

MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE AND THE DEBATES AROUND A SINGLE
LITERARY CANON IN TURKEY

by

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SINGLE LITERARY CANON IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the literary canon in Turkish literature. There is not a single literary canon in Turkish literature, which constitutes the main body of literature. On the contrary, there are different literary canons belonging to different ideological, ethnic, religious and cultural groups. In the formation of these various literary canons in Turkey, the role of the ideological standpoints is crucial. Firstly, I give a broad definition of the literary canon putting the notion of canon in the historical process and then, I focus on the literary canon debates in the West and Turkey. To understand the workings of the literary canon in Turkey, I examine two authors from the left-wing literary canon, namely, Kemal Tahir and Nazım Hikmet and their most contentious works with regard to the effects of the ideological standpoints on the evaluation of the literary works in Turkey. Firstly, I analyze Devlet Ana (Mother State) by Kemal Tahir, which represents a good example of the effect of the ideological standpoint on the canonization of novels in Turkish literature. Then, I analyze Human Landscapes from my Country and The Epic of the Independence War by Nazım Hikmet. These two epics composed by Nazım are other typical examples that illustrate the effects of the ideological standpoint on the literary works. After the analyses of these works, I state that there is not a single literary canon in Turkish literature and the reciprocal relationship, which develops on the basis of ideology, between the wording and the perception of the literary works is the underlying cause of the ideological appraisal of the literary works.

ÖZET

ÇOK KÜLTÜRLÜ EDEBİYAT VE TÜRKİYE’DE TEK BİR EDEBİYAT KANONU ÇEVRESİNDE YAPILAN TARTIŞMALAR

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Anahtar Sözcükler: Devlet Ana, Kuvayi Milliye Destanı, Memleketimden İnsan
Manzaraları, Kemal Tahir, Nazım Hikmet

Bu tez Türk edebiyatında edebiyat kanonunu incelemektedir. Türk edebiyatında, edebiyatın ana akımını temsil eden tek bir edebiyat kanonu yoktur. Tam tersine, farklı ideolojik, etnik, dini ve kültürel guruplara ait olan farklı edebiyat kanonları mevcuttur. Türkiye’de bu edebiyat kanonlarının oluşumunda ideolojik bakış açıları son derece önemlidir. İlk olarak, edebiyat kanonunu tarihsel süreci içinde ele alarak geniş bir kanon tanımı yapıyorum ve ardından, hem Batı’daki hem de Türkiye’deki edebiyat kanonu tartışmalarını ele alıyorum. Türkiye’de edebiyat kanonunun nasıl işlediğini göstermek için sol edebiyat kanonuna mensup iki önemli ismi ve onların Türkiye’de edebiyat eserlerinin değerlendirilmesinde ideolojik bakış açılarının önemine çok iyi örnek olan eserlerini inceliyorum. İlk olarak, Türkiye’de romanların kanondaki yerinin belirlenmesinde ideolojik bakış açısının önemine çok iyi bir örnek teşkil eden Kemal Tahir’in Devlet Ana isimli eserini analiz ediyorum. Daha sonra, Nazım Hikmet’in Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları ve Kuvayi Milliye Destanı’nı yine ideolojik bakış açılarının edebiyat eserlerinin değerlendirilmesi üzerindeki rolüne yönelik tipik örnekler olarak analiz ediyorum. Bu iki eserin analizini yaptıktan sonra Türkiye’de tek bir edebiyat kanonu olmadığını ve eserin ifade ettiği anlamla bu anlamın algılanması arasında ideolojik zeminde gelişen ilişkinin, eserin ideolojik olarak değerlendirilmesinin arkasında yatan temel neden olduğunu ifade ediyorum.

To my wife and daughter

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INTRODUCTION

There is not a single literary canon which constitutes the main body of literature in Turkey. On the contrary, there are various literary canons formed by the different ideological, cultural, religious and ethnic groups. But on the other hand, the Ministry of Education is making an effort to lay down the main body of canon for literature by preparing the lists of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* in order to include some works of literature in the national education curriculum in secondary and high schools. I think a debate on the literary canon which examines intimately specific works of literature which reflect the ideological cleavages even in a single literary canon will be fruitful in understanding the inner workings of the literary canon.

This thesis will examine the plurality of literary canons in Turkey, taking account of the prominent and prolific poet and writer, Nazım Hikmet and Kemal Tahir respectively, who belong presumably to the left-wing literary canon. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in these two authors in Turkey; but their works in the literary canon and especially in the left-wing literary canon has not been studied using a comparative approach that investigates the evolutionary aspect of the literary canon in Turkey. What is interesting about their literary works is that while some of them are in the left-wing literary canon, others are placed in the state canon, in other words, in the list of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* (“*Yüz Temel Eser*”) or in an alternative left-wing canon, namely the Kemalist-left canon. There is still considerable controversy surrounding the place of Nazım Hikmet and Kemal Tahir in the Turkish literary canon. There has been some disagreement regarding which literary canon these two authors belong to. *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscape from My Country* by Nazım Hikmet are two good examples of the ambivalent place of Nazım

in the Turkish literary canon. While the Kemalist left assumes *The Epic of the Independence War* to be a patriotic poem on the National Struggle, the Marxist left-wing considers it as a poem which displays the struggle of the grass roots against imperialism. On the other hand, this poem, which is embedded in *Human Landscapes from my Country*, finds its place in the state-controlled literary canon, namely, *the One Hundred Major Works of Literature* published by the Ministry of Education, because of its patriotic and partly Kemalist tone. Likewise, the place of *Devlet Ana* in the Turkish literary canon has been a controversial and much-debated subject within the field of Turkish literature and sociological thought. So far there has been little agreement on which literary canon *Devlet Ana* belongs to.

In this research, I argue that the ambivalent attitude towards Nazım Hikmet and Kemal Tahir expressed by the Turkish Left is a good example of the debate on the literary canon in Turkey and the central thesis is that there is not a single literary canon in Turkey and that even in the same literary canon there is not absolute consistency in deciding upon the writers and poets and their works. Firstly, I will examine the notion of literary canon and its links with the Turkish literary canon. Next, I will closely examine *Devlet Ana* (1967) and two important epics, namely *The Epic of the Independence War* (1938- 39) and *Human Landscapes from my Country* (1941), in order to display the role of ideological considerations in the evaluation of the works of literature in relation to the literary canon. Finally, I will critically appraise the literary canon and the issues related to the literary canon in Turkey.

CHAPTER 1

THE LITERARY CANON: MEANING AND CONCEPT

The literary canon is at the heart of our understanding of the structure of a society; it is one of the best means of studying literary tradition, the process of becoming a nation-state and finally the politics, cultural background and maybe prospects of the society. The literary canon has been studied by many researchers taking into account its different aspects in the literary history of the West and the post-colonial literature of non-Western countries. A few preliminary studies were carried out in the early 1990s. The two most known studies in Turkey are “*The Western Canon*” by Harold Bloom and “*Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture*” by Gregory Jusdanis. These two excellent books on the literary canon were translated into Turkish in a relatively late era after the debate on the literary canon had begun. For example, Bloom’s book was first published in 1994 in English, and its Turkish translation appeared in 2014; and Jusdanis’ book was first published in 1991, and it was published in Turkish in 1997. The first serious discussions and analyses of the literary canon emerged during the 1970s with the rise of the pop culture, cultural studies and the cultural criticism in the United States; thus, the study of different canons clashing with the traditional canon, which is the product of the WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant) culture, has gained momentum since then (Bloom 46). But it was not until the late 1980s that writers, critics, and academics in Turkey considered the literary canon worthy of scholarly attention.

Although there is an ongoing debate on the literary canon since the late 1980s, perhaps because of this late start, there is not a large volume of published studies describing the role of the literary canon in Turkey. There is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with the literary canon, most of which consists of articles published in literary magazines, and some MA and doctoral theses. Whether there is a single literary canon or a plurality of literary canons in Turkish literature has been a debatable issue. Well-known examples of this debate on the Turkish literary canon were published in the special issues of *Kitaplık* and *Pasaj*, two prestigious literary magazines, in the 2000s. After the list of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* had been released by the Ministry of Education in 2004, several conflicting accounts of that list have been proposed, creating numerous controversies. *Notos*, another literary magazine, published an alternative list of *the one hundred major works of literature* in 2012, relying on opinions of prominent writers and critics in Turkish literature.

1.1. The Concept of Canon

The word “canon” has different connotations. The etymology of canon involves various meanings, which have changed over the years. Kemal Atakay enumerates these changing definitions as:

1. The law of The Church, the body of laws that Consistory Court made.
2. Secular law or body of laws.
3. General rule, fundamental principal, measure.
4. The body of texts considered sacred by the Church.
5. The body of text which belongs to a specific writer.
6. Pieces of writing and writers considered essential or fundamental (Atakay 70).

We can trace the roots of the word “canon” back to the fifth century BC. “Canna,” the root of the word, means “reed,” and it carried meanings like the rule, measure, and law (Mesut Varlık "Kült Toplantıları-1" 44). In the course of time, the meaning of canon acquired a religious meaning, which can be defined as “scriptures” accepted by the Church against the Apocrypha (Çıkla 5). Besides the scriptures accepted by the Church, canon embodied Christian Saints; thus, the term of canon carries connotations of a “sacred” tradition. According to Parla, the meaning of canon that we use currently must have been derived from this sacred connotation (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 51). Thus canon has a strong relationship with religion and authority. In the same vein, Jusdanis uses the term “canon” to refer to a list of paradigm in his

major study on the canon. As scriptures consist of a series of texts, which refer to the truth, the canon that includes these texts also embodies the truth. Therefore, canon becomes a powerful paradigm (Jusdanis 56). From this perspective, the relationship of canon with the status quo, fundamentally, takes its roots from the religious establishment (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 51). While Jusdanis focuses on canon as a paradigm of the truth, Bloom is more concerned with the relationship between canon and dominant social groups. According to a definition provided by Bloom, the formation of canon is a matter of struggle between dominant social groups, such as "institutions of education, traditions of criticism," and the writers of subsequent generations also join this struggle identifying themselves with "a particular ancestral figure" (Bloom 20).

However, from the 16th century onwards, canon began to acquire a secular meaning (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 51). As a result of this shift of meaning from the religious connotation to the secular one, another meaning of canon, which is completely figurative and stems from its relationship with authority, emerges. This figurative meaning is completely political and doctrinaire (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 52). On the other hand, canons which are formed by rude ideological intervention do not long endure. For example, the canon that Zhdanov attempted to create in the Zhdanov Doctrine or the canon of Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, or the canon that Hitler insisted on by exercising control over the arts and literature were unable to survive the change of historical context. (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 52).

Together these approaches to the term "canon" provide important insights into the formation of the literary canon. There are many factors contributing to the formation of the canon in a given context: the cultural climate, which comes into being ideologically and epistemologically; zeitgeist, that is, the world view of the era; cultural and political milieu, and dominant aesthetic ideologies are foremost among them (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 52). These factors create a complex environment which creates a great deal of work for the literary critics and writers. As a result of this complexity, while examining canons, critics and writers have to consider categories which include many more elements than before. These elements can be listed as follows: semiotics, ideology, epistemology, gender discrimination, identity theories, cultural theories, education policies, the composition of the readers, and the relationship of literature with other arts, especially, with the cinema (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 53). In this respect, Bloom points out the relationship of the literary canon to the teaching approach in a society. In his seminal book on the Western Canon, Bloom writes that the average lifespan of an individual will not suffice to read more than a selection of works from great writers. In other words, one must choose since "there is not enough time to read everything" (Bloom 15). From this fact, this question ensues: how will people choose the works to read? In this respect, canon is a right formula for selecting these works of literature, according to Bloom (Bloom 15)

In sum, although literary canons come into being as the result of complicated processes, they are traditions which are open to debate and argument (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 52). In the context of the formation process, another fundamental question about the literary canon is what factors are involved in the formation of the literary canon. According to Laurent Mignon, the factors which are effective in the formation of the literary canon, and the purpose that this canon answers are very crucial (Mignon 36). Canon cannot come into being all by itself like something which accomplishes its formation in nature; it is not a question of aesthetic pleasure either because aesthetic pleasure can always be shaped. Moreover, it always can be argued. Therefore, political power, politics, political clashing and intentions are always in the loop of the canon formation (Koçak 60).

According to Murat Belge, there are three authorities which create literary canons. The first is the literary circle which involves writers, intellectuals, instructors, academics, and journalists. Some of them, like literary historians and critics, are directly related to the formation of the canon, but the groups which are not directly connected to the literary circle, such as instructors and journalists, also have a certain influence on the formation of the literary canon. They are the first to appraise literary works; they exert full authority on deciding which work of literature should enter into the literary canon. The second is the political authority or in a narrow sense, the state. In fact, the state does not have the right to be involved in the formation of the canon, but it usurps this right because, according to Belge, "if the game which is played is this," the state is one of the main characters (political authority). The third is the people or society. However, it is difficult to determine which part of the population involves itself in the formation of the canon. Are the ones who read literary works involved or is the whole of the society involved in the formation of canon? Another issue is that a writer who is not known by a certain generation might be known and appraised by another generation. In Belge's view, people do not have the right to decide on which literary work or writer should enter into the canon, but likewise in the case the state, we cannot ignore their participation in the formation of the canon since the rules of the game necessitate it (Belge "Türkiye'de "Kanon"" 69).

Literary criticism plays a crucial role in the canon formation, and the duty of qualified literary criticism is not to reinforce public opinion about literary works but to transform this opinion on the basis of a sound evaluation of the literary works (Oğuzertem 69). Thus, critics are one of the major components of the process of canon

formation. We see that the question about the core components of the literary canon formation is still under discussion when we take these different views into account.

On the other hand, not having a canon can be the reason and the result of an environment in which everyone fights against everyone (Koçak 61). But according to Enis Batur, the resistance of canon does not crumble because every culture holds habit in high esteem and cannot do without making rules and being bound by them (Batur 66). In this sense, what is essential in the formation of canon is not only the shape, the structure or the merit of literary works but also the broader historical process (Mesut Varlık "Kült Toplantıları -1 " 45). If historical processes had occurred differently, there perhaps would not have been a need for such a canon, or else the canon would be different from the canon than we currently know. Considering this, is it possible to imagine a literary world in which canon does not exist? According to Ferda Keskin, such a world is possible, but, in his view, it is not the actual case that such worlds exist because the presence of a canon is a practical necessity for separating meritorious literary works from "a pile of junk" ("Kült Toplantıları-1" 45).

If we return to the question of the plurality of literary canons in a given society, we may note that Suha Oğuzertem adopts an empirical approach to the issue of canon. He emphasizes the importance of statistical data regarding the copies of the works published, and the need for a detailed examination of periodicals, anthologies, and textbooks, in order to make out whether or not a canon or a plurality of canons exists in a given society (69). Besides these external determining factors in the process of canon formation, intrinsic factors such as tension, restlessness, and potential of controversy always exist in canon formation (Atakay 70). The tension in the literary canon manifests itself in the choice to follow tradition or to break with it. According to Bloom, if a work of literature shows originality, this work "overcomes tradition and joins canon," and in this way, the tension between canon and works of literature is resolved (6).

In this sense, the tradition serves to establish a sound and powerful image of the past and to secure the future in the face of the issue of authenticity and artificiality. In the canon of arts, the issue of authenticity always carries significant weight, and thus determining the authentic model or text, and excluding those which are not authentic by using the authentic model or text, is a fundamental process. In other words, canon provides an ideal starting point for establishing the infrastructure of a mimetic identity (Atakay 68). At the same time, all great writers know secretly that they are not as great as the previous writers; but since accepting this fact would lead to their artistic suicide,

they continue to struggle with these previous writers. Thus, they build their career by denying these great writers (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 14). Bloom also emphasizes this point. He maintains that "poems, stories, novels, and plays come into being as a response to prior poems, stories, novels, and plays, and that response depends upon acts of reading and interpretation by the later writers, acts which are identical with the new works" (9).

Taken together, these debates suggest that there is an association between canon formation and the plurality of literary canons. In the 1980s and 1990s, the notion of the existence of different canons was developed. Alongside the works of literature of the dominant Western culture, the literary works of women writers, migrants, and black culture arose as the members of alternative canons. Works of outstanding merit which are included within these alternative canons are used in the school curriculum in the United States today. Nevertheless, the clash between these alternative canons and the dominant high culture canon continues, and what is important here is the insensitivity of the main body canon to the prominent works of literature in the alternative canons (Başçı 49). While those who advocate for the existence of a canon insist that canons are collections made out of 'the best that is known and thought', the opponents of the canon assert that they are the symbol and even the proof of the hegemony of the categories of 'dead, white' and 'European, male' (Parla "Edebiyat Kanonları" 15). This argument of the opponents of canon, which is supported especially by the critics heeding the call of cultural studies to return back to 'context,' and by feminist critics labelling canon as the programmatic and pedagogic elements of oppression, has been at the centre of the canon debate since the 1980s ("Edebiyat Kanonları" 15).

In contrast to the opponents of canon, the proponents of canon, who do not accept that the literary value of a text is connected to history and culture, give classics as an example of texts with an intrinsic artistic quality; the literature referenced most frequently in this regard are the works of Homer. This attitude towards the classics leads us to the question of what is to be considered a classic. Furthermore, is there a difference between canonical and classical works? According to Parla, classics do not change very much; on the other hand, canonical works can go in and out of the canon. She qualifies the classics as the works which overcame the effects of fashionability ("Edebiyat Kanonları" 15).

The debate between the proponents and opponents of the literary canon over the necessity of such canons constitutes another aspect of the canon debate. Both Belge and

Keskin draw our attention to the necessity of canon in literature. According to Belge, we always need a theory to know where we are and what we are doing. In this case, the literary canon acts as a theory to understand the actual situation of the literary tradition. However, he also highlights the importance of the inclusive and humanistic aspects of literary canons (Mesut Varlık "Kült Toplantıları-1" 46). Keskin's definition is similar to that of Belge. Keskin argues for the necessity of a canon by stating that, in order to not lose one's way in the face of the complexity of the world, one should "canonize." Therefore, canonization is a reflex triggered by immediate necessity. According to Keskin, literary canons express a desire for immortality because some literary works are of lasting value. Thus, they are preserved and transferred to the next generations via the creation of a literary canon ("Kült Toplantıları-1" 47). Perhaps literary canons are seen as one of the means to achieve the immortality.

These opinions suggest that literary canons have a useful function in the social context. Canon functions as a socio-semiotic institution building social awareness. The literary canon of the society which asks itself constantly what it wishes to read, in turn, shapes a society's answer to this very question (Demiralp 20). This correlation between literary canon and social awareness urges us to focus our attention on the formation of nation states.

As far as the literary canon is concerned, there is a strong correlation between the formation of the nation-state and the formation of a literary canon. Tekelioğlu claims that the canonical works recommended by the Church helped people to know God's word, but they underwent a secular transformation with the formation of the nation-state and took shape as the foundation narratives of the states (Tekelioğlu 67). The nation-states of the modern era included their founding narratives in the national educational curriculum and attempted to propagate it with the most effective means on hand (Tekelioğlu 70). The relationship between the literary canon and nation-state formation has been most intensively investigated in the seminal book *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture Inventing National Literature* (1991) by Jusdanis. Jusdanis states that "in contrast to the absolute laws of the empire and the coercive customs of the church, national culture federates individuals through communal habits, experiences, stories, and, of course, language" (49). Therefore, the canonical works of the modern era link the members of the state to one another and the experience of solidarity is facilitated by the literary canon since it comes into being as "a collection of texts recounting the story of the nation" (Jusdanis 49). Consequently, a strong sense of being

“the citizens of a unified nation” develops due to the existence of a cohesive literary canon (Jusdanis 49).

To sum up, we may conclude that there is a wide range of views on the subject of the literary canon. The debate on the literary canon formation, the elements participating in its formation, its social aspect, and its relationship with the authority and religion are still the subjects open to question. The canon debate has become a current issue in Turkey since the 1980s. The next chapter highlights the key considerations and factors in the development of the Turkish literary canon.

