yeşim Bilge Bengü (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 7.

additions of the law articles no. 141 and no. 142 that turned communist propaganda into a crime, after Nâzım was sentenced partly based on the communist propaganda.[8] On August 10, 1938, the Navy Trial began in a department of the ship named "Erkin" turned into a court. On August 17, 1938, he wrote the letter to Atatürk, cited in the Chapter 2, that asks for a pardon saying that he did not and would not incite the army to rebel. However, it is highly likely that the letter never reached Atatürk. As a result of this trial, on August 29, 1938, Nâzım was sentenced to an additional thirteen-years-and-four-months imprisonment. Combined with the Military Academy Trial, Nâzım was sentenced to twenty-eight years and four months in total. On November 10, 1938, Atatürk passed away and İsmet İnönü succeeded him as president. And, on December 28, 1938, this sentence, too, was approved by the military court.

In the meantime, the process of judgments and trials were being criticized by some lawyers and intellectuals, especially in terms of judging the civilians on military courts for the communist propaganda. On May 3, 1939, the Military Penal Code no. 148 was arranged in such a way as to furnish the military courts with the right to try civilians when suspected of the communist propaganda in the army. These changes were retrospectively applied to the Military Academy and Navy trials in July 1939, almost one year after the decision was approved. Fevzi Çakmak were seeing these purges against the known communists as a lesson and warning for others, showing what could happen to the communists who would want to capture the country by sneaking into its military.[9] This is how Nâzım's prison years began.

8 Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 195–196.

9 Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 203. In the parliament, the prime minister Refik Saydam gave a talk concerning this necessary change of the article. See Mehmet Ali Sebük, "Büyük Adlî hatâ" *Vatan*, December 20, 1949; "Askeri Adalet diye bir hukuk şubesi yoktur" *Vatan*, January 3, 1950.

§ 4.5 The World War II and After

Right after his jailing, the Second World War broke out in September 1939. Things were getting worse. In January 1940, Law on the National Protection (*Milli Korunma Kanunu*) was passed in order to strengthen the army with the very limited resources available and in the middle of the crisis caused by the war while Turkey was insisting on the politics of neutrality.[10] In the meantime, Denmark, France, Norway, Belgium, and Holland fell to the Germans. In May 1941, with the German-Italian invasion of Athens and Salonica, the war came to the Turkish borders. Nâzım and other communists began to be worried about their security in the face of Germany's invasion of, or potential alliance with, Turkey. In June 1941, the German army attacked the USSR. They were now in the Black Sea. And İsmet İnönü was being pressured to join the war alongside the Axis powers, especially the Germans, as the nationalist-fascist groups were feeling even more strengthened. In 1942, Varlık Vergisi (the wealth tax) was passed, a tax mostly applied to the non-Muslim citizens of Turkey under the pretext of raising money for the defense of the country in the event of eventual entry into the World War II. However, in the same year, following the Pearl Harbor attack of Japan, the United States entered the war, which was a game changing move. Around 1944, the defeat of fascism had come to the fore. Finally, the German army was on the retreat. With this development, Turkey and the world started to move into a period of political and economic liberalization. It was not a mere coincidence that in 1944, the Turanist, racist, nationalist groups of the far right were eliminated through varying sentences their leaders received[11] and a little earlier Fevzi Çakmak retired from the position of the Chief of the General Staff, a

10 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017 [1993]), 207.

11 İlker Aytürk, "Nationalism and Islam in Cold War Turkey, 1944–69" *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 5 (2014): 695. This development was also celebrated by Nâzım Hikmet, as he underlined the fact that the president of the country officially declared them as the traitors to the nation, which was not the case for Nâzım and other leftists. Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 126. Undated. *Kemal Tahir's Mahpusaneden Mektuplar* (İstanbul: YKY, 2019), 267–268.

position he had held since the beginning of 1920s. This period also marked the beginning of the post-1945 alliance between Turkey and the US. In February 1945, Turkey declared war on the Axis powers after breaking off all the relations with Germany in late 1944. And in April 1945, Turkey participated in the San Francisco Conference and signed the UN Charter. With this, the Turkish state had now committed itself to the (rhetoric of) democracy and freedom. And the Turkish government felt compelled to move closer to the West, especially the US, under these circumstances.[12]

Toward the end of the World War II, in March 1945, the Soviet Union noted to Turkey of its intention to abrogate the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression Pact between the countries, and, right after the war, laid claims to the northeastern provinces of Turkey (Kars and Ardahan) that were Russian territories between 1878 and 1918 as well as the control of the Straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles through an introduction of a base to be managed by the two countries together.[13] This was partly a gesture of punishment on Turkey's insistent neutral stance during the war—which seems to be why neither the British nor the Americans opposed this request of the USSR initially in the Potsdam conference.[14] Still, this had put Turkey and the US in close contact, as a potential Soviet control on the Black Sea, Marmara, and Aegean regions was posing a serious threat to the US interests in the Middle East. Thus, the Americans encouraged the Turkish government to take a firm line and refuse the demands of the USSR. This is how Turkey began to get closer to the West and especially the United State with the start of the Cold War, which also brought the rhetoric of democracy with itself.

As early as 1944, the president İsmet İnönü revealed their plans to have a more democratic and/or pluralistic regime. Right after this, starting with the passage of the Land Distribution Law unanimously, conflicts and factions started to become apparent within the CHP. Celal Bayar,

12 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 210.

13 Aylin Güney, "An Anatomy of the Transformation of the US-Turkish Alliance: From 'Cold War' to 'War on Iraq'" *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 3 (2005): 341–342.

14 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 210.

Adnan Menderes, Refik Koraltan, and Fuad Köprülü submitted a memorandum demanding the full establishment of democracy, which has come to be known as the *Dörtlü Takrir* (Memorandum of the Four). At the same time, newspapers like Ahmet Emin Yalman's liberal *Vatan* and Sertels' left-oriented *Tan* were giving a space for the Four to voice their demands and opposition. That these attempts were not initially suppressed by the government was a sign that things started to change, but soon the four were ousted from the party. Yet, later this opposition of the four was able to turn into a formation of the party. In the early days of 1946, the Democrat Party (DP) was officially registered, which was developed under the discretion of İnönü. The first multi-party elections of the Republican period was held in July 1946, despite the fact that the electoral procedures were seriously flawed with no secrecy of voting, partial supervisions, and fully closed counting process. As a result, the DP won only sixty-two of the 465 seats in the parliament.[15]

Also, it would not be true to say that the DP, at least initially, was a full-fledged opposition to the Kemalist single-party regime and ideology. Rather, it subscribed to the fundamentals of Kemalism, most notably nationalism and secularism. Furthermore, DP's promise of economic and political liberalization, as its main difference from the CHP, were also taken over by the governing party starting in 1947.[16] Thus, one of DP's maneuvers to generate a negative public opinion on CHP was accusing it of being tolerant or soft on communism—which was supported by the fact that the party eliminated the Turkist far right. However, soon, CHP

15 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 214.

16 The relative economic prosperity and growth during this period was partly a result of the Truman Doctrine through which the US planned to help "free nations" defend themselves from the foreign pressure (of the Soviets) and the militant minorities inside their borders, as well as the Marshall Plan through which the US planned to provide a considerable amount of financial support to the European countries to rebuild their economies. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 211. Economic plan of 1947 was also an important development loosening the ties of the centrally planned economy. As a result of this, the Turkish economy saw an explosive growth between 1945 and 1950. Zürcher, 217–218. In the meantime, after the establishment of NATO in 1949, Turkey was looking for the ways to join the alliance, but could only join in 1952 after the DP came to power. Zürcher, 237.

started to direct the same accusations of communism at the DP. As this rally of anti-communism was heated, in 1948 and 1949, there started another wave of purge against the left and communism, and the Turanist/Turkist groups of the far right, who were eliminated at the end of the War, were rehabilitated.[17]

There was a confusion brought about by the American-encouraged Cold War democratization and liberalization. On the one hand, there were relative liberalization of the divergent political voices and oppositions, but, on the other hand, there were a strong tendency to suppress left-wing and/or communist politics, which would not disturb the relations with the US at all in the context of the Cold War. However, in the case of a renowned poet and intellectual like Nâzım Hikmet supported by other intellectuals worldwide, this confusion became even more complicated. He was a communist intellectual and yet held in high regard by the human rights organizations, international democratic and engaged intellectuals, and cultural institutions. In such an environment, Nâzım's case was becoming more and more apparent, and as complicated, in the second half of 1940s.

Sometime in the first half of 1946, Nâzım Hikmet wrote a petition to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) concerning the judicial error and unlawfulness he had exposed to and demanded the correction of this error, that is, his release from the prison.[18] At the same time, now in a two-party regime where each wanted to gain an upper-hand over the other, a rumor about an upcoming general amnesty started to circulate among the prisoners and around the parliament.[19] In 1947 fall, while the

17 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 215.

18 Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 173. Undated. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar* (İstanbul: YKY, 2019), 326. Though this was not the first he sent to the parliament. Since almost the beginning of his imprisonment, he either made attempts to connect with the state authorities mainly through his uncle Ali Fuat (Cebesoy), "Dayı Paşa," as he referred to in his letters, or wrote independent petitions for a pardon.

19 Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 185 and no. 198. Both undated. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 340, 355.

rumors was still continuing, Nâzım's petition was put in process.[20] In late 1948, as the discussions about a potential general amnesty became and it was expected to apply to the sentences of political prisoners like Nâzım, the Minister of Justice Fuat Sirmen visited him in prison. According to Nâzım's account, the minister dropped by in his room, too, and they had chatted for about twenty minutes. Nâzım described him the unlawfulness and injustice he was exposed to and complained about the difficult living conditions in prisons, and the minister listened to him carefully.[21]

§ 4.6 Toward the Hunger Strike

On August 19, 1949, the thirty-fourth death anniversary of the revolutionary Ottoman-Turkish poet Tevfik Fikret (1876–1915), in the newspaper *Vatan*, Ahmet Emin Yalman[22] wrote a column titled "Fikret and Nâzım

20 Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 204. September 26, 1947. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 361.

21 Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 221. October 6, 1948. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar,* 382.

22 Ahmet Emin Yalman (1888–1972) alone was one of the key figures throughout the campaigns for Nâzım's freedom. Born into a Sabbatean family in Ottoman Salonica, attended a German high school in İstanbul, Ahmet Emin received a PhD in journalism from Columbia University in 1914 with a dissertation titled *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by Its Press*, an interesting and detailed historical account of the press from the Tanzimat period to the present of writing. In the conclusion of the dissertation, Yalman ends that soon a new order will be established in place of the empire and this new order will be predominantly based on a free economy and capitalist regime. This will bring stability and respect for Turkey, which are much more powerful resources than all kinds of armament against any foreign invasion. Also, scattered all around the dissertation, Yalman places a considerable emphasis on nationalism, Turkishness, and Turkish language. This liberal nationalism of his was seemingly transferred into the outlook of his newspaper *Vatan*, served as one of the main publications arguing for Nâzım's freedom. The dissertation has been very recently translated into Turkish. See *Modern Türkiye'nin Gelişim Sürecinde Basın, 1831–1913*, trans. Birgen Keşoğlu, ed. Serkan Yazıcı, Fikrettin Yavuz (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2018).

Hikmet"[23] following his meetings with Nâzım in Bursa prison. In the essay, after a prelude where he bemoaned the revolutionary men like Tevfik Fikret, who paid high prices to serve their people, falling into oblivion, he opens up a discussion about Nâzım Hikmet who, according to Yalman, was experiencing the same fate, as a way of rejoicing Fikret's soul. He suggests that the responsibility for Nâzım's unlawful imprisonment was not only on those who arranged the two military trials, or on the single-party regime, or on the judiciary administration that kept their silence despite the open injustice committed, but also on each and every one of the twenty-million Turkish citizens. Under this responsibility, he said, he is now speaking against the injustice and hopes that his voice will find an echo.

He then went on to prove that if there is any communism in Nâzım, it could not be traced back to an external (or foreign) resource but rather to his love of this country and its people, and his inability to stand their suffering. Speaking on behalf of his newspaper, *Vatan*, he says, as a newspaper that sees the Moscow-type-communism as "the most hypocritical movement in history," he notes that they take it as their task to fight against it, and believe in the free enterprise and market economy as conditions of progress and freedom, we declare that Nâzım's imprisonment could not be a measure against the threat of communism. Rather, it could only be a service to communism. Yalman suggested that Nâzım's unlawful imprisonment and the indifference to his situation were being used as an efficacious weapon against us all over the world by the international organizations. He then briefly touches on why the sentence Nâzım received is unjust: first, when he was arrested, he was working in a film studio with no interest in politics like an ordinary citizen; second, that he was just contacted by an excited military student without his approval and that his books were found in this student's belongings could not be considered to be a serious evidence of offense in any kind of judicial and

23 Ahmet Emin Yalman, "Fikret ve Nâzım Hikmet" *Vatan*. August 19, 1949. In the essay, Yalman notes in passing that he attempted to publish an essay of this kind two times before, but they were not published, as he could not overcome the hesitation and intimidation widely attached to the name of Nâzım Hikmet in Turkey.

penal system; and third, even if proven guilty of the offense, his sentence far exceeds the sentences given in similar cases.

In the last part of the essay, he returns to his work of rendering Nâzım Hikmet a true nationalist. He cites Nâzım saying that he is connected to this country through language, the strongest connection ever. To Yalman's request from him to declare his patriotism, Nâzım is said to reply: "Would you invite a man to prove that he is a man? How would one ask a person who sings in Turkish language, who proves his love for the country with his whole existence, and who takes every risk and makes sacrifices everything for this country, to prove that he is a patriot? If the Turkish nation is subject to an external encroachment, wherever it comes from, I will be in the front line of the defenders."[24] That is why, Yalman concluded, it is a necessity to fix this injustice, a necessity that we owe to Turkish culture and literature, but more importantly to our history. He ends the essay with the hope that twenty-million Turks would not consent to carry the burden put on their shoulders by the pain and suffering of a great Turkish poet who had been unjustly held in jail for years.

Following Yalman's attempts, which might be said to have marked the beginning of the campaigns to save Nâzım from prison, the lawyer Mehmet Ali Sebük[25] wrote a series of articles explaining thoroughly and in more detail that there was a "judicial error" (*adli hata*) in the 1938

24 Complaining about the article in passing, Nâzım Hikmet noted to Kemal Tahir that Yalman made him say things that he did not say and even could not imagine saying. Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 229. September 9, 1949. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 391.

25 Until 1945, Sebük was a public officer in the small northeastern town Ordu, interested in child criminology. Trained in law and criminology in France, he was widely engaging with the prisoners in Ordu and trying to find out ways of reducing child criminality. His book *Memleket Kriminolojisi* (Ordu: Gürses Basımevi, 1944) investigates crimes in Ordu, especially the ones committed by children. In 1945, he retired from his position and moved to İstanbul to become a private lawyer. He became the legal consultant of Ahmet Emin Yalman's newspaper *Vatan*. It is at this period that he met Nâzım Hikmet in Bursa prison through Yalman's initiatives. Starting in 1949, he wrote numerous pieces in the newspaper to inform public about the "judicial error" in the 1938 military trials convicting Nâzım. He collected his memories of the period in his book *Korkunç Adli Hata ve Nâzım Hikmet'in Özgürlük Savaşı* (İstanbul: Cem, 1978).

military trials that sentenced Nâzım and that these errors are similar to the ones done in the Dreyfus trials in France. In a November 1949 article, called "The elements of crime in Nâzım Hikmet's actions,"[26] Sebük, in a succinct and technical-legal language, explicates why the sentence Nâzım received was unlawful. First of all, according to the Military Penal Code no. 94, in order for one to be guilty, one must have incited more one military personnel together to rebel against their superiors. However, Sebük points out, the evidence convicted Nâzım is based on the allegations of a single military student and, moreover, there is no evidence whatsoever that all cadets were agitated against their superiors. These are the objective elements of the attributed offense. Sebük suggests that one should also take the subjective elements into consideration, for example, intent in the offense. The court could not provide a sufficient body of evidence whether Nâzım has had any intention to incite the army and cadets to rebel.

