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Nâzım Hikmet's Reception as a World Poet¹

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Nâzım Hikmet (Ran) is acknowledged worldwide as a poet who revolutionized Turkish poetry. His work has been translated into more than fifty languages, and in many European countries, such as Italy, Greece, Spain, England, and Germany, he is undoubtedly also the most widely translated and read of Turkish poets (Mignon 2017: 85; Akbatur and Tekgöl 2013: 24). This chapter aims at analyzing Nâzım Hikmet's contribution to "world literature,"³ as well as the manifold ways of his reception by other national literatures, especially European and North American. There is a vast array of literary resources which feature Nâzım Hikmet: they range from memoirs, such as those by Ilja Ehrenburg (Ehrenburg 1968), Pablo Neruda (Neruda 1977), and Simone de Beauvoir; biographies by Ekber Babayev and Rady Fish; talks by Pablo Neruda, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Tristan Tzara; and anthologies of literature/poetry, to literary works such as novels by Peter-Paul Zahl, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Aras Ören, and Nedim Gürsel and poetry by Pablo Neruda, Howard Fast, Peter Blackman, Yannis Ritsos, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko.

As I intend to show in this chapter Nâzım Hikmet's poetry was shaped "in response to national and world events" (Konuk Blasing 2013: 7), and there are two different phases in the reception of Hikmet's poetry: the first phase, from the 1930s until the 1990s, considers Nâzım Hikmet a political poet, his ideology inseparable from his poetry; the second phase consists of Hikmet's reception as a romantic poet or "the romantic communist," stressing the poetic and stylistic elements in his poetry. Nevertheless, even in the second phase there are writers such as Güzin Dino, Saime Göksu

and Edward Timms, Erhan Turgut and Peter-Paul Zahl, who stressed the inseparability of the content and style of Hikmet's poetry from his worldview or politics. Başak Ergil emphasizes the political dynamics as a reason why the reception of Nâzım Hikmet as a communist poet changed, whereby he became a romantic, mystic and lyric figure. The collapse of the Soviet Union is responsible for the alteration in the reception of Nâzım Hikmet as a political poet. "The image of Hikmet as 'communist' poet and the selection of his politically engaged poems might therefore have been excluded towards the end of the 20th century" (Ergil 2008: 101).

During his lifetime, translations of Nâzım Hikmet's poems were published in various countries, such as Bulgaria, Britain, East Germany, France, Greece, Poland, Spain, and Italy. The first to dedicate a poem to Nâzım Hikmet was the American director Howard Fast:

And there came to me that day in prison,
speaking in the prison whisper you know so well,
that gentle writer, Albert Maltz—

Like you, his crime was words that sang of life,
of peace and hope and the things men cherish—
and told me you were free.

(Fast 1950: n.p)

Fast penned the abovementioned poem when he learned that Nâzım Hikmet had been released after a prison sentence of thirteen years. Later, in 2002, on the occasion of Nâzım Hikmet's hundredth birthday celebration, Fast would comment on his poem: "[I] called him my brother because his life was connected to my life, his thoughts connected with mine and his suffering had come out of doing what I would have done were I a part of his community" (Fast 2002: 247). Significantly, Fast points out that Nâzım Hikmet shared many similarities with poets and authors who fought for social justice and freedom worldwide.

The poem comments on Nâzım Hikmet and the American writer Albert Maltz, both of whom suffered political persecution because of ideological reasons. The latter was accused of and prosecuted for anti-American activities during the Cold War period. He was one of the "Hollywood Ten" of directors and screenwriters who appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in October 1947, sent to prison, and later blacklisted. As Frances Stonor Saunders details, under McCarthy's chairmanship of the House Un-American Activities Committee, "hearings, accusations and blacklists became the order of the day" (Saunders 2000: 191). Various investigations against intellectuals and writers were initiated. Among the targets were Bertolt Brecht (in exile on American soil), the folk singer Peter Seeger, Howard Fast, Arthur Miller, Charlie Chaplin, Marlon

Brando, and Henry Wallace, all "accused of toying with Communism" (Saunders 2000: 52) and blacklisted after refusing to answer the HUAC's interrogations.