1.2. The Literary Canon in Turkey

This chapter discusses whether there is a single national literary canon in Turkish literature or not. With the foundation of the Republic, nationalist literature, which draws inspiration from the symbols of the nation-state including the country and its people, subverted the palace and religious literature (*saray ve tekke edebiyatı*) of the Ottoman period (Karpat 492). All the same, a national literary canon accepted by all the parties involved in Turkish literature did not ensue from the entire corpus of works of literature in Turkey. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight main points of the literary canon debate taking place in Turkey since the late 1980s.

The debate regarding the nature of the literary canon began in the late 1970s in the United States, with the compilation of writings on the canon by Leslie Fiedler and Houston Baker (Demiralp 22). But while the debate on the literary canon came after the literary culture had achieved a respectable level in the western societies, in other words, after the literary culture had become strong enough to defend itself against the influence of popular culture, this process developed much differently in Turkey. When the Turkish cultural sphere began to meet pop culture and its products in the literary world, Turkish literature was not as substantial as that of the West and proved unable to defend itself against the deleterious effects of pop culture. Pop culture had ill effects on Turkish literature regarding its language, system of thought and writing practice as a result of this early encounter (Demiralp 23).

The Turkish novel followed a relatively conspicuous line. Novels written until the 1970s brought the social and educational role of the novel to the fore. Their

languages and the issues they dealt with were standardized, and they were of an ideological-educational function, but this tendency began to change with the writers such as Yusuf Atılgan and Oğuz Atay, and especially with Orhan Pamuk after 1980. But, this change would take almost ten years to be perceived by the critics. At this time, aside from the changes in the relatively standard line of the Turkish novel tradition, the Turkish novel underwent a number of changes with regards to the standard language and the diversification of the novel type. This diversification accelerated to such a degree that young people began in the 1990s to write novels instead of poems, as it had been before, in order to express their interest in literature (Parla "Gelenek Ve Bireysel Yetenek: Kanon Üzerine Düşünceler" 17). There has also been an increase in the number of novels published since the 1980s. According to Parla, the increase in the publication of the novels almost on every subject forced the Turkish tradition of literary criticism to create a literary canon, in order to choose "good works of literature" from a wide range of publications ("Gelenek Ve Bireysel Yetenek: Kanon Üzerine Düşünceler" 17). During this animated era of the Turkish novel, two main trends emerged among the novelists. The first trend was represented by a more experimental attitude, which was composed of novelists such as Tanpınar, Atılgan, Atay, and Pamuk, and the second was embodied by many more traditional writers such as Halide Edib, Yakup Kadri, Reşat Nuri and Orhan Kemal ("Gelenek Ve Bireysel Yetenek: Kanon Üzerine Düşünceler" 17). In other words, there were now at least two tendencies in Turkish novel for literary critics to discuss and canonize. But the debate among the literary critics, writers, and academics about whether the literary canon in Turkey has a singular or plural character continues.

Tekelioğlu maintains that the question about whether there is a national canon in Turkish literature is linked with the early Republican modernity, which began to develop from the 1930s onwards. This era included a number of significant events for the formation of the Turkish nation-state (Tekelioğlu 65). Tekelioğlu argues that almost all non-western examples of the literary canon, unlike the western canon, are formed in the nation-states established in the post-colonial era. But Turkey is the exception to this rule because the Ottoman Empire did not possess a colonial past. Thus, it was Turkey's internal dynamics, in Tekelioğlu's opinion, that had a dominant role in the formation of the nation-state in Turkey. Consequently, the Turkish novel had a *sui generis* method of development in the Turkish Republic. Nevertheless, according to Tekelioğlu, we cannot claim that there is a single literary canon in Turkey (65).

To support his claim, in his analysis of the Turkish literary canon, Tekelioğlu develops a framework to explain the plurality of literary canons in Turkey: the major causes of the variety of Turkish literary canons include the lack of a colonial past, the cultural difficulties vis –a- vis the definition of the West in Turkish historiography, the problems of determining which main texts to accept as canonical, and, lastly, the effects of the language reform on literary discourse (72, 73). The absence of a colonial past and the problematic relationship the Republic had with its Ottoman heritage make it difficult to identify “the other” of the Republic. Who was the “other” for the Republic? The foreign imperialists, who destroyed the Ottoman Empire, the Greeks who occupied Asia Minor between 1919 and 1922 on behalf the European empires, or the Ottoman Empire itself? This ambiguity about “the other,” in Tekelioğlu’s opinion, is the underlying cause of the plurality of literary canons in Turkey.

Although I agree with Tekelioğlu up to a point, I cannot accept his blanket conclusion that having no colonial past makes it difficult to identify “the other” of the Republic. Rather, I believe that the Republic never suffered from not having an “other.” On the contrary, as Hülya Adak states, although Turkey does not have a past marked by a struggle against colonial rule, the national struggle, the end of which resulted in the Republic, resulted in a similarly nationalistic and patriotic literature which celebrates “nationalism and independence” (“Exiles at Home: Questions for Turkish and Global Literary Studies” 21) In this sense, it seems possible that the West represented the “other” of Turkey in the nationalist literature. On the other hand, as a result of Turkey’s efforts to become westernized, its conservative attitude to its culture makes the place of the West ambiguous in Turkish literature. The West represents both a negative “other” and a positive “one of us” in the canonical literary works of Turkish literature (Tekelioğlu 74).

Beside this problematic attitude regarding the West and the “other,” in Turkish literary tradition, there is not an Ur-text which provides a narrative and metaphorical structure to the national literary canon, like the Bible in the Western tradition. The Koran did not carry such connotations into Turkish literature, especially in the early era of the Republic, because the early Republican discourse attempted to secularise the political system by adopting the French model of laicism and excluding the Koran from the cultural life of the young Republic. Therefore, in the works of the most well-known writers of the era, such as Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Halide Edib, we find biblical metaphors instead of Koranic metaphors. As a result of this attitude, Christian

religious terminology entered into the narration of the Turkish national liberation movement in the metaphorical sense; one of the most well-known examples of these works is *Sodom ve Gomere* (1927-28) by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (74).

Kemal Karpat, another scholar who has written seminal works on Turkish politics, also draws our attention to the relationship between the state ideology and the formation of the Republican literary canon in Turkey. According to him, the policies of the Republic had beneficial consequences for Turkish literature. Firstly, as a result of the efforts to become westernized, Turkish literature found its source of inspiration in the West; secondly, new currents of thought, which were not acceptable in the Ottoman era, flowed in the realm of literature; and thirdly, the institution of the People's Houses provided a fruitful environment for "the writing and publishing experience." Thus, private publications were developed with the expression of the original thoughts of the writers (Karpat 492).

In Karpat's view, contemporary Turkish literature is one of the most effective forces in the formation of the new social, political and intellectual currents of Turkey. Karpat's observation that Turkish literature has exerted influence on the values and paradigms of modern Turkish culture has been supported by a large number of scholars and literary critics. But Karpat sees the relationship between Turkish history and literature as a reciprocal relationship, which has, in turn, shaped Turkish culture. He provides an explanation as to how Turkish literature exerted influence on Turkish culture. In his opinion, the Republic used literature as a major vehicle for remolding Turkish culture. The Republican ideology shaped both individual and social patterns of thought, and the behavior of people, via literature; consequently, the Republic also used literature for transferring Republican ideas to the social realm. As a result of this relationship, "Turkish history and the history of the contemporary Turkish literature are closely interwoven" (Karpat 491).

The translation of the Western literary masterpieces into Turkish under the sponsorship of the Republican government was the means to introduce the new methods of literary expression as the fresh ideas in the efforts to shape the new individual of the Republic (491). But although the fact that contemporary Turkish literature has shaped to a certain extent the Turkish social setting is widely accepted, there is nevertheless an almost clear consensus that there is not a single literary canon in Turkey. Murat Belge is one of the literary critics who support the idea that there is a plurality of literary canons in Turkey. According to him, the special situation of Turkish literature is in fact, an

archetypical example of the plurality of literary canons. In this respect, he questions why there is not an inarguable literary canon in Turkey, even though Turkey has a top-down political system, which is very suitable for such a kind of canonization. The answer to this question, in his view, lies in the fact that what are imposed as the literary works of Turkey are, in fact, not works of literature (Mesut Varlık "Kült Toplantıları-1" 53). Furthermore, according to Belge, pluralism in Turkey is not pluralism as such - that is, it is not self-perpetuating - and if people found a way to liquidate each other, they would certainly do so, and pluralism would cease to exist in Turkey. In other words, the pluralism in Turkey is not based on agreement, but rather on a desperate struggle ("Kült Toplantıları-1" 53). This is not pluralism which takes its roots from a common consensus in society.

On the other hand, some critics regard the literary canon as an alien conception to the Turkish literary world. For example, Demiralp asserts that canon is a new conception in Turkish literature. He attributes canon's late introduction in the Turkish literary imagination to the influence of French literature on Turkish literary critics and writers. Indeed, the notion of canon was not well known and was not as much of a reference point for French literary critics as it was for their Anglo Saxon counterparts (Demiralp 19). His main contention is that Turks have novelists and poets who have worldwide success and reputation; but, as of yet, Turkey does not have a literary canon in the literal sense that the West has a literary canon. Rather, he asserts that although Turkish literature does not have a literary canon, there has been an ongoing debate regarding the national literature since the beginning of the Turkish nation-state. In fact, this is the debate about the universalism and indigenous culture, which always existed among the Turkish intelligentsia. From which outside sources should Turkey seek recourse? From the West or the East? Which one must weigh heavier in the Turkish literary tradition?

Besides this cultural debate, there have also been debates on anthologies, and Demiralp states that by looking at these debates, we can say that there has always been an unnamed debate in Turkey regarding the nature of the Turkish literary canon. He sees this debate as a power struggle between various ideological camps, in order to obtain supremacy in the field of discourse (22). Although Demiralp's claim regarding the literary canon in Turkey seems a bit ambiguous to an extent, because he defines the literary canon as both alien and something which existed already under the debate of national literature, we can draw a tentative conclusion that the debate on the nature of a

Turkish literary canon goes back to the early Republic, and perhaps even to the Tanzimat era.

Several critics seem to assume that there have been various literary canons represented under multiple names in Turkey. Pelin Başçı, a scholar, emphasizes the ongoing discussion in Turkish literature with regard to the literary canon under different subtitle such as “the official literary canon,” “the alternative literary canon,” “the Ottoman literary canon” and “the new canon.” According to her, there is a tension between literature and national identity in Turkey, stemming from the relationship between them, and this relationship determines each of the parties. She emphasizes the importance of the books excluded from the official canon, in order to understand what the literary canon is in Turkey and she asserts that anthologies and school books are important indications as to how the actual Turkish literary canon came into being (Başçı 45).

She gives the example of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* edited by the Ministry of Education. In this list, there are seventy-three Turkish writers, and even if some of the authors included on this list, such Nazım Hikmet and Aziz Nesin reflect a positive development in regards to the literary canon, the number of women writers and poets remains extremely insufficient (Başçı 45). On the other hand, another issue regarding the list of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* surrounds the works of the prominent writers which are included on the list. For example, Oğuz Atay is represented on the list with his autobiographical novel “*Bir Bilim Adamının Romanı* (1975)” instead of “*Tutunamayanlar* (1971)” or “*Tehlikeli Oyunlar* (1973), which are his most well-known and read works. Furthermore, Orhan Pamuk and Adalet Ağoğlu are not on the list (Başçı 45). Writers such as Nazım Hikmet and Aziz Nesin were excluded from the literary canon controlled by the state because they were widely regarded as detrimental to the idea of “classless and unprivileged society.” But they are included in the list of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* with examples of their works more reconciled with the dominant political ideology, or at least those seen as less harmful to the national unity of the country. Here again, we see the selectivity of the dominant ideology over the literary works (Başçı 48). Therefore, in the countries like Turkey, where ethnic and religious identities provide the basis for the national identity, the debate about the literary canon turns into the debate about “national culture” (Başçı 50).

In Turkey, various literary canons were formed by the literary critics in different periods. Berna Moran is one of the first Turkish literary critics who created a literary canon in his seminal work *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış*, whose first volume was published in 1983. Other literary critics and academics in Turkish literature such as Jale Parla, Murat Belge, Tahir Alangu, İnci Enginün, Selim İleri and Fethi Naci also formed literary canons by including prominent literary works of Turkish literature in the studies or anthologies they produced in different periods. These literary critics used different criteria for assessing literary works that they included in their studies. However, there are no significant differences between these anthologies or critical studies with regard to the literary works included in the literary canon they laid down. They show remarkable similarities in the way they did not include non-Muslim writers. Moreover, they did not include woman writers, or women writer were included on a limited scale in the literary canons that these critics and academics laid down in their studies (Adak *Lecture* 2017).

The fact that non-Muslim writers are not given a place in the Turkish literary canon is another significant aspect of the canon issue in Turkey. According to Mignon, the works of non-Muslim writers were ignored as a prevailing attitude in the studies of literature after the Tanzimat era (Mignon 36). He names this ignored canon of the non-Muslim writers as the “reverse literary canon” because they constitute a list of the writers and works eradicated from the memory of the national literature. Turkish historiography does not want to regard non-Muslim writers as part of the national canon. There are several factors which have contributed to this omission, from the fact these authors wrote their works in different alphabets to the fact that they belonged to a different religiosity and nationality.

In contrast to the pluralistic approach of the Tanzimat era, the Republican period aimed to forge homogeneity in Turkish literature by confining the writers to the narrow categories of their religious roots. The Republic used religion rather than language and ethnicity to define the Turkishness of their citizens, and as a result of this definition, non-Muslim writers were excluded from the Turkish literary canon controlled by the state (Mignon 41). Cultural pluralism may thus serve as a source, from which a more productive and constructive cultural environment may be cultivated, at least in the sense of the production of more qualified works of art.

The debate surrounding the literary canon in Turkey is related to the idea of nation, nationalism and the rise of the national literature. As I mentioned above, the literature of the minorities in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic were not

included in the national literary canon formed under the control of the state in the early era of the Republic. Although different indigenous cultures that lived in this geography under the umbrella of the Ottoman Empire interacted with each other tightly, their mutual effects would be ignored, and the works of literature of the non-Muslim citizens would not be included in the national literary canon. Today, how can one conduct research in the field of Turkish literature without directing one's attention to the minority literature created alongside Turkish literature since the beginning of the Tanzimat era? I think a study of this kind is impossible with regard to Turkish literature. But from the nineteenth century onwards, nation-states formed their national literary canons by excluding the "others" in a view utterly hostile to the cosmopolitan local cultures. Consequently, literature that came into being in this manner raises a lot of question about the past, and indeed about the future as well (Başçı 53).

A variety of perspectives were expressed by the literary critics in Turkey about the formation of the literary canon. But, Berna Moran's work *Türk Edebiyatına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* (1983) establishes its distinction as the first attempt which investigated literary works according to the ideological perspective from which they were composed in Turkish literary tradition. In the first volume, Moran analyses the novels written before 1950. The central theme was East-West conflict in these novels. In the second volume, he analyses the novels written after 1950, and the central theme of these novels was the unequal society of Turkey. Therefore, the novels were not chosen by Moran as a result of aesthetic preference. On the contrary, Moran took these novels in this study because they reflected the most problematic issues in Turkey in different periods.

Moran sought to demonstrate how the literary discourse had altered the ideological discourse of the novels. In this respect, he was the first literary critic who exposed the reciprocal relationship between ideological discourse and literary discourse in Turkey. According to Moran, the novelists who wrote before 1950 had reproduced the dominant ideology in their works. On the other hand, the novelist of the post-1950 opposed the dominant ideology (Nazan Aksoy 26). Moran attempted to demonstrate what kind of aesthetic problems arose from the literary discourse that the novelists of the post-1950 used to reflect the issues relating to ideology. In fact, ideological and literary discourses are inextricably interwoven in the intrinsic meaning of a text, and they have a reciprocal relationship. According to Moran, ideological messages in the surface meaning of a text are altered by the literary discourse of the text. In this respect, we cannot understand the meaning of literary texts by only emphasizing a single aspect

of the text. On the contrary, a literary critic must take all the implications of the text into consideration in order to carry out a detailed analysis (Nazan Aksoy 32). In this respect, Moran defines a literary canon in his seminal book *Türk Edebiyatına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* for Turkish literature, carrying out a sound evaluation of the significant literary works of Turkish literature.

1.3. The Language Reform and the Formation of the Turkish Literary Canon

In the Ottoman Empire, Turkish novelists adopted the novel as a genre from the West but used it as a means of facilitating the Empire's westernization endeavor and getting the idea of westernization across the society. However, in the early Republican era, the Kemalist ideology used novel as a vehicle to transform the remnants of the Ottoman Empire into a nation-state and the novelists of that period "put their art in the service of the Kemalist project." (Parla "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 28). In this respect, the purification of the Turkish language was crucial for the Republic.

History and language were high on the list of priorities, in the early Kemalist era. One of the most culturally shocking reforms of Kemalism was the language reform, which was implemented after the alphabet reform on 1 November 1928, and with the establishment of the Turkish Language Society (TDK) in 1932, the language reform picked up speed. In order to purify the Turkish language by eliminating words of foreign - Arabian, Persian, and Latin – origin, the Society of the Examination of Turkish Language (Türk Dil Tetkik Cemiyeti) was established, and this society undertook studies in the areas of linguistics, etymology, grammar, terminology, and lexicography (Wikipedia). The language reform, which had been started by Mustafa Kemal, was at its peak between 1932-1938 and continued with a relatively low intensity until the 1970s.

The language reform, which wiped out "Arabic and Persian borrowings and grammatical features of the Turkish language" (Adak "Exiles at Home: Questions for Turkish and Global Literary Studies" 22), cut the ties of the history and cultural continuity with the Ottoman past and the "Middle Eastern Islamic world," and served as a means of constructing a new national identity and culture based on the Kemalist principles, according to Parla (qtd. in Adak "Exiles at Home: Questions for Turkish and Global Literary Studies" 22).

The immediate effect of the language reform on literature was that everything written by 1930 stayed out of the contemporary Turkish literature's field of occupation because most of the works of the pre-republican era were not translated into the new Turkish alphabet. (Parla "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 29). This had a significant impact on Turkish literature. Tekelioğlu defines the Language Reform in the early era of the Republic as an unnamed "literary revolution" (75).

In Turkey, since the generation who grew up after the reform of language did not understand the Ottoman Turkish inscription, it was only the authorities in this field who decided for years which works that were written in the Ottoman Turkish inscription were important and would thus be translated into Turkish. The history and memory of literature had been shaped in preference to these experts (Mignon 36). According to Tekelioğlu, the early era of the Republic can be seen as social engineering designed as a pedagogical approach (75). Therefore, the language reform is considered as one of the causes of the plurality of literary canons in Turkey. Apart from the language reform imposed by the state authority, the Turkish political system and its leading elite have applied pressure on all social practices, including the literary sphere. As far as literary canon is concerned Parla considers this situation as a paradox because if we define the literary canon as the list of the works deemed to be in the educational curriculum and preferable by the leading elite, which controls cultural institutions and whose "ideological and aesthetic prerogatives" are determinant in the cultural sphere, Turkey could not form a literary canon even if it were to be guided by the state. ("The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 27, 28).

On the other hand, according to Parla, although literary canons are the product of an ideological structure, the ascendancy of massive ideology may prevent the canon formation ("The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 28). Furthermore, the writers and poets whose works have a great appeal for the dominant ideology show a great similarity because they take their inspirations from the same political and cultural space, which "embraces a homogeneous worldview" ("The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 28). In that case, the political space chokes artistic innovation and extinguishes aesthetic merit.

After the 1980 military coup, Turkey's political and cultural life witnessed a period of suppression and depoliticisation during the 1980s. The repercussions of this

sinister atmosphere were felt and are still felt in many fields in spite of the revisions of the constitution in a democratic direction at different times in the 1990s and the 2000s. The depoliticisation of the Turkish citizens and the suppression of free speech and thinking had its desired effect primarily on the intellectual and literary culture of Turkey. Consequently, “a surge of pop-culture products from music to magazines replaced the puritanical cultural preferences of the previous era” (Parla "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 34).