The other allegations against Nâzım were concerned with the communist propaganda in the army. However, appealing to the legality principle, Sebük says, when these alleged events were taking place, doing communist propaganda and even forming a community for this purpose in the army did not constitute an offense. Even if they were, the same action could not be convicted both as inciting the army to rebel and as a communist propaganda in the army at once. Furthermore, there is neither a sufficient number of allegations nor a necessary evidence that would require conviction. The only evidence the court had had was a few words that are supposedly told by Nâzım to two military students and they could not constitute the necessary evidence. In conclusion, Sebük argues that the trials convicting Nâzım violated the legality principle and yet sentenced Nâzım to a heavy imprisonment due to some alleged words far from constituting a definitive evidence. That is to say, Sebük suggests that the military trials committed a "judicial error" (adlî hata). (Note here that they try to avoid mentioning the instigators and/or perpetrators of

26 Mehmet Ali Sebük, "Nâzım Hikmete ait fiilerin suç unsurları" *Vatan*, November 23, 1949.

this "error," a term that seems to be chosen for this purpose, as it does not necessitate the personal intention and effort).

This was the title of another column by Sebük written in December 1949: "Great Judicial Error" ("Büyük Adlî hata").[27] In this column, too, Sebük lists the judicial errors in Nâzım's case from a legal perspective. However, this time, he tries to show that there is a gap between the reason of the conviction and the clause according to which the conviction was given. He states that Nâzım was convicted for the communist propaganda, yet he was tried for inciting the army to rebel, and gives several quotes related to this from the accusations presented in the court. At the same time, implying that the government of the time was aware of this gap between the clause and the reason of conviction, he cites the prime minister Refik Saydam's speech in the parliament, where he argued for the change of the relevant article in such a way as to include the communist propaganda in the army as an offense against the article no 148, as mentioned above. Although Sebük overall had been using a dry and legal-technical language in his essays, he ends this one by noting that he had encountered countless judicial errors in his 20-year-long career, however, he had never seen one that was as obvious and lasted for so long as this one.

Note here that both Yalman and Sebük were writing articles to generate a public opinion for Nâzım's case. While Sebük's tone and mode of writing is usually technical pointing one by one to the errors committed in the trials, Yalman's language is agitative crying out for the sufferings of Nâzım, a poet of the Turkish language and defender of the Turkish nation, who was made to pay high prices for his people. He suggests that in the world, or outside Turkey, his case was being used against Turkey to render us undemocratic, undeveloped country, to put a pressure on the country and take advantage of the situation. That is, the international gaze watching Nâzım's case, in Yalman's discourse, turns into a threat and, more importantly, makes Nâzım's case a national issue. For this

27 Mehmet Ali Sebük, "Büyük Adlî hatâ" *Vatan*, December 20, 1949. Also, see "Askeri Adalet diye bir hukuk şubesi yoktur" *Vatan*, January 3, 1950.

reason, he was urging the people as a whole to fight for fixing this injustice. To repeat, Yalman here plays with the threat of the outside to convince the inside. By making the inside insecure, he wants to show that Nâzım's unlawful imprisonment is a threat to the welfare of the Turkish society, a national security problem. Later, Sebük's writings tone, too, changed though. Yet, instead of trying to prove that Nâzım is not a traitor but rather an ardent patriot, he started to establish a direct similarity between the Dreyfus affair and Nâzım Hikmet.[28]

In the meantime, Nâzım's situation were gaining greater publicity all over the world. The international gaze Yalman pointed to was rapidly expanding. In France, young progressive Turks has already started to publicize Nâzım's situation forming a union called Union of the Young Progressive Turks (Union des Jeunes Turcs Progressistes), consisting mostly of the students from Turkey in France at the time including names such as Attila İlhan, Kemal Başţuji, Cahit Güçbilmez, Taci Karan, Avadis Aleksenyan. It might be said that the first echo Yalman hopes to find for Nâzım was found in France with this. These progressive young Turks got in touch with the French intellectuals and artists around the National Committee of Writers (Comité National des Écrivains, CNE) and the French Communist Party (PCF). They asked them for help to publicize Nâzım's situation. Following this, a committee called the Committee for Saving Nâzım Hikmet and Dissemination of His Works (Comité Pour la Libération de Nâzım Hikmet et la Diffusion de ses Œuvres) was established and chaired by Tristan Tzara. It consisted of the world renowned writers, poets, intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Aragon, Tristan Tzara, Simon de Beauvoir, and Pablo Picasso, some of whom Nâzım named in the poem he wrote on the fifth day of his hunger strike. (I will make a discussion of the poem shortly). Multiple times the committee and the intellectuals sent letters to the president İsmet İnönü and the prime ministers of Turkey requesting the end of the injustice Nâzım

28 Göksu and Timms, *Romantik Komünist*, 262; Turgay Fişekçi, "Nâzım Hikmet'i Açlık Grevine Götüren Yol," 8.

Hikmet was subject to. At the same time, they were communicating with the world the situation Nâzım was going through.

On November 6, 1949, they wrote a letter to the prime minister of Turkey. One day later, International Union of Students (IUS) sent a letter to the prime minister requesting the end of Nâzım's unlawful imprisonment which was, as argued in the letter, apparently against the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[29] The president and the prime ministers all seemingly opted for indifference. Tzara even wrote letters to Saraçoğlu, who was at the time the chair of the Grand Assembly, although he was informed by the progressive Turks that Saraçoğlu was a supporter of the Nazi Germany. According to Taci Karan's account, during the process, the former judge Fahrettin Karaoğlan's confessions published in the newspapers were really helpful to demonstrate the unlawfulness of the trials. He confessed that Nâzım was convicted with no evidence and reason whatsoever.[30] The Turkish students informed the French intellectuals about Karaoğlan's words. Relying on them, Joë Nordmann, the president of the International Association of Democrat Jurists (L'Association Internationale des Juristes Démocrates, AIJD), sent a letter to the presidency of the Turkish Grand Assembly. So, when 1950s started, there was a large pressure on the Turkish government. The activities of the French committee lasted from the beginning of 1949 to almost until the end of 1950, until Nâzım was taken out from the prison.[31]

Then, on January 29, 1950, Sebük appealed to the Grand Assembly for the elimination/correction of this error and requested a pardon for Nâzım. In the columns he wrote in *Vatan* he had already explained the errors Nâzım's military trail included in detail from a legal perspective. All these started a public discussion and perhaps marked the beginning of the continuous attempts and campaigns to take Nâzım out of prison

29 Taci Karan, "Paris'in 'Jön' Delikanlıları" *Cumhuriyet Dergi*, January 12, 2003.

30 *Yaprak*, May 15, 1950. When Nâzım's case started to gain publicity in the country, Karaoğlan's confessions were seemingly put into circulation by his daughter.

31 Taci Karan, "Paris'in 'Jön' Delikanlıları" *Cumhuriyet Dergi*, January 12, 2003.

that was to last until his release in July 1950.[32] Following these, İrfan Emin, Nâzım Hikmet's own lawyer, on February 9, 1950, sent a letter to the president İsmet İnönü informing him that Nâzım was thinking of starting a hunger strike. İnönü recommended him to see the Minister of Justice. On March 3, 1950, finally, a bill concerning a general amnesty prepared by the Ministry of Justice was sent to the Assembly along with the names of the political convicts planned to be released, but it was rejected and thrown out by the deputies. Afterwards, the Assembly meetings were intermitted. Nâzım Hikmet declared his intention to start a hunger strike soon. İrfan Emin recommended Nâzım to start after April 8 following the reopening of the Assembly so that he can get in touch with the authorities and politicians to once again negotiate his case. Nâzım accepted to wait a little longer.[33]

In the meantime, there were coming out essays in the newspapers claiming that Nâzım lost his appetite for living, he got depressed in prison and no more wanted to live. That is, he became "suicidal" and were using hunger strike as a pretext. In a letter he wrote to Kemal Tahir, on March 4, 1950, he argued that the news and articles speculating that he had lost his appetite for living is false and warned him not to believe.[34] In the same days, upon learning that Kemal Tahir, too, was intending to start a hunger strike of his own to help Nâzım's case publicize, on March 5, 1950, he sent him another letter begging him to give up undertaking a hunger strike in support of himself. This same request is remade five days later in a letter dated March 10.[35]

---

32 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet ve Açlık Grevi Kronolojisi" in *Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi*, ed. Yeşim Bilge Bengü (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 39.

33 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet ve Açlık Grevi Kronolojisi" in *Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi*, ed. Yeşim Bilge Bengü (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 39.

34 Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 238. March 4, 1950. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusane'den Mektuplar*, 405. These news were probably emerging from his complaints to his mother and friends about the psychological issues—"melancholia" and "neurosis"—he was experiencing under difficult prison conditions. See Turgay Fişekçi, "Nâzım Hikmet'i Açlık Grevine Götüren Yol," 7–8.

35 Letters to Kemal Tahir, no. 239 and no. 240. March 5 and March 10, 1950. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusane'den Mektuplar*, 405–406.

Toward the end of March 1950, the amnesty was seemingly put aside by the parliament once more. The right-wing newspapers and politicians was in ardent opposition to the release of political convicts, most of whom were known left figures like Nâzım Hikmet, Kemal Tahir, and Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, all tried and convicted in the Navy Trial. On March 30, 1950, Nâzım wrote to Kemal Tahir that the temporary failure of the amnesty bill did not disappoint him at all.[36] This was frequent note he wrote to Kemal Tahir since the beginning of 1940s. Oftentimes, when mentioning the amnesty issue and his attempts in that regard, Nâzım was noting that he is not optimistic, but he does not just give up, in case the right time comes. He called this attitude of his own "hopeful realism" (*nikbin realizm*).[37]

§ 4.7 Hunger Strike Unleashed

On the same day, he wrote a letter to Piraye, his ex-wife, and his kids and relatives, noting that he was about to launch a hunger strike as a last call to fight against the injustice he was exposed to.[38] And, finally, on April 8, 1950, he started the strike by declaring that "for the petition I present to the people I use my life as a stamp." (*Millete verdiğim açık istidaya canımı pul yerine kullanıyorum*).[39] By putting his body in suspense, he thought he was giving a petition to the Turkish people to decide, because they are the ultimate decision maker. He wanted them to decide whether he will die or not. If they do not want it to happen, they should pressure the state to free Nâzım. If they want it to happen, they do not need to do anything,

36 Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 241. March 30, 1950. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 406.

37 But every time he reminds that Kemal Tahir sees this as pessimism (*bedbinlik*). He says that it is an attitude that prepares one for the worst and yet not help one keep one's hopes still high. This is the role he thinks the writer should play in the realist literature. See, for example, Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 291. Undated. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 378–379.

38 He was careful to note in the letter that this is not a result of frustration, fear, or desperateness. Turgay Fişekçi, "Nâzım Hikmet'i Açlık Grevine Götüren Yol," 9.

39 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet ve Açlık Grevi Kronolojisi," 39.

they could just stay indifferent. However, in the latter case, it might be detrimental to themselves, because the "outside" might see them as the undemocratic people, people that needs to be checked out, and negative "foreign" sanctions might apply.

On the same day with the start of hunger strike, after his health was examined in a hospital in Bursa, he was taken to İstanbul by the police. A group of intellectuals in İstanbul and Ankara immediately wrote a petition to the president İnönü telling him that Nâzım fell a victim to a "judicial error" and beseech him for Nâzım's release from the prison. Next day, Nâzım was examined in Cerrahpaşa Hospital, İstanbul. Doctors detected that his health had already deteriorated. Following Sebük's telegraphy from Ankara afternoon requesting him to postpone the strike a little further, as he was going to get in touch with several politicians and hopeful about the outcome, Nâzım postponed the strike.[40] On the same day, Vâ-Nû published Nâzım's letter about the start of the strike in the newspaper *Akşam*. On April 10, 1950, he wrote to Kemal Tahir that "I stopped my strike just for now."[41] Next day, another medical examination was held in Cerrahpaşa Hospital once again. According to the results of these examinations, Nâzım had had serious heart and liver problems. Then, he was moved to Paşakapısı prison in Üsküdar, İstanbul. After this, he had never gone back to Bursa prison.

On April 15, 1950, the medical report coming out of the examination in Cerrahpaşa hospital demonstrated that Nâzım Hikmet was seriously ill and must be treated in a full-fledged hospital. If after the treatment the cited health problems are observed to continue, the criminal code no. 399 would be appropriate to apply, that is, Nâzım's must be released if there is no progress in his health.[42] Then, on April 24, the office of chief public prosecutor in İstanbul referred Nâzım to the medical

40 Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet ve Açlık Grevi Kronolojisi," 39.

41 Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 242. April 10, 1950. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 407.

42 Sebük was continuing his writings to draw attention to Nâzım's case, which gained an important momentum with the declaration of the hunger strike. He, too, was arguing that this is a national issue that concerns all Turkish people.

jurisprudence. Next day, for this purpose, his health was reexamined in Cerrahpaşa Hospital in a single person room under the supervision of gendarmes.[43] On the same day, he wrote to Kemal Tahir his intention of starting hunger strike again but warned him once more not to do the same thing himself.[44] On April 29, the doctors reported that he must be treated for three months in a full-fledged hospital and if the results are not promising, he must be released from the prison. Then, he returned to Paşakapısı Prison. Upon being convinced that this was not going to happen, on May 2, he resumed his hunger strike in the prison, which was going to continue for 18 days until May 19.[45]

On May 7, the fifth day of fasting, he wrote the poem "On the Fifth Day of Hunger Strike"[46] telling those who campaign for him that "your eyes are like sparkling starts at my bedside."

> My brothers, (*kardeşlerim*)
> please forgive me
> if I cannot say properly
> what I want to say.
> I'm a little drunk, a little light-headed,
> not from rakı
> but from starvation's medicine.[47]

He says that he is light-headed from hunger. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, hunger makes the hungry light-headed, dizzy, delirious, and even delusional. But also, hunger results from the delusion that prevents the hungry from seeing the causes of their hunger. Nâzım dramatizes the opening as if it was a scene of extemporizing and plays with this

43 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet ve Açlık Grevi Kronolojisi," 39.

44 Letter to Kemal Tahir, no. 243. April 25, 1950. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 407.

45 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet ve Açlık Grevi Kronolojisi," 40.

46 For the Turkish, see "Açlık Grevinin Beşinci Gününde" in *Bütün Eserleri* (İstanbul: YKY, 2008), 944–945. Here I use the English translation "Five Days into the Hunger Strike" in *Beyond the Walls: Selected Poems*, trans. Ruth Christie, Richard McKane, and Talât S. Halman (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2002), 175–176, but I modify the translation throughout.

47 "Five Days into the Hunger Strike," 175.

double meaning of hunger both as resulting from delusion and resulting in delusion. In the next stanza, he opens up the issue:

> My brothers,
> Those in Europe, those in Asia, those in America,
> I, in this month of May,
> am neither in prison, nor on hunger strike:
> I am lying in a meadow at night,
> your eyes are sparkling like stars at my bedhead,
> and your hands like one hand in my palm
> Like my mother's hand,
> Like my loved one's hand,
> Like Memet's hand,
> Like life's hand.[48]

What is obvious here is that he addresses an international audience and/or shows that his addressee is an international, outside, group. And this group looks at, and looks after, him: "your eyes are sparkling like stars at my bedhead." They gather around and work to save him. Remember that he gave a petition to the Turkish people with his hunger strike and now made it known that the outside is looking at, watching closely, the inside. The eyes are directed at Turkey to see if they are going to do the right thing. And he continues,

> My brothers,
> *you* have never abandoned me,
> not me, nor my country, nor my people.
> I know your love for me and mine
> is like my love for you and yours.
> For this my friends, I thank you, I thank you.[49]

The gazes watching him have never abandoned him, his country, and his people. They love his people, as he loves theirs. Remember that this is not about saving Nâzım, but a national issue, about the welfare and well-

48 "Five Days into the Hunger Strike," 175.