In those "dark times" (ironically, given Brecht's comments on Hitler's totalitarian regime which he had managed to escape), it was a crime to sing of "life, of peace and hope" (Fast 1950: n.p.). Poets such as Nâzım Hikmet established themselves as spokesmen and advocates of humanity, resisting the rule of "dark times" and uniting their voices to promote brotherhood and peace. The key terms "singing"/ "song" feature in many writings and poems on Nâzım Hikmet, written by different international world literature figures such as Samuel Sillen, Pablo Neruda, Simone de Beauvoir, and Claude Roy. In Azade Seyhan's words, singing symbolizes "the power of Hikmet's words to fire his audiences and enlist them in the fight against tyranny" (Seyhan 2003: 168).

Another significant poet who was influenced by "Turkey's poet" and who wrote poetry dedicated to him was Pablo Neruda; the two had met for the first time at the Youth Festival, which was held in East Berlin in 1951. In *Winter's Crown for Nâzım Hikmet* he fondly addresses him as "brother poet" (Neruda 1977: 195) and laments his untimely death:

Why have you died Nâzım? And how?
What will we do without your songs?
Where will we find the source?
Where will your great smile be waiting for us?
What will we do without your stance?

(Translated by Susan Drucker-Brown,
Turgut 2002: 203)

Neruda's poem is an elegy on the death of the poet. In his *Memoirs* (1974) Neruda reminisces about Hikmet's unjust destiny:

a legendary writer kept in prison for eighteen years [...] condemned to the punishment of hell. The trial was held on a warship. [...] My brother poet felt his strength failing him. [...] He began to sing [...] sang all the songs, all the love poems he could remember, his own poems, the ballads of the peasants, the people's battle hymns. (Neruda 1977: 196)

Neruda's artistic and humane appreciation of Nâzım Hikmet continues: "You sang for all of us, my brother. We need have no doubts any longer or wonder what to do. We know now that we must begin to sing" (196). Singing, therefore, as also pointed out by Roy, becomes a way out of torture, a means of resistance and protest, a metaphor for struggle, and Nâzım Hikmet became its master, "a master of song" (Roy 2002: 205).

I

As a committed Marxist, Nâzım Hikmet was widely known in Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union. As a student of KUTV in the 1920s, he met Vladimir Mayakovsky and Sergey Jessen, the avant-garde poets of futurism, while with Meyerhold he was active in agitprop theatre (Sverçevskaya 2002: 29–30). In the 1950s, he was translated in the former DDR (German Democratic Republic). Most significantly, with Brecht's support, the first Nâzım Hikmet publication was realized in East Berlin (Hamm 1982 [1964]: 184). It was entitled *Turkish Telegrams* (1956), and was followed by *Gedichte* (1959), a more comprehensive edition of his poetry (Hamm 1982: 184); six of his plays were staged in the DDR alone (Kraft 2008: 10). Nâzım Hikmet enjoyed contrasting receptions in East and West Germany. While in East Germany, mostly, but not only, because of his communist sympathies, he was acknowledged as a literary hero relatively early; in West Germany the recognition came belatedly.

Nâzım Hikmet spent half of his most productive years in prison (the longest term being between 1938 and 1950). His poems were smuggled out of prison and published in France, the country where his wife Münevver and his son Memed had been living since 1961. Their intense efforts to publicize his works were joined by those of other Turkish exiles such as Abidin and Güzin Dino. From France, Nâzım Hikmet's poems were circulated in Italy, Spain, Latin America, the United States, and the Soviet Union (Fish 1969: 419). According to Rady Fish, his poetry triggered a worldwide, long-lasting echo (Fish *ibid.*).

In 1949, an international campaign began for his release and a petition was signed by illustrious contemporaries such as Tristan Tzara, Brecht, Louis Aragon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Neruda, Georg Lukács, and Pablo Picasso, immediately followed by a hunger strike by the poet himself. In the United States, it was Paul Robeson who supported the petition and published an international call for Nâzım Hikmet's release. In 1950, Nâzım Hikmet shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Robeson and Neruda. Neruda accepted the prize on Nâzım Hikmet's behalf and gave a speech praising his poetry as world poetry (Fish 1969: 446). Nevertheless, according to Gisela Kraft—one of Nâzım Hikmet's translators in German—Hikmet's identity as a poet was overshadowed by his identity as a cult figure of "world communism." This inevitably resulted in the diminished perception of the artistic value of his poems, though they were "poems which touched the reader's heart" (Kraft 2008: 12).