In this period, postmodern theories gained entree into the Turkish intelligentsia. In fact, this had a converse effect on the efforts of purifying the Turkish language and the language, losing its standardized language feature, was revitalized with “the language of the magazine media, the colloquialisms of pop and arabesque music.” ("The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 34). Referring to the post- 1980 era, Gürbilek argues that “in the most oppressive era of the Republic, language and culture underwent a cultural and intellectual diversification. This paradoxical period also brought a liberalization of cultural identities that had been imprisoned in a unitary discourse” (qtd. in Parla "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 34)

This period led to “an enormous productivity in the Turkish literary scene, accompanied by an unprecedented experimentation in form and style” (Parla "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 38). This era of intellectual emancipation contributed to the formation of different canons in Turkey with the growth of the works brought out by various cultural and intellectual groups; there were LGBT groups, Kurdish writers and poets, Islamist writers and poets, feminist activists and Marxist-left authors among them. While the postmodern culture and art gained ground, the opponent literary canons of the main state canon emerged. According to Parla, “the claim of recent works to canonicity” was now questionable in light of those new literary works, which belong to various subcultures and cultural identities ("The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 38). Parla claims that there is a cycle of canonicity and diversity, which is the principle underlying the canonization, repeated in the literary sphere. And this cycle has already started in the Turkish literature with the emancipation of the Turkish language from “its republican fetters” ("The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 38).

The main conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is that there has been an attempt to create or rather to define national literature especially from the outset of the foundation of the Republic. National literature came into being with the dynamics of the creative writers on the one hand, but the effort to define national literature as a fundamental constituent of the nation-state was always on the agenda in Turkey on the other hand. However, a widespread agreement has never been reached on this matter, and what is more, this debate turned into an ideological fight. Some literary circles, which had the power of discourse have brought up the writers or works at different times, and they have attempted to canonize them. Furthermore, they have insisted on their choices more and more.

These circles comprise not only the state and the governments but also the circles which are influential in the cultural environment of the country. Thus, different literary canons such as the left-wing, right-wing, traditional and western-oriented canon came into being in Turkey. In fact, these circles were not selective about works or writers which were to be included in the literary canon but, what was important for them was excluding the literary works and writers who were not compatible with their ideology. Because they considered themselves as the real owners of the country, they assumed that they had authority over the cultural life of the nation. However, from the 1990s onwards, there has been a gradual change in reader behavior, which evolves independently from the authorities or the literary critics' guidance. Here, I want to give an example of the changing aspect of the literary canon according to the readers' preferences, in the case of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. Tanpınar discussed the reform of language from a different point of view that is not conforming to the Kemalist attitude.

He was an idiosyncratic author of Turkish literature and did not devotedly approve the Republican reforms as the Kemalist regime expected the writers to do. Because of his critical attitude against Kemalist reforms, Tanpınar was perceived as an odd writer who remained nostalgic about the Ottoman heritage by Kemalists. The adverse reaction to the attitude adopted by Kemalists towards him was the acknowledgment of his works by the Islamist movement. Paradoxically, both the Kemalist-modernist and Islamist intelligentsia have discovered Tanpınar's intellectual background, which was rooted both in the traditional culture of the Ottoman heritage and western humanism, from the 1980s onwards (Parla "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" 31). One of the reasons for this marked shift in attitudes towards Tanpınar's works was the publication of them by

YKY (Yapı Kredi Yayınları) in the 1990s after the Islamist publishing house Dergah suspended their publication. Thanks to YKY, which publishes books for the readers from a wide range of cultural context, the books of Tanpınar had a wider audience. Today the perception of Tanpınar shifted from the conservative writer to a modernist one, and thus he is included in both the conservative-Islamist literary canon and the Turkish modern literary canon. (Dellaloğlu 38,39)

I believe that if there were to be a single literary canon in Turkey, this would have to comprise all of these various tendencies in literature, which take their roots from different ideological, cultural and religious spheres. The criteria for assessing literary works or literary competence of writers must be established on the distinction between good works of literature and poor ones (Demiralp 22). Furthermore, in order to form an inclusive national literary canon, the literary canon in Turkey must open its doors to the works of literature of the other ethnicities and non-Muslims regardless whether these works were written in Turkish or not. This attitude does not mean that the Turkish literary canon has to change. On the contrary, this attitude will serve to create a new way of canonization which reflects the richness of literary tradition in Turkey (Başçı 56). In this respect, “understanding the Turkish literary canon means understanding the social identity of Turkey and making expansion in this identity in favor of the “other identities” (Başçı 65).

1.4. The Turkish Left Wing and Literature

One of the most important events of the 20th century was the rise of the Left in the world. However, the Left underwent ideological and structural changes during the 20th century. Therefore, we cannot define the Left as an ideology en bloc today. In this section, I will attempt to describe the evolution of the Left both in the world and Turkey before I investigate the relationship between Turkish left-wing and literature.

In social sciences, having the notion of what to study is very important, but notions can change in time. In this respect, the notion of the Left and socialism has also changed and has expressed different meanings according to the age in which it has existed. In Turkey, the notion of the Left and the left-wing politics have also been significantly altered by the global changes in left-wing politics, especially, after the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989. As a result of these changes, different tendencies emerged in the Left by the beginning of the 21st century. During this period, the Left in

the world has got rid of its centralist, totalitarian and monistic characteristics and has begun to adopt a policy that highlights decentralization, individual, ethnicity, gender issues and cultural identity (Ergüden 55). With the collapse of the Soviet bloc at the beginning of the 1990s, the Marxist-left has begun to question itself about the policy of the past years.

In the context of the explanation that I offered above, I can say that the Left in Turkey is formed by the heterogeneous groups and in this respect, it impossible to talk about a single left-wing politics since the 1990s. Although the historical development process of the Left in Turkey began in the Tanzimat era, the left-wing parties and groups began to be influential in the Turkish political system in the 1960s. In this period, the Turkish left wing, which adopted a policy emphasizing the class struggle, emerged as a powerful intellectual and political movement in Turkish politics (Aydınoğlu 407).

The Turkish left wing continued its powerful position in the Turkish political system until the end of the 1970s. However, the military coup in 1980 was a blow from which the Left never really recovered. From the military coup in 1980 onwards, the Left in Turkey has lost its political power in Turkish politics. Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet bloc at the end of the 1980s was another shock for the Marxist-left. Consequently, factional divisions in the Turkish left wing have accelerated since then. According to Murat Belge, it is possible to say that all the political ideologies in Turkey have derived from nationalist ideology. In this respect, in his view, the ideologies such as Islamist, liberal, conservative and communist do not seem to make sense in the Turkish political system. Again, according to Belge, because a social democracy which is modelled on the Western type of social democracy has never existed in Turkey, the internationalism, which laid the foundations for the western form of social democracy, has not been a serious subject of debate in the Turkish left wing (Belge "Milliyetçilik Ve Sol" 29).

From the 1990s onwards, the Marxist left in Turkey has been shaken by the gradual decline of the Left in the world and the factions of the Left except Marxist left began to assume a more nationalist attitude in Turkish politics. This ideologic tendency would be named "nationalist or Kemalist" left in the later era (Belge "Milliyetçilik Ve Sol" 30). Today in Turkey, we witness different factions of the left wing such as the Marxist left, nationalist or the Kemalist left, the Feminists and the Greens. Therefore, today, we cannot talk about a left wing en block in Turkey. In this respect, I will not

investigate the relationship of the works that I analyze in this thesis in the context of a left wing en block, but rather in the context of different factions of the left wing in Turkey, namely the Marxist left and the Kemalist or nationalist left.

The first attempts to understand and depict society in the novel began with the initiative of a small circle of leftist writers in the 1930s in Turkish literature. Among these writers' works, perhaps, the most well-known novels are *Çıkrıklar Durunca* (1931) by Sadri Ertem, *Sokakta Harp Var* (1932) by Kemal Ahmet, *Çıplaklar* (1936) by Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Çitra Roy ile Babası* (1937) by Sabiha Sertel, *Kuyucaklı Yusuf* by Sabahattin Ali, *Köyün Yolu* (1938) by Ahmet Sevengil and *Afrodite Buhranından Bir Kadın* (1939) by Reşat Enis Aygen (Türkeş 1052). The recurrent theme in these novels was the labor exploitation and poverty. It was not until the late 1960s that Marxism was known by the Turkish intelligentsia in the theoretical level because the political oppression, which began in the single-party era in the 1930s, precluded any translation and publication of the main masterpieces of Marxist literature. As a result of this political oppression, Marxism did not take place in the Turkish novel as a result of the clear understanding of the Marxist theory until the 1960s. Instead, the poverty of the people was the central theme in these books (Türkeş 1052).

The writers of the early Republic were members of the new generation, and they were criticizing the old institutions as well as the new ones, which were emerging with the Republic. Because they were sensing that the new institutions were corrupted from the very beginning, they attempted to show the ugly side of the new political system in their novels (Türkeş 1053). Rural poverty was their overriding concern. Therefore, the influence of the Turkish left wing on literature began with "village novels" (Türkeş 1053). Orhan Kemal with *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* (1954) and *Vukuat Var* (1958); Yaşar Kemal with *Sağırdere* (1955) and *Körduman* (1957); and Kemal Tahir with *Rahmet Yolları Kesti* (1957), *Yediçınar Yaylası* (1958) and *Köyün Kamburu* (1959) put village in the centre of the novel (Türkeş 1054). In this period, Kemal Tahir considered rural life as the most crucial issue for the economic well-being of the country. In this respect, *Göl İnsanları*, which was first serialized in *Tan Gazetesi* in 1941, and then, published in the book format, was like the mirror that reflected Kemal Tahir's thesis on the rural life in Turkey. He defended the view that knowing rural life and village community was not possible only through observation; it was crucial to know also the history of Anatolia, Anatolian tradition, and the Ottoman heritage. He used a sociological discourse in his novels instead of the literary language and narrated his

theses on Turkish society by putting words into the mouths of the novel characters. Therefore, his literary narrative irritated some of his readers because of the long, dull discourses (Türkeş 1054).

After the socialist idea became widespread among the Turkish intelligentsia, many of the writers and poets joined TİP (Labour Party of Turkey). This tendency of the writers and poets towards the leftist politics had a significant effect on the increase in village novels numbers published in Turkey. As a result of this growth, the number of the young people interested in the village novels also increased, and the geography, which literature dealt with, enlarged (Türkeş 1058). Kemal Karpat, who considers the modern novel to have lagged behind poetry and short story, provides an explanation as to how village novels influenced Turkish literature. According to him, the life of peasants in the rural setting provided a new dimension to the Turkish novel. These novels were mostly about the fate of the peasants, who struggled for land or fought for a new life in the towns or cities in which they immigrated. This new field enabled Turkish novelists to handle more complex plots constructed in ample space and time. Therefore, the scope of the novel in Turkey expanded into broader geography (500).

When socialist movement became pervasive and a considerable opposition arose in the second half of the 1960s in Turkey, literature and also the literary criticism became highly politicised along with the youth (Türkeş 1059). Until the 1980s, the social groups taking part in the leftist movement did not express their authenticity. But, after the military coup in 1980, these groups emerged in the left-wing politics by establishing their distinctions as women, queers, environmentalists and ethnic groups. Paradoxically, the oppressive character of the military coup resulted in a search for the cultural, ethnic and gender identities in society (Türkeş 1065). The word that left a deep mark in this period was the “individual.” People began to have a sense of their selves as individuals in contrast to the 1960s and 1970s, in which the left movement suppressed the freedom of the individual in favor of collective action. The persecution of the leftist youth, writers, and intellectuals, by the military junta after the coup, resulted in a left-wing literature of injustice, which turned into the narrative of the conflict between good and evil, and the voice of this narrative, at times, took on an arabesque tone, whose roots go back to the traditional narratives, which was the language of pain (Türkeş 1070).

The classics of the Marxist ideology began to be published in the 1960s in Turkey. In this period, literature was considered as an important means of expressing

the ideas about Turkey's social realities. Hence it was not thought to reside outside of the ideological sphere of these years. The novels, such as *Esir Şehirin İnsanları* (1956), where Tahir wrote about the occupation of İstanbul in the First World War, and the National War of Independence, were not taken into consideration in the 1960s because the period of the National Struggle and the Ottoman Empire and its history were not on the agenda of Turkey.

Until *Yorgun Savaşçı* (1965) was published, Tahir's novels did not occupy a central place in the Turkish intelligentsia of the 1960s. *Yorgun savaşçı* (1965) included, in Tahir's novels there is an intense historical background, along with the theme of the National Struggle. In this respect, we can draw a parallel between Tahir and the recent generation of writers such as Yakup Kadri and Reşat Nuri (Kayalı 45). Therefore, Tahir was not embraced by the writers of that period. As a novelist or as an intellectual he was not at an exciting position in the literary and intellectual sphere of Turkey in these years (Kayalı 45).

In that period, readers were not interested in the historical novels about the Ottoman heritage or the National Struggle. But the novels such as *Onuncu Köy* (1961) or *Amerikan Sargısı* (1967) were embraced readily by readers because these novels reflected the principal incidents in the life of people. In this respect, Tahir's novels were not fitted to the zeitgeist of the 1960s (Kayalı 46). Orhan Kemal's and Yaşar Kemal's novels, which were written in that period, were more suitable for the spirit of that time. Therefore, Tahir seemed to be forgotten about and less embraced in the "three Kemals" of Turkish literature, namely, Orhan Kemal, Yaşar Kemal, and Kemal Tahir. While the two other writers' books (Orhan and Yaşar Kemal) became classics to some extent, for example, *İnce Memed* by Yaşar Kemal and *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* by Orhan Kemal, Kemal Tahir's novels did not become prominent in Turkish Literature of this period (Kayalı 47). Nevertheless, we cannot consider village novels of this period as novels written from a fully fledged Marxist perspective. However, although the village novel carries connotations of the prospect of a socialist society, the Kemalist thought nevertheless formed the background of village novels.

If we consider village novels as a separate canon in left-wing literature, men, who are the heroes of these novels, are lettered republicans attempting to finalize the unfinished project of Kemalism (Türkeş 1070). The role of the leftist men protagonists is central in these novels and women assume pivotal roles temporarily (Türkeş 1071). In this respect, we can say that the Left did not settle old scores with the dominant

ideology in Turkey. Therefore, the Turkish left could not sever its ties with the Kemalist ideology and the state. As a result of this inconsistent ideological stance against the regime, an anti-militarist and internationalist attitude in the leftist novels has not been present for years (Türkeş 1071). Until the 1970s, the central issue in left-wing novels had been the peasantry. After the 1970s, the revolutionist movement came to the center of left-wing novels (Türkeş 1071). But the theme of this period's books, which encompasses the prospect of the revolution, did not go behind the narration of the leftist militants' individual stories. And in the subsequent years, also in the 1980s, instead of the problems of the labor classes, the existential anxiety of the individual took place in left-wing novels, in Turkey.

1.5. From the 1980s to 1990s

In a period in which the individual and individual liberty came to the fore, purely aesthetic discussion, history of literature and political sociology were no longer at the forefront of the literary scene. With the influence of postmodernism and compelling desire of being the best selling, a sense of satisfaction began to dominate the literary sphere in Turkey. In spite of the endeavor of the literary critics who tried to stand up to the new trend by emphasizing new forms of Marxist aesthetic, the ideological and political analysis in literary texts went out of favor. (Türkeş 1063).

To conclude, the left-wing literary canon in Turkey developed mainly via village novels and could not produce the works of literature which encompassed Turkish society from a fully fledged Marxist point of view. In this respect, as Adak emphasizes, most of the leftist writers prefer to ignore the events of 1915-16, which contributed to the creation of the national bourgeoisie as a result of the seized property and assets of the deported Armenians, and do not want to see this disaster from a class perspective although they criticize the myth of classless republic ("Exiles at Home: Questions for Turkish and Global Literary Studies" 21). Besides, Turkish left wing ignored non-Muslim writers who had a socialist past and reflected their ideology in their works. For example, Zaven Biberyan (1921- 1984), who was Marxist and at the same time, the member of TİP (Labour Party of Turkey) has never been mentioned in the left-wing literary canon in Turkey (Adak *Lecture* 2017). In that sense, the left-wing literary canon is not able to represent the entire corpus of left-wing literary works.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KEMAL TAHIR AND THE LITERARY CANON

2.1 Kemal Tahir as a Novelist

In some critics' opinion, Kemal Tahir is a reactionary and renegade, who wanted to hinder the progress and on the other hand, according to some others, he is one of the most militants of all his generation in the social issues of his time (Sevim 59). He put forward a lot of hypotheses and opinions in social sciences such as history, anthropology, and sociology.

In the intellectual development of Kemal Tahir, the historians such as Fuad Köprülü, and Ömer Lütfi Barkan took a central place. Also, İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, Mustafa Akdağ, Halil İncalcık and Niyazi Berkes influenced his intellectual achievement (Kayalı 24). Although Kemal Tahir composed poems and wrote short stories, he decided to write novels until the end of his life. He admitted that Nazım Hikmet had helped him at the beginning of his career in literature. First, Tahir viewed the problems of the newly founded Republic from the Kemalist angle in his works, but adopted a socialist, even a Marxist attitude in the novel in the course of time. After this shift in his ideological position, he began to criticise Kemalist ideas, and he ended up in prison with the charge of provocation of the navy to insurrection to the current government in 1938 (Kayalı 25).

Tahir had been in prison with Nazım Hikmet for a certain time, and in this period, he acquainted himself with Marxism. He came out of prison under a general amnesty in 1950 as a determined Marxist. But the divergence of opinion arose between

Nazım Hikmet and Kemal Tahir in the later era. Kemal Tahir distanced himself from the scientific socialism, which he regarded as an alien ideology to the Turkish social structure in the late period of his life and thus, his alienation from the Turkish left began. After Kemal Tahir came out of the prison, he had not any contact with TKP (Communist Party of Turkey), and he never became a member of this party (Kayalı 26). He distanced himself from TİP (Labour Party of Turkey) as well. According to Tahir, in the western societies, in which historical, economic and social conditions were intensely studied by academics, novelists did not have to do much work; on the other hand, in Turkish society, in which social conditions and the historical background were not profoundly studied, and even the truths about its history were turned upside down and often concealed from people, it was incumbent upon the writers to reveal the truths about the past and actual situation of society (Kayalı 33). In fact, this approach that Tahir adopted explains why he based his works on the sociological and historical ground.

Kemal Tahir published *Sağirdere* in 1955. It was his first novel, which he put his name on for the first time as the writer. But by the publication of *Sağirdere*, he had already begun to keep himself aloof from the leftist intelligentsia. Marxist Kemal Tahir, the friend of Nazım Hikmet in the 1930s, was changing his judgments on Marxism and his approach to the main sociological issues of Turkey. The first signal of the split between Tahir and the left wing in Turkey came with the publication of *Rahmet Yolları Kesti* (1957). In this novel, Tahir sided with the state against banditry and in fact, by doing so, he adopted an attitude towards Yaşar Kemal and his newly published book *İnce Memed* (1955). The burglar bandit of *Rahmet Yolları Kesti* (1957) is the exact opposite of the heroic bandit of *İnce Memed* (1955). This attitude already provides a clue about opinions Tahir would express on the state later on (Sevim 66). From the 1950s onwards, Tahir's attitude towards the Turkish left isolated him from the left-wing literature, but because he was a friend of Nazım and he had spent 12 years in prison for voicing Marxist ideas, he was accepted as a Marxist writer by the majority of the leftist writers. Orhan Kemal says about him: "He is not incarcerated for stealing a chicken, he struggled for the cause (*Marxism*), and he was incarcerated for the communist propaganda. In this respect, he devoted himself and his freedom for the Turkish left and for that reason I have respect for him." (qtd. in İbrahim Tüzer 267)

Kemal Tahir, who did not look kindly on the Ottoman Empire until the mid-sixties, began to adopt a positive stance on the political and cultural heritage of the

Ottoman Empire defying the ideology of the Republic. He claimed that the Ottoman State had a fairer and more equitable social order than the western countries and he began the quest for a reliable theoretical ground for his theses (Sevim 66). After he acquired pro-Ottomanist ideas, he begins to clash with Kemalists, and *Bozkırdaki Çekirdek* (1966) made his relationship with Kemalists extremely difficult because, this time, he criticised the Village Institutes, successful educational institutions which did credit Kemalist regime at that time.