49 "Five Days into the Hunger Strike," 175.

being of the Turkish people. He thanked them, because they are aware of this fact. And in the next paragraph, his remarks get even more specific.

> My brothers,
> I have no intention of dying.
> I know,
> I'll continue to live still in your minds.
>
> I'll be in a line of Aragon,
> 'in every line that tells of the beautiful days to come,'
> and in Picasso's white dove,
> and Paul Robeson's songs,
> and most beautiful of all,
> I will be your companion smiling in victory
> along with the dockers of Marseilles.[50]

Aragon, Picasso, Robeson are the people who were making international calls for Nâzım's freedom. As I noted above, most of the international campaigns to save Nâzım was based in France. So, he did not forget the dockers of Marseilles. He ends the poem saying that he is thoroughly happy, "over the moon."[51] As now clear, the gazes outside are of vital importance here. They figure, as in Yalman's narrative, both as gazes that are detrimental to Turkey, since they will judge Turkey badly if Nâzım is let die, and as loving gazes, in Nâzım narrative, since they love Nâzım's country and people, and, due to this love, they want them to help Nâzım to fix the injustice, to fix the injustice problem as a whole in Nâzım's Turkey.

Two days later, on May 9, Nâzım's health deteriorated and was sent to the department of chest diseases of the Cerrahpaşa Hospital. Simultaneously, his mother, Celile Hanım, launched her own hunger strike naming it "oruç" (fast) and started to collect signatures from people on the Galata Bridge, İstanbul. Police intervened in the protests. In the placard Celile Hanım held was written the following words:

50 "Five Days into the Hunger Strike," 175–176.

51 "Five Days into the Hunger Strike," 176.

> My son Nâzım Hikmet, who was unjustly jailed, is on hunger strike. I want to die as well. I am fasting day and night. Those who want to save us, sign this notebook by writing your addresses. His mother: Painter Celile.[52]

One day later, in Ankara, three poets of the *Garip*, Orhan Veli, Oktay Rifat, and Melih Cevdet, announced their decision to launch their own hunger strike for three days in solidarity with Nâzım through their journal *Yaprak*. They were careful to note that their action was not a political call but rather a matter of collegiality between poets.

And on May 11, a weekly named *Nâzım Hikmet* started to be published by the students in the İstanbul Higher Education Youth Association (İstanbul Yüksek Tahsil Gençlik Derneği, İYTGD)[53] in order to further Nâzım's cause and increase its publicity and visibility. Its first issue was published with the headline: "They want to kill Nâzım." Furthermore, they strongly underline the fact that "the eyes of the intellectuals are now [directed] at İstanbul and Ankara" and that the killing of Nâzım meant "to tarnish the name of the Turkish nation" (*millitemizin üstüne yapıştırılan leke en büyük ve tarihî leke*). And, in the same issue, a declaration of the İYTGD was published as well with the title: "Save Nâzım Hikmet." In the declaration, it was underlined that the Turkish people do not want to be mere spectators to the death of Nâzım Hikmet and, curiously, Nâzım was referred to as "the eyeballs of the humanity" (*insanlığın gözbebeği*).[54]

---

52 "Haksız yere mahkûm edilen oğlum Nâzım Hikmet açlık grevindedir. Ben de ölmek istiyorum. Gece Gündüz oruçluyum. Bizi kurtarmak isteyenler bu deftere adreslerini yazarak imzalasınlar." Quoted in Turgay Fişekçi, "Nâzım Hikmet'i Açlık Grevine Götüren Yol," 12.

53 Since the beginning of the public discussions on Nâzım and the judicial error, the Turkish newspapers, dailies, and journals were divided into two: first, there were those supported Nâzım's case such as *Vatan*, *Akşam*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Gerçek*, *Hür Gençlik*, *Nâzım Hikmet*, *Yaprak*, *Bakış*; second, those who were strongly against it such as *Millet*, *Son Telgraf*, *Yeni Sabah*, *Kudret*. For example, against the discussions of general amnesty, see Nuretin Ardıçoğlu, "Bunları mı affedeceğiz," *Kudret*, July 6, 1950. On the *Nâzım Hikmet*, see also, "Fahri Oktay *Nâzım Hikmet* Gazetesinin Öyküsünü Anlatıyor," interview by Erden Akbulut, in *Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi*, ed. Yeşim Bilge Bengü (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 35–36.

54 *Nâzım Hikmet* 1, May 11, 1950.

This just means that Nâzım was worldly renowned poet, but it is still interesting that he is the eyeballs, because he needs to be looked after, as he gets frail due to the starvation. And those who look at him also look at the Turkish nation and people. And letting him die in prison, or rather "killing" him, is a betrayal to nation and the Turkish people.

In the second issue published on May 15, it was once again announced to the Turkish people that Nâzım Hikmet was dying "because he lived for you, he wrote for you, he devoted his life to your struggle of life and freedom."[55] In the same issue, Nâzım's poem "Korku" dedicated to Paul Robeson was also published both to show the internationality of him and to once again underline the outside gazes directed at the inside. Not surprisingly, it was once again noted that "the most progressed intellectuals and peoples directed their *eyes* at Turkey are following the events going on here, and they pass judgments (*hüküm vermekteler*) about both the relevant offices, on the one hand, and about our people, on the other." And this shows that these "hundreds of thousands of gazes" show very well the magnitude of the effect of these events going on here. Then, the newspaper goes on to say to the people: "You will not only save Nâzım Hikmet, but also save yourself." They are also instructed: "don't close your *eyes*" to Nâzım slowly dying "before the eyes of the entire world." Once again note how important the eyes and gazes in the event was: both seeing and being seen. You have to see, since you are being seen, and you have to see in order to escape being seen or gazed at.

The international groups were also working to help Nâzım at the same time. Students from Glasgow was calling the situation "murder" and protesting the Turkish embassy as well as UNESCO. The writers in Poland drew attention to the medical conditions of Nâzım Hikmet and, similarly, protested the Turkish government. In Delhi, Indian writers was objecting to the delay of the amnesty by the Turkish government, sending a note to the Turkish embassy, saying that Nâzım symbolizes the universal dreams of peace, democracy, and better future.[56] In New York, in front of the

55 *Nâzım Hikmet* 2, May 15, 1950.

56 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi," 24–25.

Turkish consulate, the protests for Nâzım were held by the left-wing intellectuals including Howard Fast. An American-Turkish committee was established to publicize Nâzım's case and appealed to the Turkish embassy and consulates in the US. Paul Robeson was calling the black people and the other democrat groups in the US for contributing the freedom struggle of Nâzım Hikmet.[57]

On May 12, Orhan Veli, Oktay Rifat, and Melih Cevdet started the strike in support of Nâzım. On the same day, an article titled "Eğer Sen Ölürsen" (If You Die), written by Esat Adil, was published in the newspaper *Gerçek*. Addressing Nâzım, he was saying, "If you die, 'this hell and this heaven' nation becomes uninhabitable country of torment and sorrow. And we would be cursed by the world of culture, the world of fairness and justice.... Do not let Turkish poetry and Turkish language impoverish!"[58] The next day, the magazine *Hür Gençlik* published a special issue to support Nâzım's hunger strike and demanded his release. On May 14, general elections were held in Turkey. Democrat Party won the elections taking vast majority of the seats in the parliament. The single party period ended. Democrat Party won the 53.4 percent of the votes while the CHP's votes were 39.8 percent, which meant that the DP won 408 seats in the new parliament against the CHP's 69 seats. This result is celebrated as if a long-awaited liberation all over the country.[59]

On May 15, the İYTGD organized a demonstration for Nâzım Hikmet in Çiçek Palas, Laleli to support the demands for his release and call the newly elected government for ending the injustice Nâzım had been subject to. However, the event was attacked by right wing anti-communist students associated with the National Union of Turkish Students (Millî Türk Talebe Birliği, MTTB), who were strongly opposed to Nâzım Hikmet's release. The students, receiving the support of the people around, attacked the İYTGD members, shouting the slogan "Communists to Moscow!" (*Komünistler Moskova'ya*). However, the police took the

57 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi," 30.

58 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi," 27.

59 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 219.

members of the İYTGD rather than attackers into custody. The events have come to be known as Çiçek Palas Events.[60]

On May 17, intellectuals like Halide Edip, Adnan Adıvar, Sait Faik, Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Fikret Adil, Mina Urgan, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Abidin Dino, and Cevdet Kudret sent a letter to Nâzım asking him to pause his hunger strike until the new government was definitively formed.[61] And finally, on May 19, he stopped the strike on its seventeenth day. He sent a letter to Mehmet Ali Sebük saying that he stopped his strike once again until the new government is put in place. The same day İrfan Emin had sent to the newspapers the letters written by the leading intellectuals that ask Nâzım to give a break to the strike until the government is established.[62]

Right after the end of the strike, the same group of intellectuals started to pressure the new government to immediately pass an amnesty law and/or special amnesty for Nâzım Hikmet. In the meantime, international efforts to save Nâzım, too, were still going on. On June 2, the AIJD president Joë Nordmann wrote a letter to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs underscoring that imprisonment of Nâzım Hikmet is a manifestation of violence. The letter also noted that it was deeply concerning despite the fact that previously they were told that Nâzım is about to be free, this did not turn true. Another letter was also sent to the new president Celal Bayar. The same day discussions concerning the general amnesty started anew in the parliament. Once again, some right-wing deputies showed strong opposition to the proposal concerning the inclusion of the political prisoners like Nâzım Hikmet in the scope of the amnesty. Some of the names were Tevfik İleri, Şevket Mocan, Hüsnü Akşit, Remzi Oğuz Arık, Suphi Baykam. All underlined the fact that communists like Nâzım Hikmet are traitors of the nation.[63]

60 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi," 30–31.

61 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi," 31.

62 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi," 31.

63 Kıymet Coşkun, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi," 33. Also, Mehmet Ali Sebük this time was writing on, and arguing for, the amnesty project. See "Af Kanunu Projesi" *Vatan*, June 13, 1950.

On July 14, however, on the second session, the much-anticipated general amnesty was finally passed in the parliament. However, the political prisoners were not included in it initially. Yet the sentences of those who cannot benefit from the amnesty was reduced by their two-thirds.[64] This reduction, probably designed with Nâzım's case in the background, led to the release of Nâzım from the prison who had already served almost half of his time. The next day, he was released.[65] The MTTB published a declaration saying that twenty-thousand Turkish higher education students were saddened by the parliament's decision letting the communists and Nâzım Hikmet out from the prison in the newspaper *Ulus.*[66]

On November 22, 1950, he was awarded the International Peace Prize by the World Peace Council (WPC) alongside Pablo Picasso, Pablo Neruda, and Paul Robeson. He could not attend the conference, because he could not obtain a passport in Turkey. Pablo Neruda accepted the prize on his behalf. On March 26, 1951, Nâzım and his new wife Münevver have a son named Mehmet. After his release, he went back to his work in the İpek Film Studios. Yet upon the state's attempt to conscript him, he had to flee the country, first to Romania and then to the USSR once more. On August 15, 1951, after his escape, he citizenship was revoked by the Turkish parliament.

§ 4.8 The "Turkish Dreyfus Affair" and Coming of Democracy

Even before the beginning of his prison years, Nâzım Hikmet's trial, imprisonment, and hunger strike leading up to his release from the prison had been haunted by the shadow of the Dreyfus Affair. The "judicial

64 In his memoirs, Altan Öymen notes that when the law was passed, in the salon there were either no deputies who were against the law or they were somehow not given the opportunity to express their opposition. *Değişim Yılları* (İstanbul: Doğan, 2004), 521.

65 Obviously, this was celebrated in Vatan by Yalman and Sebük, who were really instrumental in his release. Yalman, "Bayram Havası" *Vatan*, July 16, 1950; Sebük, "Milletin Büyük Affı ve Neticeleri" *Vatan*, July 30, 1950.

66 *Ulus*, July 16, 1950.

error" Nâzım was subject to have reminded and been continuously compared to the errors included in Dreyfus's case. It is even sometimes suggested that Nâzım's case was much harsher than Dreyfus's. For in the latter, even if fabricated, some evidence was provided to the court, the military trials that convicted Nâzım Hikmet, on the other hand, did not even bother themselves with finding, or making up, a necessary evidence.[67] The emergence of the intellectual as a politically responsible and engaged being with the Dreyfus affair deeply marked the narrative of Nâzım Hikmet's case. Yet it is not exactly clear who Dreyfus was and who Zola was in the Nâzım affair. Subjected to the unlawfulness, he occupied the place of Dreyfus, but, at the same time, being the renowned intellectual, he was able to wield the power of a public intellectual. Yet the intellectuals—both national and international—also seemingly played the role that Zola played in the Dreyfus case. Also, once again drawing upon the Dreyfus affair, Nâzım's case has been elevated to a national problem that concerns the well-being of the Turkish citizens, as Nâzım's hunger strike was often formulated as a chance for the Turkish people not only to save Nâzım but also to save themselves. They save themselves, as they reinstall the rule of law, democratic politics, human rights—the principles the outside is watching, and anticipating, to see their rehabilitation. For unless they are rehabilitated, the sanctions and even an intervention might be needed, because at stake is human life and the defense of a society, embodied and exemplified in the starving and slowly dying body of Nâzım Hikmet.

This is how the fate of Nâzım Hikmet was aligned with that of the nation-state. As I have already discussed in the Chapter 2, he as the singular author of his life and thought had been taken as a model Turkish citizen as well as the same model on which the modern state has been built, and with his work of purifying the Turkish language, he contributed to one of the foundational elements of the unified nation-state. Now, with his hunger strike, as argued, he contributed to the democratization of

67 Göksu and Timms, for example, suggest that "ülke tarihinde ilk kez basının öncülük ettiği kamuoyu baskısı düzeni zorluyordu." *Romantik Komünist*, 262.

Turkey as well. At a turning point of the Turkish democracy, by putting the state for the first time under a wide public and media pressure, bringing the outside in, he also contributed to the installment of the democracy in Turkey. The origins of democracy in Turkey, too, then, can be found also in the story of Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike, who, after many years, wrote that he was not *let* out of the prison, he *get himself out* of the prison with the help of a few friends and the force of times.[68] That is to say, according these accounts, Nâzım's story is in many ways is the story of the Turkish nation-state. This story can also be told in the reverse. For example, Kerim Korcan implicitly suggests that with Nâzım's trial in a military court, resulted in the first place from his call to the police directorate to complain about the Marxist military students who came to meet him, has started the era of the prevalence of the military courts in Turkey.[69] That is, Nâzım originated, or strengthened, the military's hold on the Turkish society. However one chooses tell the story, one tells necessarily an origin story where both Nâzım himself and the nation-state have analogously emerged and re-emerged. Thus, whenever he writes himself and his life, he seems to write the state, and vice versa. And the mode of his writing of the self and life as one and whole are modeled after the thinking/writing of the nation-state as one unified entity.

In the next chapter, however, I attempt to show that writing of life and the self as one with definite borders is an impossibility, because what makes possible such a writing is the assumption of an outside to the self. Without that outside, there is no inside. There are fragments in Nâzım's writings where this impossibility has been noticed, and where the self and life as one is written off. (Although I use "writing" in a similar way that Derrida uses it in a dual sense as both an inscription/assertion and self-effacement, I still felt that I need to qualify the difference as "writing of" and "writing off." The former is assertion while the latter effacement.

68 See his 1963 "Dokuzuncu Mektup" (Ninth Letter) of the "Tanganika Röportajı" (Tanganyika Interview): "Hapisten çıktığım günleri hatırlıyorum, / hapisten çıkarıldığım günleri değil, çıktığım, / içerde kendimin dışarda dostların ve zamanların zorlamasıyla çıktığım günleri hapisten." *Bütün Şiirleri* (İstanbul: YKY, 2008), 1851.

69 Kerim Korcan, *Harbiye Kazanı* (İstanbul: E Yayınları, 1989), 13.

I use the latter also to refer to unleashing, arising out of writing, as in "writing off hunger"). I call these fragments Nâzım's late style, drawing mostly upon Edward Said's elaborations of the concept. In the following chapter, I try to explicate this before concluding the thesis.

