

THE OTHER HISTORIES OF ROMANTICISM IN THE POETRY OF  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY AND ABDÜLHAK HAMİD TARHAN

Thesis submitted to the  
Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
English Literature

by  
Arif Samet Çamoğlu

BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

2014

The Other Histories of Romanticism in the Poetry of  
Percy Bysshe Shelley and Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan

The thesis of Arif Samet Çamoğlu

has been approved by:

Assoc. Prof. Kim Fortuny

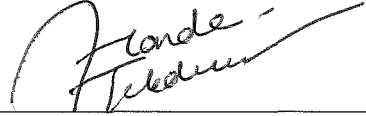


(Thesis Advisor)

Prof. Cevza Sevgen



Assist. Prof. Hande Tekdemir



Dr. Başak Demirhan



Assoc. Prof. Halim Kara



June 2014

## Thesis Abstract

Arif Samet Çamoğlu, “The Other Histories of Romanticism in the Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan”

Numerous scholarly definitions have been applied to Romanticism, each suggesting a specific set of criteria that can cover the term as broadly as possible in aesthetic, political, philosophical or historical concerns. One such attempt to come up with a binding understanding for it is the periodical criticism of Romanticism which is grounded on an oppositional evaluation of the history of this literary phenomenon. Locating and explicating the temporal significance of Romanticism through the ways it departs from previous literary traditions, a certain wing of scholarship confines Romanticism to a particular time of history, severing its ties with other ages.

This thesis addresses and problematizes the periodical classification of Romanticism by investigating its relation with other centuries through the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan. Bringing these English and Ottoman Romantic poets together, this comparative study endeavors to expose the marriage of different discourses of different periods of history in their cited poems. While the use of the philosophical and scientific literatures of the Enlightenment in Shelley’s verse necessitates the revision of the presumed break between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, Tarhan’s return to Sufism in his Romantic poetry challenges the pro-modern attitude prevalent in local Turkish scholarship. Exploring the characteristics of their Romantic poetics through a close reading of selected poems, the thesis argues that periodical definitions of Romanticism are in some cases anachronistic as proven by the Romanticisms of Shelley and Tarhan.

## Tez Özeti

Arif Samet Çamođlu, “Percy Bysshe Shelley ve Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan Şiirlerinde  
Romantizmin Başka Tarihçeleri”

Romantizm için Őu ana dek birçok bilimsel tanım öne atılmıŐ ve bunları her biri söz konusu terimi estetik, politik, felsefi veya tarihsel anlamda olabildiđince geniş kapsayabilecek belirli kriterler dizisi önermiŐtir. Bu türden kapsayıcı anlayıŐ geliştirme çabalarından biri de Romantizmin tarihini zıtlıklar üzerinden inceleyen dönemsel eleŐtiridir. Romantizmin zamansal önemini önceki yazın geleneklerinden nasıl ayrıldıđına odaklanarak belirleyip aŐıklayan bu eleŐtiri kanadı Romantizmi, diđer çağlarla bađlarını kopararak, yalnızca bir tarihsel döneme hapsetmektedir.

Bu tez Percy Bysshe Shelley ve Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan’ın Őiirleri üzerinden Romantizmin diđer yüzyıllarla kurduđu iliŐkiyi irdeleyerek bu olguya iliŐkin dönemsel deđerlendirmeleri mercek altına alıp sorunsallaŐtırmaktadır. Adı geçen Osmanlı ve İngiliz romantik Őairleri bir araya getiren bu karŐılaŐtırmalı çalıŐma farklı dönemlerin farklı söylemlerinin birlikteliđini Shelley ve Tarhan’ın alıntılanan Őiirlerinde saptamaya çalıŐmaktadır. Nasıl ki Aydınlanma Çađı’nın felsefi ve bilimsel yazınlarına Shelley’nin mısralarında göndermeler yapılması on sekizinci ve on dokuzuncu yüzyıllar arasında bulunduđu varsayılan kopuŐun yeniden düşünülmesini gerektiriyorsa, Tarhan’ın Romantik Őiirinde Sufizme geri dönüşü Türkiye akademisinde bu konudaki yaygın modernizm-yanlıŐı tavrı tartıŐmaya aŐmaktadır. Her iki Őairin Romantik poetikalarını inceleyen bu tez, Romantizmin dönemsel tanımlamalarında anakronizmin, Shelley ve Tarhan’da görüldüđu gibi, kaçınılmaz olduđunu tartıŐmaktadır.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am thankful to all of my professors at the department of Western Languages and Literatures for having equipped me with the necessary insight and knowledge to embark on this voyage of my academic journey. My gratitude to Professor Cevza Sevgen and Associate Professor Kim Fortuny in particular is beyond words, since not only my present but also my future in academia would not be as exciting as they seem to me now if it were not for my most influential mentors' instructions and interventions.

Inside and outside the academic scene Fatma amoęlu, Melis Gnekan, Neęe amoęlu, Burak Bilgin, Arda amoęlu, Hseyin amoęlu and Mahir Kaplan constitute my *deus ex machina*. All of these wonderfully unique people have contributed to my well-being and well-doing in incomparably significant ways, as well as to the completion of this study. Their presence, full of affection, trust and support, has been invaluable and indispensable for me so far.

Lastly, I would like to thank BAP (Bogazici University Research Fund) for granting me the inestimable opportunity to work with an ideal professor, Kim Fortuny (a.k.a. Prospera) as her research assistant, and to dedicate the required time, effort and zeal to this thesis.

## CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....   | 1  |
| CHAPTER II: SHELLEY’S REASONABLE ROMANTICISM.....  | 9  |
| CHAPTER III: ROMANTIC MODERNITY AND ISLAMIC TRADITION IN<br>TARHAN’S POETICS.....                    | 26 |
| CHAPTER IV: EASTERNIZING ROMANTICISM AND ROMANTICIZING<br>SCIENCE: TARHAN AND SHELLEY REVISITED..... | 43 |
| CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION.....   | 59 |
| APPENDIX.....  | 64 |
| REFERENCES.....  | 66 |

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

It is a prerequisite for any critical work on Romanticism to be mindful of the elasticity of the term itself. In an age of postmodern prudence that stigmatizes general definitions and praises diversity, one feels obliged to approach Romanticism through a pluralist perspective. This consciousness regarding the heterogeneity of Romanticism, against the odds, predates our era of hyperawareness. Arthur O. Lovejoy manifested it a lot earlier in a speech delivered at the fortieth annual meeting of the Modern Language Association of America, December 27, 1923, in quite a radical manner. He expressed his cynicism about the meaning of the word, announcing boldly,

The word Romantic has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing. It has ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign. When a man is asked, as I have the honor of being asked, it is impossible to know what ideas or tendencies he is to talk about, when they are supposed to have flourished, or in whom they are supposed to be chiefly exemplified (232-233)

Lovejoy's comments urge scholars to come up with questions that can broaden the concept of Romanticism rather than definitions that can only restrain it. As he preferred the plural use of the term to avoid simplistic generalizations, and to promote its diverse nature, Lovejoy grew into a mentor figure for studies on Romanticism which strive to treat the subject with due cautiousness. This thesis follows his lead, and in doing so, aims to explore the Romanticisms of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Abdulhak Hamid Tarhan as individual literary phenomena. It endeavors to expose the distinct qualities of each that unsettle the conventions of the literary criticism.

The Romanticisms of Shelley and Tarhan are undeniably unlike in many ways. Their difference rises first and foremost from the fact that they belonged to separate systems of metaphysics that earned each distinct worldviews. Being members of dissimilar geographies and societies, Western-Christian in Shelley's case, and Eastern-Islamic in Tarhan's, they appear hardly identical in terms of the cultural heritage that had the most direct bearings on their literary productions. What their differences signify for the secondary literature on Romanticism constitutes the common ground they walk. The bridge between the two poets can be seen to be these anachronistic readings of their Romanticisms. However, if considered as standing outside the periodical classifications attributed to Romanticism in general, Shelley and Tarhan turn out to be 'alike' when their particular Romanticisms are studied comparatively and against the grain of much of the secondary literature. Historical arguments of a certain wing of literary criticism suffer a serious challenge in the face of Shelley and Tarhan's texts. A mainstream critical tendency to define Romanticism in and through a single historic episode, which one encounters most frequently in anthologies, collections, and introductory works related to Romanticism, often contradicts these poets' Romantic attitudes when one looks closely at the language of the poems. Although the multifaceted character of the term is now broadly acknowledged, Romanticism is still often introduced as a homogeneous literary phenomenon that embodies specific traits while dismissing some others. Michael Ferber, for instance, attempts to invent a general definition for the term, despite his awareness of the irreducible nature of it. Following his recognition of the difficulty, or more accurately, the futility of a pursuit of a binding description for Romanticism, he



gives in to such ambition eventually by claiming:

Romanticism was a European cultural movement, or set of kindred movements, which found in a symbolic and internalized romance plot a vehicle for exploring one's self and its relationship to others and to nature, which privileged the imagination as a faculty higher and more inclusive than reason, which sought solace in or reconciliation with the natural world, which 'detranscendentalized' religion by taking God or the divine as inherent in nature or in the soul and replaced theological doctrine with metaphor and feeling, which honored poetry and all the arts as the highest human creations, and which rebelled against the established canons of neoclassical aesthetics and against both aristocratic and bourgeois social and political norms in favor of values more individual, and emotional. (10-11)

Sketching such an ontological, epistemological, political and aesthetic outline for Romanticism, Ferber draws the portrait of a Romantic artist as a figure of introversion, imagination, and emotion, watching his environment in a defiant wistfulness, and transposing it into his art according to his liberal, fanciful and sensational poetic judgment. What inspires a picture as such is generally the assumption that Romanticism came into being as a sheer reaction to the status quo that was shaped under the dictum of the previous ages. Ferber's definition situates Romanticism against the norms and ideas of the former century, reinforcing the presumed break between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The oppositions frequently placed between reason and imagination, society and individual, and experience and emotions hint at the war of discourses between the Age of Reason and Romanticism. This longstanding historical clash has been often furthered by critics, and continues to mold our vision of Romanticism to the present.

Exceptions, on the other hand, survived this binary understanding and tempted readers to dare meet the poles, or move beyond them. Promising this expansion of sight, Shelley's Romantic poetry disturbs a temporal categorization by means of its textual references to scientific empiricism, and the philosophical rationality of his

predecessors. His knowledge of scientific developments and the philosophical debates of the age promote a dialogue between seemingly irreconcilable discourses. Chapter One explores the echoes of this unconventional conversation through a close reading of Shelley's poem "Mont Blanc". The poem exhibits Shelley's fascination with science and Enlightenment philosophy, and cuts across traditional notions of the Sublime by merging it with the concrete, detailed and physical observation of nature. Studying, therefore, the natural imagery of "Mont Blanc" with a consciousness of the influence of scientific and philosophical figures on Shelley, the first chapter aims to problematize the periodical understanding of Romanticism founded till now on an unjustified antagonism between itself and the Enlightenment<sup>1</sup>.