II

In 1932, Nâzım Hikmet was introduced to the English-speaking public: some selected poems were translated by Nermine Mouvafac in the

American literary magazine *Bookman*, under the title "A Poet of the New Turkey" (Gronau 1998: 7; Blasing and Mizanoğlu-Reddy 2002: 267; Ergil 2008: 29). He was introduced as "Turkey's Communist Poet" with a prophetic vision: "He is Nâzım Hikmet, communist poet, perhaps the only poet of the new generation who will leave a lasting mark" (Mouvafac 1932: 509). Mouvafac praised Hikmet as a world poet "poised between East and West" (514). While quoting lines from Nâzım Hikmet, she remembered Whitman's poetry and pondered on their main similarity, which is the appeal for brotherhood (515). In the following years, many American authors and poets who referred to the Turkish poet compared him to Whitman. A famous case in point is the poet and critic Edward Hirsch and his foreword to Hikmet's *Human Landscape from My Country* (2001):

Hikmet is one of the great poets of social consciousness. He is a figure comparable, say, to Federico Garcia Lorca and Miguel Hernandez, to César Vallejo and Pablo Neruda, which is to say that he was a Whitmanesque poet of the empathic imagination who felt his way into the lives of other people, who put his wild creative energies at the service of a human vision. (Hirsch 2002: vii)

Nâzım Hikmet's international dimension is put forward by Hirsch in depicting his poems as "human poems" (*poemas humanos*), comparable to the poetry written by Federico Garcia Lorca, Miguel Hernandez, César Vallejo, and Pablo Neruda. According to Hirsch, Nâzım Hikmet's translation of *Human Landscapes* "is a noteworthy event in world literature [...] to put beside Ezra Pound's *Cantos* as a heroic achievement. [...] Hikmet shared Pound's concept of the epic as 'a poem including history'" (viii). Hirsch draws another interesting similarity and compares Nâzım Hikmet to James Joyce, for choosing "ordinary characters" and being "inspired by the local, instigated by his native realm to try to create a universal pageant" (ibid.). In his article "Beyond Desolation" Hirsch again compares Hikmet's poems with Whitman's, stating that "like Whitman, he can speak with an overpowering directness" (Hirsch 1997: 37).

The second article in English entitled "The Case of Nâzım Hikmet," published under the initials M. N., appeared in 1950 in *Masses and Mainstream*, an American monthly Marxist review. Nâzım Hikmet is depicted as a unique poet and "great anti-fascist fighter" whose immediate release should be enacted. In this article, the US government "as an accomplice of the police terror in Turkey" (M.N. 1950: 5) was made responsible for Nâzım Hikmet's imprisonment through the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.

The publication of the first book of Nâzım Hikmet's poems in English had to wait until 1952. *Nâzım Hikmet, Selected Poems* appeared in

Calcutta, India, which had gained its independence from Britain in 1947. The translators were two Turkish women, Nilüfer Mizanoğlu-Reddy and Rosette Avigdor-Coryell who decided on the use of a pseudonym (Ali Yunus) due to political restrictions of the McCarthy period in America (Blasing and Mizanoğlu-Reddy 2002: 267; Baybars 2002: 259). Thanks to "The Union of Progressive Young Turks"⁴ who started the campaign for Nâzım Hikmet's release from prison, "these students contacted their friends Nilüfer Mizanoğlu-Reddy and Rosette Avigdor-Coryell, who were then studying at Columbus University in New York," to translate Hikmet's poems into English (Blasing and Mizanoğlu-Reddy 2002: 267).

In January 1954, two years later, a collection entitled *Poems by Nâzım Hikmet* was published by the publishing house *Masses and Mainstream* in New York, with an introduction by Samuel Sillen, the chief editor of the publishing house, who introduced Nâzım Hikmet as "unmistakably, [. . .] an artist who belonged with Neruda and Aragon among the great poets of our age" (Sillen 1954: 5). Sillen's introduction is credited to be the first and therefore image-forming introduction on Nâzım Hikmet's poetry in the United States (Ergil 2008: 54). In this text, the poet is honored as a Marxist and anti-fascist, and a politically engaged poet. Sillen refers to Nâzım Hikmet's poetry as part of "prison literature" and names, and compares Nâzım Hikmet to, political prisoners' literature such as Julius Fuchik's *Notes from the Gallows*, Danielle Casanova's letters, Gabriel Pen's last testament, and the letters and poems of American political prisoners. He concludes that "there is no division between Hikmet the political poet and Hikmet the lyrical poet" (Sillen 1954: 7).