5

Writing off Life and the Self: Late Style and the Rhythm of Transience

> *late style does not admit the definitive cadences of death; instead, death appears in a refracted mode, as irony.... the irony is how often lateness as theme and style keeps reminding us of death.*
>
> – Edward Said, *On Late Style*

§ 5.1 Late Style

I have discussed thus far that Nâzım (and his corpus), a towering figure of the Sartrean committed literature (*littérature engagée*) in the early twentieth-century, is overwhelmingly realist. Despite the fact that realist literature aims to eradicate the voice of the author, and Nâzım, too, expressed him plans to do so, in his works he always underscored it, his life and self, perhaps because of, or despite, the precarity he has been exposed to throughout his life. A self-defined communist,[1] he spent almost

1 Nâzım often embraced the term *komünist* as an identity and provocatively played with it against the derogatory and annoying sense it has gained in Turkey due to the prevalence of the anticommunism in Turkey. Also, he preferred it over "socialist" because of

thirteen years in Turkish prisons and another thirteen in Russian exile. More important, as a product of "entangled revolution"[2] (of Russia and Turkey), he was constantly blackmailed to speak for or against things, regimes, ideologies; he always positioned himself as a consistent whole and absolute character vis-à-vis others, by inventing and experimenting with ways of re-presenting, or perhaps re-asserting, the "I." This is congruent with his secular Marxist-realist "content" posit(ion)ing the "man" at the center of the world as its prime creator, a man that can easily "smash the black earth."[3] Accordingly, nature figures extensively in his poems but almost always as a source of man's life, as a fecund woman, and as at man's disposal. There is a telos this man is directed at, an inevitable progress

---

the German National Socialism in an attempt to distinguish himself from them. See A. Kadir, *1938 Harp Okulu Olayı ve Nâzım Hikmet*, 67.

2 I borrowed the term from Nergis Ertürk. See her "Nâzım Hikmet and the Prose of Communism," *boundary 2* 47, no. 2 (2020): 153. The October Revolution in the early 1920s was still young and powerful as violent rejection of the past and the traditional; of what resists the irrepressible advance of productive forces. Concurrently, in the early 1920s, Ottoman Empire was dissolving into Turkish nation-state where the imperial past was perceived as a symbol of decay by the founding cadres and condemned as that which fetters the progress. Of course, the Turkish Republic was not founded on a belief in historical materialism, but there was another teleology in play, the teleology of westernization. He was in this sense a product of entangled revolution and, precisely for this reason, was doubly constrained. According to Viktor Shklovsky, a Russian formalist and contemporary of Nâzım, "the Soviet writer of the 1920s had two choices: to write for the desk drawer or to write on state demand." Quoted in Svetlana Boym, *Architecture of the Off-Modern* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 20. In the case of Turkey, especially after the Kurdish rebellions of 1925 and the ensuing declaration of the Law on the Maintenance of the Order, the Kemalist regime started to crush any dissonant voice including the Turkish communists. Nâzım was not exactly forced to write for the state, but he had always had to choose sides and show that he supports certain regimes, ideologies, states, and revolutions not to be seen as traitor, petit-bourgeois, opportunist, and so on.

3 In *Letters to Taranta-Babu*, he says mankind created such machines that can smash the black earth and with its technology exploit the nature in any way it wants. Similarly, in *Kuvây-i Milliye* and the *Landscapes*, man "create and destroy" everything. As I have argued in the Chapter 2, nature most of the time figures as "outside" of the man, something to be benefitted from and exploited, in Nâzım's poems.

he has to make. This too is in line with Nâzım's presentation of himself as temporally changing (or progressing) but still an indivisible author/ity and as the sole agent of his action and thought. The critics and biographers usually consider Nâzım a source of all the significations that fill his work and as a complete, absolute character that is either one thing or another, that can never be split, multiple, nondirectional, or stray. For this kind of indivisibility and autonomy, based on a modern conception of the human, is the principle behind Nâzım's own writings, which most of the time tends to become "a war of one man against all." So far I have attempted to show these.

In this chapter, I want to discuss that Nâzım Hikmet has a late style that diverts from this corpus by drawing upon Edward Said's elaborations of the notion as an exilic, disruptive, and lyric artistic mode, and a phenomenon of literary modernism. Although Said seemingly takes it as artist's conscious turn from, break with, or objection to, his or her previous works, Nâzım's late works appear as not much conscious but fleeting "pop ups" rather than a fully conscious and definite turn. Following Said's suggestion that lateness is a critical attitude rather than a phenomenon primarily related to the artist's old age, I consider late style to be the artist's, in this case Nâzım's, self-critique. He wittingly or unwittingly *speaks truth to power.* Speaking truth to power means, as I interpret Foucault's notion, identifying and speaking truth to the power relations one takes part in or that pass through one.[4] Foucault's account of speaking truth, too, however, seems to be a conscious phenomenon, the subject's intentional choice and work on himself or herself, but I argue that it may as well be an unwitting phenomenon, a slip of tongue, or a slip of poetic language.[5] It targets the self and aims to dethrone it, the I, by letting it be

4 On this notion, see Foucault's *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001) and *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II, Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

5 Viktor Shklovsky argues that poetic language is always to some degree a foreign language. See Boym, *Architecture of the Off-Modern*, 18. Poets do not always get hold of their

inconsistent, stray, and multiple. In this sense, I suggest, Nâzım's late style is a critique of himself and a refusal of the man at the center of the world.

I try to demonstrate that Nâzım's late style decenters the man and the I simultaneously. It betrays his historical materialist representation of time as a directional and linear progression, by popping up in the form of shadowy and unchronological memories, fractured moments of looking back, which turn into a grave critique of the self as well as anthropocentrism. For this critique not only calls for lost personal moments, missed experiences, but also remembers the existential precariousness and minuteness of the human in the face of the great earth and the sublime cosmos, of its condition of eternal passing away. è

This is not a mere theme or a simple parable portraying the human as just a part of nature among other beings, but rather a mode, a feeling, where the poet's lyricism comes into touch with nature's own rhythm: the poet's unmaking of the I becomes simultaneous and contiguous with nature's unmaking of itself. Put differently, it is poet's feeling through nature; a *hapticality*, which is, as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten put, "the interiority of sentiment, the feel that what is to come is here.... the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you

---

poems; that is to say, sometimes a poem cannot even be understood by its creator. It is a foreign language; either it does not make sense at all (as in the case of one who is presented with a language one has no knowledge of) or it makes sense but not as well and fully as it does to a "native" speaker. This suggests that "meaning" of a poem might not be fixed either by what its poet says or by an historical research that thoroughly describes all the connections, experiences, and influences the poet has had and how they formed his or her poetics. This applies to not only poetic language but also language as a whole. Can we ever get hold of the language we speak or write? Is not the mastery of a language a "mastery of non-mastery" as described by anthropologist Michael Taussig? See "The Corn-Wolf: Writing Apotropaic Texts," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 1 (2010): 29. Does not it slip away at the very moment we attempt to *have* it; at the moment we try to fix its meaning? Lacan infamously suggested that the unconscious is (structured) like a language and defined it as the discourse of the Other, which I take to mean that there is always something foreign to us in the language we speak, something that we cannot know and control but sometimes somehow gives itself away. This is, I believe, why we should analyze texts against the grain too and try to find the other, the strange, the unknown in the author's discourse.

to feel through them feeling you."[6] In this sense, the poet feels that the upcoming destruction of nature is here and perceives it as the necessary destruction of himself. He feels at one with nature, not as a mere literary trope, but by feeling with it feeling him. This is where personal history connects with "world history" and personal politics with "world politics" whose method, Walter Benjamin suggests, must be nihilism.[7] In this context, I argue that Nâzım's late personal critique cannot be disentangled from his critique of the destructive age and the world ordered for the exploitation of nature, of which he is a part and through which he feels in his late works. He seems to suggest that we can keep up with the rhythm of nature only by destroying the human. For, paradoxically, the only way to slow down the tempo of nature's own destruction is to speed up the destruction of the human at the center of the world.

Nâzım's lateness then is both critique of himself and his world. However, this does not mean that at some point he abandoned communist politics and switched from literary realism to modernism. Rather, there are points, that intensified in number toward the end of his life, that unexpectedly remind him how fragile the "I" is, and despite this fragility, how equally arrogant it is. These are fleeting moments of "realization" that the human must be humbled, decentered, and even destroyed, as perhaps rem(a)inders of an alternative communism. To be able to illustrate this, I close read three late works of Nâzım Hikmet juxtaposing them with figures who are neither Marxist nor communist, at least in the way that Nâzım was, namely early Fredrich Nietzsche and his "Truth and Lie" essay, and Walter Benjamin and his essays "Destructive Character" and "Theologico-Political Fragment." I put them together to be able to find the

6 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 105.

7 "Theologico-Political Fragment" in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), 156. Judith Butler aptly notes that "Benjamin does not say that it must be called nihilism, only that it has been called that [*zu heissen hat*], suggesting that his statement is less prescriptive than descriptive." See her "One Time Traverses Another: Benjamin's 'Theological-Political Fragment'" in *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, ed. Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 284.

other, the strange, in Nâzım's discourse, to disclose his exilic lateness and perhaps nihilist world politics. Nâzım's three works under consideration are "On Living" (completed in 1948), "Fable of Fables" (1958), and "Things I Didn't Know I Loved" (1962).

§ 5.2 Things Nâzım Didn't Know He Wrote

I start with "On Living," specifically with its title. It is not "On Life" (*Yaşama or Hayata Dair in Turkish*),[8] but rather "On Living" (*Yaşamaya Dair*). "Life" implies something static, given, and stagnant, while "living" seems to define an active process, spontaneous, unfolding, and contingent. In fact, the composition of the poem itself exemplifies this; each of the three stanzas (or parts) of it was written at different times, even in different years, and they are separated from each other accordingly as 1, 2, and 3. In one of his prison letters to his friend Kemal Tahir serving time in another prison, Nâzım sent him the third part and wrote that "I am sending you the third and last one of the *On Living* series."[9] He considers it a series, but seemingly an unintended one. For, when he sent the first part to Kemal Tahir, he was talking about it as "a *strange* writing that I have recently scribbled."[10] The first two stanzas were written in the same year, 1947, but probably at different times/months of the year, while the last one was written in February 1948, which is the one I want to examine first. I cite it here as a whole.

> This earth will grow cold,
> a star among stars

8 Note that Turkish noun "yaşam" is of relatively recent origin, so it was possibly not available to Nâzım. Still, it would not be wrong to say that most of the time he insisted on the verb form rather than the noun; "yaşamak" instead of "yaşam(a)." Two of his novels are titled *Yaşamak Güzel Şey Be Kardeşim* (translated into English as *Life's Good, Brother* by Mutlu Konuk Blasing) and *Yaşamak Hakkı* (*Right to Living*, initially serialized in a Turkish newspaper but left unfinished due to Nâzım's imprisonment in 1938).

9 Letter no. 212. Undated. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 370. Translation mine.

10 Letter no. 218. Undated. *Kemal Tahir'e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*, 363. Translation and emphasis mine.

and one of the smallest,
a gilded mote on blue velvet—
I mean *this*, our great earth.

This earth will grow cold one day,
not like a block of ice
or a dead cloud even
but like an empty walnut it will roll along
in pitch-black space…

You must grieve for this right now
—you have to feel this sorrow now—
for the world must be loved this much
if you're going to say "I lived"…[11]

By way of comparison, I would also like to cite the introductory sentences of Friedrich Nietzsche's early and initially unpublished essay "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" ("Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne") that he wrote in 1873, around the same time with *The Birth of Tragedy*.

> Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of 'world history,' but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die.[12]

Both Nâzım and Nietzsche appeal to a scene wherein the world cools and congeals and then human life perishes. Both attempt to tell us how small and unimportant event this is for the entire universe—the world will roll along like "an empty walnut" in just "a minute"—despite the fact that it signifies the end of human life and, therefore, the greatest and most

11 I use Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk's translation of the poem. When necessary, I either modify or add the Turkish originals in parentheses. See "On Living," in *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet* (New York: Persea, 2002), 152–153.

12 "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *Continental Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Clive Cazeaux, trans. Daniel Breazeale (New York: Routledge, 2000), 53.

significant event that would ever happen to us. Even defining this event as "a minute" and "an empty walnut" is an anthropomorphism where we translate an occurrence in the universe into our terms, the terms we can make sense of how small we are. Nietzsche thus continues that even this could not "adequately illustrate how miserable, how shadowy and transient (*flüchtig*), how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature."[13] Even in making sense of how unimportant, small, we are, we maintain anthropocentricism.

To overcome this, Nâzım suggests in "Things I Didn't Know I Loved" that he knows "we live slightly longer than a horse but not as nearly as a crow."[14] In a sense, he points to "perspectival" variations on life for different beings. Yet I want to examine another passage from this poem:

> I have some questions for the cosmonauts
> were the stars much bigger
> did they look like huge jewels on black velvet
> or apricots on orange
> did you [become arrogant][15] to get closer to the stars
> I saw color photos of the cosmos in *Ogonek* magazine now don't
> be upset comrades but nonfigurative shall we say or abstract
> well some of them looked just like such paintings which to say they were terribly figurative and concrete
> my heart was in my mouth looking at them
> they are our desire to grasp things
> seeing them I could even think of death and not feel at all sad
> I never knew I loved the cosmos[16]

Here he asks cosmonauts whether they become arrogant when they get closer to the stars. Since getting closer to them means getting hold of

13 "On Truth and Lie," 53.

14 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," in *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet,* 261.

15 Here I modified the English translation. The verse in Turkish reads: "Kibirleniyor mu insan yıldızlara biraz daha yaklaşınca." The translators render the Turkish verb "kibirlenmek" "to feel proud." I think that "to become arrogant" gives the sense better, as my discussion here hopefully clarifies.

16 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," 263.

them, "knowing" them, Nâzım wonders whether their anthropocentricism was reinforced, as Nietzsche describes the invention of knowing as "the most mendacious moment of 'world history'."[17] In the artwork essay, Walter Benjamin says,

> [e]very day the urge grows stronger to *get hold* of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. Unmistakably, reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye. Uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former.[18]

Nâzım asks the cosmonauts about their arrogance, as they are the ones with the "auratic experience." Then, curiously, he goes on to recount that he saw the photographs, "reproductions," of cosmos in a magazine, *Ogoniok*, and liken them to nonfigurative, abstract paintings, but in their very being nonfigurative and abstract, he finds them to be terribly figurative and concrete. What does this mean? Why does he write "don't be upset comrades" ("*kızmayın ama yoldaşlar*") before likening the photos to nonfigurative and abstract paintings? Why would the comrades be upset with or get angry at nonfigurative paintings? Is it because those paintings are not "realist" enough? Does he say it because he is afraid or because he does not care anymore about the official artistic definitions by which his oeuvre has been delimited?

---

17 "On Truth and Lie," 53.

18 "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 223. Emphasis mine. Similarly, in her book studying the ways in which the Hubble spaces telescope images make us to see the cosmos, Elizabeth Kessler argues that these images "invoke the sublime and... encourage the viewer to experience the cosmos visually *and* rationally, to see the universe as simultaneously beyond humanity's grasp and within reach of our systems of knowledge." *Picturing the Cosmos: Hubble Space Telescope Images and the Astronomical Sublime* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 5. As also evident in Benjamin's and Nâzım's remarks, cosmos represents a sublimity in the face of which the human is decentered but at the same time the ability to "capture" it and its knowledge with images recenter it in the universe.