The second chapter addresses the temporal compartmentalization of Romanticism by investigating Tarhan's Romantic poetics also in this regard. Like Shelley, Tarhan remains outside the prescribed notions of Romanticism, having devised his own formula of it. With loud resonances of the past, his poetry challenges the scholarly claims on Tarhan's modern position in the history of Ottoman-Turkish literature. Gunduz Akinci, belonging to this wing of critical tradition in Turkish scholarship that reads Tarhan most of the time through a strict periodical appreciation, argues in her work *Abdulhak Hamit Tarhan: Hayati, Eserleri ve Sanati* that Tarhan's poetry is best understood only through the dynamics of the age it was produced in<sup>2</sup>:

---

<sup>1</sup> There is a growing interest in recent scholarship on British Romanticism in the interrelation between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Christopher Goulding and Mark Bruhn address the subject specifically through Shelley's literature and underline the unity of the separate discourses of different periods in a manner similar to that of this study. See, Bruhn, Mark J. "Shelley's Theory of Mind: From Radical Empiricism to Cognitive Romanticism". *Poetics Today*. 30. 3 (2009). Web. And also, Goulding, Christopher. "Shelley's Cosmological Sublime". *Review of English Studies*. 2006. Web.

<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix.

He (Tarhan) read and liked Divan poetry, but was not satisfied with it, and wanted to express something else. This was possible only by looking through the window of the West. The true value of *Belde* and *Sahra* can be measured not by today's means, but by the means of the days when they were written; they are the fruits of a period in which we headed towards Western thinking. (Akinçi 247)<sup>3</sup>

As this example suggests, Tarhan's Romanticism has been handled in Turkish scholarship largely as a signifier of a crucial political-historical turn that took place in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Critics, broadly speaking, have sought the strains of the spirit of the age in his works, and conditioned readers to appreciate Tarhan's poetics on the basis of the symptoms of modernization and Westernization it supposedly displays. The political-historical strife between the past and the present, East and West, and the modern and the traditional took its toll on the major part of the secondary literature, and grounded Tarhan's Romanticism on such a binary conjuncture. And as a result of this radical temporal division, the influence of the Ottoman philosophical and literary heritage has been at worst entirely ignored, or at best briefly mentioned.

When the influence of Sufism on Tarhan is born in mind, even as a literary convention, it can be noted that the Ottoman poet debunks the associations between his literature and modernization politics of the Empire, and evades the historical significance attached to his Romanticism by paying tribute to old Islamic philosophy, a vital part of traditional Ottoman culture. Studying his poem "*Kürsi-i İstiğrak*" ("The High Seat of Contemplation") through a backward gaze, and thus unearthing the bond between Tarhan's Romanticism and Sufism, I endeavor to highlight in Chapter Two

---

<sup>3</sup> All English translations of the original Turkish texts, done under the supervision of Prof. Cevza Sevgen, are my own, except for Tarhan's poem "*Kürsi-i İstiğrak*", which is translated by Walter G. Andrews.

the organic tie between the old and the new. The poem brings to the surface Tarhan's indebtedness to his Eastern forefathers of letters, along with his fascination with European literature. This ebb and flow between utterly different modes of literature and philosophy, like the one noted in Shelley's poem, destabilizes the common critical assertions regarding Tarhan's Romanticism. Just as Shelley deviates from the conventional definitions of Romanticism by employing discourses that historically run against the tide of literary criticism, Tarhan digresses from the course his poetry has been assigned via his recourses to the past, and compels the reader to revise the temporal classification his works have been widely subjected to.

While the first and the second chapters pave the way for mutuality by exploring their Romanticisms separately, chapter three functions as a meeting point for Shelley and Tarhan. Adopting Tarhan's translation of Shelley's poem "To the Moon" as its catalyst, this section of the thesis is a final, in-depth look at the identical aspects of their dissimilar poetics. Though it acknowledges the attention Turkish scholarship has paid to the translation, the chapter refrains from pinpointing solely the one-way significance of this literary practice. After referring to scholarly works that interpret Tarhan's transference of Shelley's verse into Ottoman Turkish only with an emphasis on the characteristics of Tarhan's literature, it pursues a critical approach that relates to both poets on a mutual level.

The third chapter starts with a close reading of the original work, through which the hidden discursive richness of "To the Moon" is uncloaked. The influence of natural sciences on Shelley's Romanticism is underscored through the astronomical references embedded in the poem. Shelley's implicit experimentation with scientific theories in his verse gains visibility in the moon imagery he creates. The description of the moon, bearing the marks of Shelley's knowledge of astronomy beneath the

cover of the metaphorical use of language, foregrounds the interrelation between the figurative and the literal, the imagined and the reasoned, and the fancied and the experienced. And this hybridity “To the Moon” shelters, unsettles the historical placement of Romanticism against the rationality of Enlightenment, and the mechanistic worldview of science.

Despite its remarkable departure from Shelley’s work in meaning and style, Tarhan’s translation of “To the Moon” raises similar concerns regarding the conventions of the literary criticism on Romanticism. Inviting Islamic mysticism to his text through allusions that do not exist in Shelley’s poem, Tarhan weaves Sufi philosophy into the body of his translation. The fact that he makes this detour by returning to his old Eastern masters in the moment of his engagement with a rather novel and Western text, attests to Tarhan’s inherent bond with the tradition. This literary “regression,” in terms of aesthetics and history, acts contrary to the state politics of the age with which Tarhan’s poetics is often correlated. Scholarly debates that temporalize Tarhan’s literature with key concepts such as modernization and Westernization, conflict with this anachronistic fashion of his poetics. By means of a radical diversity of discourses, which contradict the conventional perception of Romanticism in Turkish scholarship, Tarhan’s verse denies the historical taxonomy superimposed on it so far. In this respect Tarhan seems to be in an alliance with Shelley, granting us the opportunity to revise the prevalent historical classifications applied to their respective Romanticisms. Through their inclusion of different modes of literatures of different centuries, Tarhan’s translation, and Shelley’s poem promote a critical gesture required to question the periodical illustrations of Romanticism.

The study arrives at its destination with the proposition that the historic route some scholars have been travelling in their analyses of Romanticism impedes their

critical journey. The shortcuts they take in their studies lead them to problematic generalizations, and turn their project upside down. They tend to historicize Romanticism mostly by compressing its non-uniformity within a certain period of time, yet by doing so they jeopardize the historicity of the literary phenomenon. Severing its ties with diverse discourses of different ages, this particular wing of scholarship in fact risks dehistoricizing Romanticism.

To the discerning reader, Shelley's *Defense of Poetry* exhibits his acknowledgement of the necessary marriage of distinct disciplines in poetic genius. The advocacy for discursive diversity Shelley manifests in his critical prose encourages further the revision of the homophonous history of Romanticism in general through his particular Romanticism. In a similar vein, but in a dramatically variant tone, Tarhan embraces in his letters the co-presence of dissimilar modes of literature in his works. His recognition of tradition's reappearance in his avant-garde writing, a mournful one due to his unachieved ambition to overreach and excel the past, testifies to the interplay between the literatures and philosophies of different centuries. The confessional notes of Tarhan, and the professional comments of Shelley on poetry, urge a reconsideration of Romanticism as a monophonic literary phenomenon defined in historical terms, and draw our ears to the polyphony repressed in played-out theories of Romanticisms.

## CHAPTER II

### SHELLEY'S REASONABLE ROMANTICISM

This chapter aims to investigate the exchange between the rationalist and the Romantic voices in selections of Shelley's verse. Shelley's intermingling of scientific and literary discourses in his poetry will be pinpointed as a gesture that unsettles the dichotomy founded historically between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. This historical duality turns out to be a matter of question once the negotiation between these two poles becomes more evident. I will endeavor to problematize the presumed disagreement between these different forms of literature, scientific and Romantic, through a close look at Shelley's "Mont Blanc". Because it is a lengthy text, I will restrict my reading of the poem to its fourth section, where I will attempt to catch glimpses of the meeting of the edges in question with an emphasis on the representation of nature. In order to do so, I would initially like to offer a quick survey of the secondary literature on this topic that informs and inspires my reading of Shelley's poem.

Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Shelley's colleague at Oxford, bears witness to Shelley's zest for scientific inquiries in his biographical work *Shelley at Oxford*, where he provides us with abundant accounts related to the rationalist character of the Romantic poet. A frequent epithet Hogg chooses for Shelley is "young chemist", who argued with fervor that "a spadeful of the most productive soil does not to the eye differ much from the same quantity taken from the most barren. The real difference is probably very slight; by chemical agency the philosopher may work a total change, and may transmute an unfruitful region into a land of exuberant plenty" (Hogg 9).

Through such anecdotes, Hogg not only reveals the unity of praxis and theoria in Shelley's mind, but also the poet's resoluteness towards the merging of reason and imagination in his poiesis. Hogg's notes about Shelley's interest in scientific knowledge were not groundbreaking, yet. Scholars have been well aware of the fact that Shelley's familiarity with science predated his career at Oxford. One of them, Desmond King-Hele notes that the education Shelley received both at Syon House and Eton was not insufficient at all in this regard. Shelley was drawn to scientific investigations, according to King-Hele, thanks to the entertaining and enlightening lectures he received from Adam Walker, the author of *A System of Familiar Philosophy* (1779), in which the main subjects treated were "astronomy, electricity (i.e. electrostatics), mechanics, hydrostatics, chemistry, the atmosphere, light and magnetism" (King-Hele, *Shelley and Science* 159).

An ardent reader and follower of the scientific developments of his age, Shelley was keeping track of such empirical information to the extent that his own literary writing came to serve also as a modest archive for the factual discoveries of the time. There are instances in his works that reveal his fondness of the rational understanding of things and beings, and his use of scientific discourse in the discussion of these matters. One of them is noted by Joseph Barrel:

The appalling lack of scientific equipment and of technological skill dictated that in the development of science astronomy should precede physics, and physics, chemistry. Yet, astronomy, no less than chemistry, is an empirical science, as far removed from astrology as chemistry from alchemy. In fact, by the end of the eighteenth century, when Laplace wrote his popular *Systeme du monde* (which Shelley read, and refers to in his notes to *Queen Mab*), the body of astrological knowledge had become truly impressive. One perceives, if only from the notes to *Queen Mab*, that the astronomical world by Shelley's time had taken on essentially the aspect that it wears today. (Barrel 29)



On the other hand, Shelley's writing was definitely more than a literary agenda that kept minor records of the scientific progress of the century. It did not fail at all to communicate with the texts and facts of the realm of reason in rather intricate terms. Comparing him to Wordsworth, King-Hele underlines Shelley's eagerness to apply scientific knowledge to his poetical language when he holds "Shelley's attitude of science was at the opposite pole to that of Wordsworth. He loved it, and is never tired of expressing in poetry the thoughts which it suggests. It symbolizes to him joy, and peace, and illumination. What the hills were to the youth of Wordsworth, a chemical laboratory was to Shelley" (King-Hele, *Shelley, His Thought* 165). As suggested by King-Hele, Shelley benefited a great deal from scientific discourse, especially in his verse descriptive of natural elements and phenomena. A keen admirer of Erasmus Darwin, who contributed to scientific literature through his own collections of poems *The Botanic Garden* and *The Temple of Nature*, Shelley employed the scientist's arguments and observations in his poetry. Shelley was deeply impressed by scientific figures like Darwin "who showed him how to describe clouds, winds and storms scientifically in verse" (164).

Other recent scholarship has paid close heed to Shelley's employment of a scientific voice in his poetry. Exemplary of such works is William Keach's *The Political Poet*, which traces the influences on Shelley's writing back to ancient Greek, and then forth to the rationale of the early nineteenth century, without, however, actually mentioning the significance of science clearly. After quoting Shelley's preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, Keach states that "Here is a founding principle of Shelley's radically idealist poetics: instead of offering sensuous material figures for mental states and processes, the writing in *Prometheus Unbound* will draw its figures of 'imagery' from mental process itself" (Keach 127). Although Keach

discloses in his words Shelley's empirical approach to mind, which is at odds with the conventional Romantic conception of it as a mere faculty of imagination, he does not address this issue as another proof of the wedding of science and poetry in Shelley's case.

