A VIEW ON TURKISH LITERATURE OF THE OTTOMAN PERIOD IN TERMS OF COMMONS OF FOLK AND DIVAN LITERATURES

PROF. DR. CEMAL KURNAZ
GAZİ UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF LETTERS / ANKARA, TURKEY

IS THIS DIVAN LITERATURE?

Very year, in the first lesson of the term, I converse with the new students of the Literature Department and listen to their ideas about Folk and Divan literatures. Here is a general view their knowledge of this subject that they acquired in high school:

In the Ottoman period existed a huge public population and, along with the Sultan, the court circles administrating the public. So, the literature of created by this huge population was the original national literature, the literature formed in the court circles was simply artificial and far from being national. Because the Folk literature used colloquial Turkish of masses, and it was, therefore, simple and unadorned. The use of traditional syllabic metre of Anatolian Folk poetry and national versification forms was a characteristic feature of Folk poetry. The language of Divan literature was, on the contrary, an incomprehensible one formed with Arabic and Persian-originated words and a quantitative metre called “azmet” besides Arabic and Persian versification forms. Furthermore, Divan poets lived in the palace and they preferred to keep away from the public, but Folk poets lived in the public. Divan literature was a “palace literature”, created and appreciated by a few people in the court-circles. It never spread out of the palace and reached the masses. The reason why it is called the “upper-class literature” is that it was the literature of those belonging to a small group and looking down on ordinary people forming the Ottoman society...

It should be kept in mind that these are the ideas of not only our university students coming from high school but also of many literate people. But in recent years these ideas, which are of no scientific validity, have started to be reviewed.

The main incorrectness lying at the root of these ideas is the tendency to divide the Ottoman society into two as “the public” and “the court circles” and to assume this division as a starting point. In fact, it had a homogeneous social structure fed largely by Islamic culture. The institutions such as mosques, tekkes (dervish lodges), “madrasas” (Muslim theological schools), community centres and village cafés played a major role in the development of this common culture. It’s impossible to disagree with Erol Göno-
Muzafar Izen has determined that 3,182 poets in the tezkeres (poet biographies) belonged to 108 different professional groups. The proportions of some of these groups in overall number are as follows:

- Clergy class: 1,147 (36%), bureaucrats: 892 (28%), sheikhs and dervishes: 182 (5.7%), military class: 117 (3.7%), craftsmen: 117 (3.7%), court circles: 60 (1.8%)... etc.

These data indicate a full in artistic activities from all professional groups. Taking into account the fact that, nowadays, art and poetry can spread only to the intellectuals’ quarter, its importance would be better understood.

There is no doubt that art requires a certain cultural level. Today, a villager who goes down to town doesn’t feel to have the necessity of visiting a bookstore and of buying newly-apparled poems, stories or novels. What’s more, the works written with the assertion that they use colloquial Turkish don’t sell too much. That’s why, the difference between the proportion of access of the public to artistic and literary activities in Ottoman period and today is evident, despite the influential mass media means of today.

Here is an explanation of the issue by Fuat Köprülü: In the 17th and 18th centuries, in big cities and towns of the Empire in Asia and Europe, there was a very large intellectual class who had comprehended Islamic sciences and literatures in a desired manner. With the prosperity and wealth, this high cultural atmosphere affected the lower classes by rising their cultural levels and enjoyment for ages.

Among the most striking examples of such a development, the “ümni” (illiterate) Divan poets are worth mentioning.

ILLITERATE DIVAN POETS

“Umni” is a term used to describe a person who doesn’t know to read and to write. Illiterate artist’s are, at the same time, the folk artists creating verbal cultures. In other words, tradition creates its own artists with its own power. The same thing is valid for Anonymous Folk literature and Minstrel literature (the literature of poet-musicians).