I believe that he does not care anymore but just speaks truth to the very power relations through which he had made himself and his poetics. In fact, he criticizes himself by taking all the risks. He seems to be ready to burn all he had made up at once.[19] He digresses in exile. He reveals the things he did not know he loved, things he once suppressed successfully, things he forgot not to be seen as a petit bourgeois, for example. Here is another passage from the same poem: "moonlight the falsest the most languid the most petit-bourgeois / strikes me / I like it" ("*ayışığı geliyor aklıma / en aygın baygın en yalancısı en küçük burjuvası / severmişim*").[20] He means that, however petit bourgeois and cliché it may be, he likes the moonlight in all the forms, no matter what might be told about him having such a "taste." Once again, he speaks truth to all the power relations he had clung to and perhaps still does, specifically to the life-time tension that the possibility of being called "petit bourgeois" caused.

In another part of the same poem, a blurry memory from his childhood pops up like a silhouette:

> I've written this somewhere before
> Wading through a dark muddy street I am going to the shadow play
> Ramazan night
> a paper lantern leading the way
> maybe nothing like this ever happened
> maybe I read it somewhere an eight-year-old boy
> going to the shadow play
> Ramazan night in Istanbul holding his grandfather's hand
> his grandfather has on a fez and is wearing the fur coat
> with a sable collar over his robe
> and there's a lantern in the servant's hand

19 In a similar fashion, yet a different context, Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi argues that Foucault saw a moment of enlightenment in the Iranian Revolution, because there he observed a group of people who were ready to pay a price, the price for access to the truth, which is situated in the possible alteration and destruction of the self, and in the form of a question: "What... is the work I must carry on myself... to be able to access to truth?" *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* (Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 177–78.

20 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," 262.

and I can't contain myself for joy.[21]

The eight-year-old boy in the poem is Nâzım Hikmet, the grandson of an Ottoman paşa. Why does he recall that moment vaguely, why is his memory blurry, why is he so cautious that he says even that it might not be his own past but from something he reads? Why is his remembrance as shadowy as the shadow play (*Karagöz*) he was going to?[22] Because, once again, he forgot, not to be named as a grandson of paşa (*paşa torunu*) but a communist, an uncompromising one. For there has always been a question, a doubt, as to the sincerity of egalitarians who come from wealthy families.[23] During his entire life Nâzım seems to have worked hard to forget or not to remember his grandfather, his family; he tried to prove that "he changed his class and became a communist."[24] Of

21 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," 262.

22 He says that he wrote this somewhere before. That somewhere is possibly his essay titled "*Oyunlarım Üstüne*" ("On My Plays") that he wrote around the same time with this poem, in 1962. He begins it by describing the same event, the shadow play he went to with his grandfather. He says, "I am aware, for the first time in my life... I am writing a memoir, I guess. However, if there is someone who cannot write his memories, that is me. Why is that?... The reason is so simple: my memory is as weak as you cannot imagine. Details do not stick in my mind, dates, names I cannot keep them in mind." And at some point, he stumbles, "once again, I conflated the order of my memories. I am aware, I am always complaining about this. But does human remember what he or she has been through necessarily in a chronological order?" Nâzım Hikmet, "Oyunlarım Üstüne," in *Yazılar 1* (İstanbul: YKY, 2018), 326, 332. Translation mine.

23 Herbert Marcuse suggests that "[t]he fact that the artist belongs to a privileged group negates neither the truth nor the aesthetic quality of his work. What is true of 'the classics of socialism' is true also of the great artists: they break through the class limitations of their family, background, environment." This shows that even in the late 1970s within Marxist circles there is a question concerning the "sincerity" of the artists coming from upper classes. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward A Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 19. A far more interesting thing comes out in Said's discussion of Theodor Adorno's late style. He suggests that Adorno's late style, that is his critical style, is grounded in his acknowledgement of his elite uprising—"suspicions were well founded"—as well as in his critical, ironic, and cynical attitude toward society in which his critique is cultivated. *On Late Style* (New York: Pantheon, 2006), 20–21.

24 As I have cited in the Chapter 2, see, for example, his 1947 poem "In the Era of Sultan Hamit."

course, he also tried to get rid of the Ottoman/imperial luggage that his connection with his grandfather might reveal. Let me turn to Nietzsche once again on this matter.

> Deception, flattering, lying, deluding, talking behind the back, putting up a false front, living in borrowed splendor, wearing a mask, hiding behind convention, *playing a role for others and for oneself* – in short, a continuous flattering around the solitary flame of vanity – is so much the rule and the law among men that there is almost nothing which is less comprehensible than how an honest and pure drive for thought could have arisen among them. [25]

The roles we play for others and ourselves are shaped by the power relations in and through which we make ourselves. Doing so, we forget, remember, present and construct ourselves, modify and regulate who we are, who we were, and who we may be. Nâzım identifies those relations that made him and, perhaps without knowing, critique them and himself made by them.

§ 5.3 Destructive Memory

He now remembers, he remembers how joyful it is that he once went to a shadow play with his grandfather. However, he does not use the past tense, which prevents the conclusion that it is a joy of the past experience that he points to. He says, "I can't contain myself for joy" ("*benim içim içime sığmıyor sevinçten*") while at the same time moving from the third-person narrator to the first-person. Would it be the joy of remembrance, of recalling what was forcefully forgotten, and of being now able to critique the act of forgetting and forgetfulness? Edward Said describes one of the features of late style as "a return or homecoming to realms forgotten or left behind by the relentless advancement of history."[26] Nâzım, in literal exile, seems to have returned to a metaphorical home (of memories).

25 "On Truth and Lie," 54. Emphasis mine.

26 Edward Said, *On Late Style*, 135.

Also important in Said's remarks is breaking the advancement of the history. And this is manifest in the multiple tenses and the fractured structure that breaks the poem into discontinuous and disorderly episodes, making it non-directional. There no more appears to be a teleology Nâzım advocates for. The recurring verse of the poem is "I Didn't Know I loved" and it blurs the very distinction between past and present. It is a realization at the present but at the same time recognition that he had always loved some things in the past without knowing that he loved them. They now "pop up" in a disordered mode at a moment of looking back, as if it was a moment of catastrophe. He tells his "living" story but by no means from a linear or chronological perspective. He began the poem with supposedly the present, what the date is (March 28, 1962), and where he is (sitting by the window on the Prague-Berlin train). Then he turns to future: "the river will bring new lights you'll never see."[27] Yet a little later he remembers his years in the prison between 1938 and 1950:

> in prison I translated both [two] volumes of War and Peace into Turkish
> I hear voices
> not from the blue vault but from the yard
> the guards are beating someone again.[28]

These are past memories, he translated Tolstoy's *War and Peace* to make ends meet in the prison, true,[29] but he hears the prisoner beaten by the guards *now*, at the present, while sitting by the window on the Prague-Berlin train, twelve years after his release from the prison. Once again, he tells a past experience in present tense: "Vera's behind the wheel we're driving from Moscow to the Crimea"[30] and then he remembers, however vaguely, his grandfather and his holding his hand in a Ramazan night, sometime in the first decade of the twentieth century. From the age of

27 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," 261.

28 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," 261–262.

29 He translated the book in collaboration with Zeki Baştımar, often benefitting from the French translation. Recently, his name, too, for the first time, appeared in a edition of the translation published by Can Yayınları.

30 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," 262.

eight he moves to seventeen (perhaps late 1910s) and recalls his first kiss with a girl (named Marika) in Kadıköy, İstanbul. But suddenly he turns to the prison years again: "friends sent me three red carnations in prison."[31] From there he turns to a very recent moment, the moment he saw the color photos of the cosmos in *Ogonek* magazine.[32] And so on. We are travelling between discontinuous and shadowy moments. Adorno defines the late Beethoven as "the cesuras, the sudden discontinuities that... moments of breaking away."[33] Nâzım, too, seems to break away. He breaks away from order, both from the teleological order and the order of his own works.

We are not told about where he comes from (probably Prague) and where he is going to (probably Berlin) and why he is travelling. Just as his living story is by no means teleological as told by the poem, the train does not have to arrive at somewhere; it just goes. He suggests, at the end of the poem: "I didn't know I loved so many things and I had to wait until sixty / to find it out sitting by the window on the Prague-Berlin train / watching the world disappear as if on *a journey of no return*."[34]

It seems that his journey (of living) has no directionality and no teleology. It is not about arriving but going. It is "a journey of no return." Like Walter Benjamin's destructive character, Nâzım now sees ways everywhere. Benjamin has a piece, a *Denkbild*, called "Destructive Character," originally published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1931. Here is how it begins:

> It could happen to someone looking back over his life that he realized that almost all the deeper obligations he had endured in its course originated in people who everyone agreed had the traits of a "destructive character." He would stumble on this fact one day,

31 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," 263.

32 The first Soviet spacecraft called *Kosmos* was launched on March 16, 1962, almost two weeks before Hikmet's travel on the Prague-Berlin train.

33 Edward Said, *On Late Style*, 11.

34 "Things I Didn't Know I Loved," 264. Emphasis mine. And they come with the shadow of death. He asks why he discovers these now: "is it because I lit my sixth cigarette / one alone could kill me."

> perhaps by chance, and the heavier the shock dealt to him, the better his chances of representing the destructive character.[35]

To dissect, this seems to suggest that when one day one looks back, and Nâzım looks back over his life on the train, and understands that all the troubles and obligations that he had in the past is due to destructive character(s) and, upon this realization and "shock," he himself starts representing, becoming, that destructive character. Who is the destructive character in Nâzım's narrative though? Himself. A destructive Nâzım for Nâzım's self-construction and self-identity: a "petit bourgeois" who likes the moonlight, the most languid one, and a grandson of paşa who cannot contain himself for joy, who has a taste for nonfigurative paintings. He identifies the destructive character and "becomes" him by destroying himself.

This character, according to Benjamin, destroys everything; makes room and clears away. His is a journey of no return, no arrival, no departure, no direction. For "his need for fresh air and open space is stronger than any hatred."[36] Destruction is what keeps him young and cheerful, because destroying rejuvenates by clearing away the traces of age and clearing away "means to the destroyer a complete reduction, indeed eradication, of his own condition."[37] In March 1962, on the train, Nâzım is almost one year away from his death, and the idea of death is there with him, but he roots out of his condition. He ventures into the shadowy memories, the forgotten moments, the things he did not know he loved. He breaks the "whole" into multiple Nâzıms. And, as he breaks, he realizes how easily the world falls apart, multiplies, when it is tested by destruction. Yet this is by no means an individual or personal matter. Rather, "this is the great bond embracing and unifying all that exists. It is a sight that affords the destructive character a spectacle of deepest harmony."[38] For it is, in fact, the nature that destroys, "that dictates his tempo,

35 Walter Benjamin, "Destructive Character," in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, (London: NLB, 1979), 157.

36 "Destructive Character," 157.

37 "Destructive Character," 157.

38 "Destructive Character," 157.

indirectly at least, for he must forestall her. Otherwise, she will take over the destruction herself."[39] We are back at the point. The world will perish. It is just transient. We are minute. And the only way to deal with this destruction is to destroy ourselves. That is why the destructive character is always blithely at work.

The destructive character does not aim at being understood. He finds the attempts in this regard superficial. In fact, he provokes misunderstanding, "just as oracles and the destructive institutions of the state"[40] provoke it. Here Benjamin redefines petit bourgeois. A petit bourgeois is not one who likes the moonlight but the one who is afraid of being misunderstood and thus constantly represents himself as a whole. Nâzım always wanted to be understood. He did not reveal, or forgot, that he likes the moonlight not to be seen as a petit bourgeois. But Benjamin suggests that a petit bourgeois is, in fact, the one who is afraid of being misunderstood. The destructive character should perhaps be misunderstood. By breaking away, Nâzım now wants to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and led astray.

He has "an insuperable mistrust of the course of things at all times to recognize that everything can go wrong."[41] Death is there with him at every moment. It is usually held that late works of the artists are not reliable. But Benjamin suggests destructive character is the reliability itself, because he knows that there is nothing permanent. Late Nâzım is most reliable now. For he knows that "no moment can know what the next will bring."[42] The destructive character is an ambivalent figure. He tries to beat the rhythm of nature by bringing about a closure and yet has no conception of closure, no telos, no expectations, as in Nâzım's journey of no return, and he understands how small he is and thus is ready for his own destruction.

Here Nâzım's critique of himself connects to his critique of anthropocentricism and the Anthropocene. Despite his precarious life, he

39 "Destructive Character," 157.

40 "Destructive Character," 158.

41 "Destructive Character," 158.

42 "Destructive Character," 158.

constructed himself at the center of the world vis-à-vis the other, as an autonomous whole, just as his Marxist poetics places the man at the center of the world as the creator and the destroyer of the world, the source of everything in the world. Late Nâzım destroys this image of whole with "a cascading series of discontinuous fragments, all of them in some way assaulting suspicious 'wholes'," as Said comments on Adorno's late style.[43] That is why, despite the fact that late style is not always about aging and that even death seems fragmented in lateness, it reminds us the death, not only the death of the artist, but also the approaching death of "man," as early Foucault announces in both the beginning and end of *The Order of Things*.[44] That is why Nâzım's "late style is *in*, but oddly *apart from* the present,"[45] the present marked by the Anthropocene. It is in, because it follows its rhythm, but apart from, as it is too late now to keep up with it.

I consider the Anthropocene an ethos, as Foucault's Kant consider the Enlightenment, or Foucault himself considers modernity: it is at once *what is* and *what ought to be*.[46] The cause of the Anthropocene is the "man" placed at the center of the world and its potential effect is the erasure, unmaking, of the same man. Yet to unmake the Anthropocene itself, the "man" must decenter, unmake himself. It is what is about to happen unless we interfere and at the same time what ought to happen through our interference. It is the present precarious existence of ours that urges us to unmake ourselves. But we are late. And our lateness reminds us death, or perhaps it requires death; it is dictated by the tempo of the nature, its total passing away. We have to catch up with the rhythm, the cadence of nature, that is the cadence of death.

---

43 *On Late Style*, 42.

44 In the preface of the book, he suggests that "[man] will disappear again as soon as that knowledge [that invented him] has discovered a new form," and ends the book by saying that "one can certainly wager that [soon] man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea." *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2002), xxv; 422.

45 *On Late Style*, 24.

46 Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Vintage, 1984), 35.

§ 5.4 The Fable and the Rhythm of Transience

Referring to the story he told about cooling and congealing of this world, Nietzsche says that such a fable might be invented but still would not be adequate to illustrate how miserable we are. Still, Nâzım invents a fable where (hu)man is not placed at the center but placed as just one among all other living beings, as he now feels through nature and accords with its rhythm. It is called "Fable of Fables" written in 1958 in Warsaw. There are five "things" juxtaposed without one being superior over others, even though the story is told by the poet. The things are plane tree, the poet (i.e., Nâzım Hikmet or the "I"), cat, sun, water, and their life (ömür).

> We are by the waterside
> the plane tree and I.
> Our reflections are thrown on the water
> the plane tree's and mine.
> The sparkle of the water hits us
> the plane tree and me.[47]

There is a water and at its side stands the poet and the plane tree. And they are lightened by the water's shining—the water shines through the sunlight—and their reflections (semblances) are thrown on the water.

And then comes a cat. It repeats. "The sparkle of the water" this time hits all three: "the plane tree, I and the cat." In the third stanza, the sun joins them and, interestingly, the *life* of the plane tree, the poet, the cat, and the sun is also there, both as lifespan of each and life on earth as a whole. It repeats again.

> We are by the waterside
> the plane tree, I, the cat, the sun and our life (*çınar, ben, kedi, güneş, bir de ömrümüz*)
> Our reflections are thrown on the water

47 The original Turkish reads: Su başında durmuşuz / çınarla ben. / Suda suretimiz çıkıyor / çınarla benim. / Suyun şavkı vuruyor bize / çınarla bana. Here I use Richard McKane's translation of the poem. See Nâzım Hikmet, "Fable of Fables," in *Beyond the Walls: Selected Poems*, trans. Ruth Christie, Richard McKane, Talât S. Halman (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2002), 203–205.

the plane tree's, mine, the cat's, the sun's and our life's.
The sparkle of the water hits us
the plane tree, me, the cat, the sun and our life.[48]

Why does their life (*ömür*) join these living things though? *Ömür*, originated from the Arabic *'umr*, also the root of the word *umrah* meaning short visit, refers to yaşam (life) but with temporal implications, as in "lifetime." This time Nâzım does not use *yaşam(ak)* for life, with biological and even sometimes organicist implications, but *ömür*, which seems to signify a transience, ephemerality, and finality.