However, informing us that scientific studies on brain were nothing unknown to certain British Romantics such as Keats and Coleridge, Alan Richardson admits the way Shelley "flirted with a materialist view of mind" and picked up a "materialist psychology in *Queen Mab*" (Richardson 37). Still, it is again D.G. King-Hele who offers us an insightful reading of *Prometheus Unbound*, focusing on the roots and connotations of Shelley's scientific terminology: he guides those struck with wonder to see how Shelley adopted literally the rational and mechanical terms and notions to his poetry. A brief citation of his analysis of the forth act of *Prometheus Unbound* would be illuminative at this point:

The 'wind-flowing folds' are the stragglings lunar mountain ranges; the white hair 'scattered in strings' probably refers to the bright ray systems seen around some craters at full moon. The 'eyes' of the winged infant pour out 'fire that is not brightness', presumably the infrared radiation discovered by Herschel in 1800. Shelley follows this with a vibrant 25-line image of molecules whirling 'over each other with a thousand motions', to generate radiations of all wavelengths, and words and music<sup>4</sup>. (259)

---

<sup>4</sup> King-Hele's analysis applies to the lines below, taken from the forth act of *Prometheus Unbound*:

I see a chariot like that thinnest boat  
In which the Mother of the Months is borne  
By ebbing light in to her western cave  
Whens he upsprings from interlunar dreams;  
O'er which is curved an orb like canopy  
Of gentle darkness.  
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds  
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.  
Its hair is white- the brightness of white light  
Scattered in strings. (King-Hele 259)

References to science are explicit especially in *Prometheus Unbound* and *Queen Mab*. The works cited so far resurface Shelley's own promethean gesture in this respect, his leap beyond the boundary separating two different modes of literature. Although my reading of Shelley's "Mont Blanc" builds upon these studies, I plan to address the significance of the unconventional interplay between reason and imagination in Shelley's poem as regards the scholarship on British Romanticism that favors this dualism. Highlighting the moments in Shelley's poetry that defy the presumed antagonism between Enlightenment and Romanticism mainly in terms of the landscape imagery, this chapter follows the critical stance provided by the mentioned scholars and moves a step further, problematizing the insistence on this dichotomy, which is valid even for some of the contemporary studies on Romanticism.

I will quote the fourth section of "Mont Blanc" in three parts. The part below constitutes the first twelve lines of the section, in which an empirical fascination with nature strikes the eye.

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams, □  
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell □  
Within the daedal earth; lightning, and rain, □  
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane, □  
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams □  
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep □  
Holds every future leaf and flower; the bound □  
With which from that detested trance they leap; □  
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,  
And that of him and all that his may be; □  
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound □  
Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell. (Shelley, Mont Blanc 371-372) □

At first glance, "Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane" tempts the reader to invoke the notion of the Sublime. It is not surprising, since the aesthetics of the Sublime is conventionally at work especially when a description of landscape might

hint at a larger understanding of it, a stimulus for the exalting of emotions and the expanding of comprehension. Instead of a long discussion on this topic, yet, I would like to offer an economic justification for mentioning the Sublime regarding the line in question.

“The first wave of Romantic poets,” claims Louise Economides, “heralded the Sublime as a discourse intended to close the gap between the human mind and nature” (Economides 91). In line with the statement of Economides, the quoted part of “Mont Blanc” can be read as Shelley’s attempt to achieve this negotiation between nature and the human mind. Furthermore, citing Wordsworth’s lines “How exquisitely the individual Mind . . . to the external World / Is fitted: and how exquisitely, too . . . The external World is fitted to the Mind” Christopher Hitt refers to *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* and tells us that the poet was seduced by a Wordsworthian evaluation of the Sublime (Hitt 161). Both Hitt and Economides are not content with these traditional readings of the Sublime when Shelley’s poetry appears in the scene. In agreement with them, I will focus on the complexities of Shelley’s Sublime as I do a close reading on the chosen section of the poem.

The poem documents the cycle of life in quite a plain and undramatic manner, enlisting things and beings living in the natural world as they are. It portrays fields, lakes, forests and buds in an order that does not betray their simple organic unity. The ecosystem which they inhabit is depicted in its rawness, unprocessed by fancy attributions. In this sense, the human eye gazing upon the chain of beings remains distant and objective. The task of the observant is merely to sketch a catalogue of these earthly dwellers in their autonomous state.

Even though the adjectives such as ‘fiery’, and the possessive pronouns like ‘his’ may suggest a stylized natural depiction, and a privileged human position,

natural phenomena such as earthquake, flood and hurricane do not promise a higher significance in the poem, other than the ordinary events of the wildlife. They are not standing for a challenge to the human mind, a sublime vision testing or elevating the human agency in its relation to the external world. They are merely the components of the cycle of nature. Their presence suggests nothing but the casual causes of natural conditions, to which other animate things and beings are subjected. Announcing the circumstances of the habitat for leaves and flowers, and streams and buds, these natural occurrences only define the setting for the dwellers of nature. Therefore, the excitement of the reader, who is willing to regard them as signals of the Sublime experience in its traditional sense, is humbly deflated by their unshocking practical reality.

Human existence is included in this community and atmosphere as yet another ring of the chain, no more important than the other members. Absence of a central human agent ennobled by his communication with the external world renders the search for the Sublime in these lines futile. Man and his deeds earn no greater attention than the hardly visible insects or a fading flower. The poem situates him side by side with seemingly menial beings, and does not grant the human subject a status that exceeds all others. Owing to its avoidance of an anthropocentric attitude, the poem clearly welcomes an ecocritical reading. Through its unconventional use of the Sublime, “Mont Blanc” invites us to note a different representation of nature, which is not ruled by human-centered figures of speech. Louise Economides responds to this call in his article cited in our discussion, where he argues:

If the anthropocentric sublime “discovers” the incommunicability of perception as a means of ironically reproducing communication, Shelley’s texts reenter this distinction between perception and communication—but with a difference. This difference involves a more radical deconstruction of

language's ability either to presence stable individual consciousness (perception) *or the world as a reality unified by language*, the unifying operation of the symbolic. (Economides 99)

Even though Economides' interpretation would suit better another study that deals with Shelley's language in purely ecocritical terms, it nevertheless helps this one underline the distinct environmental consciousness at work in his verse. It is worth noting that the poem treats 'all' in a reasonably detached fashion, sparing no privilege even to human beings. The description of natural phenomena and beings rest upon a concrete surveillance over them, and is not affected by a personal preconception. Natural imagery is depicted by the observer with the faintest intervention of his imagination. All he sees is grounded upon an empirical investigation, leaving no room for pathetic fallacy<sup>5</sup>. This part of the poem, hence, unearths the influence of the scientific attitude on Shelley's verse. Rather than as a faculty of imagination, the poet uses his brain as a data collector in his contemplation of the outer world. His mind brings together the material on the outside realm in a style as impersonal and empirical as that of a scientist.

This satisfactorily rationalist approach Shelley adopts echoes the philosophy of an age-of-reason thinker, John Locke. In his discussion on the "Reality of Knowledge" Locke proposes: "But our ideas of Substances being supposed Copies, and referred to Archetypes without us, must still be taken from something that does or has existed; they must not consist of Ideas put together at the pleasure of our Thoughts, without any real pattern they were taken from, though we can perceive no

---

<sup>5</sup> The term 'pathetic fallacy' was initially introduced by John Ruskin essay *The Pathetic Fallacy*. He divided the term into two principal kinds, namely, "the wilful fancy" and "the irrational fallacy" (*The Pathetic Fallacy* 26). The notion is evoked especially when a narrative projects human emotions on non-human beings and objects. And since its emergence, the term has been utilized as a tool to address most commonly the divisions between the concrete and the abstract, and the reasoned and the imagined. See *Ruskin, John. The Pathetic Fallacy. The Green Studies Reader. Routledge. New York, 2000.*

inconsistence in such Combination” (Locke 568). Locke’s argument on the necessity of a conformity between the ideas related to the external things and their physical reality affirms the vital role of the sensual perception in human understanding. According to him, ideas that match the accounts of empirical knowledge are the ones least vulnerable to suspicion. With its description of nature, based on a consistency between its imagery and actual appearance, Shelley’s poem seems to reverberate with Locke’s opinions.

An affinity between the Enlightenment thinker and the Romantic poet may perhaps sound implausible. Hogg, however, refutes this assumption by attesting to it. “The examination of a chapter of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* would induce him, at any moment, to quit every other pursuit” (Hogg 24). This biographical detail strengthens the assumption that Shelley might have found Locke’s philosophy inspiring enough to inscribe it somewhat implicitly in the quoted part of “Mont Blanc”. Still, reading Shelley’s poem solely through its reflections on scientific discourse and enlightenment philosophy would result in an ignorance of the other side of the coin. As much as he was carried away by his passion to cling to the voice of reason, Shelley never struggled to become a true disciple of it. “Mont Blanc” presents not only textual evidence of the poet’s fascination with the rationale of the Enlightenment and science, but also the grimaces that accompany his digression from it. In the second part of “Mont Blanc”’s fourth section Shelley departs from the objective ground of observation, and perches upon a land molded through a rather subjective language.

Power dwells apart in its tranquility,  
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:  
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,  
On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains

Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep  
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,  
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice  
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power  
Have pil'd: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,  
A city of death, distinct with many a tower  
And wall impregnable of beaming ice. (Shelley 372)

Compared to the previous part, this one is obviously much less indicative of Shelley's attunement to the call of science and reason. In fact, what these lines may support is a radical break from the empirical approach to nature. Imagination supersedes reason, and the description of the external substances undergoes a personal shift. Instead of the concrete scenery of things outside, Shelley favors a highly personal portrayal of them in these lines. Similes and personifications the poet uses, such as "the glaciers like snakes" and "the Sun in scorn of mortal power", underscore the role of the imagination and the subjective attitude in Shelley's representation of the natural world.

Shelley aims farther beyond the boundaries of reason by bringing forth a notion that resides outside its sphere. A transcendental concept as such, "Power" is defined by the poet as some thing/being that is ungraspable through empirical logic. The observant in the poem now plunges into a form of contemplation that is completely at odds with the one noted in the first section. His mind serves him not only as an instrument of reason, but also as a locus through which he can reach beyond the visible boundaries of the physical world. And this he achieves through the guidance of nature that 'teaches the adverting mind'.

Nature is posited in these lines as an extremely potent and potentially aggressive figure that exposes the weakness of humankind. By revealing the feebleness of man through its own majestic presence, nature appears like a reminder or a warner for man regarding his fragile and finite existence. Such an instructive role, however, is



attributed to it by man himself, who looks ‘down’ on nature by utilizing it as an instrument to ‘teach his mind’ while falsely praising the terrifying grandness of it. He stands above nature through his capacity to assign meaning to it, and gains authority not in physical but in existential terms. Against the egalitarian location of the human and the non-human in the first part, the superior position of man over his surroundings, hence, strikes the eye in these lines. Gazing on earth, he stands above all that is around, and tries to make sense of each. All that exists around him seems to be there to tell him something. His environment, thus, appears under his regard as a void that needs to be explored through human understanding, and exposed through a meaning attached to it by man. And this privileged state of man in his relation to nature draws us back to the notion of the Sublime, which is utilized by Shelley at this point of the poem in its utmost traditional way.