Illiterate poets; who were well-known in Folk literature, Tekke (derwish lodge) literature and Minstrel literature, started to appear also in classical literature as of the last years of the 15th century. As far as it has been determined, their number is ten: Cemîli (8701/1465-66/950/1643-44), Çağırıcı Şeyhi (15th century), Huifî (15th century), Râyi (16th century), Tağbî (16th century), Sibâli (16th century), Bâdir (death date: 968/1560), Meşrefî (death date: 962/1554-55), Enverî (death date: 954/1547), Valîli (16th century). All these poets were craftsmen. For example, Huifî was a shoemaker, Bâdir was a jeweller, Sibâli was a tailor and Enverî was an ink-maker. Some of them lived in capitals like Istanbul, Bursa and Edirne; where a quite dense cultural atmosphere existed. But there were some others coming from remote parts of the Empire like Mertizlen, Refe and Dîyarbakır. For instance, it’s well-known that Cemîli, who lived in Dîyarbakır, went to Têrêzî and Herât, and participated in the gatherings of Hüseyin Baykara, and wrote an imitative poem to the “Three Divans” of Ali Şir Nevai. These events not only give an idea about cultural relations between different Turkish geographies of that time but also make us think of the dimensions of the effects that the Herât school made on Anatolian domain.

In “Kaygîzaman” by Katip Çelebi, it’s registered that, of the illiterate poets, Cemîli, Huifî and Enverî had “Divan” (a collection of poems by one poet). In addition, Enverî’s poems were composed, even three centuries earlier, by great musicians such as Erî, Sadullah Agâh and Dede Efendi. It’s probable there are some other poems set to music that shows a long-term influence. Among these poets, Meşrefî became better known as he composed his own poems. This example is a witness of the resemblance between illiterate poets and classical composers.

Although the illiteracy of folk poets is quite comprehensible, its existence in the classical literature is an issue that has to be explained; for, the rich cultural background, the ability to use the arzu metre and the aesthetic rules on which the classical literature is based require a special education. So, how these poets, praised very much by poet biographers, have been cultivated?

To answer this question correctly, the division between “public” and “non-public” must be ruled out. The Ottoman had a homogeneous structure fed from a religious and mystical source. The well-known works read in mosques and other public places constructed the infrastructure of this harmony. The centres of cultural diffusion were the big cities of the Empire, chiefly Istanbul. The 16th century the process had been accelerated and there had been a remarkable rise in the cultural level of the reader. As a result of this common and dense cultural life, the names of drafsmen were written next to those of great world emperors in poet biographies. The illiterate Divan poets cited above were among them.

Fuat Köprülü explains an illiterate poet’s becoming as famous as classical poets with the cultural level which he grew in along with his own talent. Our char gatherings, the fruits of our verbal tradition, played an important role in cultivating these illiterate poets. It’s impossible to disagree with Latifi, who made correct detection about Hufi: Hufi had always talked to virtuous people and
intellectuals, got in touch with scholars by learning by heart all he'd heard from them. Mehmet II, the conqueror, who didn't find what was told about Hufu credible, granted him with his audience and listened to his poems from himself, and he appreciated and praised him. That Çağlıçen Sheyh was a close chat-friend of a great poet, Ahmed Pasha, can be remembered as a good example.

All the poets cited above were not illiterate at all. In biographies, there are some hesistant expressions about the literacy of some poets. But the illiteracy of most of them has been clarified. And, no matter how much literary poets, like Kiyasi, boasted about their literacy, the lines of Evreni, Hufi and the others have always been a pleasure source for our hearts. Consequently, our illustrious poets, who were cultivated in our chat-gatherings, have to be evaluated as an important indicator of the diffusion of the classical Ottoman culture to Ottoman public.

THE ROLE OF THE PALACE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE CAIZE TRADITION

The role of the palace in the development of art and culture can't be underestimated. The encounters and the patronage of scientists and artists by the palace were an old tradition in Turkish-Islamic culture. So, every sultan had to follow this tradition and the lack of it's application made him face a strong criticism from the courts circles, artists and scientists.

One of the most criticised aspects of Divan poets is that they obtained money from statesmen in return for their works and poems. Taking into consideration the conditions of that time, it is comprehended that it was essential for the poets.