It is still puzzling that an "immaterial" concept, ömür, joins the "material," and living, things in the poem written by the self-proclaimed materialist poet. It stands with them at the waterside. The next stanza of the poem is about who will perish first, whose life will end before others, under "normal" circumstances, in the way the nature works without disturbance. And "*ömür*" signifies here a total passing away, even its own passing away as a notion. They are at the waterside: the cat, the poet, the plane tree, the water, the sun, and their life. The first one to leave, taking its semblance on the water with itself, is the cat whose life is the shortest under normal circumstances. The poet will follow the cat and his reflection on the water will be lost. Third is the plane tree and its reflection on the water, and then the water itself will go and there will be no more reflection. The sun will remain for a while and then it, too, will leave eventually. This is told as if they all, especially the poet, know this without feeling any anger or sorrow. They all keep up with the rhythm of nature. Each knows in what order they will leave the scene. Even the sun and the life (*ömür*) itself will have a closure. No more repetition. Even the notion of ömür passes away.

They are not uncomfortable with this in any sense. They just do what they do. They do not force each other to do something, especially the poet, the human. He is not in a hurry to make use of the water or the plane tree; he does not work to shape them for his "needs," to take the advantage of "solar energy," to extract something from the nature, unlike

48 "Fable of Fables," 204.

the nature as outside as it is the case with most of Nâzım's previous poems. Rather, now, he feels through it. The nature feeling his feeling, on the other hand, is not in the business of "taking revenge," as the popular trope of our day goes. The sun does not warm more than it usually does; it is just warm enough. They are standing side by side in peace as the last stanza tells us.

> We are by the waterside
> the plane tree, I, the cat, the sun and our life.
> The water is cool
> the plane tree is huge
> I am writing a poem
> the cat is dozing
> the sun is warm
> it's good to be alive. (*çok şükür yaşıyoruz*)
> The sparkle of the water hits us
> the plane tree, me, the cat, the sun, our life.[49]

Everything works in the way they "normally" do, and they do so on their own terms: the water is cool, the plane tree is huge, the human is writing a poem, the cat is dozing, the sun is warm. Life is good while passing away in its totality. This is the Apollonian image of the destroyer that Benjamin points to. The poet, the destructive character, lives the moment but knows that it will perish, just as Nietzsche describes, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the Apollonian character as the dreamer knowing that what he sees is a dream.[50] And everything passes away in an Apollonian order. It is just tranquil. He is happy. "*Çok şükür yaşıyoruz*." "*Şükür*," an Islamic concept, rhyming in the poem with "*ömür*," is an expression of being happy with or grateful for what is given (by God) and/or having no further needs or desires beyond the given. It is only in its transience that life is good.

In his "Theologico-Political Fragment," written in the early 1920s, Walter Benjamin suggests,

---

49 "Fable of Fables," 204.

50 For a thorough account of Nietzschean effects in Benjamin along these lines, see Mauro Ponzi, *Nietzsche's Nihilism in Walter Benjamin* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

> To the spiritual *restitutio in integrum*, which introduces immortality, corresponds a worldly restitution that leads to the eternity of downfall, and the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence, transient in its totality, in its spatial but also in its temporal totality, the rhythm of Messianic nature, is happiness. For nature is Messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away.[51]

For Benjamin worldly restitution is in the natural rhythm of perishing, not in the overcoming of this perishing. We are not interested in surviving death, but in the rhythm of its coming. It is the rhythm that leads to happiness (*Glück*). As Yannik Thiem suggests, therefore, in Benjamin, "theological thinking becomes a matter of grasping of our experience of transience in life and history in a nonindividual, nonpersonal, yet not in an ahistorical or transhistorical way."[52] In his lateness, Nâzım reaches his own theological thinking which is deeply personal and, precisely because of this, deeply historical and political. Thus, it is in tune with the rhythm of nature, the rhythm of our own transience. This enables the total passing away in happiness. The fable, and parable, of our age, of the modernity and the Anthropocene, more urgently than ever, then, is to decenter the human, the "I." The poet knows very well how small, how fleeting, how transient his existence is in this world, and how insignificant this world is. Coming to terms with this is the very condition that makes one live "as if [one] will never die"[53] but also as if tomorrow is the final day.

So far in this chapter I have argued that Nâzım Hikmet, a Marxist avant-garde and a pioneer in Turkish literary modernity, has a late style. This late style is lyric, exilic, and catastrophic. It works against the linearity of the teleological or chronological order and the order of Nâzım's oeuvre. However, this is not a "turn" or "rupture," because it is not a self-conscious move from one style or mode to another. Rather, like his shadowy memories, Nâzım's late works seem to pop up at different and

51 Benjamin, "Theologico-Political Fragment," in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, (London: NLB, 1979), 156.

52 Annika Thiem, "Benjamin's Messianic Metaphysics of Transience," in *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, ed. Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 34.

53 Nâzım Hikmet, "On Living," in *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet*, 133.

unexpected times. They are episodic both in genesis and in style. Neither would this mean that he left behind communism by the de-Stalinization of the Soviet Union in the early 1950s, because, though rare, he has late works written before 1950s, like the poem "On Living" I analyzed here.[54] Instead, these are just flashing moments that intensified toward the end of his life, when he started to look back. They just come out "strangely," as he defined the first part of the "On Living series," or in the form of blurry, transient memories that are not even told in the first-person.

Following Said's remark that literary modernism itself can be seen as a late style phenomenon,[55] Nâzım's work in late style might be taken as his modernist moments. This has already been discussed by Nergis Ertürk in the context of his 1962 novel *Life's Good, Brother*, another late work of Nâzım. And as Ertürk also discusses, these moments might be seen as the "real" communism that Nâzım once envisaged and imagined.[56] I agree that these are the works that are political and the ones that we need to look into for the present political possibilities, especially in the Anthropocene. For these are the works that decenter the "I" by embracing the always already precarity of that "I," which becomes apparent when it is conceived as just a being among others and juxtaposed with the vastness of earth, "I mean *this*, our great earth," and the sublimity of cosmos.

I have tried to demonstrate this by reading the selected poems of Nâzım against the grain, through a comparative close reading with the ideas of Nietzsche and Benjamin. Using the retrospective advantage of the intellectual historian, I have brought together seemingly disparate

54 Similarly, Nâzım's late lyricism does not mean that, after the revelation of Stalin's mass murders during 1950s, he found refuge in the personal lyric from the totalitarianism his politics turned into. Rather, it might be taken as a political and personal response to the totalizing regime. A similar argument made by Clare Cavanagh in the context of Russian and Polish poetry after 1917, against the discourses that tend to characterize the lyric poetry as an escapist tendency under totalitarian regimes. See her *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

55 *On Late Style*, 135.

56 Nergis Ertürk, "Nâzım Hikmet and the Prose of Communism," *boundary 2* 47, no. 2 (2020): 153.

figures based on some thematical, or rather "anecdotal," similarities. For such similarities remind us that we must work against ourselves, risk them, and only in this way we can remember that in question is not only a personal issue, or the issue of personal lateness or poetic lyricism, but rather lateness of our age. Let me end this by turning to Benjamin one last time: "man can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of modern men to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights."[57]

57 "One-Way Street" in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, (London: NLB, 1979), 103.

Conclusion

Ölüyoruz, demek ki yaşanılacak.
[We are dying, so it is going to be lived.]

– İsmet Özel, "Yıkılma Sakın"

§ I Critique

"So you've shown from afar how the discursive assumptions that Marxist and feminist militants and thinkers are using are all deeply entangled with power. This reveals that you have mastered the application of critical tool, but is that enough?" asks Fadi Bardawil.[1] Here I, too, have shown how the discourses through which Nâzım built himself are shaped by the post-Enlightenment Western discourses and entangled with the relevant power structures, especially the modern state. Furthermore, I have done this by applying to him the critical tools developed in the Western metropoles and, thus, rendering him an object of the metropolitan theory rather than a thinker on a part with it. However, to say that

1 Fadi Bardawil, *Revolution and Disenchantment*, 22.

the metropolitan theorists see the nonmetropolitan political intellectuals as not fellow theorists but objects of their critiques is to say these metropolitan theorists are fully shaped by their material/social conditions—and this always comes with an (implicit or explicit) inattentiveness to the particularities of these "metropolitan" theories to underline their *underlying* metropolitanism. So, this seems to (re-)apply the alleged metropolitan critical tools to metropolitan theorists themselves.

But must our critiques, metropolitan or not, always turn into a work of "revealing the underlying conditions" that shape certain texts, intellectuals, theories, and works? This question captures one of the most important stakes in this thesis: a search for, a gesture toward, a critique that is not necessarily motivated to point to and uncover the underlying conditions. For when pointing to the underlying conditions, the critics usually position themselves in a *conditionless* space, a space of outsider neutrality, and, ultimately, a space of the ahistorical liberal subject making decisions about such-and-such conditions underlying such-and-such works and thoughts. That is, critique often becomes a form of finding out some "deeper" structures that delimit the other's works and thought, assuming that the critique itself speaks from a space and time unaffected by the same or similar structures.

It is the positing of such a subject that is able to speak without being affected by "deeper" structures that I have attempted to problematize in this thesis. To be more explicit, this is the issue I have been at pains to address in the thesis through a myriad of concepts such as the liberal subject, the human, the unified author, the whole, and so on. Whatever name it is given, such a subject is imagined as the one who can make neutral and rational judgments about the world one inhabits taking a step back from it, and can constitute the single author(ity) over, and owner/producer of, its own life, thoughts, and actions. This is also the subject of the natural human rights and that of the positivist scientific neutrality. The issue that puzzles me is how come we work through this subject even when our critiques are deeply historical (historicist or historical materialist, if you like). In this regard, this thesis might be considered self-contradictory, or betraying itself, because it, too, is at times

"seduced" by the work of identifying "underlying conditions." But this is in particular applicable to the Marxist epistemology. Although it is our foremost historical/historicist discourse (or alternatively perhaps because of this), it is able to tell everyone what kind of "underlying conditions" within which they are speaking, mostly without being concerned with the conditions that shape its own discourse. It is then a discourse that is mainly directed at the historical conditions of the other, not those of the self. In such a discourse, the Marxist thinker is always a subject that is not conditioned by the underlying conditions. And this all-seeing quality is what enable them to talk about the underlying conditions of the others. They can explain the "whole," or the "totality," by assigning every event and phenomenon to a function in the total narrative, except the critic themselves. It is this humanism (of the critique) in Marxist thought as it appears in Nâzım that I have tried to critically evaluate in this thesis.

This brings me to another related, and equally important, point Bardawil makes in his work: some of those metropolitan critics and theirs works, for example, Susan Buck-Morss's *Thinking Past Terror*, make a distinction between the Marxist and modernist-nationalist Arab thinkers, on the one hand, and the Islamist ones, on the other, and then considers the latter as the authentic politics of the region, which can resist the hegemony of the Western epistemology while disqualifying the latter being unauthentic, being "conditioned" by the Western discourse.[2] This raises an important question for me too: should our critique of the nonmetropolitan Marxist thinkers like Nâzım Hikmet[3] necessarily end up with a search for the "authenticity" in the supposedly "non-Western" elements occupying the same place—which runs the risk of aligning with an authoritarian government in most of the cases? (The problems associated with directly identifying Islam as the "non-Western" element and thereby the prime candidate for authenticity are also obvious here). If our critique ends up with this search for the authenticity, as I have argued here, this means that we still act and see like the state, as a whole, with

2 *Revolution and Disenchantment*, 53–82.

3 I must note that I am not sure at all whether Nâzım Hikmet was really a "non-Western," "nonmetropolitan" intellectual.

an outside from which we should always defend ourselves to protect our "authenticity" from the penetration of the outside, Western, elements. This is what I have tried to argue throughout the thesis. To make it clearer: in question is a twofold argument. On the one hand, self-modernizing/westernizing nationalist projects produce a nation-state where there is always an external threat, because these projects are undertaken at once both to be like the West and to be immune to its penetration that is ready to be justified under the pretext of bringing the humanity to the non-West. On the other hand, those who identify authentic elements and want to defend them against the Western contamination produce a similar state structure to protect and keep themselves "pure." In all cases, the modern state structure brought from the West either by colonialism or by self-modernizing projects is in play. And this structure is able to create its own colonialism, its own Orient, as in Turkey against Kurds and Arabs. Being state means being colonial.

Another question is whether critique is always a critique of an outside object, of the "other." Is my critique of Nâzım Hikmet really singlehandedly directed at Nâzım Hikmet? Reading and getting to know Nâzım was my coming-of-age experience. And I grew up weary of hearing all the same positive appraisals and endorsements of his figure in Turkey, and I read and hear about him not in the metropole, not even in the metropole *of* Turkey. It is always said that Nâzım has always been "protected" somehow implying either that he could not be silenced due to the presence of his family in the upper echelons of the state and society or that he was in fact "reluctantly" guarded by Mustafa Kemal and Kemalism. Whether he is protected or not in this sense, he is always protected in the vast literature devoted to his works. I believe it is now a time to unprotect Nâzım, because only when he is unprotected, the new possibilities of reading and by reading him might be opened up. Still, this is a critique directed at the outside, no matter how much it had been part of my experience. However, returning to Paul de Man's notion that autobiography is a figure of reading that can be found in every text. In this text, too, the autobiographical elements can be found, but obviously I would not cite them here. But the critique I directed at Nâzım Hikmet might be

taken as the critique directed at myself, a work on myself, because I do not see him, his figure, not a distinct, outside phenomenon to myself.

My call for unprotecting Nâzım, unprotecting the subjects in a context like Turkey, and now, might be seen as a "preach of violence" and/or as yet another spelling out of the death-of-the-subject discourse. This might also be triggered by Foucault's apparent influence in this thesis, as the "Western" theorist whose theories I apply to Nâzım Hikmet. Furthermore, he kept telling us that what he speaks about is only valid for the West or the Western modernity. Was he just being precautious concerning the "unknown lands" to himself, or is he simply Eurocentric? Even worse, in a few rare instances where he engaged with the "East," he seems to have highly romanticized it, especially the death-events he witnessed there. As he is often charged, he praised for the Iranian revolutionaries and their sacrificial politics which led up to a theocratic and murderous regime in Iran. He found his "heterotopias," possibly his alternatives to the Western modernity, in "certain Chinese encyclopedia" imagined by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges. So, was he nothing other than a highly sophisticated Orientalist? Maybe. But what I take him to be is a relentless critique of the (Western) modernity and its principle based on the figure of the human that I have been talking about. He searched for the ways in which we can decenter this human, which is an utmost urgency in our present.

§ II The Present, Again

The decentering this human is not a personal matter, nor about a death of this and that subject, nor about the institutionalized Western academics' drawing "critical lessons" from the deaths of the Middle Eastern subjects. It is a work of violating the borders and the boundaries of the human that has been for long thought to be the central subject in and of the world. Everything outside the human has been thought to be *for* the human. Signed by the work of biopolitics, we, the humans, have forgotten that we are mortal beings. As Benjamins suggests, to repress death is to repress nature. So, it is a work of reminding ourselves the death and our

fleetingness. Therefore, it is an ethical and collective project of working on ourselves, a project of writing off ourselves. One of the gestures here is that maybe this writing off the self might be very related to the work of writing off the nation-states. And maybe another gesture is that this might be the work of the "non-West" or Jameson's "third world" literatures which have already been writing the self and the state together.