Kemalists accused him of discrediting the village institutes and using the information provided by the secondary sources. And in 1967, with the publication of *Devlet Ana* (1967), his troubled relationship with the left intelligentsia reached its climax. Right after *Devlet Ana*, he clashed again with Kemalists with the publication of *Kurt Kanunu* (1969). Then, *Yol Ayrımı* (1971), in which Kemalist regime came in for severe criticism over the politics of westernization, was published. After he wrote the novels which expressed sharp criticism towards the Kemalist regime and pronounce critical judgments on orthodox Marxism, Kemal Tahir was no longer in the circle of the leftist or Kemalist intelligentsia. He seemed to create a third way in his approach to the Ottoman past and therefore, he was considered as a writer who had an unconventional approach in the Marxist realm on the current political issues of his time in Turkey. In this respect, his opinions on the Ottoman past and the Republic, for the most part, were shared by the Turkish right wing but an amalgamation was never formed between Tahir and them. I will investigate this topic under the title of Kemal Tahir and the right-wing literary canon on the following pages.

New ideas and attitudes began to crystallize in 1967, in Turkey. Consequently, various political stances started to manifest themselves in the political arena in the same year. Kemal Tahir published two novels: *Bozkırdaki Çekirdek* and *Devlet Ana* in 1967. The former was considered as a novel which criticised village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri), and the latter was perceived as a novel written in praise of the Ottoman past, and consequently, it did not go down well with the left-wing literary critics, on the pretext of having reactionary connotations (Kayalı 48).

Tahir claimed that classical Marxist ideology and the ideas designed on the model of the West were not able to explain Turkish social structure and he attempted to demonstrate it in his works to the conventional Marxist intellectuals (Kayalı 27). On the whole, Tahir's novels are loaded with an intense political and sociological discourse.

Therefore, the theoretical approach in Tahir's works exposed him as a theorist rather than a novelist.

2.2 Devlet Ana (Mother State)

To further understand the role of ideological attitude in the canonization of works of literature, here, I will explore the idea that *Devlet Ana* has an ambiguous position in the literary canon, and I will do a critical textual analysis of *Devlet Ana* in order to understand *Devlet Ana*'s unique place among the works of Kemal Tahir.

Devlet Ana has been identified as a work that represents Tahir's clear break with the left-wing literary canon in Turkey, and it is also widely regarded as Tahir's most controversial novel. Consequently, it had been subjected to damning criticism while attracting hailing praises as the masterpiece of Tahir. The reason of these attacks and praises was not only the merit or the faults of the novel, but also, the admiration for Kemal Tahir's personality or the anger at him played an essential role in the discussions on *Devlet Ana* (Moran 211).

After *Devlet Ana*, the position of Kemal Tahir in Turkish literature became both politically and literary controversial. Tahir became the target of severe criticism because he failed to produce a novel which encompasses the early history of the Ottoman State from a Marxist point of view in *Devlet Ana*. Furthermore, many literary critics from the left wing had a general agreement on the fact that he wrote a novel from a right-wing conservative standpoint. This theme came up mostly in discussions of *Devlet Ana*'s position in the Turkish literary canon. As I stated before, left-wing literary critics are very reluctant to include *Devlet Ana* in the left-wing literary canon due to a series of reasons that I will try to analyze below. My view, however, is that *Devlet Ana*'s place in the literary canon is ambiguous. In which literary canon is it placed? Left-wing literary canon or the right-wing literary canon? I think this question remains unanswered. On the one hand, literary critics such as Murat Belge, Cevdet Kudret, and Fethi Naci argue that *Devlet Ana* has completely a nationalist and statist tone, which places it in the right-wing literary canon. On the other hand, literary critics such as Selahattin Hilav and Tahir Alangu contend that *Devlet Ana* is the first Turkish novel which has characteristics different from the Western novel and it was also written from a Marxist point of view.

From this perspective, *Devlet Ana* is the first Marxist novel peculiar to Turkey. On the other hand, however, other critics argue that *Devlet Ana* is not a novel or a work of literature, but rather a textbook, in which Kemal Tahir expressed his views on Turkish history and politics in the form of literary narrative. In the words of Halit Refiğ, one of this view's leading proponents, *Devlet Ana* is not in the conventional standards of the novel genre. According to him, it cannot be ranked as a historical or sociological textbook either, but it included most of the characteristics of these genres. It brought together “*Orhun inscriptions, Kutadgu Bilig, Dede Korkut tails, Vilayetname, Yunus Emre, Evliya Çelebi, Naima, Cevdet Paşa and Ahmet Midhat Efendi*” (Refiğ 162).

Although I agree with Refiğ to some point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that *Devlet Ana* is outside of the novel genre because we see essential attributes of a work of fiction such as fictional characters and places along with the dialogues between the fictional characters. Furthermore, *Devlet Ana* has undoubtedly a plot that holds the narrative although it has unfamiliar characteristics to the novel genre. In this case, I can qualify *Devlet Ana* as a *sui generis* novel. In sum, I think that the debate over whether *Devlet Ana* is in the left-wing literary canon or the right-wing literary canon is more meaningful than the discussion on whether it is a novel or not.

My view is that *Devlet Ana*'s place is not evident in the literary canon, or rather in the existing literary canons in Turkish literature. Though I concede that Kemal Tahir is initially a Marxist writer, I still maintain that he shifted his position over time and adopted a nationalist and statist attitude and this attitude is most evident in *Devlet Ana*. For example, the xenophobia, the extravagant discourse on Turkishness, the emphasis on the *sui generis* character of the Ottoman Empire and the presentation of the Ottoman State as a caring state are the most visible elements of this nationalist and statist attitude in *Devlet Ana*. Furthermore, these features have never a positive connotation in the Marxist ideology. Although some literary critics might object to the fact that the place of *Devlet Ana* is ambiguous in the literary canon, I think that *Devlet Ana*, which does not overlap the Marxist discourse, is not in the left-wing literary canon but I also believe that it is not in the right-wing literary canon. Therefore, the issue about the ambiguous position of *Devlet Ana* in the literary canon is crucial because I think we can understand the structure and the workings of the canonization of the works of literature in Turkish literature by studying the works which have an ambiguous position in the literary canon.

Belge, Kudret, and Naci offered harsh critiques of *Devlet Ana* for having a nationalist even xenophobic voice although Tahir claimed to have written *Devlet Ana*

from a Marxist standpoint. Belge emphasized the themes such as Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP), the non-feudal social order of the Ottoman State and Xenophobia in *Devlet Ana*. He analyzed *Devlet Ana* in the light of these themes. On the other hand, Moran adopted a more literary approach and analyzed *Devlet Ana* according to the genre to which it belongs. When it comes to the topic of *Devlet Ana*, most of us will readily agree that it is a historical novel. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of the distortion of history by Tahir. Whereas the literary critics, who endorse Tahir's theses, are convinced that Tahir captured the historical facts accurately, Marxist literary critics, such as Murat Belge, maintain that he distorted the factual events in a very deliberate way.

Critics have long assumed that, writing *Devlet Ana*, Kemal Tahir aimed to remove the ingrained inferiority complex modern Turkey has owing to the loss of the Ottoman Empire. According to these critics, Tahir also wanted to highlight the human type peculiar to the Ottoman Empire, the traditional virtues of that human type and the ability of Turks to establish states (Moran 212). Tahir explains his aim of writing *Devlet Ana* with these words: "it is necessary to investigate the source of the power which enables the Ottoman Empire to live during seven hundred years to determine the individual and social characteristics of the Anatolian local folk" And he adds, "the roots of the overwhelming issues that our society suffers today are in our history" (qtd. in Kudret 175).

Kemal Tahir attempted to tackle these issues and their solution applying a so-called Marxist concept which he created in his imagination by putting forward the two distinctive characteristics of the Ottoman state, namely Asiatic Mode of Production and its non-feudal social order. In the general background of *Devlet Ana*, we see the profound effect of these ideas. As a result of this approach, he wrote a novel which idealizes the historical events rather than captures them accurately.

In *Devlet Ana*, what is narrated is the rise of the Ottoman state, which had a lifespan about 600 years. In this historical novel, Tahir depicts the Bithynia, where the Ottoman Beylik was established, and he gives us the picture of Bithynia in the framework of the Byzantium-Ottoman relationship via a relatively complicated plot, which is constructed in the convention of romance. According to Tahir, *Devlet Ana*, in fact, depicts the people of the day and age in which it was written (Kudret 175), to put it succinctly, this novel portrays the modern society of Turkey by exploring the roots of this society in history. Therefore, to understand the actual situation of Turkish society,

he had used the retrospective analysis of historical events and gave an ideological meaning to his work (Kudret 176). In Tahir's view, the essential factor in the establishment of the Ottoman Empire was the predisposition, or rather the gift Turks had for the establishment of successive states in the different ages of history and this ability to establish states was still intact according to Tahir (Kudret 176).

The story, which Tahir tells us in *Devlet Ana*, begins circa 1290 and ends with the conquest of *Bilecik* by Turks circa 1299. In order to create an intense narration, it seems Tahir put the plot in a limited period (Belge *Genesis* 68). In this period, Ertuğrul Bey conferred the power to Osman Bey, the son of Ertuğrul Bey. Orhan Bey, the son of Osman Bey, grew and prepared for taking power from his father. Thus, we see the first three generations of the Ottoman Dynasty together in the plot of *Devlet Ana* (*Genesis* 68).

Although some critics such as Berna Moran argue that the genre of *Devlet Ana* is romance, *Devlet Ana* is a novel which tells the establishment of the Ottoman State. In this respect, it can be considered as founding myth or national epic as well as a romance (Belge *Genesis* 72). Founding myth tries to give clear and lucid answers to the questions such as “who are we?”, “where do we come from?”, and “what is the essence of our national existence?” In fact, the quest for these answers is not in the scientific realm. Therefore, it cannot be the object of real historiography, but it can only be the theme of the national ideology as never-ending rhetoric (*Genesis* 53). I believe that *Devlet Ana* has qualities of both romance and founding myth and these two genres are intertwined in *Devlet Ana*. Therefore, I will first give a brief overview of *Devlet Ana* in relation to romance, and then, I will examine it in regard to the convention of founding myth.

Kemal Tahir uses historical romance genre to depict the heroic acts of the protagonists. The term of romance defines the works of fiction produced before the era where the contemporary novel rose in the 19th Century. While novel pictures the real life and usual modes of expressions, romance portrays the events has never happened or are not likely to come about in high- flown language (C. Hugh Holman 413). The characters and events in romance are generally from a world away from the everyday life, and male protagonists are upright and chivalrous. The romance genre includes “elements of fantasy, improbability, extravagance, and naivety” (Cuddun 615). “Elements of love, adventure, the marvelous and the mythic” are the other prominent elements in romance (Cuddun 615).

In *Devlet Ana*, we witness most of these elements which are inherent in the romance genre. Love poems of the Turkish traditional folk literature and *The Epic of Dede Korkut* constitute the basic motifs of *Devlet Ana* (Moran 212). For example, the protagonists of the novel, Kerim, and Aslı, are directly taken from the Turkish folk literature. We can get that idea easily when we scrutinize the names of the characters and the allusion to the original story of *Kerem ile Aslı* in the novel. As far as bravery is concerned, *The Book of Dede Korkut* is a reference for Tahir (Moran 212). Nevertheless, Talat Sait Halman claims that “Kemal Tahir’s novel, in fact, is nothing more than a poor imitation of the historical romances of European and Anglo-American literature” (Halman 156). Because, according to Halman, the protagonists who established the Ottoman State are depicted as “nondescript and insipid characters” in *Devlet Ana* (156).

This kind of critiques about *Devlet Ana* goes as far as to qualify it as a mock romance. For example, some critics define some passages from *Devlet Ana* as the explicit and simplistic use of the pulp fiction conventions of the Western literary tradition although Tahir claimed to have written a novel peculiar to Turkish literature for the first time. In this respect, Cevdet Kudret funnily criticizes *Devlet Ana* for not having a serious plot as a historical novel with pejorative terms:

“While Kemal Tahir, who was against everything that came from the West and that had a Western connotation, wanted to create his work under the influence of the epic works of Turkish history such as *Dede Korkut Tales* and *The Epic of Köroğlu*, he seemed to have ended up with a blood-and-thunder tale, which is typical example of the Western adventure novels such as *the Three Musketeers* or *Les Pardaillan*” (178).

If we now turn to the plot of *Devlet Ana*, I can say that the plot of the novel unfolds as the fight between good and evil. There are two stories in *Devlet Ana*. The first story is about *Kayı Tribe*, which laid the foundation of the Ottoman State in *Söğüt* and the second is about Kerim Can, who gets revenge for his brother’s murder committed by Notus Gladys and his entourage. While The former is a story on the social scale, the latter is an individual story; but these two stories are interrelated. Bithynia, in which *Kayı* Turks live under the leadership of Ertuğrul, had been turned into a wasteland. Ertuğrul is an older adult nearing 90 years, and he becomes infirm by illness and old age. In this respect, We can draw a parallel between elderly Ertuğrul’s plight and the barren lands of Bithynia (Moran 215). After Osman took over the leadership from Ertuğrul, who died, *Söğüt* begins to prosper again. Here, the archetype

of “wasteland” is obvious, and this pattern will be repeated through the book in connection with Asiatic Mode of Production.

The second story is Kerim’s story, and in fact, this story has a characteristic of the initiation rite, which represents different phases in the life of Kerim (Moran 215). The accomplishment of Kayı Turks constitutes the central theme of the novel on the social scale. They acquired wealth and power, established their state and expanded the territory of their country over Byzantium. But on the other hand, the story of Kerim constitutes the second theme of the novel, and it is a remarkable accomplishment on the individual level (Moran 222). The romance features emerge in the story of Kerim Can. I think Tahir takes the basic pattern of the European Middle Ages romance and applies it to *Devlet Ana*’s plot. This pattern develops on the theme in which valiant medieval knight fights against the evil. Notus Gladys plays the role of the classic example of the evil knight in *Devlet Ana*. He kills Demircan, Bacıbey’s son and Kerim’s brother, and Bacıbey thereupon constrains Kerim to take revenge on the infidels, who murdered Demircan. In fact, Kerim wants to be a scholar. He always preferred books to the sword, but her mother pounces on him with a whip in her hand and burns all his books in the fireplace:

“Bacıbey o zamana kadar, kitapları tadını çıkara çıkara yakıyorken birden kudurup hepsini parçaladı, saz kırıklarıyla beraber ocağa fırlattı.” (...). Bırakacaksın mollalığı bu geceden tezi yok! Çenesiyle sedire koyduğu savaşçı giyimlerini gösterdi. Şunları giyeceksin! Aga kılıcını takacaksın omzuna... Babanın kanını İnegöllülerden aramaya vakit bulamadı ağan... Gidip arayacaksın!” (Tahir 135).

Here, we see the everlasting issue between the class of scholarship (ilmiye) and martial class (seyfiye) in the long history of the Ottoman Empire. This tension between these two classes would be more intense and noticeable in the following years of the state until the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the beginning of the 20th century. In any case, the head of the State, Ertuğrul Bey, is well aware of the importance of these two qualities for the state and backs up Kerim by saying Bacıbey these words:

“Kerim, okumasını, Ertuğrul Bey'e borçluydu, "işini uzattın Bacıbey ve de tadını kaçırdın. Bize okumuş da lazım.” (101)

Kerim must take the revenge of his brother and kill the infidel murderers in order to prove himself. Thus, the first episode of Kerim is completed with the death of the enemies (Moran 220). On the other hand, Kerim achieves various heroic acts like going into the cave of the evil Friar Benito and finding out the precious scripts in a chest

(the motif of going underground and slaying the dragon in romances), and at the end of a series of heroic acts, he was able to be with the girl who he was in love with. I think Tahir called Dermircan's brother as Kerim (caring) purposely to emphasize the "caring state" concept. Kerim embodies bookish and martial characteristics in his personality, and the Ottoman historians allege that the Ottoman Empire harbored both the martial and scholastic characteristics from the beginning of its establishment for years. Therefore, I think Tahir wanted to represent this aspect of the Ottoman Empire in the personality of Kerim by alluding to the Ottoman State. At the end of the novel, we see Kerim's decision to return to scholarship after he became a member of the military class. Bacibey again threaten him with her whip but this time, Kerim is very adamant, and he plucks the whip from her mother's hand and gets over his fear from her mother:

"Kerim sıçrayıp anasının bileğine yapıştı, kırbacı, daha doğrusu, çocukluğundan kalan son korkuyu, kolayca çekip aldı. Yüzü değişmiş, rahmetli babası Rüstem Pelvan'ın çok kızdığı zamanlardaki halini almıştı. Bu değişmeyi daha fark etmediği için üstüne atılmak isteyen anasını, tıpatıp babasının kükreyişiyle durdurttu: .-Geri bas! Geri dedim! Kırbacı kaldırınca Aslıhan aralarına girdi." (Tahir 650).

In this scene, we see that Kerim underwent a complete transformation. He became a fierce and determined man as to order his mother, Bacibey and his wife, Aslıhan. I think Tahir demonstrate the maturity that the Ottoman State reached in the personality of Kerim, who also reached full adulthood at the end of the book. Now, if I return to the social and economic background themes of *Devlet Ana*, it is essential to understand the meaning of Asiatic Mode of Production and the absence of a feudal society in the context of the Ottoman State in order to make an accurate textual analysis of *Devlet Ana*. Therefore, in his book *Genesis* (2008), Belge went through an analysis in the light of these concepts.

According to Tahir, the social system of the West produced a human type peculiar to the West. This system, which based on the class struggle and social hierarchy, is not favorable for bringing about harmonious social relationships between people. As a result of this, the westerners are exploiters, and thus, they are cruel and egoistic people in the eyes of Tahir. Here, what Tahir means by the system peculiar to the West is the Feudalism in Europe in the Middle Ages and then, capitalism in the modern times. In contrast to the western societies, the Ottoman society, in which feudalism did not exist, had a classless and cooperative community, according to Tahir (Moran 224).

First, I want to give a brief definition of Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP) as it is understood in the Marxist literature. From 1961 onwards, socialism and the themes related to socialism began to be discussed in Turkey under the constitutional liberty that the constitution adopted after the military coup in 1960 allowed. In these years, Asiatic Mode of Production began to be discussed among socialists and academics in the world, and in the same era, socialists in Turkey showed an interest in Asiatic Mode of Production as well. If I give a summary of Asiatic Mode of Production as Murat Belge puts it, I can say that in the places where the nature is a real handicap (in the form of flood, drought or other natural disasters), which hold back people from planting crop or raising cattle in the small groups, only big social organizations can cope with these physical handicaps by creating extensive production systems and public works and in this case, the social structure, which enables the production, is the state. Therefore, there would not be private capital in the countries where this kind of production process existed and social classes would not be formed because a system in which people were divided into groups could not exist in this countries, in other words, in the countries where Asiatic Mode of Production was the dominant mode of production (Belge *Genesis* 55, 56).

In the 1960s, some Marxist intellectuals and academics saw an oppressive character in the state apparatus in Turkey rather than the dominance of a class as the Marxist theory put it. Those Marxist thinkers, in fact, considered the reason of this oppressive character of the state system in Turkey as the residual effects of Asiatic Mode of Production, which takes its roots from the Ottoman past of Turkey (Belge *Genesis* 56). On the other hand, academics who were not Marxist, such as Ömer Lütfi Barkan, also took into consideration Asiatic Mode of Production in Turkey's economic life. Other intellectuals and scholars, who were the standard bearers of Asiatic Mode of Production in Turkey, were İdris Küçükömer, Sencer Divitçioğlu, Selahattin Hilav and Muvaffak Şener. Kemal Tahir was one of these standard bearers in the 1960s and the following years.

Before I argue the effect of Asiatic Mode of Production and non-feudal character of the Ottoman State on the formation of *Devlet Ana's* central thesis, I want to draw attention to the influence of Barkan's ideas on Tahir because this influence is not examined in detail in the literature on Kemal Tahir. Barkan was literally ordered by the state to become a historian (Berktaş "The Other Feudalism" 180). And he focused his energy as a historian on the distinct form of the state that the Ottoman Empire had, and

according to him, this form of state was considerably different from that of the western counterparts.