"The royalties, determined today by the estimation of the writer and the work among readers, briefly - a material equivalent of personal gifts - were provided to poets by high officials, chiefly by the sultan. Poets, writers and scientists obtained some kind of royalties called "caize" by presenting their works to authorities in those positions. The amount of the royalties varied depending on the knowledge and the cultural level of the person to whom the work was presented. If the civilization history of East is examined, a considerable increase in the number of scientific and artistic works during the reign of cultured statesmen is observed."

Belgut Necatigil has drawn attention to the positive role of "caize" mechanism: "Caize is like a code of work of art for the Ottoman Empire. It is a custom of Divan literature and a kind of social publicity for the artists. It replaces today's royalties that are paid for the writings published in the newspapers and magazines and for books. That is, it is an equivalence of labour. It varied according to the poet and the work. For example, a really good poem of a good poet was awarded with a big price. The poet showed, by means of the works he presented to statesmen, his literary ability and earned money in turn. The sultan the vizier and other important administrators knew very well that the odes written for them were full of exaggerations and unreal descriptions; however, they rewarded the artist owing to his creativity. The caize (money, various basic necessities) given to poets are like the favouritism of the early years of the Republican period. Otherwise, it would be unfair to say that the statesmen who distributed prices adored commendations and the poets were toolies. The poet wrote poems and earned in proportion to his success and creativity and prepared his budget according to what he earned."

On seeing scientists and artists were encouraged by the sultan, other local administrators endeavored to make their own regions a centre for artistic activities that brought about an overall revival of art in the whole Empire, even the remotest parts of the country." In this issue Ağık Celebi gives these expressions that are of a poetic and a proverbial value:

"It is narrated that a child born in Prizen is given a "mahalan" (pseudonym) before his first name; a child born in Yenice pronounces his first words in Persian; a child born in Pristina is born with his fountain-pen in his hand. That is why Prizen is a poet source, Yenice is a home of Persian and Pristina is a clerk house."

Prizen, Yenice and Pristina, aforementioned, are three small Roumelian towns very close to one another. From the quotation above it is understood that these places, which had been conquered towards the end of the 14th century, became cultural and artistic centres. This fact shows, at the same time, the power and dynamism of the culture. In the quotation, everybody's literary and artistic interest, formerly born children's wish to become a poet and their speaking Persian, the literary language of the era, were depicted in an exaggerated story. Other examples from other places, where a dense Turkish quality was dominant, can be given to prove this fact. Ali Riza Vaygö gives an example in just the same way. Having made valuable researches and compilations about the folklore and literatures of Turkmen nomadic tribes living around Taurus Mountains, this writer detected to beyras (couplets) from Yenıçihirli Arni and Hoca Veyrol.

It is meaningful enough to be able to compile, even in the republican period, couples from Divan poets in the local languages of Taurus Turkmen, who had fiercely rebelled against the government policy of settling the nomads. The fact that the Ottoman culture was able to reach even the remotest mountain villages in an era when the means of communications was very limited can only be explained with an unceasing cultural diffusion.

THE LANGUAGE OF DIVAN POET

One of the most criticized aspects of Divan poetry is the incomprehensibility and complexity of its language. In fact, this assertion contradicts the aforementioned improvements. There were, of course, some works written with an extremely complicated and artistic language style but it is not true to say that all those old works are like that. For instance, today everybody is acquainted with the fact that Divan prose does not simply consist of ornamented works of Veyesi and Nergisi. Divan prose developed in two ways; first to create art, second to inform huge masses. Those who try to slander this literature, always use the ornamented works written by Veyesi and Nergisi for artistic motives, as examples. But the works of the same writers that were written in an unsophisticated, colloquial language (such as Habname by Veyesi) are never mentioned. The interpretations of the Holy Koran, hadis books (the sayings of the prophet Mohammed), crafts regulations, legends, religious and epic folk stories, heroic stories about commanders, poems of victory and conquest, some Ottoman history books and books concerning ethics and politics were mostly written with a comprehensible language for the public.