As previously mentioned, the period of the Cold War in the United States was the period of "red-scare" when Marxist and communists were accused of being agents of the Soviet Union, a period of polarization between ideologies, not only in the United States, but more particularly in the Western Bloc of Europe; this context is visible in Nâzım Hikmet's reception, especially in West Germany. Nevertheless, the Cold War period also coincided with a period of peace movement against nuclear weapons, whereby Nâzım Hikmet became the advocate and "a poet laureate of the peace movement" (Göksu and Timms 2006: 268) through his poems "The Little Girl," "The Japanese Fisherman," "Don't Let the Clouds Kill," distributed worldwide by the World Council of Peace. Peter Seeger composed a song of "The Little Girl" as "I Come and Stand at Every Door" in the early 1960s (Blasing and Mizanoğlu-Reddy 2002: 271).

As an official member of the World Council of Peace, Nâzım Hikmet traveled widely. He was actively against the Korean War and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The World Council of Peace constituted for Nâzım Hikmet a platform to meet intellectuals and writers representing different languages and cultures. Thus, he made the acquaintance of the partisan and writer Joyce Lussu, the Italian delegate at the Stockholm

peace conference in June 1958.⁵ The Italian writer Giancarlo Vigorelli described his poems as unique and enthusiastic pieces which introduced the spoken language into poetry: “his language is the language of a modern citizen-poet” (Nesin 2018: 256). According to Vigorelli, the Italian readers were the luckiest readers in Europe, because Nâzım Hikmet’s poems were accessible in the 1950s, and his poetry collection was published in 1958 (Nesin 2018: 252–4).

In the English-speaking world since the 1960s, the immense efforts of the translators Mutlu Konuk and Randy Blasing aimed to make him available to American readers. In 1965, Konuk and Blasing realized that Hikmet was not only Turkey’s poet but “a world-class poet with an international reputation” (Konuk 2002: 271), “ironically [. . .] in French, in the heartland of America” (ibid.). Later in 2013 Mutlu Konuk and Blasing would write a comprehensive biography entitled *Nâzım Hikmet, The Life and Times of Turkey’s World Poet*.

In Britain, the first publication of Nâzım Hikmet’s poetry was Taner Baybars’ translation *Selected Poems by Nâzım Hikmet* (1967). Baybars recalls the reception of the book as “encouraging” with “plenty of reviews that qualified Nâzım as a ‘discovery,’ ‘unusual,’ ‘refreshing’” (Baybars 2002: 261). In 1970, Baybars translated another book, *The Moscow Symphony*, introducing Nâzım Hikmet as a “poet of great humanity and originality of mind, whatever his political commitment” (Baybars 2002: 5). The publication of *Modern Turkish Poetry* followed in 1971 with the support of Daniel Weissbrot and Ted Hughes who were editors of *Modern Poetry in Translation*, and in 1972 with *The Day Before Tomorrow* (Baybars 2002: 263). Baybars confesses his enthrallment with Hikmet’s poetry in the following terms: “What fascinated me about Nâzım Hikmet’s poetry was its vitality, its originality, the subtle and intriguing use of Turkish. And it was deeply moving” (Baybars 2002: 259).

III

In France, the first translation of Nâzım Hikmet’s poetry was in March 1936, in the journal *Commune* which was edited by Louis Aragon (Basutçu 2002: 285; Göksu and Timms in Turgut 2002: 51). Further poems followed in 1948, published again by Aragon in *Europe* and in *Les Lettres françaises* (Basutçu 2002: 285). In 1958 Nâzım Hikmet visited Paris for the first time and was greeted by a delegation consisting of Tristan Tzara, Charles Dobzynski, the composer Philippe-Gérard, the painter Abidin Dino, and Güzin Dino (Basutçu 2002: 289; Göksu and Timms 2002: 85). The French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir honored Hikmet in her autobiography through recalling Nâzım Hikmet’s report during a lunch in Paris in 1958 (de Beauvoir 1965: 390–1).