Christopher Hitt helps us keep in mind that Shelley was occasionally moved by the Sublime in a manner similar to his contemporaries. Just like Wordsworth, he intended now and then to found a bridge between “the external World” and “the individual Mind”. To achieve this goal, however, Shelley had to abandon reason and search for a transcendent means to fill the gap between the mind and an otherwise incomprehensible nature. For this reason, he remained in touch with other Romantic figures of his age, and followed the conventions of the Sublime. Hitt explains this fact as follows:

I have already noted Shelley’s self-consciousness about the tradition of the natural sublime. One of the few points on which critics universally agree is that “Mont Blanc” participates in, or presents itself as participating in, this aesthetic discourse... Furthermore, Shelley demonstrates an awareness of his own contemporaries—those writers we have since taken to calling the Romantics. For example, as many scholars have pointed out, “Mont Blanc” reads somewhat like a response to Coleridge’s “Chamouny; the Hour Before Sunrise. A Hymn” (1802), and there is at least anecdotal evidence to suggest that Shelley had the Coleridge poem in mind when he toured the Alps. (Hitt

Shelley's sympathy for the traditional understanding of the Sublime is significant, for it sheds light on his complicated poetics that both embraces and evades the discourses of the Enlightenment and science. In the way he employs it, the Sublime invalidates the objective tone of the poem as it entails an inevitable partiality by relying fundamentally on the contemplation of man as the source of meaning. This mode of contemplation, as already noted, defies the empirical facts and approaches the external world through a transcendental gesture. Unlike the scientific observation of the outer world noticed in the first part, where the representation of nature was reasonably based on its concrete physical reality, the second part of "Mont Blanc"'s forth section expels reason and empirical knowledge, and promotes a relation with nature that is beyond their reach.

Following his retreat to the Sublime, which undermines the rational voice he seemed to employ in the beginning, Shelley returns to his reasoned portrayal of nature in the last part of the section. Through the end of "Mont Blanc"'s forth section, Shelley revisits the scientific discourse of his time and leaves the subjective evaluation of the external world aside:

Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin  
 Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky  
 Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing  
 Its destin'd path, or in the mangled soil  
 Branchless and shatter'd stand; the rocks, drawn down  
 From yon remotest waste, have overthrown The  
 limits of the dead and living world,  
 Never to be reclaim'd. The dwelling-place  
 Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil; Their  
 food and their retreat for ever gone,  
 So much of life and joy is lost. The race  
 Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling

Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,  
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves  
Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,  
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling  
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,  
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever  
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean-waves,  
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air. (Shelley 372)

There is almost a lament in these lines that gets even louder when accompanied by an environment gloomy and barren. Branchless and shattered pines, and the landscape of waste and ruin suggest sympathy between the wretched state of the observer and the equally miserable observed. Man describes nature in such dark terms, and fancies it to partake in his morose vision. If this is what fills the gap between the individual mind and the external world, then one may say the traditional notion of the Sublime leaks into this part of the poem as well. And yet, the poem's ground is too slippery to make this assumption so hastily, as it is marked with voltas at unexpected moments.

It is indeed ambiguous what the poem wails for. Whether it is an existential crisis on the side of the observer concerning his alien position on earth, or a political critique of the industrial revolution that demarcated the line between nature and civilization in the most violent terms, is hard to tell. What I deem obvious in these lines, still, is the momentary identification of man with nature. Yet, the alignment between two appears to be a temporary one, for the poem shows suddenly that nature is not ill-pictured to represent man's ill state. The human being does not seem to be the center which collects and distributes meaning regarding all that is, since "The race of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling vanish...". It is not sympathy that brings together man and nature by means of a pathetic fallacy, but indifference of the latter to the former. Nature follows its course regardless of man's acts, thoughts and feelings, as "vast caves shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam" no

matter what.

Shelley's avoidance of the anthropocentric image of nature, in which it proves to be nothing but a symbol for a higher significance, caught the attention of Economides, as noted earlier, who argues "[T]his desire for a transcendental signified that unites the mind and nature is itself interrogated in Shelley's texts, in part due to developments in the subsystem of science, which during the early nineteenth century fully realized its autopoiesis in established disciplines that produced specialized, increasingly secular forms of communication" (100). In this train of thought, one can read the chaotic representation of nature not through the disordered gaze of man, but simply on the basis of its own signification. Having no function-value for the human system of meaning, natural events take place just because the ecosystem works that way.

The changes occurring in the landscape depicted in the poem can be taken as mere instances of a mid season, or just geographical phenomena, no matter how unsettling they may look to the human eye. Taking them as scenes that challenge and in return elevate the human mind would mean nothing but a reproduction of the traditional, anthropocentric notion of the Sublime. Although Shelley pays tribute to its conventions in the second part quoted, he does not conform to the prevalent aesthetic discourse on the Sublime in the present lines. Economides demonstrates Shelley's discontent with this interpretation of the Sublime and refers to Nigel Leask, whose ideas on this subject are enlightening:

Indeed, as Nigel Leask convincingly argues in "Mont Blanc's Mysterious Voice: Shelley and Huttonian Earth Science," Shelley draws upon the latest developments in early nineteenth-century geology in order to critique earlier representations of sublimity that had contributed to "Mont Blanc's" popular reception as an emblem of Christian catastrophism, the view that the

mountain bore traces of the biblical Flood and was the product of either a wrathful or benign God. In opposition to geologists who supported this “Neptunist” view that earth formation resulted from a single, anomalous catastrophe, “Mont Blanc” endorses the “Vulcanist” position that destruction occurs as a constant over time through explosive eruptions that are simply part of natural, evolutionary processes, not divine intervention. (Economides 104)

As held by Leask, Shelley’s aversion to the traditional Sublime goes hand in hand with his attraction to the current scientific developments of his age. Rather than a symbolic understanding of nature, Shelley pulls again to the scene a factual representation of it in “Mont Blanc”. The poet takes a distance from the human-centered analogies, rooted definitely not in reason, and applies an objective approach to the natural realm. And this attitude gains utmost clarity in the last lines of the cited section, where the meeting of the river with the ocean waters, and its vaporization is brought forth as concrete details of nature’s physical reality. Not representative of any idea loaded with veiled references to the position of man in the World, this natural phenomenon is viewed and reported by the observer as the usual change of state of a substance in an empirically accurate fashion.

With its flow between the objective and subjective perspectives, and empirical and transcendental views on nature, “Mont Blanc” convinces us that seemingly uncompromising discourses merge into one another in Shelley’s poetics. His poetry provides us a unique puzzle where the pieces of Enlightenment philosophy intermingle with those of Romantic literature. And although this puzzle has been acknowledged by scholars such as Desmond King-Hele, William Keach, and Alan Richardson, the critical insight it offers to the oppositional readings of the Enlightenment and Romanticism has been largely overlooked. This dichotomous treatment still needs a revision, which we may undertake with the help of Shelley’s poem.

There is a tendency to segregate rationalist discourse from Romantic literature even in current academic work interested in this subject. An unjustified desire to impose a historical adverseness constitutes the base of this scholarly bias. For instance, a recent book that offers guidance to the characteristics of Romanticism, titled *Romanticism and Transcendentalism*, defines this literary emergence as a reaction to the preceding age of reason:

Romanticism emphasized the importance of the subjective experience. The romantics believed that emotion and the senses could lead to higher truths than either reason or the intellect could. Romantics supposed that feelings, such as awe, fear, delight, joy, and wonder, were keys that could unlock the mysteries of the world. The result was a literature that continually explored the inward experiences of the self. The imagination became one of the highest faculties of human perception, for it was through the imagination that individuals could experience transcendent or spiritual truths (5).

Such dichotomies often located between the intellect and emotions, the physical and the spiritual, and hence, the Romantic and the reasonable serve the attempts to construct a compartmentalized understanding of literary history. Claiming Romanticism to be a reactionary attitude against its predecessors, the historical periodization that informs such criticism allows no room for a mutually serving dialogue between these two interlocutors. The censorship we note in this case pertains to a blind adherence to a categorical appreciation of the history of literature. A certain period succeeds the other with an indisputable urge to move beyond it, this trend of criticism holds. And yet, poets like Shelley, with their insistence on the fusion of the ideas and discourses of two distinct periods of history, puts the correctness of the catalogue-historicism that favors such clear-cut divisions at stake.

Despite the biographical and literary productions that tell us otherwise, the dualistic conception of science and Romanticism gets the nod, not only when Romanticism is on the table in general, but also when Shelley is considered in

particular. Harold Bloom seems to be one of those who articulate Shelley's poetics through a break with the Enlightenment philosophy, as he says "[T]he precisionist or concretist is probably Shelley's most effective enemy, since everything vital in Shelley's poetry deliberately strains away from the minute particulars of experience" (Bloom 28). Contrary to Bloom's remarks, this chapter has covered many points both in the scholarship on Shelley's use of the scientific discourse, and on his poem "Mont Blanc", where the empirical tone was as noticeable as that of the transcendental in his relation to nature. Especially the fourth section of "Mont Blanc" helps us see how Shelley's poetry goes against the traditional grain, refusing to adjust to the critical stance shaped under the influence of a classificatory historicism.

"Mont Blanc" ultimately teaches us that we should seek differences within the scientific and Romantic literatures themselves, if we are to look for any. It reminds us that neither of them rests on a homogenous discourse. Both Enlightenment and Romantic modes of writing are marked by a diversity within themselves that resists any reductive historical categorization. Shelley's poem leads us to the conclusion drawn by Marshall Brown, who suggests:

The historical thrust of Enlightenment and the historical memory of Romanticism must alike be recognized if their succession is to be comprehended. Romanticism and Enlightenment differ from one another in consequence of the ways each differs internally from itself – in which Enlightenment is driven toward its opposite and in which Romanticism incorporates its antithesis. (Brown 31)

### CHAPTER III

#### ROMANTIC MODERNITY AND ISLAMIC TRADITION IN TARHAN'S POETICS

As Shelley's poetry urges us to revisit a particular wing of scholarship on Romanticism that advocates a historical discrepancy between the writings of different disciplines of different ages, so does the verse of Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan. Turkish literary criticism on Tarhan rests, for the most part, on the claim that his Romantic poetry offered a brave new world, which traditional Ottoman literature had not yet discovered. His poetics has been generally regarded in the secondary literature as a landmark for the break with the Eastern aesthetic realm, and a fusion with the Western world. In this chapter, these anti-nostalgic, and somewhat occidental scholarly arguments on Tarhan's Romanticism will be revisited, and their validity in the present reading of his poem "*Kürsi-i İstiğrak*" ("The High Seat of Contemplation") will be reconsidered. His relation to nature in this poem reveals not only an avant-garde Romantic poetics that denies the conventions of old Ottoman poetry but also exposes his acceptance of the tradition's influence on him. Tarhan's philo-philos towards the Eastern tradition in his representation of nature will be explored through his sympathy for Sufism on the one hand, and his contempt for the outdated poetics of Divan literature on the other.