It can be said that Divan poets used more than one language. A poet who used a composite at highly artistic language in the panegyric parts of hadis (ode written to praise a person, especially a sultan) used a more simplified language in "gazels" (lyrics) and in "murahebs" (quaraines). A great majority of the gazels and murahebs in Divans were of a comprehensible simplicity for the whole public of that time. Among those there were really very simple ones. For example: according to what Ağık Celebi says, the poems of Uksıh plı Islak Efendi spread among singers and musicians and were sung at wedding ceremonies, as they had been written in a simple, easy and natural style."
Meanwhile, the Türkü-Rasti (Simple Turkish) trend is worth remembering as a stage in the development of Dîvan poetry although it did not have a residual influence.  

In addition, the assertion that the courts aristocracy was uninterested in colloquial language is not accurate at all, as it is a well-known fact that some Sultans wrote poems in syllabic metre - not in aruz - and simple colloquial language.  

It is wrong to think that people living in the palace spoke a different language from the public. It is a striking incident that, with a circular be sent to schools, Abdülmecid II wanted much greater importance to be attached to Turkish and compilations from vernaculars to be made. Although this event took place during the years when the Turkish trend started to flourish, it was still a good progress.

A FUTURE APPROACHING DIVAN POETRY TO FOLK POET, PROVERBS AND IDIOMS

In the poems of our classical poets, proverbs, idioms and colloquial expressions are frequently used. This particularity, which has not been examined deservedly enough, is a valuable evidence for the relation of Dîvan poetry with the folk culture.

In our literature, there is a literary term called "ısnal-i mecel" which means to exemplify so as to support an idea or to use proverbs in poems. The "ısnal-i mecel" became more and more widespread with the increasing popularity of proverbs and idioms in our literature as from 15th and 16th centuries.

The 16th century is the maturation age of our classical literature and many great poets lived in that period. The use of proverbs, idioms and expressions reached its peak with Necatibey, who passed away at the end of that century and who had a profound impact on the poets who succeeded him. The poets who knew the possibilities of Turkish language very well enriched their poems by using proverbs, idioms and expressions and playing with their meanings skillfully.

THE TENDENCY OF DIVAN POETS TO WRITE IN SYLLABIC METRE

The folk and Dîvan literatures are two different literary traditions having their own characteristics. However, as a result of mutual effect, some common points emerged. One of these common points is the tendency to write their poeems in syllabic metre.

It is known that, as of 16th century, many Dîvan poets used syllabic metre in their poems. Meali (died in 1511), Usuli (died in 1538), Zaif (died in 1559), Ayıklı Çelebi (1513-1571), Fevri (died in 1574), Murat ı (died in 1595), Hisnem (died in 1684), Feyzü, Murat IV, Afife Sultan, Mahmut, Nabi, Nedim (died in 1730), Ahmet ıı, Seyh Galip (1757-1799), Yahid Muhrami (died in 1732), Izzet Molla (1785-1829), Hazratischait Sait (died in 1837), Afif Pasha (1787-1845), Edhem Pertev Pasha (1824-1872), Afife Sultan (1825-1898), Muïni Pasha (1828-1910) are some of the poets who wrote in syllabic metre. They mostly used a versification form called "koşma" (the equivalent of the gazel). Apart from these; Hitabi, a 16th century poet wrote a "marabba" in syllabic metre. Feyzi Çelebi, who lived in the 17th century, wrote a "Sani ve Penseve Mevlev" (a very long poem consisting of many rhymed spiritual couples) in syllabic metre. Since the first Islamic literary works in which couples and quatrains were used together, aruz and the syllabic metres have been used side by side. Yusuf-a Zeliha, written by Halil oglu Ali in 1235 in quatrains and syllabic metre and Baturle-Amat, translated from Arabic by an unknown poet by using quatrains and syllabic metre, are interesting examples. The "Tebbi" poetry of Yusuf Emre and the "muntur" poetry as of the 17th century are full of examples of this quatrains-couplets and aruz-syllabic metre togetherness.

In social sciences, if there is any example of any phenomenon it is always possible that there are other examples. From this point of view, it can be said that there are other Dîvan poets than cited who wrote poems in syllabic metre.