The Ottoman system, said Barkan, was “an order in which everyone worked for the state, and the state worked for everyone” (Berktaş "The Other Feudalism" 182). “Barkan’s basic theory was that Ottoman society and/or the timar system in the classical Age were not feudal” (Berktaş "The Other Feudalism" 184). In this respect, Tahir would be an implicit mouthpiece of Barkan’s theses in *Devlet Ana*. According to many admirers of Kemal Tahir, he studied the Ottoman social structure with a new perspective. He claimed that there had been limited use of the private property in the Ottoman Empire, and most of the property was under the control of the state. Therefore, the proprietary rights of the land and the military system made a whole. He defended the idea of the “caring state” (kerim devlet) about the Ottoman Empire. According to him, without the state eastern communities could not exist, on the other hand, this was not the same for the western communities. Therefore, in the West, the state had not a determining existence for the life of people. Of course, these were very statist ideas expressed by Kemal Tahir. In fact, this was the “we resemble only ourselves” argument, which was a strong and important argument in the 1920s and 1930s in Turkey (Berktaş "The Other Feudalism" 127).

The historical background of this argument was formed in the era before the Republic, in the years of National Struggle. This was, actually, statism and national conceit, which would be developed by Barkan in a later period. Barkan would bring the “‘we resemble only ourselves’ argument to its ultimate point by denying the feudal structure of the Ottoman Empire comparing with the Western Middle Ages, and mystifying the state in a grandiose manner with blurred notions and definitions” (Berktaş "The Other Feudalism" 168).

Barkan was considered as a statist and nationalist historian by Turkish left. I believe the frame of mind behind *Devlet Ana* was shaped by the nationalist and statist thought of the 1930s and I also think the first clash between Tahir and the Turkish left broke out when Tahir wrote *Devlet Ana* because *Devlet Ana* seems to be a scene that displays the main argument of Barkan’s theses. Barkan attempted to picture the Ottoman State in a setting, in which the evil of feudalism did not penetrate. He thought that Ottoman State was so distant from feudalism that the class conflict could not exist in the Ottoman society (Berktaş "The Other Feudalism" 219). Rejecting class conflict in the Ottoman Empire’s social order was inadmissible for the left-wing intellectuals. I

think Tahir based these heretical suggestions on a Marxist term, that is, Asiatic Mode of Production in order to give a Marxist tone to *Devlet Ana*.

In *Devlet Ana*, there are several significant details which help the reader to follow the theme of Asiatic Mode of Production in the plot. For example, from the beginning of the novel we see an implicit explanation related to Asiatic Mode of Production in the dialogue between Notus Gladyus and Mavro:

“Üç kez yatak değiştirdi Sakarya Irmağı" derdi, üç kez, hisarları kuruda koyup savunusuz bıraktı. Türk'ün, Moğol'un sürüp gelmesi bundan" derdi rahmetli... Yolları yutmuş bataklık... Kervan işlemez olmuş. Babam rahmetli, "Buraların yoksulluğu bundan" derdi” (Tahir 24).

Here, Tahir demonstrates that Bithynia had a cruel nature which made hard it to live. According to Asiatic Mode of Production conception, the harsh environment is one of the most critical factors that lead to Asiatic Mode of Production. Therefore, we can deduce from Mavro's words that a powerful state is needed in Bithynia to organize economic activities on a land which causes difficulties to people in farming and livestock raising. As a result of the logic that praises Asiatic Mode of Production, which emphasizes the strength of the state and its rulers, Mavro's father advises Mavro to pray to the Sultan in Konya or, in other words, to the Kaiser for the welfare of people (Belge *Genesis* 57):

“Yoksulluk, yıkılsın gitsin, dersen kayzerimizin, ya da Konya Sultanı'nın, güçlü olmasına dua edeceksin derdi” (Tahir 24).

In the following pages of the book, we will hear the same kind of analysis, this time, from Osman Bey. He tells Şeyh Edebalı Asiatic Mode of Production and the geopolitics, for sure, in the way in which Tahir conceptualized it:

“Ne fayda ki Konya tahtı cehennem ateşinde kızdırılmış demir parçasıdır, şeyhim, çünkü salt Anadolu çoraktır, verimsizdir. Hele bugün derisi yüzülmüş, eti soyulmuştur. Yolları silindiğinden kervan işlemezdir. Suları azgınlaştığından her yanı bataktır. Masraflı devlet besleyemez!” (Tahir 188).

In Tahir's opinion, Turks had the great ability to establish states. Tahir emphasises the Ability of Turks to establish successive states, along with the social order they have:

“İşimi kolaylaştıranlar! Verimli topraklara sahip olana yarar Anadolu... Tükenmez insan kaynağıdır, insanın zanaatı da görüldüğü gibi, köylülük değildir, devlet kuruculuğudur” (Tahir 189).

Here, we witness state chauvinism, and Tahir will demonstrate the superiority of the Turkish-Islamic culture almost in every field of the cultural, social and economic life over the Western World, via the state chauvinism. Tahir claims that the West has no morals and on the other hand, the East has a highly evolved traditional morality:

“Latin İstanbul'u basıp alınca Frenk düzeninin nasıl bir bela olduğunu görüp anlamıştır. Bu düzen köylüyü köle etmeye dayanır. Kim ister köle olmayı? Demek zorlayacaksın aralıksız! Zorlarken zorlarken n'olur adam? İnsanlıktan çıkar! İşte bu sebepten Frenk adamı, say ki, kuduz canavardır. Kahpedir, kıyııcıdır, Allah'ı maldır, dini imam soymaktır. Irzı, namusu, utanması, acıması, sözü, yemini hiç yoktur. Bunalırsa insan eti yer (...)” (Tahir 191).

All of these details are significant because Tahir began his analysis on the field of economics and continued making a comparison between the West and Ottomans in the area of morals, which is a very relative and subjective matter. Departing from the race or religion, he creates a national enemy in the image of the West, by professing rude words that could be conceived only by a far-right populist (Belge *Genesis* 59). On the other hand, Tahir brought the conception of “caring state” forward in *Devlet Ana*. According to Belge, *Devlet Ana*, in fact, is a novel which is produced with the invention of the concept of “caring state” by Tahir and this concept renders the Ottoman State as a socialist state.

Tahir's looking on the Ottoman State as a socialist state was not welcomed by most of Marxists in Turkey. To couch chauvinist ideas perverting the discourse of Marxism is not a whole new ball game for the Marxists of the developing countries. But, Kemal Tahir furthered this chauvinist and xenophobic discourse in *Devlet Ana* to such an extent that it was impossible to accept the standpoint of Tahir for the sensible Marxists in Turkey (Belge *Genesis* 64). Apart from the mode of production of society, the nationalist and statist discourse excels in the novel, and this discourse gives the impression that Tahir introduced Asiatic Mode of Production, which has a Marxist connotation, to explain why the human type in the Ottoman society was different from the western human type. But in fact, the concept of Asiatic Mode of Production looks like tacked to the nationalist and statist discourse in *Devlet Ana* because going by the ethnic origins of people and judging them according to their ethnic and religious ties appear much more noticeable than Asiatic Mode of Production in *Devlet Ana* (Belge *Genesis* 64). Together these analyses of *Devlet Ana* on the socio-economic level provide considerable insight into Tahir's theses on the economic and social structure of the Ottoman Empire and consequently, his approach to the history of the Ottoman Empire.

To put it briefly, complex motives and reasons contributed to the rejection of *Devlet Ana* by the left-wing literary canon as well as the right-wing literary canon. I will explore the relationship of *Devlet Ana* with the different literary canons in the Turkish literary tradition in the following sections but here, I want to recapitulate the essential points with regards to the political and social messages of *Devlet Ana* that swerves from the Marxist ideology. Kemal Tahir thought that Turkey had a *sui generis* social and cultural structure which took its roots from its Ottoman past and he began the quest for a form of Marxism which would be implemented in the social, cultural and economic life of Turkey. He was profoundly influenced by Ömer Lütfi Barkan and Fuat Köprülü, the historians who had the theses on the distinctive traits of Turkey in the same thought pattern with Tahir. Indeed, Tahir wrote *Devlet Ana* to convey his ideas through a historical novel. But although he tried to remain faithful to the Marxist theory basing his thesis in *Devlet Ana* on Asiatic Mode of Production and feudal system, both of which were taken from the Marxist terminology, he adopted a nationalist and statist discourse when it comes to explaining the *sui generis* structure of the Ottoman society. Indeed, that was the jargon which was used by the nationalist historians mentioned above.

According to Belge, Tahir became disillusioned with Marxism and joined the ranks of the nationalist, writing *Devlet Ana* (Belge *Genesis* 99). But the nationalist and statist tone of *Devlet Ana* was not enough as to include it in the right-wing literary canon because the Marxist past of Tahir was a significant obstacle for his acceptance in the right-wing literary canon. Furthermore, Tahir insisted that he wrote *Devlet Ana* from a Marxist point of view. Therefore, the ambiguous position of *Devlet Ana* in the Turkish literary canon continues to be questioned. In this respect, ideological attitudes play an essential role in the canonization of the literary works in Turkey. I will explore this subject on the following pages.

2.3 Devlet Ana and the Islamist Literary Canon

Kemal Tahir never produced literary works which directly take place in the religious realm, or the Islamist ideology but yet, Islamist intellectuals embraced him half-heartedly after the publication of *Devlet Ana*.

Kemal Tahir was one of the intellectuals who expressed radical ideas against the westernization in Turkey. According to Tahir, advocating the westernization amounted

to lack consciousness and pride in the religion in the surface meaning of the word. In the eyes of Tahir, the proponents of the westernization project were against the traditional, national and moral values. What is worse, they would become estranged from their identity. In Tahir's opinion, there is no excuse for such alienation. According to him, no one can claim to be in the right-wing or the left-wing politics without breaking away from the westernization. In other words no matter what political opinion one has, one must be against the westernization to be a patriot. Otherwise, they would be deceiving themselves (Akyıldız 467, 68).

This attitude adopted by Tahir against the westernization went down well by the right-wing intelligentsia in Turkey, but yet, some intellectuals such as Sezai Karakoç were circumspect in fully embracing Tahir. According to Karakoç, even if Tahir was a staunch opponent of the westernization, he was still using the leftist political jargon, such as "Asiatic Mode of Production" and "underdeveloped countries' economy" to criticise the West and the politics of westernization. Furthermore, he was still trying to establish a theoretical method using the political terms of Marxism. Therefore, according to Karakoç, developing a relationship with the left wing would have harmful effects because these ties would serve to put the leftist political jargon in the foreground. According to Karakoç, however, Tahir may try to criticise the Republican regime, and the regime's policy regarding westernization, he could not free himself from the leftist political thought (Lekesiz *İslamcılık* 968, 69).

On the other hand, Ahmet Kabaklı a nationalist-conservative scholar and columnist draws attention to the change in Kemal Tahir's opinions and considers this change as the shift to the right wing in Kemal Tahir's views. He says that Kemal Tahir found his real identity as a writer and an intellectual after he broke with the simplistic and fashionable Marxists. According to Kabaklı, Kemal Tahir and Nazım Hikmet are prominent artists and leading figures of the Turkish socialist movement, but since Nazım passed most of his time abroad, he could not overstep the limits of the doctrinaire Marxism. Unlike Hikmet, Tahir could change himself after he was released from prison and as a result of this, he adopted a more nationalist attitude rejecting a socialist approach incongruous to the Turkish national values (Refiğ 262).

These examples drawn from the two leading figures of the right-wing intellectual sphere shows us the controversial position of Tahir in the Turkish right-wing intellectual sphere. As I will try show later in this chapter, the same controversial position of Tahir is also evident in the left-wing intellectual sphere in Turkey.

2.4 Devlet Ana and the Nationalist-Conservative Literary Canon

Kemal Tahir gained prestige among Turkish nationalists with the publication of *Devlet Ana* (1967). But Turkish nationalists and conservatives never expressed their admiration to Kemal Tahir explicitly, and the nationalist-conservative literary canon never opened its gates to Tahir's works with a consensus. Today, even if *Devlet Ana* carries an Ottomanist and statist tone referring to the Anatolian Turkishness, it cannot be considered as the part of the nationalist-conservative canon.

Osman Turan, a scholar, and politician from right-wing ideology, wrote a book whose title is *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkuresi Tarihi* (1969). He was a competent historian of the Seljuk and Ottoman period, and he tried to make a synthesis of the Turkish nationalism and Islamist ideology. This synthesis would be named Turkish Islamic Synthesis (Türk İslam Sentezi) in the later era. The thesis of the Turkish Islamic Synthesis can be briefly summarized in the following outline: Turks believed that the dominance over the world was assigned to them and they materialized this belief to a considerable extent by establishing the Ottoman Empire. But they maintained their dominance by providing the other nations with justice, equality, and welfare, not by exerting pressure on them. In the same years, *Yesevi* dervishes, who played an important role in the foundation of the Ottoman State in *Söğüt*, gained importance thanks to Namık Kemal Zeybek a prominent member of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) in the 1970s. Zeybek expressed a great interest in the role of the worrier dervishes in the foundation of the Ottoman State. Thus, a romance on the Ottoman Empire, and *Söğüt* the town where the Ottoman State was established emerged in the right-wing movement (Ayvazoğlu 575, 76). Even if it is not confessed, Kemal Tahir's *Devlet Ana* played a key role in this process (Ayvazoğlu 575, 76). But although it has a pro-Ottoman tone, and nationalist-statist connotation, *Devlet Ana* did not gain acceptance of the Turkish nationalists enthusiastically. The scenes in the plot of the novel, in which the young Ottoman worriers make love with Anatolian Greek girls, and other scenes incongruous in the Turkish Islamic setting, irritated Islamists who are sensitive about conservative values.

2.5 Devlet Ana and the Kemalist Literary Canon

Kemal Tahir was standing close to Kemalism as to carry the photograph of Mustafa Kemal in his wallet (Timur 189). Kayalı describes Tahir as a romantic Kemalist submerged slightly with a socialist sauce in the 1930s. But he began to question Kemalism after the Liberal Republican Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası), which was founded by Fethi Okyar as an opposition party, was closed by the Kemalist regime as it was seen dangerous to the Republican ideals in 1930. Furthermore, Kemal Tahir was sentenced to 15 years in prison by the Kemalist regime in 1938 while Atatürk was still alive (Kayalı 139).

If we turn to Tahir's criticism of Kemalism, he raised the question whether the national war of independence was an anti-imperialist war or not, showing great courage. Furthermore, he voiced severe objections to the Kemalist ideology, and he claimed that reforms would not have a long life (Kayalı 27). He also criticized the reform of language, which underwent in the Republican era, asserting that language was an integral part of the people's lives and it was impossible for the societies, which had not history and a strong language, to have great artists. According to Tahir, it was unlikely to produce art with a fabricated history and language, which had not long past. He regarded the reforms as a break with the past. He opposed the language reform and the Sun Language Theory (Güneş Dil Teorisi) by stating that the Ottoman Turkish language was an imperial language, which need not be purified (Kayalı 28).

The efforts to put Kemal Tahir outside of the literary canon are noticed in the Kemalist-left literature, too. The Kemalist left always has an adverse reaction to the Ottoman past of Turkey. They criticised the despotism of the Ottoman Empire and its religious identity invariably putting the merits of the Republic against the Ottoman Empire's political and religious structure. In this case, it was nearly impossible to include a writer like Kemal Tahir, who was Marxist and a bitter critic of the Kemalist reforms, in the Kemalist-left literary canon even if he was once a proponent of Kemalism and a sympathizer of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Furthermore, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison by the Kemalist regime of the 1930s. Tahir had a negative attitude to the westernization and modernization policy of the Kemalist regime. He regarded the efforts of westernization as the primary source of all the economic and social issues, which modern Turkey faced.

According to Tahir, Kemalists betrayed Turkey by bringing the western culture to Turkey and by ignoring the Ottoman past, which had a superior culture in the sense of both human and spiritual cultures. The first severe crisis between Tahir and Kemalists erupted when he published *Yorgun Savaşçı* (1966). This novel approached the National Struggle from a different point of view which was not compatible with the dominant ideology, and Kemalists found him utterly arbitrary in the way he distorted history (Sevim 67). While he was excluded from the Marxist literary canon with the publication of *Devlet Ana* (1967) because of his pro-Ottoman attitude, Kemalists closed the gates of the literary canon to him because of his aggressive stance on Kemalism.

Tahir only approved the Left of Centre Movement (Ortanın Solu Hareketi) and established a good relationship with Bülent Ecevit, the leader of this movement in the 1970s (Dosdoğru 17). For example, Ecevit praises *Devlet Ana* with these words: “This novel is the transition from authentic Turkish myth and epic to the authentic Turkish novel (...) it is a novel that shows us how Ertuğrul, Osman, and Orhan Beys formed the *Kayı* tribe that laid the foundation of a new and deep-rooted state in Bithynia” (Refiğ 142). Apart from Ecevit, İsmail Cem, another leading figure of the Left of Centre Movement, also felt sympathetic towards him. Cem points out: “(...) In other words, Kemal Tahir gave the first examples of the historical and cultural interpretation courageously when the vast majority (of the intellectuals) were silent, and they were not able to understand (the matter)” (Refiğ 255). In spite of the sympathy that the Left of Centre had for him, Tahir was excluded from the Kemalist- left canon even if he was an enthusiastic proponent of Kemalism at early ages.

2.6 Devlet Ana and the Marxist Literary Canon

Kemal Tahir had a controversial relationship with the left-wing ideology although he was known as a Marxist writer in Turkey. He started his literary career as a Marxist writer but then, he made a clean break with Marxists in Turkey shifting his orthodox Marxist opinion to a nationalist and statist stance. He presented his ideas as the implementation of a kind of Marxist theory, which had distinctive characteristics peculiar to Turkey.

According to Tahir, socialism infiltrated in Turkey as an incongruous element with the Turkish social structure and in this context, he accused Turkish socialists of falling under the influence of the Comintern (The Communist International) (Sevim 82). As I shall try to demonstrate in the section of Nazım's position in left-wing literature, some Turkish intellectuals from the Kemalist and Marxist left alleged that Nazım was under the control of the Comintern, and he wrote *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* in order to back National Struggle and the Kemalist Regime with the manipulation of the Comintern. From those accusations, we understand that there was an intense debate about the realization of socialism in Turkey in the 1960s.

Tahir suggested a kind of socialism which would be appropriate to Turkey, and he attempted to find the origins of this type of socialism in the reinterpretation of the Marxist ideology in close touch with the objective reality of the social, economic and cultural life of Turkey (Sevim 72). In fact, he tried to formulate a modernization program against the pattern of the western type of exploitation which was concealed with a mask of modernization. In his opinion, the programme of westernization was out of touch with the Turkish tradition.

One of the peculiarities of Tahir, as a Marxist writer, was his disbelief in a revolution that workers and peasants might bring about. This conception was entirely against the revolutionary doctrine of Marxism and Marxists in Turkey came out against this understanding more than any misconceptions that Tahir asserted in the name of Marxism. His belief that Turkey had a *sui generis* history and culture laid behind this opinion. Even Marxists intellectuals in Turkey uttered that Tahir went as far as to adopt an anti-communist, even a fascist attitude by rejecting the scientific socialism and attempting to promote the discourse of indigenous socialism instead of the scientific socialism (qtd. in Sevim 75). Another conception peculiar to Tahir was the concept of "caring state" which he used to describe the Ottoman Empire. Caring state means, in Tahir's opinion, a state which serves the public. In this kind of state, the government does not support the economic exploitation of the working classes and adjusts the balance between various social classes. According to the caring state theory, a society could exist even if a state was not present in the West. On the contrary, it was impossible to see a community without a state in the East (Sevim 71). Therefore, the state is crucial for the Eastern civilizations.