In an age which is defined first and foremost by the Ottoman Empire's attempts at radical political and sociological reformations, Tarhan was himself full of ambition to achieve novelty on the late nineteenth-century literary scene. Just as the empire was leaning towards a rather Westernized constitution that would help refine



and define itself beyond its ancient Eastern roots, the poet, author and dramatist Tarhan was seeking ways to liberate himself from the traditional borders of classical Divan poetry. His desire was ignited further as he frequently travelled to Europe like an official ‘Odysseus’, in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s words, appointed by the Empire as clerk at embassies where he encountered physically and literally the instruments of change he was to utilize (Tanpınar 459). Listing Racine, Corneille, Hugo and Lamartine among the names influential on his writing, Asım Bezirci reminds us in *Abdülhak Hamit* that Tarhan’s voyages supplied him with a range of different examples of Western poetry (17). More striking than these biographical details, however, is Tarhan’s own declaration that he was dissatisfied with the tools and rules of the old Ottoman poetry. In his poem “*Na-kafi*” (“Insufficient”) he celebrates his dismissal of tradition as follows<sup>6</sup>:

True that we destroyed old poetry, causing a tumult  
We inscribed true poetry on the scroll of wisdom  
Pulling our strength, we spent all our time to build this path  
Since the ancestors’ works seemed insufficient to us. (qtd in  
Bezirci 61)

Unlike Divan poetry, in which the representation of nature was nothing more than a proof of the poet’s descriptive linguistic merits, Tarhan’s Romanticism seemed to promise a rather philosophical depiction of nature, an approach that gives birth and shelter to deep emotions and metaphysical contemplation (Kaplan 314). His intimate relation to nature confirmed his success in his attempt to surpass the stale vocabulary of classical poetry. Referring to Tarhan’s poetry, Ali İhsan Kolcu draws attention to the emergence of a new appreciation of nature in the Tanzimat Era literature:

---

<sup>6</sup> See the Appendix.

A novel perspective towards nature is among the new themes that became part of our literature during the Tanzimat Era. The static concept of nature in our old poetry, which portrayed pale images of various flowers, after encountering impressionism and expressionism through Romanticism that praised a new understanding of nature, began describing nature as an outcome of observation in all senses, which related to the various aspects of things as well as the metaphysical realm<sup>7</sup>. (41)

These examples from Turkish scholarship on Tarhan's poetry imply a temporal gap or a breach between the present his poetry inscribes, and the past the classical Ottoman literature signifies. Treating his Romantic poetics as a micro-reflection of the politics of the age, many scholars have been conditioned to highlight the Western style in Tarhan's verse, while overlooking the Eastern reminiscences that still survived in his lines, especially when his relation to nature is born in mind. His poem "*Kürsi-i İstiğrak*" ("The High Seat of Contemplation") discloses this significant hybridity, which has received partial attention up to now in this respect. Since it is a long poem, I will cite only the first four stanzas of it in two parts.

Kendar-ı bahrde hoş bir mahaldir, nazır-ı alem,  
Tahaccür eylemiş bir mevcdir, üstünde bir adem,  
Hayalettir, oturmuş, fıkır ile meşguldür her dem  
Giyinmiştir beyaz amma bakarsın arz eder matem.  
Bulutlar, dalgalar, yıldızlar etrafımda hep mahrem.  
Ağaçlar, cuylar, kuşlar, çiçekler daima hurrem.

Bu تنها yerleri gördün mü sen zannetme halidir!  
Hayalatımla meskundur, bu yerler pür-mealidir,  
Muhat-ı aczdır, hem latenahi birle malidir;  
Bu mevki'dir yerim sahilde bir kürsi-ş alidir.  
Bulutlar, dalgalar, yıldızlar etrafımda hep mahrem.  
Ağaçlar, cuylar, kuşlar, çiçekler daima hurrem. (Tarhan, *Kürsi-i İstiğrak* 99)

By the sea there is a pleasant place, gazing out upon the world  
An ocean wave turned to stone, upon it rests a man

---

<sup>7</sup> See the Appendix.

Who sits there like a phantom, ever occupied with thought  
He is dressed all in white but seems to be in mourning  
Clouds and waves and stars intimately surround me  
Ever joyous are the stream and bird and flower and tree

Have you seen these lonely places, do not think them empty  
They are peopled with my fantasies, filled with import  
They are surrounded by impotence yet replete with eternity

This is my place, a high seat on the margin of the sea  
Clouds and waves and stars intimately surround me  
Ever joyous are the stream and bird and flower and tree (Tarhan, The High

Seat 254-255)

The opening lines of the poem appear almost like a literal reproduction of Caspar David Friedrich's painting "Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer", a common visual reference of the notion of the Sublime. Situating man as a figure of surveillance, 'gazing out upon the world', the poem centralizes the position of the human in his encounter with the environment. This contact, however, is an intellectual one, characterized by the thoughts of the contemplating 'man in white'. Through the sophisticated evaluation of nature, the poem weaves the traditional Western Sublime into its content. As Shelley's "Mont Blanc" occasionally pinpoints the bridge constructed between the human body and nature through the mind of the observer, Tarhan's "The High Seat of Contemplation" yearns for this sort of apotheosis in an identical manner.

The traditional use of the Sublime in the poem helps justify the claims of Tarhan's Westernized poetics. In a Wordsworthian gesture, Tarhan brings forth "the elevation of the mind" in the comprehension of nature, and the figure in the poem becomes affected intellectually by the alterity he observes (Wordsworth 272). Ozturk acknowledges this affinity between Tarhan's poetry and Western Romanticism, and

likens Tarhan's awe in the face of nature to the one Wordsworth experiences (190).

Likewise, Kolcu agrees with the poet's Western fashion by locating its roots, this time, in French Romanticism:

Abdülhak Hamid's Romanticism does not spring from the Romantic portraits of Divan poetry. French Romanticism proves to be his source as he is inspired by Rousseau, Lamartine and Chateaubriand, even though his vocabulary belongs to the old poetry and to Sufi discourse. For this reason, he tries to express his feelings as a Romantic subject without being able to relate his sensibilities to his own circle<sup>8</sup>. (27)

Marking a complex relation to nature, the poem refrains from utilizing symbols and allegory to decipher the maze, and alienates itself from classical Ottoman poetry, or from Tarhan's local 'circle' in Kolcu's words. Veysel Ozturk's comments on the conventions of Divan poetry help the reader highlight the distance between the poetics of Tarhan, and that of his forefathers: "Doğanın unsurlarının kendisi için değil başka bir şeyin alegorisi veya sembolü olarak o şey için şiirde var oluşu klasik mazmunların tamamında belirgin olan niteliktir. Doğaya böyle yaklaşan şiir, gözün gördüğünün değil zihnin düşündüğünün idaresinde bir imge kurma biçimi benimsemiş olur" (64). "The use of nature as an allegory or a symbol of something other than itself is a characteristic observable in all classical poems. With such an attitude towards nature, this sort of poetry welcomes the construction of the image on the basis of what the mind thinks, not what the eye sees". Although the parallelism between the two is notable in terms of the function of the observer's mind, the lines given above suggest a radically different intellectual operation. Man, no longer conditioned to make sense out of nature through its symbolic values or allegorical significance, meditates on its overwhelming presence by his own means.

---

<sup>8</sup> See the appendix.

The presence he focuses on is based on

'here and now', rather than 'there and then'. And Veysel Ozturk's argument supports this spatio-temporal distinction:

Nature, as a space in classical poetry, is employed always as a reflection of a transcendental realm. And this transcendental realm is heaven itself. Gardens, valleys, rivers all taken together, not individually, are associated with the notion of heaven, which is invisible and yet constructed by means of its depictions in the Qur'an. If we consider the transiency of this world and the eternalness of the otherworld, it becomes evident that for the divan poet truth is not necessarily achieved through seeing. If truth is not present in this false world but in the next one, true nature is supposed to be the transcendental heaven that belongs to the otherworld<sup>9</sup>. (66)

Contrary to the appreciation of nature as a pseudo-simulacrum of the paradise which prevailed in classical Ottoman poetry, Tarhan's poem reflects on the land and sky through a profane immediacy. Nature is portrayed not under the guidance of a pre-given grand narrative, but on a personal reception. An earthly description of nature replaces the otherworldly treatment of it that was common in the older tradition of poetry. Rather than a stale vocabulary that defines the otherwise vivid colors of earth in palest terms, Tarhan manages to express the energetic presence of each natural figure in the poem, and celebrates their singular and worldly existence. Through this radical difference, hence, Tarhan's Romantic poetics secularizes the otherwise religious representation of nature that had occupied the Ottoman poetry.

Tarhan's migration from Eastern Islamic semantics to a Western Romantic discourse gains further clarity when his praise for a defiant individualism is noted. "The High Seat of Contemplation" revolves around a human subject who thinks and speaks about nature through his own accounts. He does not refer to the holy words of the scripture to translate and confine mundane reality into and within prelapsarian

---

<sup>9</sup> See the Appendix.

significance. All he relies on is his own subjectivity, which comes to the scene by means of his imagination.

'Peopling' his surrounding with his 'fantasies' the speaker of the poem undergoes a personal experience with nature. He stands in awe, and takes refuge in his imagination during his encounter with the environment. He tries to compensate for the ontological abyss between himself, and the other natural beings and things by employing his imagination. He can achieve union between his body and the world, thus, between the inside and the outside, only with the help of this artistic faculty of mind. Therefore, his meditation on nature occurs in the utmost individualist terms, unmediated by the preconceived systems of belief.

The poem's secular and individualist tone explicates the frequent association between Tarhan's non-traditional Romantic poetics, and the Ottoman Empire's modern politics during the Tanzimat Era. Through such instances embedded in his poetry, Tarhan participates in the construction of a new subjectivity the Empire was yearning for. Ozturk, drawing a parallelism between historical-political changes and Romanticism's birth in the Ottoman geography, suggest that the democratization of governmental policies paved the way for a different concept of subjectivity (49). Political developments such as the limitation of the Sultan's authority, and the protection of private property by law through the Hatt-i Sharif of Gulhane (1839), and the granting of equal rights to Muslim and non-Muslim communities alike through the Edict of Reform (1856), led to an untraditional experience of individuality.

All these said, one might infer that Tarhan's poem carries the traces of this urge to modernize and Westernize by granting its subject the democratic and secular license to relate to nature on his own account, hindered neither by a conservative Eastern discourse, nor a dated religious narrative. Historicizing Tarhan's

Romanticism by investigating his poetics only through the politics of the age, on the other hand, can be misleading. As progressive, modern, and individualist as it is meant to be, Tarhan's Romantic verse was characterized simultaneously by a backward looking, traditional, and communal attitude. His poem in question sheds light on this agreement between these opposite ends, as can be witnessed in the following lines:

Sükunetle kuşanmış hay-huy-ı şehri guş eyle,  
Sehab-ı hande-riz berk-ı yekser-kahrı guş eyle,  
Ağaçlardan çıkam efkarı seyret, nehri guş eyle,  
Bu vahşetgahda sen gel benimle dehri guş eyle.  
Bulutlar, dalgalar, yıldızlar etrafımda hep mahrem.  
Ağaçlar, cuylar, kuşlar, çiçekler daima hurrem.