THE TENDENCY OF CLASSICAL TURKISH MUSIC COMPOSERS TO WRITE POEMS IN SYLLABIC METRE

The tendency to write poems in syllabic metre can be seen among classical Turkish music composers. The composers cited below made compositions for the poems written in syllabic metre. They also wrote poems using this metre. Hafiz Pasha (died in 1649), Taşçezade Recip Çelebi (died in 1690), Ahmet Mehmet (died in 1700), Bahurseid Mustafa İleri Efendi (died in 1711), Burnaz Haan Çelebi (1670-1729), Mustafa Çavuş, Selm II (1761-1808), Mahmut II (1784-1839), Numan Ağa (1750-1834), Şakir Ağha (1779-1840), Nuri (19th century), Hamz şehzade İsmail Dede Efendi (1778-1845), Delalade İsmail Efendi (1797-1869), Haşim Bey (1814-1868), Haci Arif Bey (1831-1884), Haci Fakhry Bey (died in 1890). At the beginning of the 20th century Rahmi Bey (1865-1924), Leyla Saç (1850-1936) and Ahmet Rasim (1864-1932) continued this tradition.

Classical composers not only wrote poems in syllabic metre but also used the poems of folk poets as the lyrics of the songs they composed.

Classical composers' writing poems in syllabic metre can be assessed as Dîvan literature's rapprochement to the folk literature. As of the 16th century, Dîvan poets started to write these sorts of poems. Most of these composers had to the same quarters as poets of that time. The cordiality between Hafiz Pasha - Nâilî, İrti - Nabi and Enfi, Haan Ağha - Nedim is well known. Consequently, it can be assumed that this trend, observed among poets and composers, made a gradual progress in different domains of the classical culture with the effects of the localisation movement.

The classical Turkish music composers' interest in syllabic metre has only been detected as of the 17th century. Very little is known about those having lived in previous centuries. The 17th century is a period during which the first examples of the transition from "marabba" to "yarhs" appeared. Of the first poets writing yarhs, Nâilî (died in 1666) and Nazım (1650-1727) lived in that century. In the "Tulip Age" (1703-1730), the poets inclination to write yarhs increased considerably. This fact is another proof of classical composers' interest in the public's enjoyment. The resemblance between the versification forms and meaning values of the two different literatures (folk and Dîvan literature) is a subject that requires further research.

It is quite natural that there are many common points in the domains like drawing, calligraphy, and architecture as well as in literature and music. The artists who benefited both classical and folkloric culture reflect these common features very effectively. The unity of our culture and its reflections will be understood better so long as such studies are carried out.

THE INFLUENCE OF DIVAN POETRY ON FOLK POETRY

In our previous articles, we tried to show that folk literature and Dîvan literature, both of which developed in a common cultural accumulation, have affected each other. Fuat Kâtipçü draws attention to this case by saying: "It is impossible not to grasp that folk literature and Dîvan literature had some positive and also negative effects on each other." Mehmet Çavuşoğlu supports the same point of view with other proofs as well:

"The fact that we can see the poems of some famous Dîvan poets like Baki, Fuzuli, Yahya Bey, Hayreti in the manuscript collections of folk poems which were collected by some literate people in the notebooks and which reach to our age; proves that the intellectuals were not the only readers of Dîvan literature. One can see mostly the poems treating the Sufism in these notebooks. This fact shows the
The folk poets wrote poems in aruz metre and they also used the words, the imaginations and the concepts of Divan poetry.

THE TENDENCY OF FOLK POETS TO WRITE IN ARUZ METRE

The minstrels, being affected by Divan poetry, wrote in certain aruz patterns in forms of gazel, muhabba, muhammus, nisâbet and nustezat. They called these poems as Divan, Selo, Senar, Kalendir, Satranç and Veziç Aker according to aruz patterns in which they were written. I think that these words, rather than being literary terms, express a melody a tune, which fit the metre in which they are written, and I believe that they are all folk music terms. In my opinion, the poems that are written in form of gazel, muhabba, muhammus, nisâbet are called as such as they are read with a certain tune in harmony with the metre in which they are written.60

THE INFLUENCE OF DIVAN POETRY ON GEVHERI

The most significant examples indicating the influence of Divan poetry on folk poetry exist in minstrel literature. The poems of Gevheri should be examined closely in order to exemplify that influence.