Another dimension of the present I have dwelt on in the Introduction: hunger strikes might be seen as "parables" of this human and its sheer impossibility. I have expressed my puzzlement with the difference between Nâzım's hunger strike and the hunger strikes today. The former that took only eighteen days was not deadly at all while the latter are deadly through and through usually taking more than two hundred days. In the case of the latter recent hunger strikes, hunger strikers compete with the state to win the sovereignty over their own life. They try to usurp the state of its power to decide life and death by acting like a state but also, at the end of the day, leaving the decision to the state once again. However, they establish their full sovereignty over their life only when death comes. This demonstrates the sheer impossibility of the sovereign subject over life. This is also valid in the case of Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike, especially acting like a state, but there I have argued that it must be thought with his life and writing, and can be taken as a fragment from which to read his life and oeuvre, which are deeply marked by his self-writing against the others and their gazes. He writes himself as a unified object and the single, absolute producer of his life and thought, vis-à-vis these gazes. However, everywhere he needs these gazes, he needs the outside to be in, he needs the help to write the self as one. His hunger strike, too, has been made possible by the existence of these "outside" gazes, just as himself as the author. That is, his writing of the self always carries the possibility of writing off the self within itself, which, as I have argued in the previous chapter, becomes apparent in his late style. Late Nâzım is ready to violate his self and welcome the outside, which is perhaps why the "guests" is really an important theme in these late works.

Once again to go back to the Introduction, this puzzlement between the past and the present hunger strikes brought me to a

problematization of the notion of hunger strikes and to an understanding that each hunger strike requires a different historical elaboration. For there is no single definition of hunger strike that we can apply to the every case identified as hunger strike. There are all kinds of phenomena that goes by the name of hunger strikes: hunger strike as a suicide, hunger strikes as a way of disciplining the body, hunger strike as a pacifist act of civil disobedience, hunger strike as the prisoner's method of resistance, hunger strike as a weapon in the asymmetric warfare, hunger strike as a "terrorist" tactic, hunger strike as a last call, hunger strike as death fast, and so on. That is why I felt a need for the introduction of a distinction, a break, between the past and present of hunger strikes in Turkey. I do this in a sense to problematize the purported lineage from Nâzım Hikmet to the present practices of the leftist politics of Turkey. Nâzım Hikmet is no doubt a figure looming large in the mental life of the Turkish left. However, his politics and present largely differs from the left today, as even two different practices. And what is commonsensically seen as the political in Nâzım might need to be replaced for the present, as I have tried to do here. There is a distinction widely drawn between Nâzım's political, "ideological," works and lyrical, "personal," works. I have tried to place the political in the lyrical, because working on the self, or writing off the self, emerges there, and because reading him "now" politically entails it.

Third meaning of the present that shaped the thesis or that is the "underlying condition" of the thesis: the present of Turkey. Since a while, there has been a purge going on in this country, in our schools, in workplaces, and in our commons. The state is everywhere and everyone. It is from this present emerges my critique of Nâzım's writing of life and the self as the state writing, searching for its roots in the larger context of modernity, as it has been shaped by the humanism, colonialism, biopolitics, and the modern state. That is to say, our present in this country might have been the work of decades and centuries rather than a recent occurrence. But, to repeat, the "dark" historical frame drawn here is conditioned by the present, by our present writing of the state. But it is done to seek out any hope for writing it off. And, as I have tried to show, it might

be possible only in connection with a writing off ourselves, writing off the human. Before putting an end to this study, I want to summarize what I have done in the chapters of this thesis once again.

§ III Summary

In the Chapter 1, "Writing of Life: Biopolitics, Hunger Strikes, and the Person of the State," working mostly through Foucault's formulations, I have discussed biopolitics as a modern discourse that places human life under the protection and guarantee of the modern state, that urges the state to defend the society by all means and at all costs, and grounds its existence on this prime duty of social defense. I have argued that hunger strike is a modern biopolitical resistance, as it relies on this discourse of the state as the protector of life and suggests that the state is unable to do so as evident in the suspended body of hunger strikers. It calls for the "outside" of the state to look at them and, thus, look at the state deviating from the norm of being state. I have argued that it is a practice that is closely connected to and reinforces the modern state as the defender of life and society.

In the same chapter, I inquired into a potential resemblance between the idea of the author in particular, the individual in general, and the modern state. In what ways the individual is constructed as the sovereign, the autonomous and self-producing entity, and in what ways this is similar to the discourse of the modern nation-state, the self-enclosed entity with borders, with a definite inside and outside, and as the sole rationality and authority of life. To be more specific, I have interrogated the ways in which the modern author is constructed analogous to the making of the modern state, the ways in which the modern political and literary authors/authorities interact with each other and are modeled after one another. Nâzım Hikmet tends to establish himself, strives to be or appear as, the indivisible authority over his life, word, and action. Keeping this in mind, on a more general level, here I attempt to investigate, or once again make a gesture toward, the ways in which modern individuals practice state and the modern state is imagined as a person, as an author

through a series of anthropomorphisms and personifications in Western political thought that permeates the colonial practices and experiences. In conclusion, I have discussed that we tend to be like states in two senses. First, we are like states in the sense that we call the state to arms to safeguard life and reinforce this everywhere, even in our resistance practices. That is, we constantly reproduce it. Second, we are like states in the sense that we define ourselves as single unified entities, individuals, self-producing wholes with definite inviolable borders and boundaries vis-à-vis others outside. In conclusion, following Foucault, I have attempted to show that "the state is a practice."

In the Chapter 2, "Writing of the Self: 'Nâzım Hikmet'," I have tried to point to some recurring themes, images, origin stories, beginnings and re-beginnings, and fantasies through which Nâzım and the discourse on him constructed "Nâzım Hikmet" in his poems and other works. Even if this might be considered to be a biographical sketch, rather than attempt to establish a linear, factual, and coherent biographical narrative, I have played with fragmentary stories and myths that have been surrounding and constituting the still present discourse on Nâzım Hikmet. The argument was simply that despite the fact that Nâzım is many and multiple, he tends to portray himself as one, an identity, always positioning himself vis-à-vis the gaze of others, always responding and reacting to their presence whose objectification, in turn, makes possible Nâzım as a self-producing and unified authority over his own life and thought. Beyond the biographical sketch, this has served as one of the building blocks for my argument that his hunger strike is a "synecdoche" of Nâzım's life and poetics; that is, it is a fragment of his life that explains the "whole," the whole that both Nâzım himself and his biographies claim for him. Yet at the same time this has demonstrated the paradoxical nature of such a work in which the "man" needs the presence/gaze of others to be able to construct himself as the one.

In the Chapter 3, "Writing of Hunger: Poetics of the Hungry Gaze," I have read Nâzım Hikmet's 1922 poem "Açların Gözbebekleri" along with Knut Hamsun's early novel *Sult* (*Hunger*, 1890) and Franz Kafka's 1922 short story "Ein Hungerkünstler" (A Hunger Artist). My goal was to

demonstrate that in all these seemingly disparate figures and works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, hunger figures as something to be looked at as well as something having a gaze of its own. Another point is to make a gesture toward the idea that Nâzım's writing of hunger equipped and surrounded with gazes precedes his act of hunger strike, which is a form of resistance, as I have discussed in the first chapter, shaped by the visibilities. Reading together these disparate works and writers is part of the larger methodology of the thesis which I called "reading against the grain." What brings Hamsun, Kafka, and Nâzım Hikmet, and a novel, a short story, and a poem, together is the idea of reading them against each other's grain to be able to go beyond what is immediately given and what is considered clearly distinct.

Hamsun and Kafka, Hunger and "A Hunger Artist," have been in many cases taken and thought together, so there was nothing new in putting them together. The novelty, if any, stems from putting Nâzım Hikmet, and his poem, together with them. Nâzım's literary oeuvre is shaped by realism and an urge to represent the injustices and inequalities. And Hamsun and Kafka are usually considered to be the "great writers" of modernist European literature, which is, to oversimplify, characterized by the attention to the individual consciousness, imagination, brokenness, and inattentiveness to the social issues. Put differently, there is no way in which these two "camps" can be brought and read together. Nâzım is a romantic communist who wants to represent and advance the causes of the downtrodden in his works, while Hamsun and Kafka is enigmatic and "timeless" figures of modernism, they have nothing to represent and speak for, and there is no historical context their works emerge from, speak for or against. Thus, the gesture was to read them against such a clear distinction; that is, to contaminate Nâzım with modernism and timelessness, and Hamsun and Kafka with representations and the social.

In the Chapter 4, "Writing off Hunger: Nâzım Hikmet's Hunger Strike, or, 'L'Affaire Nâzım'," I have given a detailed historical account of Nâzım Hikmet's hunger strike while underscoring its two aspects in particular. The first aspect is concerned with the idea that hunger strike is possible only when there are gazes that pay attention to the strikers and

watch the state as an outside to it. In Nâzım's hunger strike, this is evident from the international audience he addresses in the poem he wrote on the fifth day of his fasting. He brings the outside *in*, both the international gaze and the negative public opinion of Turkish intellectuals and people weary of the single-party regime despite the post-WWII atmosphere of relative political and economic liberalization. The second aspect I wanted to underline is connected with how this event is shaped around images and imaginations of the Dreyfus Affair and the figure of the public intellectual emerged in this affair in the nineteenth-century Europe with the monumental intervention of Émile Zola. Even long before Nâzım's hunger strike, the Dreyfus events and Émile Zola's role in them had been lurking in the background. This has turned the event into a "Turkish Dreyfus affair" or "L'affaire Nâzım," which are even taken as a sign of Turkey's "real" democratization, as the state is said to have been put under public pressure for the first time in the history of the republic. Even in this event, in which Nâzım resisted the state, the story of Nâzım "necessarily" coincides with the story of the nation-state in different accounts.

In the Chapter 5, "Writing off Life and the Self: The Rhythm of Transience and the Late Style," I have discussed that Nâzım Hikmet has a late style that diverts from his self-identical, self-assertive corpus by drawing upon Edward Said's elaborations of the notion as an exilic, disruptive, and lyric artistic mode, and a phenomenon of literary modernism. I have tried to demonstrate that Nâzım's late style decenters the "man" and the "I" simultaneously. It betrays his historical materialist representation of time as a directional and linear progression, by popping up in the form of shadowy and unchronological memories, fractured moments of looking back, which turn into a grave critique of the self as well as anthropocentrism. For this critique not only calls for lost personal moments, missed experiences, but also remembers the existential precariousness and minuteness of the human in the face of the great earth and the sublime cosmos, of its condition of eternal passing away.

Nâzım's lateness then is both critique of himself and his world. However, this does not mean that at some point he abandoned communist politics and switched from literary realism to modernism. Rather,

there are points, that intensified in number toward the end of his life, that unexpectedly remind him how fragile the I is, and despite this fragility, how equally arrogant it is. These are fleeting moments of "realization" that the human must be humbled, decentered, and even destroyed, as perhaps rem(a)inders of an alternative communism. To be able to illustrate this, once again as part of my strategy of reading against the grain, I have close read three late works of Nâzım Hikmet, juxtaposing them with figures who are neither Marxist nor communist, at least in the way that Nâzım was, namely early Fredrich Nietzsche and his "Truth and Lie" essay, and Walter Benjamin and his essays "Destructive Character" and "Theologico-Political Fragment." I have put them together to be able to find the other, the strange, in Nâzım's discourse, to disclose his exilic lateness and perhaps "nihilist" world politics. Nâzım's three works under consideration were "On Living" (completed in 1948), "Fable of Fables" (1958), and "Things I Didn't Know I Loved" (1962). I have discussed that this is where Nâzım comes to embrace the impossibility of himself.

Bibliography

REFERENCES TO THE WORKS OF NAZIM HIKMET

Nâzım Hikmet and Vâlâ Nureddin. "On Beşler İçin" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 1984–1985. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1921].

Nâzım Hikmet. "Açların Gözbebekleri" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 40–43. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1922].

———————. "Şair" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 113–114. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1923].

———————. "Türkiye'de Amele Sınıfı ve Amele Meselesi" in *Yazılar 2*, 13–17. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [*Aydınlık, 1924*].

———————. "Piyer Loti" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 34–37. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1925].

[Anonymous]. "Putları Yıkıyoruz, No. 1: Apdülhak Hamit" in *Yazılar 1*, 17–20. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [*Resimli Ay*, 1929].

Nâzım Hikmet. "Cevap" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 115–117. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1929].

[Anonymous]. "Putları Yıkıyoruz, No. 2: Mehmet Emin Beyefendi" in *Yazılar 1*. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [*Resimli Ay*, 1929].

———————. "Meşhur Gandi Bir Kahraman mıdır? Yoksa Bir Hain mi? *Resimli Ay* (1930).

[Süleyman]. "Muazzam Şair Mayakovski Neden İntihar Etti?" *Resimli Ay* (1930).

[Fıkracı]. "Müddeiumumi Bey İstical Buyurmayınız" in *Yazılar 2*, 69–70. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [*Hür Adam, 1930*].

———————. "Çocuğun İsmi" in *Yazılar 2*, 72–73. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [*Hür Adam, 1930*].

Nâzım Hikmet. "19 Yaşım" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 228–232. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1930].

———————. "Benerci Kendini Niçin Öldürdü?" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 259–344. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1932].

———————. "Karıma Mektup" in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 420–421. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1933].

[Orhan Selim]. “Öptüğüm El” in *Yazılar 1*. İstanbul: YKY, 2018. [*Akşam*, 1934].

———————. “83 Yaşında Delikanlı” in *Yazılar 1*. İstanbul: YKY, 2018 [*Akşam*, 1934].

———————. “Bu Böylece Biline!..” in *Yazılar 1*. İstanbul: YKY, 2018 [*Akşam*, 1934].

Nâzım Hikmet. “Taranta-Babu’ya Mektuplar” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 439–468. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1935].

———————. “Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 481–530. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1936-1937].

———————. *Kan Konuşmaz*. İstanbul: Ararat Yayınları, 1977 [1936].

———————. “Sultan Hamit Devrinde” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 887. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1947].

———————. “Mukayese” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 882. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1947].

———————. “Yaşamaya Dair” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 906–908. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1947–1948].

———————. “On Living” in Poems of Nâzım Hikmet, trans. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk, 132–134. New York: Persea Books, 2002 [1947–1948].

———————. “Korku” in Bütün Şiirler, 936–937. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1949].

———————. “Açlık Grevinin Beşinci Gününde” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 944–945. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1950].

———————. “Five Days into the Hunger Strike” in Beyond the Walls: Selected Poems, trans. Ruth Christie, Richard McKane, Talât S. Halman, 175–176. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2002 [1950].

———————. “Masalların Masalı” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 1633–1634. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1958].

———————. “Fable of Fables” in *Beyond the Walls: Selected Poems*, trans. Ruth Christie, Richard McKane, Talât S. Halman. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2002 [1958].

———————. “Oyunlarım Üstüne” in *Yazılar 1*, 321–337. İstanbul: YKY, 2018 [1962].

———————. “Severmişim Meğer” in *Bütün Şiirleri,* 1800–1804. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1962].
———————. “Things I Didn’t Know I Loved” in *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet*, trans. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk, 261–264. New York: Persea Books, 2002.
———————. “Tanganika Röportajı” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 1838–1852. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1963].
———————. “Autobiography” in *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet*, trans. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk, 259–260. New York: Persea Books, 2002.
———————. *Yaşamak Güzel Şey Be Kardeşim*. İstanbul: YKY, 2002 [1963].
———————. *Life’s Good, Brother: A Novel*, trans. Mutlu Konuk Blasing. New York: Persea Books, 2013 [1963].
———————. *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*. İstanbul: YKY, 2020 [1966–1967].
———————. *Human Landscapes from My Country: An Epic Novel in Verse*, trans. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk. New York: Persea Books, 2002 [1966–1967].
———————. “Kuvâyi Milliye” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, 530–638. İstanbul: YKY, 2008 [1968].
———————. *Kemal Tahir’e Mahpusaneden Mektuplar*. İstanbul: YKY, 2019 [1968].

OTHER REFERENCES

A. Kadir. *1938 Harp Okulu Olayı ve Nâzım Hikmet*. İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2009 [1966].
Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen Aus Dem Beschädigten Leben*. Frankfurt Am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1951.
———————. *Negative Dialectics*. New York: Continuum, 2007 [1966].
Ahmad, Aijaz. “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’” *Social Text* 17 (1987): 3–25.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Ahıska, Meltem. "Occidentalism: Historical Fantasy of the Modern" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (2003): 351–379.