Düşün ol zatı kim emriyle zatondan ıyan olmuş,  
Vücut-ı sermedisinden zemin ü aman olmuş.  
Düşün deryayı, her bir katre mev-I bi keran olmuş,  
Hafaya'yı ilahidir ki yek dil, yek-zaban olmuş.  
Bulutlar, dalgalar, yıldızlar etrafımda hep mahrem.  
Ağaçlar, cuylar, kuşlar, çiçekler daima hurrem. (Tarhan, Kürsi-i İstiğrak  
99-100)

Hear the city's hue and cry girdled with silence  
Hear the cloud pour laughter, the bolt of sudden violence  
Watch the thoughts emerge from trees, listen to the brook  
In these wild places, come and hear eternity  
Clouds and waves and stars intimately surround me  
Ever joyous are the stream and bird and flower and tree

Think on Being that commands manifestation of its own essence  
From whose eternal substance are created earth and sky  
Think on the sea whose every drop is endless billow  
These are the divine mysteries spoken by one heart, one tongue  
Clouds and waves and stars intimately surround me  
Ever joyous are the stream and bird and flower and tree (Tarhan, The Hight  
Seat 255)

The figure becomes further immersed, like a transparent eyeball<sup>10</sup>, in his surrounding as the poem moves on. He becomes all ears as he hearkens to the audible dynamics of nature. Integrating thoughts into the skeleton of the environment, the poem seeks the traces of the intransient essence nature embodies. The closest landscape becomes the signifier of the remotest notion: eternity. Through his imagination, Tarhan attributes divine characteristics to earth that binds all that there is while being not subject to time. He traces the divine in nature itself, and does not prefer to point at an otherworldly concept of it. His Romanticism, like that of Wordsworth, treats nature in a pantheistic fashion, locating in it the signs of divinity. Tarhan, on the other hand modifies pantheism according to his rather Islamic view of nature. At this point, referring to Mustapha Bala Ruma's take on the function of pantheism in Romantic train of thought is useful to explicate Tarhan's religious pantheism:

In Romantic philosophy pantheism is manifested in the belief that the Imagination is the supreme faculty in man. This belief sets the ground for wider claims of the English Romantic poets about Nature and its spirituality. The imagination was taken to be the vehicle that transforms man into God by imbuing him with divine qualities such as the ability to see beyond the ordinary. Hence, the Romantic Imagination which encompasses feeling and thought becomes the manifestation of the indivisible quality of God. As a result of this, the Romantic epistemology obliterates the distinction between Subject and Object; and the knower and the known. In the process, the dichotomy between subject and object is transformed into a Unity. (87)

---

<sup>10</sup> Considering Emerson's familiarity with Sufism, it would not be an arbitrary gesture to refer to the American writer's transcendentalism at this point. The passage cited below provides a good example for his acknowledgement of the Sufi notion of 'Divine Unity':

Standing on the bare ground, -my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space, -all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing, I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God" (Emerson 11).

For further information on Emerson's relation to Islamic philosophies and poetry, see Wia Chee Dimock's article "Deep Time: American Literature and World History". *American Literary History*, Volume 13, Number 4, Winter 2001.



Ruma's notes on Western Romantic pantheism helps us think about ways in which Tarhan's pantheism is akin to that of Western Romanticism. While he stresses the power of imagination, and the autonomy of the subject in his relation to nature, Tarhan identifies God with neither himself as a poet, nor with his persona in the poem. His pantheism, in this regard, is rather an East-oriented one, despite the inspiration it receives from Western sources. Ozturk explicates this important nuance by arguing that the notion of divinity in Hamid's poetry, with its authentic and otherworldly qualities, corresponds to the Islamic faith in Allah, and later he adds that Tarhan's Romanticism invokes Islamic mysticism when nature is addressed in a deep, sophisticated manner (224-225). Kolcu makes a similar observation and finds it vexing that Abdulkhak Hamid retreats to the classical Sufism in his moments of melancholy despite the poetical reformation he achieved (15). Such examples of the recognition of Tarhan's negotiation with Islamic philosophical tradition in Turkish scholarship is relegated to brief comments on the subject, refraining from in-depth analyses of it. Sufism, on the other hand, proves a strong source of knowledge and inspiration for the poet, especially in the moments he sought union with nature, both in physical and poetical senses of the word.

Due to its long and rich history, Sufism is invoked in this chapter only through one of its key concepts: 'Divine Unity'. The second part quoted from "The High Seat of Contemplation" brings to light the poet's return to this particular Sufi notion. The beholder in the poem is struck by the interrelation among beings and things, and feels a strong sense of belonging to that community, 'surrounded by clouds, stars, and waves intimately'. His central subjective position is interrupted by the environment, which awakens him to the fact that it occupies not only his mind, but also the very ground he walks on.

From an individualist experience of nature, the poem moves on to a collective consciousness and stitches every entity into the body of a Supreme Being. The speaker in the poem not only appreciates the divine quality of nature, but also praises its capacity to bring all things and beings together. With its explicit reference to the Sufi notion ‘Wahdat al- wujud’ (Divine Unity) the poem invites the old Eastern philosophical tradition into its otherwise secular Romantic composition. All that there is, as can be deduced from the lines above, appear as ingredients of a majestic form, and manifests ‘the essence of the divine Being’. This intimate appreciation of nature, informed by Islamic mysticism, agrees well with the distinct pantheism of Tarhan. Both celebrating a radical sense of togetherness in and with nature, these two movements sound alike indeed. This fact caught Ruma’s attention too, and his argument on their similarity helps one locate better the meeting point between Romantic pantheism and Sufism in Tarhan’s poetics:

[I]n Sufi philosophy, pantheism has a parallel in the twin doctrines of “Wahdat al- wujud” or Divine Unity, and “Shuhdiyyah” or Divine Immanence, both of which stresses the presence of God in all things. In these doctrines, the duality of Subject-Object; and the distance between man and God is totally eliminated. Consequently, man and God become one in Unity. This doctrine was popularized in Sufism by Ibn al-Arabi. (93)

Ibn al-Arabi proves to be a relevant reference when we explore Tarhan’s re- application of Sufism. In her reading of Tarhan’s translation of Shelley’s poem *To the Moon*, which will be discussed in the third chapter, Nüket Esen lists Ibn al-Arabi among the Sufi philosophers with whom Tarhan may have potentially had affinities. . And Esen’s assumption seems not to be an unlikely one when one takes into account the biographical details about Tarhan provided by Turkish scholars.

Tarhan’s travel route involved Eastern geography as well as the West. And his

visits to the East brought him closer to what he simultaneously strived to avoid. As an intellectual eager to familiarize himself with different styles and manners of writing, Tarhan surrendered easily to the mystical literary tradition of the East. During his stay in Tehran, Asım Bezirci writes, he immersed himself in Persian literature, and digested a good portion of this meal (15). Besides such literary voyages, Tarhan improved his knowledge of Eastern letters in his personal education. We learn from İnci Enginun, for instance, that Ahmet Vefik Paşa recommended him to pursue his studies on Arabic language and literature, and Tarhan himself was quite willing to do so (20). His interest in Persian and Arabic literatures, therefore, explains why his presumed familiarity with Islamic philosophical discourses such as Sufism is not surprising.

As Shelley's fascination with scientific and rationalist perspectives towards nature found its way into his representation of nature, Tarhan's attraction to Eastern literary and philosophical traditions left its print on his relation to nature. Beams of Sufi philosophy shine bright in his poetics, and highlight in sharpest terms the fusion regarding the Eastern and the Western, and the traditional and the modern. For Sufism turns out to be an embodiment of all that was dismissed by the avant-garde poetics Tarhan endeavored to champion. A brief look at the political-historical status of this philosophy can help the reader grasp Sufism's function against the loaded notion of 'progress'. And accordingly, one can see how Tarhan's allusions to Islamic mysticism may unsettle the acknowledged pro-Modern interpretation of his Romantic poetics. It goes without saying that Sufism, having blossomed in Muslim cultures, has an Eastern origin. Due to its genealogy, Sufism taints the pure Western blood that was supposed to flow in Tarhan's poetry. Yet, even more important than this naked fact is the threat(s) Sufism posed for the project of Westernization and Modernization that were characterizing both the literary and the political scenes of the age. Modern

regularizations that became more forceful during the Republican period (from 1923 onward) were apt to establish a West-oriented secular regime. As a result, these reforms had to target certain religious practices that did not agree well with the new ideological façade of the country. “What lay ahead, in line with the obligations to the external conditions and the adjustments over the internal conditions, was a powerful will to prefer a simple, stereotypical, restricted, salvation-promising, loose, and faint religion accessible to anyone” (Kara 564). And this took its toll on Sufism, which was among the systems of belief incongruous with the desired decorum of a secular society. Since it did not confine spirituality to a specific place, but worshipped its presence in every spot that it rendered itself visible, Sufism resisted the privatization of religion, and hence, its removal from the public sphere. Its emphasis on the unity of being, for instance, rendered the modernist sterilization of religion, which comes through its institutionalization, inapplicable. Consequently, Sufism’s non-conformism with the reforms of the period led to its prohibition by law, and its erasure from the public space. Brian Silverstein draws attention to the discriminative politics of the Republican period in this regard:

In the Ottoman Empire until 1923 and briefly in the Republic of Turkey, Sufi orders were of major importance to social, political and economic life. Many *ulama* actively cultivated their devotion in one (or more) of the numerous idioms of Sufism available in the Empire. However, in 1925 the Republican administration proscribed the orders and closed their lodges. It has since been technically a punishable offence to be involved in a Sufi order -as shaykh (a title not recognized by the Turkish state) or as devotee- although a number of orders have continued to function in a somewhat ‘public secret’ fashion. (39)

Surviving as an underground practice, Sufism was treated like a tumor in the nation’s body, infecting the organs that linked the country to its unwanted past. Resilient to the treatment, though, this ‘malevolent’ cell jeopardized the life of the modern organism with its other deadly qualities, such as its reliance on the notion of companionship. As

noted in “The High Seat of Contemplation”, individualism proves vital for a secular operation of both the politics of the age, and the poetics of Tarhan. Bound no longer by a grand narrative, the individual in the poem makes his own statements, and relates to the world around him through his liberal state of mind. While the first part of it seems to favor such a radical singularity, the poem replaces this with an all-binding plurality in the second part cited. Venerating the Sufi notion ‘Wahdat al- wujud,’ the poem departs from a liberal subjectivity, to a transcendental communalism, which it reaches by conversing with nature. Tarhan’s poem participates in an intact dialogue with nature, keeping the human party silent. All we witness throughout in this section of the poem is nature’s inarticulate speech. *Hearing, watching, and thinking* nature, the persona of the poem foregrounds its non- human soliloquy. Still, the conversation between the human figure and his environment seems to include both parties, as he feels responded to by nature, being surrounded by its elements. And this exchange, whether a product of human imagination or of a physical reality, points at a radical co-existence. The interrelation that rises out of such an unusual communication gives birth to a community. Constituted in this mutual speech by a strong reference to a Diving Being, the collective presence celebrated in the poem occurs in religious terms.

“There is a sense among Sufis that companionship is linked intimately to conversation, and conversely that conversation engenders companionship. The term ‘*sohbet*’ itself derives from the same Arabic root as the word ‘*sahaba*’, companions, and the terms participate in the same semantic extension” (Silverstein 43). Companionship, an essential characteristic of Sufism as Silverstein puts it, emerges out of conversation, and problematizes the construction of the modern individual Turkish Republic embarked upon. By bringing people together through a verbal

exchange, which functions as another form of worship, conversation gathers its subjects under a sacred roof. With its notion ‘Unity of Being,’ Sufism promotes a collective existence that takes place through such dialogues, and produces a sense of community, whose fundamental reference is a divine being. This inevitable allusion to a holy entity that grounds the Sufi community falls against the Turkish modern understanding of subjectivity, which prefers a secular mindset rather than religious doctrines to decide how to be oneself, and to be with others. Hence, owing to its sense of a religious community that comes along with conversations, Sufism failed to comply with the secular characteristic of the individual who was to be delivered through the Turkish modernization project.