IV

In 1960, in West Germany, Hikmet appeared for the first time as the only poet from Turkey in an anthology of modern poetry *Museum der modernen Poesie* (Museum of Modern Poetry), edited by Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Enzensberger 1963). Enzensberger's anthology contained selected works of ninety-six poets from twenty different countries such as Rafael Alberti, Paul Eluard, Konstantinos Kavafis, Vladimir Mayakovski, and Octavio Paz. Suggestively, they were introduced as "poetry of the modernity," part and parcel of the museum of world literature. The representatives of modern poetry were described as cosmopolitan, as "literary engineers" (Enzensberger 1963: 15) who would use the same "poetic world language" (Enzensberger 1963: 13). Enzensberger's anthology was praised by the German literary critics and to this day it remains unsurpassed, unique in its scope and content as canon-forming.

In 1963, in West Germany, Brands translated the third book of *Human Landscapes* *In Jenem Jahr* 1941. The remaining others were published in a complete edition of *Human Landscapes* in 1979 and 1980, respectively. In 1972 Yüksel Pazarkaya published eleven poems by Nâzım Hikmet in an anthology entitled *Moderne türkische Lyrik*. In the 1980s, sixteen books by Nâzım Hikmet (besides his poetry, his novels, and his plays) were published in West Germany (connected with the development of Turkish Migration Literature).⁶ The 1980s thus became the years of Nâzım Hikmet's reception (Dikici 2015: 71).

Aras Ören, a name among the first generation of Turkish migrants' literature, was one of the authors who confessed to the influence of Nâzım Hikmet—along with Brecht's—on his writing (Gezen 2012: 371). In West Germany, Nâzım Hikmet had already been prominent among members of the German Left since the end of 1950. Peter-Paul Zahl, imprisoned in the 1970s for ten years, wrote the preface to *Human Landscapes* (Hamburg, 1978, reprinted in 2001) from prison, comparing his own prison conditions in the Federal Republic and Nâzım Hikmet's in Turkey (Zahl 1981). In Zahl's novel *Die Glücklichen?* (The Happy Humans 1979/2001), Hikmet's poem appears as the motto of the twelfth chapter: "Lasst uns die Erde den Kindern übergeben, wie einen riesigen Apfel, wie ein warmes Brot" (Zahl 2001: 285).

In West Germany, it was only in 1977 that the Turkish Academic and Artists' Union's first comprehensive biography and a collection of poetry were published, comprising homages from writers of various countries, such as Anna Seghers, Aragon, Neruda, Sartre, Tzara, Peter Hamm, Ilya Ehrenburg, Konstantin Simonov, Alfred Kurella, Angel Miguel Asturias, Viktor Komissarjevski, and Jean Marcenac, entitled *Nâzım Hikmet: Sie haben Angst vor unseren Liedern* (Nâzım Hikmet: They are Afraid of

Our Songs), published in both Turkish and German. It was republished in 1982 on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of Hikmet's birth, edited by the *Türkenzentrum Berlin* under the initiative of Mehmet Aksoy. The collection also contains excerpts from biographies by Rady Fish, writings about, and analysis of, his poetry by Ekber Babaev and Asım Bezirci, and an interview by Charles Dobzynski (Aksoy 1982).

Max Leon remembers Nâzım Hikmet's funeral in 1963 and recalls the oratory by Konstantin Simonov: "Hikmet was more than a talented poet, he was truly a great poet. The history may prove such an evaluation. And I am sure that the history will approve this" (Leon 1982: 26). Madeleine Riffaud who met Nâzım Hikmet at the Youth Festival in Berlin in 1951 wrote: "each reader of Nâzım Hikmet, if in France or in Turkey, in Vietnam or in Angola, everywhere where his work is translated, everybody feels him/herself as friend, as brother of Nâzım" (Riffaud 1982: 72). Peter Hamm wrote in 1964 in the weekly newspaper *Zeit* under the heading "Schickt mir Bücher, die glücklich enden!" (Send me books that have happy endings!) that Nâzım Hikmet "was ignored for a long time" (Hamm 1964). This article was reprinted later in 1982 in *Nâzım Hikmet*, *Türkenzentrum Berlin*. According to Peter Hamm, the "imprisoned" poet Nâzım Hikmet, became a "poet of the people, not only of his own: Japanese⁸ fisherwomen printed his poems as leaflets against armament; black Americans carried at demonstrations his larger than life-sized portrait; French workers sent him letters of appreciation; in many countries young people sent his poems as love letters" (Hamm 1982: 182).