———————. "Türkiye'de İktidar ve Gerçeklik" in *Türkiye'de İktidarı Yeniden Düşünmek*, ed. Murat Güney. İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 2009 [1998].

Akbulut, Erden. "Fahri Oktay *Nâzım Hikmet* Gazetesinin Öyküsünü Anlatıyor" in *Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi*, ed. Yeşim Bilge Bengü, 35–36. İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011.

Alexander, Catherine. *Personal States: Making Connections Between People and Bureaucracy in Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006 [1983].

Anderson, Patrick. "'To Lie Down to Death for Days': The Turkish Hunger Strike, 2000–2003" *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 6 (2006): 816–846.

Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. London: Penguin Books, 1963.

———————. "On Violence" in *Crises of the Republic*, 103–198. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1972.

Aretxaga, Begoña. "Maddening States" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32 (2003): 393–410.

Atay, Korhan. *Serteller*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2021.

Ateş, Sabri. "Oryantalizim ve Bizim 'Doğumuz'" *Doğudan*, 1, no.1 (2007): 1–20.

Aytürk, İlker. "Nationalism and Islam in Cold War Turkey, 1944–69" *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 5 (2014): 693–719.

Bardawil, Fadi. *Revolution and Disenchantment: Arab Marxism and the Binds of Emancipation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020.

Bargu, Banu. *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Becker, George Joseph, ed. *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967.

Belge, Murat. “Nâzım Hikmet ve Sabiha Sertel’den ‘Hint Masalları’” *Kitap-lık* 67 (2003): 38–45.

Benjamin, Walter. “Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, 111–140. New York: Schocken Books, 1968 .

———————. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, 217–251. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

———————. “Critique of Violence” in *Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, 236–252. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

———————. “One-Way Street” in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, 45–106. London: NLB, 1979.

———————. “Theologico-Political Fragment” in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, 155–156. London: NLB, 1979.

———————. “Destructive Character” in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, 157–159. London: NLB, 1979.

Betlemidze, Mariam. “Suicidal Activism in Siberia: Femina and Homo Sacers of Kara 1889” *Russian Journal of Communication* 9, no. 1 (2017): 71–86.

Boym, Svetlana. *Architecture of the Off-Modern*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008.

Butler, Judith. “One Time Traverses Another: Benjamin’s ‘Theological-Political Fragment’” in *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, ed. Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons, 272–285. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.

Cassirer, Ernst. *Kant’s Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.

Cavanagh, Clare. *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

Coşkun, Kıymet, "Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi" in *Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi*, ed. Yeşim Bilge Bengü, 15–34. İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011.

———————. "Nâzım Hikmet ve Açlık Grevi Kronolojisi" in Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi, ed. Yeşim Bilge Bengü, 37–42. İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011.

Çelik, Zeynep. *Europe Knows Nothing About the Orient*. İstanbul: Koç University Press, 2021.

de Man, Paul. "Autobiography as De-facement" *Comparative Literature* 94, no. 5 (1979): 921.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980].

———————. *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003 [1975].

Dixit, Priya. *The State and "Terrorists" in Nepal and Northern Ireland: The Social Construction of State Terrorism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015.

Ece Ayhan. "Nâzım Hikmet'i Yeniden Bir Düşünelim," in *Kürt Çiçekleri: Özgür Gündem'den Yazılar*, ed. Uğur Yanıkel, 11–13,. Pasaj.org, 2016 [1992].

Eliaçık, Canan Özcan. *Barbarın Tarihi – Ezilenin Dini: Hikmet Kıvılcımlı'da Tarih ve Din*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2021.

Ellman, Maud. *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, and Imprisonment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Erlenbusch-Anderson, Verena. *Genealogies of Terrorism: Revolution, State Violence, Empire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

Ertürk, Nergis. *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

———————. "Nâzım Hikmet and the Prose of Communism" *boundary 2* 47, no. 2 (2020): 153–180.

Esmeir, Samera. *Juridical Humanity: A Colonial History*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Feldman, Allen. *Formation of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Fişekçi, Turgay. "Nâzım Hikmet'i Açlık Grevine Götüren Yol" in Nâzım Hikmet'in Açlık Grevi, ed. Yeşim Bilge Bengü, 7–14. İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011.

Fortuny, Kim. "Nâzim Hikmet's Ecopoetics and the Gezi Park Protests" *Middle Eastern Literatures* 19, no. 2 (2016): 162–184.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Routledge, 2002 [1966].

———————. "What is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 101–120. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984 [1969].

———————. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1975].

———————. *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey. New York: Picador, 2003.

———————. *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction,* trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990 [1976].

———————. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

———————. *About the Beginnings of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Lectures at Dartmouth College, 1980* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

———————. "The Subject and Power" in Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 208–228. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

———————. *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II, Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983–84*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

———————. "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 32–50. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

———————. *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001.

———————. *Toplumu Savunmak Gerekir*, trans. Şehsuvar Aktaş. İstanbul: YKY, 2018.

Gallagher, Catherine and Stephen Greenblatt. "The Potato in the Materialist Imagination" in *Practicing New Historicism*, 110–135. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Geuss, Raymond. *Philosophy and Real Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Ghamari-Tabrizi, Behrooz. *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

Göksu, Saime and Edward Timms. *Romantik Komünist: Nâzım Hikmet'in Yaşamı ve Eseri*, trans. Mehmet Barış Gümüşbaş. İstanbul: YKY, 2011 [1999].

Güney, Aylin. "An Anatomy of the Transformation of the US-Turkish Alliance: From 'Cold War' to 'War on Iraq'" *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 3 (2005): 341–359.

Gürsel, Nedim. "Nâzım Hikmet'in Rubaîleri" *Birikim* 15 (1976): 6–20.

———————. "Nâzım Hikmet'in Kıyamet Sureleri" *Birikim* 17 (1976): 11–24.

Grant, Kevin. "British Suffragettes and the Russian Method of Hunger Strike" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 1 (2011): 113–143.

———————. *Last Weapons: Hunger Strikes and Fasts in the British Empire, 1890–1940*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019.

Hacking, Ian. "Making Up People" in *Historical Ontology*, 99–114. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

———————. "The Suicide Weapon" *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2008): 1–32.

Halman, Talât S. "Nâzim Hikmet: Lyricist as Iconoclast" *Books Abroad* 43, no. 1 (1969): 59–64.

Hamsun, Knut. *Hunger*, trans. George Egerton. London: Duckworth, 1921 [1890].

Hanioğlu, Şükrü. *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Hansen, Thomas B. and Finn Stepputat, ed. *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson. London: Penguin Classics, 1985 [1651].

Irmak, Erkan. *Kayıp Destan'ın İzinde:* Kuvâyi Milliye *ve* Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*'nda Milliyetçilik, Propaganda ve İdeoloji*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011.

Jacob, Wilson Chacko. *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870–1940*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.

Jameson, Fredric. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" *Social Text*, no. 15 (1986): 65–88.

———————. *Allegory and Ideology*. London: Verso Books, 2019.

Kafka, Franz. "A Hunger Artist" in *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, ed. Ritchie Robertson, trans. Joyce Crick, 56–65. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012 [1922].

Kant, Immanuel. "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld, trans. David L. Colclasure, 67–109. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006 [1795].

Karan, Taci. "Paris'in 'jön' delikanlıları." *Cumhuriyet Dergi* 877, January, 12, 2003.

Kessler, Elizabeth A. *Picturing the Cosmos: Hubble Space Telescope Images and the Astronomical Sublime.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Kıvılcımlı, Hikmet. *Marksizm Kalpazanları Kimlerdir? Kerim Sadi*. Köxüz Yayınları, [1936].

Koçak, Orhan. "Nazım Hikmet: Şiirden Siyasete, Siyasetten Şiire…" *Bianet*, June 23, 2009 [1988].

———————. “Yahya Kemal’le Mayakovski Arasından Nâzım Hikmet” in *Kopuk Zincir: Modern Şiir Üzerine Denemeler*, 9–23. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2012 [2000].

———————. “Ataç’a Saygı” *Birikim Haftalık*, July 3, 2018.

Korcan, Kerim. *Harbiye Kazanı*. İstanbul: E Yayınları, 1989.

Laqueur, Thomas W. “Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt, 176–204. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989.

Livingston, Alexander. “Fidelity to Truth: Gandhi and the Genealogy of Civil Disobedience” *Political Theory* 46, no. 4 (2018): 511–536.

Mantena, Karuna. “On Gandhi’s Critique of the State: Sources, Contexts, Conjectures” *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (2012): 535–563.

———————. “Another Realism: The Politics of Gandhian Nonviolence” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 455–470.

Marcuse, Herbert. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward A Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1978.

Marx, Karl. *Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’*, trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O’Malley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970 [1843].

Mascuch, Michael. *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591–1791*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Mbembe, Achille. “Necropolitics,” trans. L. Meintjes. *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40.

McKernan, Bethan. “Lonely Death of Grup Yorum bassist highlights Turkey hunger strikes” *The Guardian*, May 8, 2020.

Meeker, Michael. *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002.

Memet Fuat. “Serbest Nazım” in *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar*, 84–86. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [1976].

———————. “Nâzım Hikmet’in Türk Şiirindeki Yeri,” in *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar*, 101-105. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [1984].

———————. “Minnacık Kadın” in *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar*, 106–113. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [1986].

———————. “Mavi Gözlü Dev” in *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar*, 114–123. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [1986].

———————. “Deniz Kızı Eftalya” in *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar*, 130–131. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [1987].

———————. “Gene Mavi Gözlü Dev” in *Nâzım Hikmet Üzerine Yazılar*, 212–214. İstanbul: YKY, 2017 [1994].

Meyer, James. “Children of Trans-Empire: Nâzım Hikmet and the First Generation of Turkish Students at Moscow’s Communist University of the East” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 5, no. 2 (2018): 195–218.

Michelsen, Nicholas. *Politics and Suicide: The Philosophy of Political Self-Destruction*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Mills, Catherine. *Biopolitics*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Moten, Fred and Stefano Harney. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions, 2013.

Moten, Fred. “the gramsci monument” in *The Little Edges*, 32–33. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015.

Navaro-Yashin, Yael. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Nietzsche, Fredrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Helen Zimmern. Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1909.

———————. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

———————. “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” in *Continental Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Clive Cazeaux, trans. Daniel Breazeale, 53–62. New York: Routledge, 2000.

O’Branski, Megan. “‘The Savage Reduction of the Flesh’: Violence, Gender and Bodily Weaponisation in the 1981 Irish Republican Hunger Strike Protest” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7, no.1 (2014): 101.

O’Hearn, Dennis. *Nothing But An Unfinished Song: Bobby Sands, the Irish Hunger Strike Who Ignited a Generation*. New York: Pluto Press, 2006.

Orhan Veli. “Ben Orhan Veli” in *Bütün Şiirleri*, ed. Asım Bezirci, 88–89. İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 1982 [1951].

Ortaylı, İlber. *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003 [1983].

Öymen, Altan. *Değişim Yılları*. İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2004.

Özel, İsmet. "Yıkılma Sakın" in *Çatlıycak Kadar Aşkî*, 56–57. (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 2004).

Özgül, Erdem. "Ece Ayhan Haksız mı?" *Birikim Güncel*, February 26, 2020.

Özkul, Barış. "Ece Ayhan Düzyazısında Avam ve Havas" *Birikim Haftalık*, February 23, 2020.

Parekh, Bikhu. *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Prakash, Gyan. "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 2 (1990): 383–408.

Ponzi, Mauro. *Nietzsche's Nihilism in Walter Benjamin*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Rubinstein, William C. "Franz Kafka: A Hunger Artist" *Monatshefte* 44, no.1 (1952): 13–19.

Said, Edward. *On Late Style*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2006.

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.

Sebük, Mehmet Ali. "Nâzım Hikmete ait fiilerin suç unsurları." *Vatan*, November 23, 1949.

———————. "Büyük Adlî hatâ." *Vatan*, December 12, 1949.

———————. "Askeri Adalet diye bir hukuk şubesi yoktur." *Vatan*, January 9, 1950.

———————. "Af Kanunu Projesi." *Vatan,* June 13, 1950.

———————. "Milletin Büyük Affı ve Neticeleri." *Vatan*, July 30, 1950.

———————. *Korkunç Adli Hata ve Nâzım Hikmet'in Özgürlük Savaşı*. İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1978.

Serin, Nadide Özge. "Writing of Death: Ethics and Politics of the Death Fast in Turkey." PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013.

———————. "Egemen Çöküş: Ölüm Orucu ve Siyasal" *Kampfplatz* 3, no. 6 (2015): 69–100.

Skinner, Quentin. “The State” in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russel L. Hanson, 90–131. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

———————. “A Genealogy of the Modern State” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 162 (2009): 325–370.

Sjølyst-Jackson, Peter. *Troubling Legacies: Migration, Modernism and Fascism in the Case of Knut Hamsun*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

Sontag, Susan. “Fascinating Fascism” in *Under the Sign of the Saturn*, 73–105. London: Penguin, 2009.

Stoler, Ann L. *Carnal Knowledge and the Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010 [2002].

Szeman, Imre. “Who’s Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (2001): 803–827.

Taussig, Michael. “The Corn-Wolf: Writing Apotropaic Texts” *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 1 (2010): 26–33.

Terzioğlu, Öykü. *Nâzım Hikmet ve Sömürgecilik Karşıtlığının Poetikası*. Ankara: Phoenix, 2009.

Thiem, Annika. “Benjamin’s Messianic Metaphysics of Transience,” in *Walter Benjamin and Theology*, ed. Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.

Toprak, Zafer. “Mayakovski’nin İntiharı ve Nâzım Hikmet” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 260 (2015): 22–31.

———————. “Nâzım Hikmet’in ‘Putları Kırıyoruz’ Kampanyası ve Yeni Edebiyat” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 261 (2015): 34–42.

———————. “Nâzım Hikmet, Üçüncü Enternasyonal ve Mahatma Gandhi” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 264 (2015): 58–66.

Uslu, Fatih Mehmet. “*Resimli Ay* Magazine (1929–1931): The Emergence of an Oppositional between Socialism and Avant-Gardism.” MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004.

Vassaf, Gündüz and Haluk Oral. “Nâzım Hikmet İçin Bir Sohbet Denemesi” in Haluk Oral, *Nâzım Hikmet’in Yolculuğu*, xiii–xxi. İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2019.

Weeden, Lisa. “Seeing Like a Citizen, Acting Like a State: Exemplary Events in Unified Yemen” *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 45, no. 4 (2003): 680–713.

Vernon, James. *Hunger: A Modern History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Weinstein, Arnold. “Hamsun’s Hunger and Writing” in *Northern Arts: The Breakthrough of Scandinavian Literature and Art, From Ibsen to Bergman*, 246–272. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Wientzen, Timothy. “The Aesthetics of Hunger: Knut Hamsun, Modernism, and Starvation’s Global Frame” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 48, no. 2 (2015): 208–223.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. London: Basil Blackwell, 1953.

Yalman, Ahmet Emin. “Fikret ve Nâzım Hikmet.” *Vatan*, August 19, 1949.

———. “Bayram Havası.” *Vatan*, July 16, 1950.

———. *Modern Türkiye’nin Gelişim Sürecinde Basın, 1831–1913*, ed. Serkan Yazıcı and Fikrettin Yavuz, trans. Birgen Keşoğlu. İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2018 [1914].

Yazıcı, Berna. “Devlet Antropolojisi” in *Kültür Denen Şey: Antropolojik Yaklaşımlar*, ed. Ayfer Bartu Candan and Cenk Özbay, 51–81. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2018.

Zola, Émile. “I Accuse! Letter to the President of the Republic,” trans. Chameleon Translations. *Marxists.org*. Accessed June 24, 2021. https://www.marxists.org/archive/zola/1898/jaccuse.htm [1898].

Zürcher, Erik Jan. *Turkey: A Modern History*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2017 [1993].