Gevheri is believed to have been born in Istanbul in the mid-17th century. His real name is Mustafa. The poet, who is known to have written a poem on the occasion of the Crimean Khan's Selim I, arrived in Istanbul in 1688-89, worked as a chief clerk in Istanbul, Bursa, Damascus, Bagdad and some Rumelian centres. These data confirm that he may have received a good education. In his "Diyars" (a collection of work by one poet), there are as many poems written in syllabic metre as the one is written in aruz metre. He, along with Ağık Ömer, one of his contemporaries, is one of the poets who, in their works appealed the most frequently in poetry magazines, and he made a deep influence on many poets who succeeded him.

As the Minstrel literature was a new synthesis that was formed and developed in Oezan-Bakri (Pre-Islamic Poetry Tradition) and Ottoman classical culture and style, the poet musicians had only basic knowledge about Turkish-Islamic culture and they were acquainted with translations from Arabic and Persian sources. The language of minstrels was the spoken Ottoman Turkish adopted by the public.61 This phenomenon is valid not only for Gevheri but also for Ağık Ömer, Karibi and the others.

The metaphorical elements in the Minstrel poetry look very much like the ones in Divan poetry.62 Şükri Elçin has detected that the 'lover, beloved and rival' in Turkish folk poetry are treated in the same way as in Divan poetry.63 Here, we give a list of the metaphorical elements formed around 'lover, beloved and rival' in order to enlighten the other minstrels' poetic perspectives.

Dilek Enre, who prepared a dissertation on Gevheri's Divan, has determined how many times the most frequently used metaphorical elements are repeated.64


Hair: Holy stick, Horse, Trap, Chain, Ring, String, Lasso, Unbeliever, Night, Leyla:37, Snake, Ambergris:23, Musk, Hyacinth.

Forehead: Moon.

Eyebrws: Crescent: 28, Sword, Mirhabniche in a mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca, Minbar (pulpit beside the mihrab reached by along, straight flight of steps), Bow(violin): 84.

Eye: Queen, Cruel, Mischief, Seductive, Unbeliever, Witch, Narcissus, Drunk: 59, Messenger.

Dimple: Seductive, Mischief, Murderer, Swoon: 21, Arrow, Messenger.

Eyelash: Sword, Arrow: 54.

Face, Cheek: Fire, Moon: 62, Mirror, Ayes (verse of the holy Koran), Vineyard, Paradise, Sun, Candle, Rose, Bud:107, Treasure, Cave, Fairy, Angle, Yusal.

Mole: Ambergrisc, Haciri's Eved, Indian, Echipsian, Point, Star.


Length: Slender: 39, Sappling, Yuba, Ar'ar, Day.

Teeth: Pearl, Gem.

Boob, Neck: Moon, Silver.


Metaphorical elements concerning the heart: Poor, Desirute, Wretched, Nightingale, Mad: 30, Captive, Ferhad, Madras, Meunor, Slave, Tulip, Corn.

Metaphorical elements concerning the rival: Thorn, Obstacle, Shadow, Dog, Unbeliever, Crow, Susan, and Donkey.

Of cosmic elements moon (132), sun (41), crescent (25) have been used mostly; so have
The rival is someone negative who tries to create a rift between the lover and the beloved. In the classical poems, one of the rivals’ names is the ‘obstacle’. And Veysel says, ‘There is an obstacle that complicates the union’. He benefits from a metaphor, which is commonly used in the classical literature. ‘The nightingale wails for the red rose, take good care so that the thorny flowers do not hurt you’.

Thanks to the cultural unit inherited from tradition, the people of Şarköy know that rose means beloved, the nightingale means lover and the thorn is the rival.