Despite the fact that Nâzım Hikmet's poems were translated or rewritten by prominent writers such as Ernst Fischer, Heinar Kipphardt, Stephan Hermlin, and Paul Wiens for their first publication in East Berlin in 1956 and 1959 (Hamm 1982: 184), in West Germany the interest was not very great. The Cold War period is clearly revealed as responsible for the poor reception of Nâzım Hikmet's poetry in West Germany.

In 1964 Hamm called on publishing houses, theatres, and audiences "to take care of Nâzım Hikmet," to initiate translations of his works. An explanation for the late translation of Nâzım Hikmet was delivered by Dietrich Gronau, who in 1991 published a short monograph introducing Nâzım Hikmet's work as "documentation of the 20th century" (Gronau 1998: 7). Gronau indicated that Nâzım Hikmet's "ambivalent appreciation"—"insofar questionable if as communist martyr or as original artist" (8)—as a communist poet in the Soviet Union influenced his literary image in Western countries, although "Hikmet's language, images, metaphors, references, dreams, comparisons and phantasies are of a world citizen and of an unrooted citizen of the modern times" (Gronau 2002: 174).

In this context, Gronau quotes Gisela Kraft: "What Hikmet said, his humanist message, is gradually being heard by the world. How poetic he said it, is realized little by little, and sets standards for the progress of

world poetry" (Gronau 1998: 139). Gronau's early political assessment of Nâzım Hikmet's poetry presents him as "a persistent communist [...] a real romantic" (Gronau 1998: 9). Nevertheless, Gronau called the exile period between 1951 and 1963 "Die tödliche Leere" ("the lethal emptiness," p. 122), although Nâzım Hikmet was productive in a literary and political sense for the peace movement. Gronau also claimed that the West German publishing houses were uninterested in publishing and distributing Nâzım Hikmet's work (128). In 2002, Gronau recalled the historical and political conditions in the Federal Republic of Germany to grasp the reasons why Nâzım Hikmet was overlooked and remained unnoticed. Thus, he claimed that the stereotypical objection to Nâzım Hikmet was his devotion to "ideal socialism" (Gronau 2002: 170). Gronau acknowledged the censorship by the governments in Bonn and Washington led by the anti-communism movement, similar to that in Turkey.

In 2002, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Nâzım Hikmet's birth, a collection was published in Germany as *Hundert Jahre Nâzım Hikmet 1902-1963* (One Hundred Years [of] Nâzım Hikmet), edited by Monika Carbe and Wolfgang Riemann (Carbe and Riemann 2002). Interesting and outstanding in this collection are the contributions of contemporary writers Zafer Şenocak and Karin Yeşilada. Şenocak's article is an account of how he was introduced to Nâzım Hikmet's poetry, and how that became a "cult book" (Şenocak 2002: 84) for him, due to its vividness, emotions, and passions (85). Şenocak argues that "Nâzım's political ideology appears only as a coat, with that he covered his passionate poetry, to protect it against the cold and the outer world" (85).

In the last chapter of *Hundert Jahre Nâzım Hikmet*, Karin Yeşilada's "Nâzım's Enkel schreiben weiter" ("Nâzım's grandchildren go on writing") expresses her bewilderment at the unavailability of Hikmet's books in German bookstores, since the previous publications by Dağyeli publishing house had sold out but a reprint was not issued. Nevertheless, she claims, he has become a part of world literature, and "Poems of Nâzım Hikmet in Anglo-American space are standard work, always achievable" (Yeşilada 2002: 181). According to Yeşilada, Nâzım Hikmet's poetry is a means for creative debate and a source of inspiration for "new lyric" (2002: 182). She concludes her essay by underlining that "Nâzım Hikmet's grandchildren write, and they write in German" (182). Nâzım Hikmet's grandchildren⁹ were established within the migration literature in Germany, starting from the first generation, such as Aras Ören, Yusuf Ziya Bahadın, Saliha Scheinhardt, and Yüksel Pazarkaya, and the second generation with Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Zafer Şenocak, and Habib Bektaş.¹⁰

Inspired by Nâzım Hikmet's poetry, Berkan Karpat and Şenocak wrote *nâzım hikmet: on the ship to mars* (1998), a poem in twelve segments, and a creative and poetic production with references to mystic elements, using metaphors such as "burning," "singing," and "longing." Thus the symbol

of the ship recalls in readers' the warship on the Bosphorus, on which the poet was tortured for two days and nights in 1938 (Neruda 1977: 196). "[I] shout my song / towards the walls of the ship cell / I shout towards the walls: you shall burn like Kerem / [...] I Nâzım want to burn / so that I become light" (Karpaz and Şenocak 1998: 4).