As a result of all these points of conflict, the Marxist left was very reluctant to include Kemal Tahir in the Marxist literary canon in Turkey in spite of his Marxist past,

notably, after the publication of *Devlet Ana*, which has an anti-Marxist stance and a nationalist tone in its narrative and plot. For example, Murat Belge characterizes *Devlet Ana* as a novel which Turkish nationalists could find very appealing (Belge *Genesis* 64). But on the other hand, Kemal Tahir claimed that he adhered to the Marxist doctrine while developing his thesis on a socialism which is peculiar to Turkey and he established proof of his Marxist identity by using the term of Asiatic Mode of Production, which is a Marxist concept. This explanation shows us that Tahir considered himself as a writer who belongs to the Marxist literary canon.

In Seçkin Sevim's opinion, today, both the left wing and right wing have some apprehension about including Tahir in their literary canons although they find some right values for their ideologies in Tahir. Therefore, they do not put him into their system of thought (Sevim 86). I agree with Sevim on that matter because Tahir does not belong to any literary canons in Turkey in spite of the fact that he addresses a broad audience, especially, after the 2000s with the rise of the neo-Ottomanism in Turkey.

In this section, I have attempted to evaluate the development of Tahir as a novelist in the different periods of his life and his relationship with the various literary canons i.e. the Kemalist-left, Marxist-left, Islamist and Nationalist-conservative literary canons in the light of his novels and his changing political opinions from the conventional Marxism to a form of Marxism, which he attempted to shape according to the historical past, cultural tradition and economic situation of Turkey. This marked change in his political views formed the contents of his novels and determined his place in the literary canon. Especially *Devlet Ana* altered the literary critics and reader's perception of Kemal Tahir. In fact, this alteration in the perception of the authors and their works shows us another aspect of the workings of the canonization in Turkish literature. There exists a reciprocal relationship between the perception of writers and the implication of their works, hence their place in the literary canon. As we see in the example of Kemal Tahir, although he had been considered as a writer who had ties with the left-wing literary canon, this relationship became weakened after the publication of *Devlet Ana*. The perception of *Devlet Ana* played an essential role in Tahir's reappraisal in the literary canon, and his efforts to formulate a socialism peculiar to Turkey ended in his rejection from the left-wing literary canon. We will see the same altered perception regarding Nazım because of his patriotic and nationalist discourse. In the case of Nazım, this changing attitude towards him will not cause a rejection, but ambiguity about his place in different literary canons. I will elaborate this in the chapter

on Nazım and his epics, i.e. *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country*.

In summary, this evaluation shows that Kemal Tahir, indeed, is a writer who waged war against the taboos of both Kemalist-left and Marxist-left. Although there are sharply conflicting views between him and the right-wing politics in Turkey, the ideas resulting from his attempt to create a new form of socialism peculiar to Turkey is congruent with the essential views of the nationalists. But Turkish nationalist-conservative literary canon by no means involves Kemal Tahir. I do not think a literary critic should claim that *Devlet Ana* is a part of the nationalist literary canon in Turkey because Tahir's Marxist past and his unconstrained narrative is an obstacle in the way of his acceptance in the nationalist literary canon. Furthermore, I do not believe Tahir had such a desire when he was alive. He considered himself, to some extent, as the part of the Marxist literary canon in Turkey and he was perceived as a member of the Marxist literary canon, at least by some literary critics, readers, and writers until he published *Devlet Ana* and expressed his ideas conflicting with Orthodox Marxism. Besides, there are some literary critics who assert that Tahir is still in the left-wing literary canon. For example, Hilmi Yavuz claimed that Tahir never went outside of the left-wing literary canon and ideology (Yavuz 31). The most important proof of those who see Tahir in the left-wing literary canon is Tahir's using a Marxist concept, namely, Asiatic Mode of Production to lay the foundation of his theses.

By my evaluation of Tahir and his works, I can say Tahir does not belong to a specific literary canon. As his relationship with the existing literary canons in Turkey shows us, he seems to be outside of the canonical classification in Turkish literature. Neoliberal politics, the disapproval of the nation-state and the identity politics besides the criticism of the Kemalist ideology were the subjects which came to the fore, in the aftermath of the military coup in 1980.

The quest for a non-Western modernization programme and the criticism of Kemalism brought together liberal-left intellectuals and conservative intellectuals to some extent. In that period, the criticism that Tahir made in the previous period gained importance. His criticism on the Soviet Marxism and his emphasis on the difference between the West and East conformed to the sensibilities of the nationalist-conservative and Islamist readers in this period (Köksal 40). His anti-imperialist attitude and his attempts at defending the East against the West were materialized in *Devlet Ana*, along with an implicit emphasis on a socialist movement, which takes the social and historical

conditions peculiar to Turkey into consideration. Broadly speaking, *Devlet Ana* (1967) appealed to the nationalist-conservatives, and *Yol Ayrımı* (1971), which criticised Kemalist ideology appealed to Islamists in the 1980s and thereafter (Köksal 40). Neo-Ottomanist ideas and politics are again on the rise from the beginning of the 2000s in Turkey. Many literary works and movies going by the neo-Ottomanist ideas were produced in the recent years. But other works that already existed on this subject also came to the fore. In that respect, *Devlet Ana* is a case in point.

In the 2000s, *Devlet Ana* is back again on the literary agenda in Turkey. Furthermore, the right-wing readers found the concept of caring state and distinctive characteristics of the Ottoman state, which were emphasized in *Devlet Ana*, particularly appealing for their ideology (Köksal 41). The cultural and literary activities on Kemal Tahir and his works increased considerably in the 2000s. Therefore, this increase shows that Kemal Tahir is again on the agenda of the cultural sphere in Turkey. Nowadays, Kemal Tahir's works are published by İthaki publishing house, and the 14th edition of *Devlet Ana* is on sale in bookstores. Furthermore, *Esir Şehrin İnsanları* (1956) figures in the list of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* prepared by the Ministry of Education. *Esir Şehrin İnsanları* narrates the life of people during the period of the armistice in İstanbul. The clandestine help of people to the National Struggle in Anatolia is the main topic of this novel. Besides, Halide Edib emerges in this book with her enthusiasm in the Sultan Ahmet meeting (İleri 745). *Esir Şehrin İnsanları* is one of the most appropriate novels to the needs of the official ideology of the state. In this respect, it is comparable in essence to *Human Landscapes from my Country* by Nazım Hikmet, which also figures in the list of *the One Hundred Major Works of Literature*.

To sum up, the difficulty in determining Kemal Tahir's place in the Turkish literary canon demonstrates that ideological rifts between different political and social groups play an essential role. Even in a specific literary canon, writers who are supposed to belong to this literary canon can produce ambiguity in the same ideological standpoint, and Kemal Tahir is a typical example of this situation in the Turkish literary canon.

CHAPTER 3

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NAZİM HIKMET AND THE LITERARY CANON

This chapter aims to provide a discussion of Nazım's two epics, namely, *Human Landscape from my Country* and *The Epic of the Independence War*, in relation to the existing literary canons in Turkish literature, in order to understand the workings of the literary canon in Turkey.

Firstly, I examine the poetry of Nazım. Next, I focus on *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country* in the light of Nazım's link with the Comintern and the left wing in Turkey and finally, I examine the place of Nazım's epics in the Kemalist and the right-wing literary canons. These epic poems and their processes of composition provide valuable clues to Nazım's ideological stance and his relationship with the literary canon. The literary critics analyzed *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes* in the context of Nazım's attitude towards Kemalism, his connection to the Comintern and his commitment to establishing a socialist society in Turkey.

I believe that *The Epic of the Independence War*, which is embedded in the first and second books of the *Human Landscapes from my Country*, is especially, important because of its nationalist and patriotic tone. Therefore, this epic caused considerable controversy in the literary and political circles in Turkey. It is also a matter of debate owing to its place in *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* compiled by the Ministry of Education, today; I think its inclusion in this list is a significant indication as to where *The Epic of the Independence War* stands in the literary canon in Turkey.

To conclude, *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country* express ideologically different meanings to various factions and groups in

the Turkish political life. For example, Kemalist-left, Marxist-left and even a part of the nationalist and conservative right wing can find strong connotations in these works.

3.1 The Poetry of Nazım Hikmet

The two prominent features of Nazım's poetry are the devotion to his cause and the quest for novelty in his poetic expression (Doğan 177). Building on from the idea that Nazım was an ideologically devoted poet as well as an avant-garde artist, in this section, I illustrate that his political identity and his identity as a poet are always intertwined and developed together. But yet, he had always been the target of the interpretations, which aimed to separate these two identities. Sometimes, his political stance was judged by the critics as opposed to his artistic expression (Kurtuluş 316). While I examine Nazım's poetry, I will not elaborate the technical features of his poetry. I will give a summary of the process in which he became a poet and then I will show the political and social aspects, which are fundamental in his poetry, referring to the different periods in his life.

Nazım was a revolutionist not only in the political sense, but he was also a revolutionist with regards to the novelties that he brought in Turkish poetry. He is regarded as the first representative of the socialist realist school regarding form and content, and he had been the first poet who composed his poems in free verse in Turkish poetry. In addition to the novelties in the form and content, the purification of the poetic language is another characteristic of Nazım's poetry. Comprehensibility and clarity are two main criteria in Nazım. Therefore, he considered the purification in language as an integral part of the revolution and the essential principle in the communication with people (Hilav 62).

Nazım who wanted to make the break with the traditional poetry aimed to make his poetic language a proletarian language and a direct result of this was the colloquial language that he introduced in his poems, and this was another novelty in Turkish poetry (Doğan 178). The primary source that Nazım's poetry was nourished was the folk literature and folk epics. For example, this influence is highly noticeable in *Kerem Gibi* (like *Krem*), *Ferhad ile Şirin* (*Ferhad and Şirin*) and *Şeyh Bedrettin Destanı* (*The Epic of Sheikh Bedrettin*). Furthermore, in *The Epic of the Independence War*, folk heroes were put in a different context. When Nazım put these local themes in his works,

he seemed to part company with the internationalism, which is the key concept in the communist ideology, and emphasize the local topics and issues.

In the later era, this attitude which emphasizes the authentic values and tradition would have a strong influence on the efforts of including Nazım's works into the literary canon controlled by the state; especially, on the canonization of *Human Landscapes from my Country* and *The Epic of the Independence War*. The epithet "the Poet of Turkey" cast at him, in this period, would cause controversy as to whether he was an internationalist or a nationalist poet. In fact, Nazım composed several poems which are open to such interpretation, and I think the origin of the debates around the canonization of his epics, in fact, lies in these different definitions. On the other hand, in contrast to evidence which presents the view that he was a patriotic poet (the poet of Turkey), an alternative perspective illustrates that he was a traitor. Most of the members of the Turkish right-wing politics never forgot that he was a communist and always accused him of making his escape from Turkey to Moscow in 1951. Nazım was denaturalized after his escape, but with the canonization of some of his poems in the 1990s via the list of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature*, this time, another debate began around restoring his naturalization. His citizenship would be restored on 5 January 2009.

In the poems that he composed before 1930, it is evident that Nazım attempted to combine the principles and technique of the Futurist poetry with the socialist poetry (Hilav 36). After 1932, he inclines towards a more comprehensive and classical understanding of poetry. This new form that Nazım called "the epic prose," in fact, is the contemporary epic itself according to Hilav (43). In many respects, *Simavna Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı*, which is the masterpiece of Nazım, represents the characteristic example of this new form of poetry with regard to the use of language, and the lively and fluent structure of the work (Hilav 43). To put in a nutshell, the founding principles of Nazım's poetic can be categorised into the faith in the human creativity, glorification of the modern science and technology, skilful use of colloquial expressions in poetry, diversification of the themes, rejection bourgeois values, emphasis on the emergent order (socialism), combativeness for a cause and opposition to the pleasures of the ancient tradition (Hilav 37).

The October Revolution had been influential in shaping Nazım's poetry and in that sense, he is the first Turkish poet who developed his artistic expression in the process of the October Revolution and the aftermath of the Revolution. It is evident that

a political culture, which regarded the October Revolution as the most critical stage of the human history, also viewed Nazım as the symbol of the communist cause in the upcoming years in Turkey (Kurtuluş 318). The most prominent theme in Nazım's poetry is anti-imperialism. This theme shows itself most in *The Epic of the Independence War*. Anti-imperialism seems like a point of intersection of the communist ideal and patriotism in Nazım. To put it simply, I can say being a communist necessitates adopting an anti-imperialist attitude in Nazım.

In the discussion of *The Epic of the Independence War*, one controversial issue has been Nazım's patriotism. On the one hand, some leftist intellectuals argue that he adopted a nationalist attitude. For example, Berktaş alleges that Turkish nationalist ideology that Nazım inherited already existed in Nazım's thought pattern strongly (Düzel) or Ece Ayhan asserts that he was in the Kemalist discourse (qtd. in Karaca 186).

On the other hand, some opponents of this idea attempt to give a theoretical ground or an adequate justification to explain his nationalist and patriotic voice in *The Epic* (*Lekesiz "Nazım Hikmet, Kemalizm, Komünizm Ve Sosyalist Yönetimler" 24*). A comparison of different explanations reveals very insightful commentaries on the place of *The Epic of the Independence War* in the Turkish literary canon. The following part of the thesis moves on to describe in greater detail Nazım's epics, namely, *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country*. The debate on Nazım's motives in composing these epics will also be investigated in detail on the following pages.

3.2 The Epic of the Independence War

The Epic of the Independence War is an essential part of *Human Landscapes from my Country*, and it fully deserves mention. It is a symbolic work which reflects Nazım's patriotism besides his interpretation of the Independence War from a communist point of view. In fact, Nazım regarded the Independence War as an anti-imperialist battle led by the grass roots. The Epic of the Independence War, therefore, has importance for the readers from different ideological camps. Even though depicting the war as class conflict and valuing the masses more than the elite was a challenge to the official history, there are many parallels between the official narrative of the war and *The Epic*. Writing *The Epic of the Independence War* Nazım takes the official

narrative and brings it down to the daily life of his selected heroes. He picks out local stories from other sources, such as local resistance fighters like *Karayılan*, *Arhavilli İsmail*, and *Şöför Ahmet* and through their eyes, he gives us an epic and ideal narration of the nationalist struggle.

In a sense, *The Epic of the Independence War* can be read as the political and ideological support of the national struggle. It is a strange paradox that a true epic like *The Epic of the Independence War*, which praises the Kemalist revolution in some matters, should be written by a communist like Nazım Hikmet (Berktaş *Lecture* 2017). In the main text of *The Epic of the Independence War*, Nazım is very faithful to Mustafa Kemal's account and *The Great Speech* of 1926, and thus, it can be interpreted as the moral-ideological support of the national struggle (Berktaş *Lecture* 2017). Nazım saw the national struggle as an anti-imperialist war like most of the members of the Turkish left. The left sympathized with Mustafa Kemal and his 'achievements' during the liberation war as they saw it parallel to the Leninist articulation of nationalist movements. Such struggles were to be supported because they had a progressive character and the war was regarded as a path to the freedom of oppressed nations (Sütçüoğlu 247). *The Epic of the Independence War* should not only be interpreted as a poem written with patriotic feelings, but it also should be considered as the Marxist perspective of the world, history and the dynamics of the societies.

It has eight chapters written in 1729 lines. The text narrates the events carried out between 1918 and 1922. Anatolia and Istanbul are the background places of the work. Nazım selected the sequence of events which developed during the Independence War on the front line and behind the front line and these events were presented chronologically as the separate stories. We can detect patriotism and a tribute to Mustafa Kemal's military achievements as well as the voice of the unknown heroes of the war throughout *The Epic*. For example, in part two, Sivas and Erzurum Congresses are central. Scenes from the congresses and quotes from Mustafa Kemal formed the basis of this section. Nazım also took the opportunity to criticise the elite in Istanbul who argued that Turkey should become an American mandate. Mustafa Kemal was then quoted declaring 'either freedom or death!' Part Two can be seen as a eulogy to Mustafa Kemal and the course of the liberation movement.

The main story of *The Epic of the Independence War* is the Independence War and the national struggle that began in 1919 and finished with the liberation of İzmir on

9 September 1922. These critical phases establish the framework of *The Epic*. This framework consists of six frame-work stories:

1. The story of Karayılan (Black Snake) of Antep
2. The story of Kambur (Hunchback) Kerim of Adapazarı
3. The story of İsmail of Arhavi
4. The stories of Abdullah, Osman, Abdülkadir and Mehmet of Reşadiye that are told by the telegraph operator Hamdi of Manastır
5. The story of Kazım of Kartal
6. The Story of the chauffeur Ahmet

All these frame-work stories are related to the main story in the plot of *The Epic*. Doing so, Nazım tires to break the stale narration of the historical facts and instead of being the narrator of a documentary, he becomes the narrator of an exhilarating historical adventure via an excellent piece of work produced in a very subtle way. *The Epic* does not focus on a single protagonist whose heroic acts form the plot of *The Epic*. Instead, there are a number of protagonists in the plot of *The Epic*. Another feature of *The Epic* is its approach to Mustafa Kemal's position as a leader. For example, while most of the literary works that narrate the Independence War or the national struggle in Anatolia are taking Mustafa Kemal in the center of their narration, *The Epic of the Independence War* alludes Mustafa Kemal in a few isolated instances without mention his name (Karaca 190):

“Şayak kalpaklı adam/ nasıl ve ne zaman geleceğini bilmeden/ güzel,
rahat günlere inanıyordu” (Hikmet *Kuvayi Milliye* 102)

“Sarışın bir kurda benziyordu./ Ve mavi gözleri çakmak çakmaktı.”
(Hikmet *Kuvayi Milliye* 105)

3.3 The Process of Composition of The Epic

Nazım began to compose this poem in Sultanahmet prison in 1939. Writing about the National War of Independence occurred for the first time to Nazım at the diner in the house of Şevket Süreyya Aydemir in Ankara in 1937. In the conversation between Şükrü Sökmensürer, Şevket süreyya Aydemir and Nazım, Sökmensürer, the Chief Constable, complained that no one had yet written a poem about the Turkish War of Independence. At that time, Nazım was arrested once, and after he was released from

prison, he could not find job because of the pressure of the government, whereupon he had gone to Ankara for a meeting with the state bureaucrats, who were his friends, upon the invitation of Şevket Süreyya in order to convince the authorities that he did not have anything to do with the illegal organizations (Irmak 45).

That night, in the house of Aydemir, Nazım read one of his poems on the Spanish Civil War, after that Şükrü Sökmensüer said Nazım that he should write the epic of the Anatolia being impressed by this poem. This conversation may have triggered the idea of writing *The Epic of the Independence War* in Nazım (Saime Göksu 220). This proposition which comes from a powerful bureaucrat had a significant meaning though it was unofficial. Until he was arrested on a charge that he provoked the soldiers to the rebellion, Nazım had not any attempt to write about the Independence War (Irmak 57). When he was sentenced to 28 years prison on the pretext of provoking the army to the rebellion, the idea of writing an epic on the National Militia (Kuvayi Milliye) was placed again on his agenda. The promises made implicitly to release him from prison had an impact on his decision apparently.

Nazım began to write up *The Epic of the Independence War*'s first version in 1939 in prison in İstanbul, and he sent for *The Speech* of Mustafa Kemal in order to read and study it. But perhaps as a result of the criticism of those who read his work, Nazım backtracked on his decision to publish this first version after a while, and he decided to revise and enlarge it adding new sections. He continued to write *The Epic of the Independence War* after he was transferred first to Çankırı and then to Bursa prisons (Irmak 63).

At the end of the second process of writing, which continued until 1941, he completed the second version of *The Epic of the Independence War* in Bursa prison in 1941. This version of *The Epic* was broadly similar to the current version. But again he could not have a chance of publishing it because he had begun to write another work, *Encyclopaedia of Famous People*, in 1940, and with Piraye's encouragement, he decided to transform this text to a more voluminous and detailed work, which would be entitled "*Human Landscapes from my Country*" (*Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*). Later on, he would decide to put *The Epic of the Independence War* in *Human Landscapes from my Country* (Irmak 64).