Apart from its emphasis on a particular kind of companionship, and a social practice of religion, Sufism did not appeal to the *zeitgeist* of the Republican Era for its organic ties with tradition. Since the new concept of modern individualism was modeled after a progressive understanding of history, which entailed a severe break with the past, the politics of the age aimed to replace the Eastern Ottoman past with a Westernized notion of the present. In this process of self-fashioning, traditional values that were incompatible with the new Turkish aesthetics were put aside, if not behind, and a novel outfit that was defined in rather occidental terms was put on. This political-cultural change of dress, therefore, required the removal of the tradition, i.e. the dated Eastern notions, from sight. Silverstein, investigating the relation between Sufism and modernism in Islam, analyzes the disturbance Sufism caused in the atmosphere of the republican period as follows:

“Muslims see that it is important to legitimize their practice through reference to the tradition, to past precedent. A relation of continuity with the past is thus desirable, while a form of censure and reproach is to judge a view or practice to be without basis in the traditions. In the legitimacy of a given practice or discourse aspiring to ‘Islamic’ status, the politics of continuity is central”

(45).

Sufism in Islamic culture necessitates a historical continuum that was interrupted through reformations, which started in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire and accelerated in the twentieth century Turkish Republic. And its rootedness in the tradition, resisting the willed amnesia towards the past, was not in tune with the progressive politics of modernization in Turkey. The political-historical position of Sufism, its traditional, religious, and Eastern characteristics partly explains the blurred nature of the modern, secular and Western vision in Tarhan's poetry. The poet's prophecy of an avant-garde literature is undercut by Sufism's intervention. By mingling his West-influenced Romanticism with this Eastern philosophical tradition, Tarhan deflates the scholarly claims that favor a historical and poetical break in the Ottoman literature. His relation to nature, as pantheist as that of Wordsworth on the one hand and as Islamic as that of Arabi on the other, unearths the hybridity that problematizes the aforementioned conventions of the secondary literature on his Romanticism. The case being so, any attempt to periodize Tarhan's poetics on the basis of the politics of the age, and associate it solely with its Western counterparts, seems to be hardly justifiable.

Tarhan's Romantic poetry, like that of Shelley, compels the reader to be highly cautious in order to appreciate its historical and literary significance. The poem "The High seat of Contemplation", with its branches leaning towards tradition, shows how Tarhan's poetics resist the temporal categorizations applied to his Romanticism that sever it from the Eastern past for the sake of binding it to an occidental 'now'. And as Shelley's "Mont Blanc" testifies to the interplay of different discourses of different ages in English Romanticism, Tarhan's poem seals the influence of the tradition upon Ottoman Romanticism. This understudied interwovenness of seemingly incompatible

discourses located in the poetics of both poets helps us realize that the literary historical classifications may sometimes fail to operate in non-reductive terms. Shelley and Tarhan, Romantic poets of East and West, are among the literary figures, whose works transcend temporal taxonomies, and render the blending of the tradition and the modern, hence, the past and the present unavoidable in our readings.



## CHAPTER IV

### EASTERNIZING ROMANTICISM AND ROMANTICIZING SCIENCE:

#### TARHAN AND SHELLEY REVISITED

It can be argued that the Romanticisms of both Shelley and Tarhan are anachronistic. Tarhan's return to Sufi tradition, which disrupts the historically defined position of his poetry as an avant-garde production of a new literary and political phase, finds its counterpart in Shelley's utilization of scientific discourse in his verse. In both cases, the conventions of much main-stream Romantic scholarship which underestimates the bonds between the empirical and the intuitional, and the reasoned and the imagined are debunked. A radical revision of the local and international scholarships that accept the clear-cut periodization of literature as their founding principle, proves necessary in the case of these poets. No matter how different their Romantic poetics may be, especially in terms of their relations to nature as discussed in the first and second chapters, there appears to be a strong alliance between Shelley and Tarhan when the exceptional characteristics of their Romanticisms are considered.

Turkish scholarship often brings together Shelley and Tarhan in studies of Romanticism. Tarhan's translation of Shelley's poem "To the Moon" is frequently mentioned in critical works, mostly to refer to the Western attitude of the Ottoman poet. The bridge constructed between them so far, therefore, has been one-directional, disregarding a literary mutuality. Noting the absence of such an attempt, I will read Shelley's poem, and Tarhan's translation side by side in this chapter, and try to discover a common ground that addresses the controversial points made by the secondary literature on Romanticism. To focus on the ways the poem and the translation relate to each other in terms of their significance for the literary criticism, I

will start initially with a discussion on Shelley's "To the Moon".

I

Art thou pale for weariness  
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,  
Wandering companionless  
Among the stars that have a different birth, —  
And ever changing, like a joyless eye  
That finds no object worth its constancy?

II

Thou chosen sister of the Spirit,  
That gazes on thee till in thee it pities...

Composed of two parts, the poem was published after Shelley's death in 1824 by Mary Shelley. Rarely cited in collections and anthologies, it has not been treated so far as one of the exemplary works of Shelley that could match the glory of, say, "Ode to the West Wind", or "Ozymandias". In this study, however, this posthumous poem has a vital function regarding this chapter's attempt to revise the conventions of the critical perception of Shelley's Romanticism in general.

The moon is addressed in the poem as an entity that embodies human characteristics. An intentional fallacy is evenly observable in the lines quoted, through which a unit of the solar system is represented almost as a social being, a 'companionless sister'. This humanized portrayal of the moon also invites the reader, however, to recall Ancient Greek mythology, in which natural forces and elements were closely linked with the society of Gods. Greek antiquity's veneration of divine beings in human forms had its impact in the anthropomorphic perception of the universe itself. And Shelley, well versed in Ancient Greek literature and philosophy, was aware of this while he was translating, for instance, Homer. Homer's "Hymn To the Moon", which he translated in 1818, provides us with an example of the

personified moon imagery that might have been a source of influence not only for Shelley, but also for other English Romantic poets who were the admirers of the classical age:

[B]ut when the Moon divine from Heaven is gone  
Under the sea, her beams within abide,  
Till, bathing her bright limbs in ocean's tide,  
Clothing her form in garments glittering far,  
And having yoked to her immortal car  
The beam-invested steeds whose necks on high  
Curve back, she drives to a remoter sky  
A western Crescent, borne impetuously. (Homer 709)

By means of a partial blazon, Homer's hymn celebrates the feminine charms of the moon. Shelley's poem, in a similar fashion, reflects upon it as a woman of high status, resembling a convention when reading a Romantic poet's lines about the moon. Just as Wordsworth's poem with the title "To the Moon" calls the moon the "Queen of the stars"<sup>11</sup>, and Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" praises "the Queen-Moon on her throne"<sup>12</sup>, Shelley defines the solitude of it in noble terms, suggesting that she can have no friend worthy of her company. The moon as a royal female figure, therefore, appears to be a topos that made its way from the classical literature to the Romantic verse.

The feminization of the moon depends basically on the etymological roots of the word. Corresponding to 'Οὐρανία' in ancient Greek<sup>13</sup>, and 'Luna' in Latin<sup>14</sup>,

---

<sup>11</sup> See: Wordsworth, William. "To the Moon." *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth*. New York: Oxford UP, 1933. Print.

<sup>12</sup> See: Keats, John. Ode to a Nightingale. Keats' Poetical Works. London: Oxford UP, 1958. Print.

<sup>13</sup> See the online Ancient Greek-English dictionary:  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/definitionlookup?type=begin&q=moon&target=greek>

the moon is defined through a gendered comparison between itself and the masculine Sun. This lexical history, is grounded however, on a hermeneutics that depends not on the empirical knowledge about space, but on a fanciful conception of it. Rather than the factual and objective accounts on it, what informs the sexed definition of the moon is the practice of interpretation that justifies itself only through imagination. This irrational appreciation of the moon in Shelley's poem, and in those of Keats and Wordsworth, backs up the claims of the epistemological break between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries that divide the spheres of reason and imagination in sharp terms. One of many works that favor such segregation, a 2001 print book *Romanticism* edited by David Blayney Brown, pinpoints the dichotomy in question as follows:

For much of the eighteenth-century European cultural life had been dominated by an ideal of Enlightenment. It was believed that advances in knowledge, gained through objective, rational observation and experiment, would bring about sustained improvement in the human condition... But in the second half of the century it was increasingly realized that it denied huge areas of human experience. Like a great tide on the turn, the focus of philosophical enquiry began to change from the objective to the subjective, and a new generation began to explore the potential of emotion and instinct rather than the conscious mind... (9)

Although this particular quotation does not aim at imagination as an adversary of reason, it nevertheless posits the rationale of the Enlightenment age in opposition to the mindset of the following period. Romantic thinking, with a strong emphasis on its sentimental and spiritual qualities, is historicized through its antagonistic relation to the age of reason. In this train of thought it is confined to a specific temporal category molded under the discontinuity between the discourses of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. And while this presumed incongruity distances the reader's

---

<sup>14</sup> See the online Latin-English dictionary: <http://www.latindictionary.net/search/latin/luna>

reception of Romanticism from the Enlightenment tradition, it also preconditions him to read Romantic literature under the influence of a sever dichotomy.

Informed by such arguments that historically compartmentalize the successive discursive traditions, one may find nothing extraordinary in Shelley's "To the Moon" that can demystify the mystique. Yet, when the reader manages to break the spell of the categorical understanding of literature, he will realize how this short poem unsettles the historical distinction in question by ultimately blurring the binary vision of reason and imagination. For the vocabulary of Shelley's poem bears references to the moon not only as a stylized feminine entity born out of imagination, but also as a studied cosmic formation.

Shelley had a relatively solid background in the field of astronomy, since he was familiar with James Ferguson's *Astronomy*, whose "first major work, and his first commercial success, was *Astronomy Explained upon Sir Isaac Newton's Principles* (1756), which described Newtonian astronomy without mathematics" (Davenhall 183). And to ignite his zest for astronomical knowledge further, he had Dr. Adam Walker by his side at Syon House Academy, who "lectured on astronomy, magnetism, electricity, and how to use the telescope and microscope" and "also introduced Shelley to cosmological hypotheses, among them the plurality of co-existing worlds in the universe" (Kelley 19-20). Consequently, his personal intellectual practices, and education oblige the reader to approach the lunar imagery in his poem from a rather different angle, since it may have subtle references to the scientific aspect of Shelley's Romantic poetics.

While locating the moon 'among the stars that have a different birth', the poem seems to allude to the function and meaning of the moon for the Earth that are not identical with those of other orbs. Speculations about the distinguished place of the

moon with respect to its height, distance, and dynamics had been occupying the minds of the astronomers long before Shelley's time. Galileo, whose works and claims Newton meticulously followed, mentioned and discussed these arguments regarding the special status of the moon among other fixed stars in *his Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, written in the manner of a conversation among three speakers, hence, Plato's narrative technique. Sagredo, a well-educated man representing one of Galileo's dear friends in the text, allude to some of these scientific inquiries by arguing "[L]ater many detailed parallels were drawn between the earth and the moon. More comparisons were made with the moon than with other planets, perhaps from our having more and better sensible evidence about the former by reason of its lesser distance" (106). With its modest debates on the cosmic roles and position of the moon, Galileo's work helps us see the footsteps of astronomy, which Shelley might have traced in his literary productions. In this regard, Sagredo's statement urges us to have another look at the poem's emphasis on the difference between stars and the moon, taking it not as a metaphorical expression, but a covert reference to the scientific truth.