In Emine Sevgi Özdamar's semi-autobiographical novel *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* (Özdamar 2007), the protagonist Emine encounters Hikmet's poems for the first time in Paris through her Spanish boyfriend who reads to her Hikmet's poems aloud in French, calling him a "great socialist poet" and listening to a record by Yves Montand who "sings a poem of Nâzım Hikmet" (2007: 96). Writers and poets such as Nâzım Hikmet encourage and direct her life by raising her consciousness. By the end of the novel, students are demonstrating on the Bridge of the Golden Horn for their friend Vedat Demircioğlu who was killed during a demonstration, and shouting Hikmet's poem in chorus: "My boy, take a good look at the stars" (202).¹¹

V

In 2002, the UNESCO year dedicated to Nâzım Hikmet, many activities were carried out in different countries, and commemoration books were published in Russia, France, and Germany. One of them, *Kardeşim Nâzım* (My Brother Nâzım) edited by Antonina Sverçevkaya and Svetlana Uturgauri, is a collection of the memories of Hikmet's Russian contemporaries such as Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Konstantin Raykin, Konstantin Simonov, and Ilya Ehrenburg. In the preface, Uturgauri introduces him as "a romantic communist" (Uturgauri 2002: 8) and mentions that the idea to publish such a collection rests upon his last wife Vera Tulyakova-Hikmet, who collected writings on Nâzım Hikmet from newspapers and asked Hikmet's contemporaries of writers, theatre directors, and others for their anecdotes and memories (Uturgauri 2002: 9).

Another book of commemoration is *Nâzım Hikmet*, edited by Erhan Turgut, and written in three languages (French, Turkish, and English) with an impressive preface penned through the technique of inner monologue by John Berger. The excerpt by the Guatemalan author Miguel Angel Asturias provides an idea about the reception of Hikmet in Latin America as a poet of "struggle and protest." Asturias highlights Nâzım Hikmet as a poet who provoked great enthusiasm in Latin America because he "fought against the age-old barbarians" (Asturias 2002: 201).

Göksu and Timms wrote the "first comprehensive biography" (Yevtushenko 2006: xiii) of Nâzım Hikmet in English called *Romantic Communist, The Life and Work of Nâzım Hikmet* (1999), approaching his life and work as a combination of "political courage with artistic creativity,"

"not only a communist committed to revolution, but a romantic," and tracing the time of his exile as "creative, becoming involved in the theatre and broadcasting and entering into further relationships which find their echo in poignant lyrics and love letters, as well as political poetry of great imaginative power" (Göksu and Timms 2006: ix). No doubt, this biography is outstanding in a time in which Nâzım Hikmet's poetry is separated from his politics, or his period of exile viewed as "the lethal emptiness" (Gronau 1998: 121).

Besides the biographies, book reviews, and anthology references, many contemporary authors and poets refer to Nâzım Hikmet's poetry as a source of inspiration. In an interview, the American poet David Wojahn talks about Nâzım Hikmet's influence in his work, especially in *Mystery Train* (Wojahn 1994: 52). Among younger generations of authors and poets who name Nâzım Hikmet as a source of inspiration, Tina Chang (Brooklyn's poet laureate in 2016, the first woman appointed to the position) lists him along with Federico Garcia Lorca, Jack Gilbert, and Carolyn Forché as a poet "whose life and poetry I love":

I return to these poets time and time again not only for their poetry, but also for their path of experience that has made their lives so memorable to me. [...] Their lives have led me in my role as poet laureate. (Chang 2013: 3)

Carolyn Forché is another poet who lists Nâzım Hikmet along with Bertolt Brecht, César Vallejo, Pablo Neruda, Rafael Alberti, Yannis Ritsos, Atilla Jozsef, George Oppen, and Mahmoud Darwish among those whose work is "marked by the impress of extremity and a faith in the salvific possibility of global fraternity and social justice" (Forché 2002: 1). Forché wrote the foreword for *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet* (Blasing and Konuk 2001) emphasizing that "Hikmet's poetry became for me a species of guidebook, a manual for living, advising one to embrace what came to pass, to say yes, to live fully, and, most daunting to be able to *die for people—even for people whose faces you've never seen*" (Forché 2001: 1).