To put it in a nutshell, from 1937 onwards, in other words, from the time where the proposition was offered, Nazım was not sympathetic to write an epic on the

Independence War. But after he was sentenced to 28 years in prison, he began to write the text of *the Epic of the Independence War* in 1938-9 in the hope that the promises would be fulfilled, and he only realized that the promises would not carry out that he gave up the idea of publishing *The Epic of the Independence War* and transformed the text of *The Epic* putting it into a new context. Then, he placed it in *Human Landscape from my Country*. Until he had been out of prison, he never regarded *The Epic* as a poem outside of *Human Landscapes*, and he stood behind his decision (Irmak 67). He continued to write the first draft of *The Epic*, which was more patriotic in tone, intermittently in 1940-1. The patriotic mood was present in this version partly because Nazım drew on Atatürk's speech to reconstruct details of the Independence War. Certain passages, such as the description of the Turkish victory at the battle of Sakarya between 23 August and 13 September 1921, closely echo Atatürk's speech (Saime Göksu 220).

In 1950, when Nazım came out prison, he had the difficulty again to find a job, and he had hard times to provide his wife and newborn son, Mehmet Nazım, with what they needed. Meanwhile, İnkılap Publishing house proposed a considerable amount of cash to publish *The Epic of the Independence War*. This offer dissuaded Nazım from his decision. Making some changes in the main text, he handed it to the publishing house in order to be published but this would not be materialized because of the oppression of the government on the publishing house (Irmak 74). It was first published in the book format in 1965 by Yön publishing house, and it was entitled *The Epic of the Independence War* (Karaca 188). It took place in the first and second books of *Human Landscapes from my Country* in 1966, and it was published separately in 1968 under the editorship of Cevdet Kudret who made a comparative study of the new and former editions (Bezirci 167). As I attempted to show above *The Epic of the Independence War* had a complicated process of creation and publication.

In this point, Allattin Karaca offers a counter-argument to the first argument which was brought forward to demonstrate that different motives such as the proposition of a bureaucrat or the desire to show himself a supporter of the Kemalist regime had led Nazım to compose *The Epic*. According to Karaca, the attitude of Nazım, who keeps his distance from the leader of the national struggle, is the most persuasive evidence that he did not compose *The Epic* in order to ingratiate himself with the regime or on orders of the powerful bureaucrats (193). He narrates the stories of the grass roots instead of that of the charismatic leader (191). Unlike the writers and poets

from the right-wing ideology, Nazım did not highlight the religious and spiritual values, which are seen as the underlying motive in the achievement of the national liberation. On the contrary, he suggests that the religious beliefs should be out of place in the Independence War putting the lines below into the Nurettin Eşfak's mouth:

“Bizim istiklal marşında aksayan bir taraf var/ Bilmem nasıl anlatsam, akif inamış bir adam../ (...) / ‘Gelecektir sana vadettiği günler hakkın.’/ Hayır,/ gelecek günler için/ gökten ayet inmedi bize.” (Hikmet *Kuvayi Milliye* 110)

Karaca asserts that Nazım attached importance to the activities of the people in the Independence War rather the spiritual dimension of the war (193). Thus we can see that the national struggle is presented as a grass-roots movement rather than a national movement in *The Epic of the Independence War*. In this respect, this discourse is very convenient for the ideology of the Republic (193). According to Karaca, Nazım composed *The Epic of the Independence War* in prison; consequently, it can easily be subjected to legend.

In the discussion of *The Epic* with regard to the process of its composition, one controversial issue has been the intention and motives of Nazım. As Erkan Irmak argues in his book, on the one hand, there are various testimonies or claims that he composed *The Epic* to ingratiate himself with the Kemalist rule so as not to be punished for the fabricated charge against him, or at least in order to lessen this charge. On the other hand, there is the claim that he composed *The Epic* on orders of Şükrü Sökmensüer, a powerful bureaucrat of the government. But according to Allattin Karaca, who does not accept this kind of claims, all these arguments are brought forward without taking into consideration the text itself. According to him, this text has nothing to do with a text produced on orders or with the intention to ingratiate oneself with the government. In other words, we cannot deduce these arguments from the textual analysis of *The Epic*. On the contrary, the text seems to be direct and sincere.

The sections taken from Nazım's biography cannot constitute a basis for such allegations against the genuine concerns of Nazım, in Karaca's opinion. Karaca concedes that Nazım was already in good terms with the ideology of the regime and he was backing the Kemalist reforms. Therefore, there was not a need for him to compose such an epic which had a patriotic and nationalist voice. But at the beginning, he might have had hope to avoid the charge against him (Karaca 189). But Karaca insists that what is important is the text itself and to what extent these allegations against Nazım

reverberated through the text, not the intentions of Nazım behind the composition of *The Epic*.

I share the view of Karaca that Nazım did not compose *The Epic* under the influence of some egoistic concerns and I also did not agree that he might produce *The Epic* on orders of some bureaucrats. In my opinion, the ambiguous attitude of Nazım must be looked for somewhere else. Nazım put *The Epic of the Independence War* in *Human Landscapes* by making some changes in the plot and language of *The Epic*. I will discuss the argument over the relationship between the second version of *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes* in the following section.

The narration of the Independence war from the perspective of the grass roots was something of a novelty in the Turkish epic poetry. Furthermore, these people were presented as the members of the laboring class instead of the members of the elite class. In this way, Nazım aimed to draw attention to the class conflict in Turkish society, which continued even during the war and in the immediate aftermath of the war. We can see, then, that Nazım regarded the Independence War as a struggle carried on against the imperialists by the laboring class' members rather than a nationalist movement. In this case, although I agree with the idea that *The Epic of the Independence War* has a nationalist and patriotic tone, I cannot accept this overall conclusion that it was composed only to satisfy the aspirations of the Kemalist regime, and I still insist that *The Epic* is the example of the narration of an anti-imperialist war written in a Marxist perspective and found its expression in Nazım's "patriotic feelings." In fact, what has *The Epic of the Independence War* included in the various literary canons, in my opinion, is this subtle balance Nazım achieved between patriotic and anti-imperialist feelings, by preserving his Marxist point of view. Therefore, both Kemalists and Marxists could find something that expresses their ideologies in *The Epic of the Independence War*.

It is so strange that after Nazım died, still it was *The Epic of the Independence War* that assumed a significant role to reconcile Nazım with the state. It was serialized in the newspapers and magazines because *The Epic of the Independence War*, which narrates the years of National Militia (Kuvayi Milliye), was shaped under the thumb of the official history and *The Speech* of Mustafa Kemal. Therefore, it is perceived as a pro-state text by a significant part of the state officials. While Kemalists appropriated this text, Islamists criticized it because of anti-nationalistic or non-spiritual values that it

involved. I will elaborate further on this point in the section on the relationship of *The Epic* with the various literary canons in Turkey.

3.4 The Adventure of The Epic of the Independence War in Human Landscapes from my Country

“Human *Landscapes* provides the social context or setting for *The "Epic" of the Independence War*, which is distinguished by its stylized diction and form. Thus *Human Landscapes* encompasses not only social and political history and varieties of literary genres but epic poetry itself” (Hikmet *Human Landscapes from My Country* XIII).

Now, one can question how *The Epic of the Independence War* conflicting with the general idea of *Human Landscapes* could be articulated with the general concept of it, how *The Epic of the Independence War* took its place in *Human Landscapes* without harming the ideological structure of it? One reasonable answer to this question is that Nazım kept out any single verse of *The Epic of the Independence War*, which mentions Mustafa Kemal and his *Speech*, and he also changed the verses which reflect the discourse of the official history by adding new characters and verses, which did not exist in the former version of *The Epic of the Independence War*. Doing so, Nazım made *The Epic of the Independence War* suitable for the ideological structure and spirit of *Human Landscapes*.

If we assume that *The Epic of the Independence War* took its final shape in 1941, we can say that it took Nazım one year to rewrite it (Irmak 259). So, one of the plausible explanation of this transformation may be related to the events and changes in Nazım’s life. In that case, basing on the first two arguments, we can assume that when Nazım was sentenced to 28 years in prison on a charge of provoking the army to rebellion, he wrote *The Epic of the Independence War* in the hope that his sentence may be suspended, and when he saw that this possibility would never come true, he decided to use this text in *Human Landscapes* with its new form and content (Irmak 260).

When two versions are read in a comparative approach, the differences between two versions of *The Epic of the Independence War* can be perceived, especially, in the different tones of the narrators of the texts (the former and latter versions’ narrators). In the first version of *The Epic*, the narrator has an authoritative tone. He declares to the reader how the events developed and what is the truth. Therefore, the narrator and the

reader are not on an equal platform; we feel the authority of the narrator because this version borrowed the tone of Mustafa Kemal's *Speech* and in this case, the state narrates, and the people listen to it. But in the second version of *The Epic* (the text in *Human Landscapes*), the roles of both the narrator and the reader had been changed, and they appear on the same platform sharing the narration. In other words, here, when *The Epic of the Independence War* is read, both the narrator and the reader have equal status as ordinary people. As a result of this, official history and the voice of the state in *The Epic of the Independence War* had gone, and the text became coherent with the narrative of the main text. (Berktaş *Lecture* 2017)

3.5 Human Landscapes from my Country

Here I will give the general background of *Human Landscapes*, and I will present the general structure of the work. *Human Landscapes* incorporates a series of narratives, initiated at different times and divergent intentions. The beginning of its process of composition dates back to December 1939 when, in prison in Istanbul, Nazım had the idea of writing an "encyclopedia" recording the lives of ordinary Turkish people: "the workers, peasants, and housewives, who truly deserve the credit for shaping human history" (Saime Göksu 217). Soon after his transfer to Çankırı prison, he started writing "*Encyclopedia of Famous People*." In his letter to Piraye in late 1940, he explained his aim:

"Most of the people in this book are the people we got to know together and the people we thought about when you were here. I am trying to tell about a historical period and a section of society with the background of people's personal life stories" (Hikmet Piraye'ye *Mektuplar* 185).

Nazım decided to transform "*The Encyclopedia of Famous People*," which aimed to depict the lives of ordinary people in separate lines and alphabetical order, into a new form and structure. He created this new form and structure, which represents his new poetic expression and language, in *Human Landscapes*. Nazım continued to compose the work after his transfer to Bursa prison. Therefore, this is general agreement that Nazım began to compose *Human Landscapes from my Country* in Bursa prison in 1941. It was largely completed by 1945. But this text whose writing process continued until the ends of 1947 and whose content changed many times cannot be considered to be finished, all the same.

Human Landscapes, which was produced under the effect of many other genres such as novel, letter, poetry and so on, involves many parts of *The Epic of the Independence War*. Nazım revised this work until 1950. *Human Landscapes* was not published in Turkey by 1966. His stepson Memet Fuat published *Human Landscapes* in separate volumes in 1966-67 (Hikmet *Human Landscapes from My Country IX*). "*Landscapes*, Nazım explains, "it is not a poetry book. It has elements of poetry and sometimes even technical stuff like rhymes, etc. But it also has elements of prose and drama and even movie scenarios. And what determines the character of the whole. The dominant factor is not the element of poetry. But it is not any of me others, either. I'm trying to say that I've stopped being a poet; I've become something else" (qtd. in *Human Landscapes from My Country XI*). *Human Landscapes* is wholly written down under the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and Nazım never included another narration, which could spoil this ideological understanding throughout 500 pages depicting more than 200 characters and tens of events.

Nazım conceived *Human Landscapes* as an intricate work; we understand this from the plan Nazım had confided to his friend Kemal Tahir in one of his letters:

1. I want the readers after reading 1200 lines to feel as if they traveled through a complex arena of people.
2. I want this arena of people to describe the social conditions in Turkey through the stories of people from different social classes in a definite period.
3. I want the global context - in a particular period - to be understood in the background.
4. I want to answer the question of where we are coming from, what we have achieved and where we are heading to in the best way possible within the limits of my profession (Hikmet *Kemal Tahir'e Mapushaneden Mektuplar* 139, 40).

The first book of *Human Landscapes from my Country* begins at Haydarpaşa train station's stairways on a day in spring at 15.00 in 1941. There is an atmosphere of fatigue and rush in the station.

“Haydarpaşa garında/ 1941 baharında/ saat on beş. / Merdivenlerin üstünde güneş/ yorgunluk/ ve telaş” (Hikmet *Memlektimden İnsan Manzaraları* 11)

On the other hand, the second book focuses on the people who will go to Ankara on the Anatolian Express. As “express” alludes, the second train is more luxurious and comfortable. It has sleeping and dining cars, which offers service to first class passengers. And the atmosphere is now completely different from the first one. The fatigue and rush have dispersed.

“Gülden güzel kokan Arnavutköy çileği/ ve asma yaprağına sarılı
barbunya ızgarasıyla gelir./ Haydarpaşa Garı'nın büfesinde bahar.” (Hikmet
Memlektimden İnsan Manzaraları 113)

People who travel on the first train are workers, peasants and petty bourgeois. On the contrary, the passengers of the Anatolian Express are the middle and upper classes: Bourgeois, politicians, high ranked officers, and bureaucrats. In the second book, we also see people from the kitchen crew who read chapters from *The Epic of the Independence War* in the dining car. In the third book, the story of Halil, a convict, crops up. In this book, indigent Anatolian patients, hospital personnel and Doctor Faik whom Halil met in the hospital, make their entrance into the story. The fourth and fifth books become gradually a text which praises another lifestyle. This is the depiction of a society in which there is no class clashing, and people lead a happy life. Now, the internal criticism ends up, and external criticism of the society and order begins (Irmak 187).

World War II and, especially, the resistance of the Soviets against the German invasion are prominent themes in the book four. Besides its literary successes, one of the significant characteristics of the work was that it expressed the formulation of modernity designed in the mind of Nazım. “He used the train as a symbol of the modernizing efforts of the state - `the railway was a public space structured by the state” (Aguar 110). Nazım uses the parallel train journey as a device in order to be able to switch easily focus from one social class to another. Therefore, we witness the different stories of people from various social levels at the same scene. Nazım uses various sorts of material taken from folk tales, proverbs, and different dialects to construct his style and he presents us a panorama of the social classes of Turkey in the 1940s in a single plot which unfolds in a train journey that began in İstanbul and continued in the Anatolian steppes (Hikmet *Human Landscapes from My Country* XIV).

3.6 The Communist International (Comintern) and Nazım Hikmet

The relationship between Nazım and the Comintern and accordingly, TKP (the Communist Party of Turkey) is crucial because it provides the background to the third argument that Nazım composed the Epics in line with the Comintern strategy to transform bourgeois revolutions into socialist regimes.

In essence, Marxism is a modern ideology. Therefore, it was committed to promoting the foundation of nation-states in the name of the modernity. Furthermore, the Marxist-Leninist line of the Comintern and TKP regarded Turkish Independence War as the first national liberation struggle in the age of proletarian revolutions, and Nazım belonged to the generation that adhered to this opinion (Berktaş *Weimar Türkiyesi* 200). To understand the role of the Comintern in the composition of *The Epic of the Independence War*, I will try to carefully examine *The Epic* in relation to the concept of two stages revolution of the Comintern. I think this is another dimension of the interpretation of *The Epic* beside the allegations that Nazım composed *The Epic* on orders of a high bureaucrat of the Kemalist regime or in order to ingratiate himself with the regime. Indeed, a full discussion of the influence of the Comintern on Nazım lies beyond the scope of this study, but I think the brief commentary that I will give on the relationship between TKP and Nazım will provide valuable clues concerning the canonization of *The Epic*. Firstly, I will give a brief description of the two stages revolution concept as it is understood in the Marxist-Leninist ideology and then, I will picture the relationship of *The Epic* with this line of thought in the light of the text.

In the Marxist-Leninist theory, bourgeois-democratic revolutions are seen as the introductory part of the socialist revolution. In the first stage, the task of the party, according to socialists, is carrying out a successful bourgeois-democratic revolution and in the second phase, embracing socialist revolution by surpassing the bourgeois-democratic revolution. They think they must not stop and continue the bourgeois-democratic revolution to its ends by transcending it. Therefore, from the Marxist point of view bourgeois revolutions are seen as the revolutions which have two stages (two stages theory) (Berktaş *Lecture* 2017).

According to this strategy, the direct aim of this strategy was a national liberation from imperialists through a revolution. But, communists should create a united front in the independence struggle to achieve this revolution. If the national

bourgeoisie led the revolution, this revolution was to be taken further by communists in case the national bourgeoisie should abandon revolutionary ideals. In fact, this way of thinking was what determined the political thought of the Turkish left. From 1922 onwards, mostly the Communist International, then, Lenin and Stalin evaluated the situation in Turkey, and they designed their strategy according to the presuppositions of the two stages revolution theory. That is, there has been a Kemalist revolution, and this Kemalist revolution was the first stage, and it had to be supported. In their opinion, that was an enormous step on the road of historical progress because it replaced the dynasty and monarchy with a new republic (Berktaş *Lecture* 2017).

The Kemalist revolution, also demolished the power of Islam and belief, which are an old establishment in the eyes of communists and it established a secular, enlightened Western type of regime in Turkey. But the leaders of the Communist bloc were very suspicious of bourgeois revolutions, and they never trusted bourgeois revolutionists. And at this point, they were very critical about Kemalists for not being revolutionary enough. In the eyes of Communist bloc's leaders, Kemalist strategists were not active enough. Now in the light of this background knowledge, I will present the third argument about the motives behind the writing process of *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes*.

The Epic of the Independence War is embedded in the first and second book of *Human Landscapes*, and in Berktaş's opinion, these two books of *Human Landscapes from my Country* had been the chapters people read most enthusiastically because of the patriotic tone of *The Epic of the Independence War*. Halil Berktaş argues that Nazım composed *The epic of the independence war* in order to encourage the Kemalist regime to go further in the reforms and achieve a complete bourgeois revolution which would lay the foundation of the socialist revolution (*Lecture* 2017). According to Berktaş, Nazım supported the Kemalist regime and sometimes criticized it for not radicalizing the revolution enough or compromising with politically reactionary forces. In the 1930s, Nazım was the showcase of TKP in the domain of intellectual activities and art because he had an extraordinary artistic talent and he presented specific political ideas in a better and more sophisticated way than any party member and party programme. And because of that, the duty of composing a work of literature which reflects the party opinion was assigned to Nazım.

Berktaş shows two pieces of evidence from *Human Landscapes* and *The Epic of the Independence War* to support his argument. One of them is about the murder of

Mustafa Suphi and his friends and the second is about Ali Kemal's lynching. From the Marxist communist point of view, there is a strong attack against the Kemalist regime for having murdered the communist leadership, but Nazım did not elaborate it in *Human Landscape* and only mentioned it as a chapter title. Furthermore, in the full version of *The Epic of the Independence War*, there is no mention of the murder of Mustafa Suphi and his friends (*Lecture 2017*).

“Boşalmıştı yemekli vagon yarı yarıya/ Garson Mustafa daha bir hayli okumuştı destandan: ‘Hikayeyi İmalatı Harbiye Fabrikası’/ ‘Hikayeyi Hasan’,/ “Hikayeyi Üç İnsan”/Ve/ ‘Hikayeyi Mustafa Suphi Ve Arkadaşları’./ Metrdotelin kaşları çatılmıştı bilhassa bu son hikayede/ Ve kararmıştı içinde üniformasının.” (Hikmet *Memlektimden İnsan Manzaraları 207*)

Berktaş interprets this attitude of Nazım as a support to the anti-imperialist posture of the Kemalist regime (Berktaş *Lecture 2017*). This willingness to repress criticism in favor of the anti-imperialist stance of the Kemalist regime can be interpreted as the strategy of the Comintern, according to Berktaş. Another example is the chapter that narrates the lynching of Ali Kemal late Ottoman liberal and journalist. Nazım depicts the lynching scene with the approving words.

“Başladılar ölüyü bacağından sürümeye/ Yokuş aşağı, başı taşlara çarpıp gidiyor./ Millet peşinde./ Bir aralık ipi koptu./ Bağlandı yenisi./ İbret alınacak hal./ Halkı kızdırmaya gelmez./ Bir sabreder iki sabreder;/ her ne ise .../ Böylece dolaştı İzmit şehrini Ali Kemal.” (Hikmet *Memlektimden İnsan Manzaraları 94, 95*).