That is not all that Veysel took from tradition. Some of the people from the Islamic history and the Persian history are mentioned with their qualifications in classical literature (Nasır-ı Adil, Suleyman, etc.). Veysel is a lover poet, he is a lover (minstrel) in all meanings. He says in one of his poems ‘We have been condemned to love since eternal time’. He considers love in the thinking and perception style of the Sufist literature. Like most of the grand poets who treat the excitement of mystic love, he uses the element of sea, as well. ‘This love is a sea with no limits’. This verse tells the eternity of the divine love. The lover says, ‘The Sea of love does not calm down’. The lover becomes sometimes desperate seeing how ardous this way is. He says, ‘Love is a sea; do not dive in, you cannot get out of it’. Although a love spark appears when the lover reaches to the love shore, the beloved does not show herself immediately. The place where the love emerges is the heart that is turbulent and always wavy. The lover is in a permanent grief sea. ‘Like a ship navigating indecisively, I passed my day in unawareness. These verses show the emotional state of the poet who is tuned back and forth between the unity and the abundance. ‘Being a river and reaching the sea, we get wavy and turbulent together’. These words show the happiness of the unity, represented by the sea. The rivers flowing from all sides eliminate their temporary existence in his absolute existence. It is a state of wisdom and tranquility that is expressed in a classical Ortonan poet’s verse. ‘The rivers reached the sea and became tranquil’.

Veysel talks like a sage who assimilated the Sufism. He says, ‘Kill your essence before dying’. He talks about “good breeding which is a norm in Sufism with the expression “To your hand, to your tongue, to your waist”. He expresses the desire of isolation and that he wants to get freed from the temporary occupations of the world.

Veysel sees in whatever he looks at the manifestation of God. He says that he is in the same way with Yunus Emre, Ayık Derdi, Hallac-ı Mansur, Ömer Hayyam and Neyzen Yefik on this issue. As the language of minstrel literature is in a form that is accepted and appropriated by the public, its perceptiveness has signs of the factors of classical and Sufist literatures. These signs in Veysel’s poems show the influence of the classical culture that reached to our age.

The Influence of Dıvan Poetry on Anonymous Folk Poetry

It is easier to determine these influences in the single works of folk literature. I assume that the cultural and artistic activities have gradual effects like a stone thrown into the water and its ripples that go from the centre to the vicinity. So, in all branches of art (poetry, architecture, music), one can see inter-examples. Tapınar calls them “local classics”. As the artistic activities broaden and affect the culture of the public, the traces of these influences will be seen in the new works. That is why I assume that these influences should be sought the most convincingly in anonymous works. It is easy to determine the examples of local classics in the architecture and in the traditional music in some old cultural cities like Edirne, Kastaba, Bur- sa, Erzurum, Elazığ, Urfa, Diyarbakır.

From this point of view, we believe that it will be useful to draw attention to the similarities between Dıvan literature and anonymous works like

Veysel introduces the “love matter” which he takes up between the triplet of “lover, beloved, and rival” with the criteria that the minstrel literature acquired from the classical literature. The beloved is Leyla, the rose, the candle; and the mouths (these are the metaphors he uses to describe the two elements of love: lover and beloved). When he wants to say that he is separated from his beloved, he says “I am Mecrun who lost his Leyla” and so he traces the tragic background that the tradition placed into the readers’ imagination. A short verse influences the reader like a novel by extending with rich associations. The verse “will the nightingale stop singing or will the rose wither” is in the same style. It is originated from the same source. “You are a rose, I am a nightingale; I would not exist if you did not”. These words both tell that the existence of the lover depends on the beloved and they approach to Sufism. “Is not the longing of the nightingale sufficient for the rose?” The answer to this question is in the tradition. The poet and his readers all know that the longing is never sufficient for union.

The beloved person is idealized in Veysel’s poems as in the classical literature. She has beautiful eyes and hair like hyacinth. One cannot stop looking at her moonlight face. She has beauty moles, her eyebrows are thin and arched. Her beautiful eyes capture the lover. “The black cloud has veiled the sun”. These words give a simple portrait of her. The poet takes this metaphor from tradition. The reader knows that what is pictured here is the hair shedding to the beloved’s face.

According to Veysel’s poems the eye of the lover is like a bow and her dimple (her glance) is like a sword and sometimes the bows of her eyelid capture the lover. These are all the qualifications of the typical lover.