Conclusion

The present chapter on Hikmet's reception concludes with the argument that without doubt Nâzım Hikmet was a world poet and thus part of world literature. As the "greatness of poetry lies in its universality" (Tzara 2002: 201), he was a "universal poet" (Juin 2002: 201). Nâzım Hikmet is generally revered as "myth" (Konuk Blasing 2013: 7), "mythos," "martyr" (Lüdke 2008), as a poetic voice of the Turkish Left, a poet of hope, peace, social

justice, and liberty, who could combine and unite poetry and politics. Most tellingly, his poetry is described as a “lyric, directed to the receptive world citizen” (Kraft 2008: 2). According to Aijaz Ahmad, Nâzım Hikmet belongs along with Mayakovsky, Aime-Fernand Cesaire, Bertolt Brecht, Pablo Neruda, Cesar Vallejo, Ernesto Cardenal, and Faiz Ahmet Faiz to “the great decisive poets of the 20th century” who are defined as “the great figures in [...] ‘Poetry International’” (Ahmad 2000). Thus Hikmet’s poetry reunites people on all continents. In Simonov’s words, Nâzım Hikmet’s quality as a world poet is acknowledged by history itself (Leon 1982: 26). Last but not least, Nâzım Hikmet’s poetry still stands for a longing of freedom and peace all over the world.

Notes

- 1 Dedicated to my dearest mother Tami Göbenli (1949–2014) and my dearest academic mother Prof. Süheyla Artemel (1930–2018).
- 2 I gratefully thank Cevat Çapan, Hülya Arslan, Martin Vialon, Adriana Raducanu, Bahriye Çeri, and Jonathan Kim Laykin for their critical insights, careful readings, and recommendations.
- 3 Regarding his influence on Turkish poetry, social critical poets such as Atilâ İlhan, Ahmet Arif, Enver Gökçe, and A. Kadir have been among the poets who were influenced by Nâzım Hikmet’s poetry. The influence of Nâzım Hikmet on Turkish poetry is a research topic for another study, which has been discussed only in a few articles, for example, Mehmet Doğan “A poet of his era” in *Nâzım Hikmet: To Live, Free and Single Like a Tree/But in Brotherhood Like a Forest* (2002).
- 4 “The Union of Progressive Young Turks” (İleri Jön Türkler Birliği) was founded in Paris (in March 1949) by Turkish students and intellectuals such as Atilâ İlhan, Abidin Dino, Tacettin Karan, Sevim Belli, Zekeriya Sertel, and Yıldız Sertel, and was active between 1949 and 1954 (Yuca 2017: 79–81; Karan 2003: 14–15).
- 5 Especially his love poems published in 1963 as *Poesie d’Amore* were “bestsellers for years on Valentine’s Day in Italy” (Berk Albachten 2012: 98).
- 6 Azade Seyhan calls Nâzım Hikmet’s poetry “the single most powerful source of inspiration for Turkish writers of Germany” (Seyhan 2003: 168).
- 7 The influence of Nâzım Hikmet’s poetry on Zahl’s picaresque novel *Die Glücklichen* (The Happy Humans) (1979) constituted Martin Vialon’s research topic for a talk in Dortmund, in 2019.
- 8 Nâzım Hikmet is the first Turkish author to be translated into Japanese, with seven publications between 1955 and 2002 (Baykara 2012: 106).
- 9 Karpat and Şenocak address Nâzım Hikmet as “Poet Father,” and themselves as “Nâzım’s grandchildren” (Stockwell 2017: 137–8).

- 10 The legacy of Nâzım Hikmet's poetry on Turkish and Turkish-German literature was the research topic for Stockwell's doctoral thesis (2017) titled *A Shared Longing: Rewriting Nâzım Hikmet in Turkish and Turkish-German Literature 1963-2017* as well.
- 11 Later that poem would become a poem of recitation, to mourn revolutionary student leaders of 1970s such as Deniz Gezmiş.

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