Nazım thinks in line with the general revolutionary theory and implies that revolutionary people punished a traitor in such a way. From the presentation of Mustafa Suphi and his friends' story and idealization of the lynching of Ali Kemal, we can assert that Nazım did not want to condemn the Kemalist regime, holding the viewpoint of the Communist International about the Kemalist-bourgeois revolution (Berktaş *Lecture 2017*). Although Nazım supported some actions of the regime in favour of the anti-imperialist war led by the Kemalist regime, he did not have a pro-Kemalist attitude in *Human Landscapes* as it was in the first version of *The Epic of the Independence War* because Nazım had different aims in writing the first version of *The Epic of the Independence War* and the second version of it, which is embedded in *Human Landscapes*. In *Human Landscapes*, we see the criticism of the Kemalist regime because it was not active enough to further the revolution, but at the same time, we see the effort to cover the worst excesses of the regime. Berktaş sees the scene that depicts the discussion among three important men of the regime in the dining car of the

Anatolian Express in *Human Landscapes* as the example of Nazım's criticism of the Kemalist regime made from the mouth of Deputy Tahsin (*Lecture 2017*):

“Sümerbank'ın elbiseleri belki mükemmel değildir henüz, fakat olacak./ Ama köylüye hep bir örnek/zorla elbise giydirmek/ bu olmaz.”

“Burhan Özedar sol gözünü kırpmadan sordu :/ "- Neden?/ Şapkayı zorla giymedik mi?"/ "Orda zorlamak inkılaptı,/ burda zorlamak irticadır./ Ve her nedense iş adamlarımızda/ bir güvensizlik var devletçiliğimize./ Halbuki devlet size destek oluyor."/ " - Biz de ona oluyoruz."/ Tahsin cevaba hazırlanırken/ büyüklerden insan konuştu yavaşça :/ ' - Mesele kalmadı dernek.” (Hikmet *Memlektimden İnsan Manzaraları* 140).

Here, they discuss the scope of the dictatorship in Turkey. The revolutionary era of Kemalism finished and “the thermidor” of the Kemalist revolution began (this is the Marxist interpretation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution) (Berktaş *Lecture 2017*). Deputy Tahsin seems to be a leftist within the Republican People's Party, and perhaps he is in the circle of Kadro Movement. According to Berktaş, Nazım puts in Deputy Tahsin mouth an appreciation of Mustafa Kemal and what happens after he died. These words appear like a sophisticated expression of the Comintern in accordance with the Marxist theory on bourgeois revolutions (*Lecture 2017*).

“Tahsin düşündü :/ - Başka bir devre giriyoruz, / yorulduk ... ” (Hikmet *Memlektimden İnsan Manzaraları* 144).

According to Nazım, with the death of Mustafa Kemal, the Republic entered into a state of inertia. In *Human Landscapes*, the perception of Mustafa Kemal also is different from the perception of him in the first version of *The Epic of the Independence War*. In the first version of *The Epic of the Independence War* there is another image of Mustafa Kemal, a leader of the masses and revolution but in *Human Landscapes* Mustafa Kemal is at the centre of all the decision-making mechanism and he has enormous power. We understand this from these lines of *Human Landscapes*:

“Bir şeylere küsmüş gibi söylemişti bunu./ Yüreğine bir mahzunluk düştü Tahsin'in./ Bir başka insan geldi aklına :/ ölmüştü./ Bir başka sofraya :/ dağılmıştı./ Düşündü Tahsin :/ "Muzaffer bir insandı ölen :/ nefisinden başka hiç kimseye güvenmeyen/ muzaffer ve muazzam bir kumarbaz./ Alaycıydı, kavgacıydı, kurnaz ve hükmediciydi./ Bütün gelmiş olduğum yere onun eliyle gelmiş olmama rağmen/ (o kadar ağır pençeliydi ki) kaç kerre ölmesini istedim” (Hikmet *Memlektimden İnsan Manzaraları* 141).

Although I agree with Berktaş up to a point, I cannot accept his main conclusion that Nazım followed instructions of the Comintern and TKP when he composed *Human Landscapes* and *The Epic of the Independence War*. On the one hand, I agree that

Nazım wrote two epics from the Marxist point of view. On the other hand, I am not sure if he was entirely antipathetic to the Kemalist revolution. Nazım regarded the Kemalist revolution as a progressive movement towards the socialist regime. Therefore, no matter what instructions the Comintern gave, as a devote and faithful communist, Nazım had already seen this historical turning point in Kemalism. Furthermore, Nazım was expelled from the Comintern and TKP in March 1934 (Lekesiz "Nazım Hikmet, Kemalizm, Komünizm Ve Sosyalist Yönetimler" 23). He began to compose *The Epic of the Independence War* in 1938-9 and *Human Landscapes* in 1941. In this case, the Comintern's direct intervention in the process of composition of these epics is out of the question. In the section that follows I will argue the relationship between Nazım and Kemalism in more detail.

3.7 Nazım Hikmet and the Kemalist Literary Canon

The intellectual development of Nazım, the change of viewpoint in his approach to the Kemalist revolution and his relationship with the Communist International and TKP shaped Nazım's attitude towards the Kemalist rule and institutions. Therefore, the echoes of these changes of attitude are very obvious in *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes* and also in the various versions of *The Epic of the Independence War*. In this respect, I will explore Nazım's relationship with Kemalism and the Turkish left, and I will analyze *The Epic of the Independence War* in the context of this relationship, and define the position of the *Epics* in the Kemalist literary canon.

When it comes to Nazım's Marxist attitude in his poetry, most of us will readily agree that he was a devoted communist. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of Nazım's relationship with the Republican regime and the Kemalist ideology. For the most part, the Marxist intelligentsia regarded Nazım as a Marxist poet (Apaydın 53). But, on the other hand, Ece Ayhan, a prominent poet of Turkish literature, maintained that Nazım composed most of his poems within the Kemalist discourse (Karaca 186, 87).

In line with the tendency of the left-wing in Turkey, Nazım saw Mustafa Kemal as a revolutionary leader and the Republic as a step forward from the feudal structure of the Ottoman Empire. Nazım as a symbolic figure of the Turkish left shared the view that Turkish modernization was progressive and was a revolution indeed. He was, on the one hand, supportive of the Kemalist modernization. On the other hand, he was

expressing his vision for a better society, which was not accepted by the mainstream discourse. Because of the criticisms he made from a communist point of view, Nazım is regarded as a voice of the counter-narratives, an 'other', and even as a traitor by some factions in the Turkish political life.

We see that, like the Kemalist elites of the time, he regarded the religious authorities and the Ottoman Empire as symbols of the past that needed to be forgotten and replaced. Turkey had been transformed from a traditional feudal structure, and this transformation was the result of a struggle against reactionary forces in Turkey and imperialism. The Left sympathized with Mustafa Kemal and his 'achievements' during the Independence War as they saw it parallel to the Leninist articulation of nationalist movements against imperialism. Such movements were to be supported for their progressive character. The Leninist-Marxist left also regarded the war as a path to the freedom of oppressed/ colonized nations (Sütçüoğlu 247).

I think Nazım also kept this path in his evaluation of Kemalism. But some part of the Turkish intelligentsia saw Nazım as the mouthpiece of the Kemalist politics. For example, Ece Ayhan insisted that Nazım always told from within Kemalism. Ece Ayhan, one of the famous and fruitful poets in Turkish literature, wonders if we can consider Nazım's ideas and his poetry in the Kemalist discourse. According to him, Nazım seems to be always in the Kemalist discourse, and he produced his works in relation to this discourse. In the course of this thought, Ayhan asserts that in essence, Nazım never had a problem with the Republic (Karaca 186). According to Karaca, one implication of Ayhan's claim is that Nazım shared the same philosophy with Kemalists regarding reason, science, secularism and other general principles which the positivist and modernist philosophy are built on and Ayhan also asks whether Nazım can be considered outside of the framework that the Republic provides (Karaca 187).

Erkan Irmak holds the same opinions on Nazım's relationship with the Kemalist ideology, and in his view, when we appraise Nazım's attitude in the context of *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country*, we see that Nazım had not any problem with Atatürk or Kemalist circles, but he attempted to contribute to establishing a communist lifestyle in Turkey (Irmak 57).

What he was in dispute with was not the reforms, the road to modernization or Atatürk's understanding of nationalism, in fact, he was in dispute with Kemalists' understanding of socialism and their rejection of socialism as a detrimental ideology

outlawing all socialist and communist political activities in the society. In this respect, *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country* are to be analyzed considering how Nazım's ideas and worldview are reflected in both of these works (Irmak 57). For example, even in *The Epic of the Independence War*, the war of independence is construed as the struggle of the Anatolian folk against imperialism in a socialist perspective. Therefore, this cannot be perceived as a digression from the essential outlook of the Kemalists on the Independence War, but it can be considered as an attitude that the regime disapproved. In this respect, Nazım perhaps had a more revolutionary stance on the national struggle than the Kemalist revolutionists. In other words, what the regime disapproved was Nazım's radical discourse not his essential ideas about the Republic and reforms (Karaca 187). Following this logic, Irmak reminds us that there was a political power struggle carried on by the various cadres in the Republic and Nazım, in a sense, had been the victim of this struggle and sentenced 28 years in prison. Therefore Nazım's arrest was a political decision rather than a judicial decision owing to the political struggle within the young Republic's political cadres (Irmak 52).

We know that Nazım produced the most famous and idealized narration of the Turkish Revolution in *The Epic of the Independence War* although he was a communist. Therefore, even if Kemalists assert that Nazım is not the poet of the Kemalist literary canon, Nazım is in this canon with *The Epic of the Independence War*. But on the other hand, Nazım is undoubtedly a poet who belongs to the Marxist-left literary canon with his other poems and epics. Consequently, as I stated in the beginning, there is not a single literary canon which encompasses the works of literature specified by the literary consensus. On the contrary, ideological commitments display a principal role in the canonization of the literary works in Turkish literature and *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country*, whose first and second chapters comprise the sections from *The Epic*, are the most prominent examples of this kind of canonization.

3.8 Nazım Hikmet and the Right-Wing Literary Canon

It is often said that Nazım's works had relative freedom in the 1960s. From this era, there had been moderation and toleration on Nazım's works in the nationalist and

conservative right-wing in Turkey. They began to voice approval for his poems whose themes were on the love and patriotism but yet, they never forgave him for being a communist. Some of the right-wing critics still assert that he composed his poems in order to ingratiate himself with the leaders of the communist bloc. All in all, the tolerance and moderation that the right-wing had for Nazım could not go out of an ideological dimension (Ergülen 210). For example, Ahmet Kabaklı, who appraised Nazım and his works in his book, entitled “Nazım Hikmet,” analyzes *The Epic of the Independence War* from an ideological point of view (qtd. in Irmak 85). He asserts that this work has nothing to do with the Islamic spirit. On the contrary, he explains, Nazım composed *The Epic* with a Marxist commitment. And according to Kabaklı, what is narrated in *The Epic* is not the Greco-Turkish war, but it is the class war (qtd. in Irmak 84). In addition to the Marxist discourse of Nazım, Kabaklı accuses him of using the adjectives pertaining to God, such as “overwhelming and creator”:

“ve kahreden/ yartan ki onlardır,/ destanımızda yalnız onların maceraları vardır” (Hikmet *Memlektimden İnsan Manzaraları* 178).

It is evident that Nazım’s language is a nuisance to the right-wing literary critics even if he narrates the nationalistic feelings in his work.

From the 1990s onwards, there had been an unexpected twist in the approach of the Turkish nationalist-wing to Nazım and his works. In a party congress, the leader of the nationalist-wing, Alparslan Türkeş, read passages from *Davet*, which was quoted from *The Epic of the Independence War* (Ergülen 211). This poem, in a sense, has a slightly nationalist and idealistic tone, especially, in its first stanza:

“Dörtmala gelip Uzak Asya'dan/ Akdeniz'e bir kısrak başı gibi uzanan/ bu memleket, bizim.” (Hikmet *Kuvayi Milliye* 120)

At the beginning of the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the bipolar view of the world came to an end. As a result of this series of political developments on the global scale, communism ceased to be a severe threat in Turkey. According to Haydar Ergülen, in today’s Turkey, there is a growing anti-imperialist wave, which is destitute of the intrinsic values of the Left such as anti-militarism, anti-capitalism and anti-fascism and the Kemalist left raises this stream (212). I believe nationalists are also the integral part of this general tendency because anti-imperialism outside of the values of the Left is rhetoric widely accepted in the right-wing political jargon, too. But I think the interest of the right-wing politics in Nazım’s poems does not mean to include Nazım in the right-wing literary canon, and if

anything, this can be considered as undervaluing Nazım's communist identity which has always been a real nuisance to the right-wing literary critics in Turkey. Murat Belge states "there is Nazım Hikmet, he is a communist who had been in prison for years... But when it comes to *The Epic of the Independence War*, Kemalists and Republicans embrace him. Because of that, it is not easy to determine who belongs to which literary canon in Turkey; they are subtle influences on the literary canon." (Güneş)

In sum, because of the ambiguities and simultaneous existence of conflicts in his life and works, Nazım allows to different interpretations and opposing discourses. For example, on the one hand, he wanted to take part in the Independence War, and he wrote about it in a patriotic tone, but on the other hand, he made changes in the first version of *The Epic of the Independence War* developing an alternative narrative according to his underlying motive.

As a modernist, Nazım supported the progressive side of the Kemalist Revolution, but on the other hand, he developed a positive attitude towards criminal and oppressive activities of the government as we see in the case of the lynching of Ali Kemal. While he challenged the top-down modernization model, he also criticised Kemalists for not being revolutionary enough. This ambiguous attitude caused various interpretations about his major works, namely, *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes*. Today, Nazım is included in the Turkish literary canon. *Human Landscapes from My Country* is regarded as Nazım's 'magnum opus.' It is also his work that has been one of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* compiled by the Ministry of Education for secondary and high school education since 2001 (Sütçüoğlu 239). But it seems that the debate about his political engagement, his poetic language and the canonization of his works will continue in the Turkish intelligentsia.

CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to demonstrate that there is not a single literary canon in Turkey. It claimed that there are various literary canons which are belonging to different ideological, cultural, ethnic and religious groups and this thesis also emphasized the decisiveness of the ideological standpoints in the evaluation of the literary texts in Turkey. The concept of canon, whose origins go back to the antiquity, is indeed a concept created with the practical concerns for generating a measure of all kind artistic activities. Although it had been used in a religious meaning regarding the selection of legitimate sacred scriptures after the antiquity, in the modern times, it again acquired an utterly secular sense as in antiquity to choose and classify works of art and literature. I believe that the concept of literary canon performs a useful function of a guide which helps people to select the works of literature they can read in a limited lifespan. But it also fulfills another essential role in reflecting the various ideological, cultural, religious, and ethnic structures in a given society via the reading material that these groups prefer.

The literary canon debate begins in the West in the late 1970s. In the United States, especially, with raising voices of the subcultures, the canon debate gained momentum in the 1980s. Although there had been debates under the name of the national literature (milli edebiyat), which was set up on the initiative of the regime and Kemalist literary circles, from the beginning of the Republican era, the literary circles involved in the canon debate in a relatively late period in Turkey.

The language reform and the efforts of westernization had also a significant influence on the efforts to create a literary canon controlled by the state. From the time where the canon debate began in Turkish literature, the ideological approaches to literature also revealed. The debate on the literary canon continued mostly in the special

issues of the literary magazines on the literary canon, and it arrived at the broad consensus that there is not a single literary canon in Turkey. Various literary critics emphasized multiple aspects of the canon issue in these debates, but in my opinion, the ideological aspect of the canon issue is the essential constituent of the canon formation process in Turkey.

One of the principal reasons that the ideological components have a significant effect on the canon formation, I think, is the ideological cleavages that Turkish society undergoes from the beginning of the Republic. This fragmented ideological structure of the society reflects its influence in the literary criticism. The ideological perspectives of the literary critics preclude the criticism of the literary texts from a literary and aesthetic perspective. Even in a single literary canon, say, the left-wing literary canon, which also encompasses the Marxist literary canon, the perception of a work of literature can vary considerably. Even the ideological stance of the publishing house can create a changing ideological perception of the writers as I showed in the example of Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar's novels. In this respect, I tried to display this variability in the example of Kemal Tahir and Nazım Hikmet's works as a left-wing literary canon debate.

The left-wing literature, which began with village novels in Turkey, changed its scope towards the social, political, cultural and even historical issues of Turkey in the course of time. Especially, Kemal Tahir undertook to formulate a theory about Turkey's historical and social development from a Marxist point of view, so to speak, peculiar to Turkey. *Devlet Ana* (1967) is his work that represents his break with left-wing literary canon. In this respect, *Devlet Ana* displays the controversies due to the ideological perspectives in a single literary canon, and I think it is an excellent example of the debate of the literary canon's workings in Turkey.

Even if Kemal Tahir claimed that he wrote *Devlet Ana* from the Marxist perspective basing his claim on Asiatic Mode of Production, *Devlet Ana* did not gain acceptance in the left-wing literary canon due to its excessively nationalistic and pro-state discourse. But at the same time, Islamic and nationalist-conservative literary canons also kept themselves aloof from *Devlet Ana* due to Tahir's Marxist past and claims. I assert that *Devlet Ana*, in fact, does not belong to any literary canon in Turkish literature as I demonstrated its relationship with various literary canons in the chapter on the relationship between *Devlet Ana* and different literary canons in Turkey. This situation shows us the dramatic effect of the ideological perspective on the canonization of the literary works in Turkish literature.

It is indisputable that Nazım is in the Marxist literary canon. But *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country* both seem to figure in the Kemalist literary canon, and *Human Landscapes from my Country* also figures on the list of *The One Hundred Major Works of Literature* compiled by the Ministry of Education. As Nazım used a nationalist and patriotic discourse in *The Epic of the Independence War*, this *Epic* is highly prized by the Kemalist ideology and also by the state education as to include *Human Landscapes*, which comprises *The Epic of the Independence War*, in the national curriculum. This was another typical example that illustrates the effects of the ideological standpoint on the literary works. As a result of this ambiguous position of *The Epic of the Independence War* and *Human Landscapes from my Country* in the literary canon, Nazım's stance towards Marxism and Kemalism began a matter of debate in the Turkish intelligentsia.

Even the nationalist-conservative right could find something for their ideology in Nazım's *Epics*. I pictured this debate in detail in the chapter on Nazım and his *Epics*. In fact, Nazım composed both of these *Epics* from a Marxist point of view, and also *Human Landscapes* criticizes the Kemalist regime for not being revolutionary enough. But when the meaning and expression of a literary work is confined in a narrow ideological perspective, this kind of ambiguities in the interpretation of the author and his works becomes inevitable. But I think this ambiguity also creates a new opening in the debate of the literary canon in Turkey. If a communist writer, like Nazım, whose ideological stance is indisputable, appeals to various ideological camps from the Marxist one to the nationalist, a possibility of consensus on the common literary canon can emerge. But otherwise, these ideological cleavages can continue to undermine this potential.

In sum, I think the reciprocal relationship which develops on the basis of ideology between the wording and the perception of the literary works is the underlying cause of the process of ideological appraisal. The perception of the works by the literary critics and readers and even by the state bureaucracy and the specific wording of the works have a decisive effect on the canonization of the works. For example, the wording can give the impression that writer did not aim as I tried to show in the case of *The Epic of the Independence War*. Consequently, the perception of this wording can create an utterly different meaning in the critics and readers and this can lead to various critical appraisals which deviate from the original aim and purpose of the author. The ideological standpoints of the critics and the readers play an essential role in the

assessment of the works of literature. In fact, the reciprocal relationship between the wording and perception of the work is crucial in the canonical identification of the literary works.

This thesis has shown that there is not a single literary canon in Turkish literature. The ideological perspective plays an essential role in the appraising of the literary works. Some works of literature have an ambiguous place with regard to the existing literary canons such as left-wing, right-wing, Islamic and nationalist-conservative literary canons, and even some literary works may not belong to any literary canon because of their ambiguous ideological messages and stances. But I believe that the literary criticism, which sets great store by the textual and aesthetic value of the works, is fundamental in precluding the ideological concerns in the criticism of the literary works. I think if the textual and artistic values of the works are put forward in the literary criticism, the effects of the ideological factors in the canonization of the literary works can be significantly reduced. I also believe that the literary criticism in Turkey already began to adopt this critical approach to the works of literature.

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