The lover always sheds bloody tears he passes nights sleeplessly. That is why he is pale. This state is a sign of minstrelism. Veysel also says in the same way, he is sometimes a mourning nightingale, sometimes a moth that throws his mortal body into fire.

cypress (66) among trees, rose (166) and bud (69) among flowers.

A MINSTREL WHO LIVED IN THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD

The Place of the Classical Culture in the Poems of Aşık Veysel

The elements of the classical culture, seen in Veysel’s poems, show that this influence is stronger and more prevalent than it is believed.

He is one of the exceptional minstrels who lived in our age. He has a style special to him in his poetry, in his melody. A style which makes one say it is Veysel’s as soon as he begins to play his ‘saz’.

The poet who was born in a village of Şarköy became blind at a young age. How could he become such a minstrel then? His poems don’t seem to belong to an ordinary villager. That’s the point that occupies me so much; that’s not the thing he learned from the intellectual atmospheres after meeting Tecer. What formed his personality is the cultural atmosphere in Sivas, Sivrialam, the atmosphere that he breathed naturally.

His language is simple and pure, but he also knows the words that I do not know. For example: Hedef (water, loss), Nihat (secret), trade-i cili, Zahir haten, Lumakan (soft-talk), muhallakundridce, abdi-lutfachingin, meqakhar (trouble, hardship), ciri-icikmat, sihar (grey), pahredoxident, moonhunts, hüfün (slander), ehl-i zannit, keman (violin, bow), god tıl gısır, fıkık fıkık, tezvar (enamious), bıko-i sivdgar, faq (disclosed), gerfiştir (capitive), leylimbem, endaz, bónini deleb, dal-i bah, naslhab, mefün (capivated), mura, lecher, xusad-i madlib, hir, yeşilbölgrafrance, leb (lip), bad-i suhul, ehl-i kamya, siyanat, kiyat, hare-i ari, mürückeb, siwat, enmure, lev-i halim, sarho derv, rıfat (familiarity), bılı (red), asıkhar (manifest) etc. Now that the poet used these words, his audience must have understood them, as he was a natural part of his surroundings. Besides these words, it is necessary to know how that atmosphere was formed, because of the classical literature traces that we will discuss below.
Su lemin engelmini
Aslındığı gizli.

The lips of the beloved are compared to a bud in terms of colour, shape and smallness. Anonymous folk artists determine it as a portrait in this folk song: “I thought it was a bud of rose when she pucked her lips.”

As it is known, narcissus always reminds eye in Dörsu literature. Because of colour-shape qualities, it reminds the fair-eyed beings. There is an expression that gives the same pleasure in these couplets:

“My beloved with narcissus eyes, I go crazy because of your love.”

In Dörsu literature, the wind is especially the morning wind and it is the messenger of the lovers. So it is in the folk poetry. How easy it is the answer of this riddle: “it is the messenger of the lovers, the sweet voice of the morning.”

1 Some of our students think that these poets spend their nights in the story and they live story as given from the people.
2 For example, see: Murat Alan, “Dörsu Elşenk”, TİD’li Edebiyat Arşivioloji, c. II, (Bursa, 1977); Abdullah Uçan, “Dörsu Edebiyatı Teşkilatı”, TİD’li Edebiyat Arşivioloji, c. II, (Bursa, 1977); Hossu Hitman, “Suç Kutupları Var mı?”; Harun,


4 ğüler, (Ankara, 1981), p. 67-95; Arif Çolakoğlu, "Karacabey-


6 van Sarıınları Ortak Hırsızları", TİD’in Halk Elşenkleri ve Selçuklu-

7 nın Yüce Giymeleri, (Konya, 1983), p. 173-180; Arif Çolakoğ-

8 1, "Selçuklu Sürgünleri ve Selçuklu Suç Hırsızları", in: (Ankara, 1984), p. 23-4; Cevat Kon- nusun, “Hırsızlık Halkı ve Dörsu’nun Suç Hırsızları" (Büyük-

9 Hırsızlık, "Karacabey’in Dörsu’nun Suç Hırsızları", (Ankara,