In the next line the moon's 'ever-changing' nature comes to the surface, likening it to a melancholic highborn lady. Similar to Penelope, who turns down all of her suitors for the sake of a reunion with her true match, the moon stands alone and displeased. Employing the words 'change' and 'constancy', the poem brings to the mind the conventional feminine depiction of the moon, which, however, can be interrupted via the straightforward meanings of the words themselves. Change, when stripped of its rich literary implications, signifies a usual quality of the moon widely known and accepted in Shelley's scientific circle, for it was already underlined much earlier by Galileo through Sagredo's words again:

For instance, if the moon is invariant, how would you have the sun or any other star act upon it? The action would doubtless have no more effect than an attempt to melt a large mass of gold by looking at it or by thinking about it. Besides, it seems to me that at such times as the celestial bodies are contributing to the generations and alterations on the earth, they too must be alterable. (Galileo 60)

Another word that fosters a play between the figurative and the literal uses of language in the poem is 'constancy'. Defined by the Oxford dictionary as "the quality of being faithful and dependable", constancy relates well to the traditional attributes of the female character, of which the moon appears to be emblematic in this case. If so, however, the poem contradicts itself by offering an image of the moon that is quite oxymoronic. How can it embody an identity 'ever-changing' and 'constant' at the same time? Shelley must have had some sources outside the literary history at this point, which comply with the imagery constructed in poem: an image of an altering heavenly body. And in order to grasp the probable scientific reference of the word, another look at Galileo's text is required:

[A]lthough astronomy has made great progress over the course of the centuries in investigating the arrangement and movements of the heavenly bodies, it has not thereby arrived at such a state that there are not many things still remaining undecided, and perhaps still more which remain unknown. It is likely that the first observers of the sky recognized nothing but a general motion of all the stars --the diurnal motion-- but I think it was not long before they discovered that the moon is inconstant about keeping company with the other stars. (455)

This explanation belongs to Salviati who represents Galileo himself in the text. Even though he speaks in a tone that seems to question rather than affirm, Salviati concludes that the moon's orbital dynamics differ from those of the stars. The simple scientific

fact that the moon revolves around the earth while the stars around the sun sheds light on the application of the word 'constancy' in "To the Moon". The moon is inconstant to the extent that its regular movement is unlike other planets and stars. And it is constant simply for the reason that its deviation has a pattern. It naturally cannot find 'an object worthy of its constancy', as reasonably stated in the poem, as a result of this cosmic dissimilarity. Thus it has an exceptional constancy rendering its ever-changing nature justifiable in scientific discourse, or revealing a 'madness that has a method in it' as put in the tragedy of Shakespeare's invariably variable character Hamlet.

All the astronomical information cited so far was accessible to Shelley and his circle, as Galileo's contributions to the field were of great importance for the scientists of the succeeding ages. Shelley, by means of the sources cited, must have undoubtedly equipped himself with the scientific knowledge quoted. His indebtedness to science in his representation of the stellar and lunar systems has been long confirmed by the scholars interested in the topic. Thomas A. Reisner, one of these critics, acknowledges the influence of Newton and Laplace on Shelley's astronomical imagery along with other explicit references to the Biblical sources (55). In his article *Shelley's Cosmological Sublime* Christopher Goulding draws a parallelism between the astronomical knowledge of Shelley, and the explorations and the writings of William Herschel in his reading of *Prometheus Unbound* (783). These scholarly works encourage the reader to be skeptical of the figurative use of language in Shelley's poetry, and trace the marks of the natural sciences by deciphering the literal, factual, and hence, scientific quality of language in his poem "To the Moon" as well.

Shelley's exercise of this theoretical familiarity with natural sciences in his poetry excites the reader who seeks a way out of the critical history of Romanticism



founded on binary oppositions. Contrary to the presupposed clash between sentiment and thought, spirituality and scientific objectivity, and reason and imagination, Shelley's choice of words in his verse narrows down the gap situated historically by the critics between centuries, by fusing the literal with the figurative, the empirical with the intuitional, and, most importantly, the scientific with the poetic. Synthesizing different discourses of different ages and disciplines, Shelley's poetry escapes the historical categorization that has been observed to be at work in a remarkable portion of the scholarship on Romanticism.

A similarly defiant gesture is detectable in Tarhan's translation of Shelley's poem, which problematizes the temporal classification applied to his Romanticism. Cutting loose from the original text, however, Tarhan's translation is more of a reinvention of "To the Moon" than a literal reproduction of it in Ottoman Turkish. As will be argued shortly, he experiments not only with the form but also with the content of Shelley's work:

Aya Hitap  
Benzin ne için soluktur, ey mah,  
Yorgun musun, olmadan, semada,  
Hake müteveccihen, piyade,  
Tenha ve garip, azim-i rah?  
Mevlidleri başka olduğuyçün,  
Bigane-eda nücüm iiçinde.

Ol ayna şebih kim bütün gün  
Rür hüzn durur, umum içinde,  
Ihlasına olmak üzere sani,  
Görmez de nişan-ı mihrribani. (qtd. in Esen 129)

Address to the Moon  
Why are you so pale, oh moon, Are you  
weary of being up in the sky,  
A wanderer wretched and alone

Firmly on the path to truth?  
Among disinterested stars

Practicing a different ritual.

A mirror to one who stands in public  
With a sincere countenance all day,  
And sees no signs of affection to match  
Her own sincerity of heart<sup>15</sup>.

To start with the minor deviations, while there are eight lines in “*To the Moon*,” the translated version is made up of ten. Unlike Shelley’s poem, which does not mention ‘the moon’ within its body, Tarhan’s text makes direct references to it. Listing these differences along with others, Nüket Esen suggests in her article *Abdulhak Hamid ve Shelley*<sup>16</sup> that Tarhan does not translate but adapts Shelley’s poem to his own culture. According to her, what Tarhan achieves is an example of localization rather than literal transference:

Hamid treats the focal point of the poem, the moon, quite differently from Shelley. His perception of the moon is shaped by his own culture, his own worldview, and his own sensibility. Abdulhak Hamid translates “constancy”, which Shelley uses to mean “stable, discerning”, as “ihlas” meaning “loyalty”, and acknowledges the moon as a divine being, which according to Hamid, cannot find anything to return for her pure love and faithfulness, nor the friendship and company she deserves. (130)

Tarhan’s word choice in his translation, as highlighted by Esen, seems to be determined by the influence of his culture, and converts the Western-Christian character of the original poem into an Eastern-Islamic one. Still, even more strikingly, the cultural impacts Esen speaks of in her analysis of the translation are not

---

<sup>15</sup> The reader may find my study of Tarhan’s translation through my own translation controversial. I shall note at this point that my reading relies not on the word-by-word analysis of Tarhan’s text, but its references to Arabi’s Sufism, which is not silenced or suppressed in the English version I offer.

<sup>16</sup> See the Appendix.

necessarily the ones that belonged to Tarhan's contemporary age. While importing a Western text into Eastern geography, Tarhan voyages far back in time, and revisits the philosophy and literature of the old Muslim figures. Esen points out this vital detail by revealing the role of Islamic tradition in the poet's translation<sup>17</sup>:

The moon is likened to a mirror in the translation, which is one of the images in Sufi philosophy. Gazali, Mevlana, Ibn Arabi and Ibn Haldun used the image of mirror as a philosophical metaphor in Islamic thought. In Hamid's translation, the moon, as a part of perfect nature, reflects the truth, the perfect, god, while Shelley's poem does not have any mirror. And Abdulkhak Hamid must have made a conscious choice to include a word [mirror] not included in the original poem. His purpose was to apply Islamic imagery, his native cultural images to Shelley's poem. (130-131)

Esen gives us yet another instance in which Tarhan resorts to Sufism, and this time he does so to appropriate a foreign literary product, and render it accessible to his own audience. The poet's familiarity and fascination with this branch of the tradition was discussed in Chapter Two, with specific references to the notion 'the unity of beings' associated most frequently with Ibn Arabi. By naming him among the Islamic figures who utilized rhetorical devices similar to those of Tarhan, Esen calls for a closer comparative look at Arabi's philosophy and Tarhan's poetry. While, however, Esen marks the bond between the two through the mirror-moon imagery, I will try to locate the operation of Arabi's thoughts themselves in Tarhan's translation.

It was not possible in the previous chapter to sketch a descriptive historical outline for Sufi philosophy owing to its heterogeneous practices and discourses. Nor is it a reasonable task here to define Arabi's Sufism in brief and general terms. The difficulty stems from "conceptual and linguistic ambiguity, and complex, overlapping

---

<sup>17</sup> See the Appendix.

and multileveled ideas in an esoteric formulation” suggests Ronald L. Nettler (Nettler 2). “Then, as with much of the literature medieval Islamic religious thought, there is here also an oral factor. The texts derived to some extent from an interweaving of discussion and writing” (2). So as to avoid reductive analyses, therefore, I will confine my approach to Arabi’s doctrines, and dwell only on his idea of ‘the One and the many’. Having touched on ‘Wahdat al- wujud’ earlier in this study, now I shall elaborate further on this most essential notion of Arabi by paying attention to what constitutes this radical unity. This particular idea of the Sufi philosopher entails an investigation of the meaning he imposed on, or inferred from the word ‘being’. And one can safely embark on this uncanny journey by following the guidance of Nettler:

Ibn Arabi’s conceptual foundation is the notion of ‘being’, *wujud* (sometimes rendered in English also as ‘existence’, depending on the context). *Wujud* serves Ibn Arabi as the main concept in the expression and formulation of his metaphysics; in this role, *wujud* has two faces, that of absolute being (*wujud mutlaq*) and that of conditional being (*wujud muqayyad*). *Wujud mutlaq* is the unitive principle, the fundamental undifferentiated oneness of things; it alone represents true being. The differentiated world of multiplicity (*wujud muqayyad*, conditional being) seems by contrast to indicate a ‘less real’ realm of being. (9)

The fundamental distinction between the two definitions of ‘being’ in Arabi’s philosophy, as articulated by Nettler, is of vital significance in the comprehension of his notion ‘unity of being’. His doctrine’s transcendental quality is rooted in this difference, for it defines the condition for ‘true being’ on such dualism. The ontological inequality between the conditional being and the absolute being Arabi’s Sufism sets forth is traceable in Tarhan’s translation. The poet’s text incorporates these two modes of being into its content basically through the contrast it offers between the moon and the others.

A signifier of perfection in the translation, the moon pertains to ‘the real realm’

in Arabi's terminology. Like a pilgrim who can follow only one particular path to receive the promised grace, the moon appears entirely immersed in its pursuit of 'truth'. The different route it takes in its search brings the whirling dervishes to the mind, whose trance through the circular movement result in a dialogue that cannot be heard by the ones around. Just as a dervish alienates himself from others in his ascendance to 'truth' while simultaneously staying with them, the moon assumes an authentic way of existing that keeps it detached from its closest environment. Flawless and sadly dignified, thus, the moon becomes the poetic representation of Arabi's *wujud mutlaq* in Tarhan's text. The stars float in an entirely different course, and remain inferior to the moon's majestic presence. Even the sadness it suffers, which rises from her distinguished status that necessitates a god-like singularity, functions as an ornament that promotes the moon's solemn elegance.

The community of stars, on the other hand, inhabits a realm in the translation alien to that of the moon. Like the audience watching the dance of the dervish, they seem to occupy different places while apparently sharing the same space with 'the absolute being'. Against the monolithic quality of the moon, stars assume a pluralist feature, which echoes Arabi's concept of *wujud muqayyad*. Stars gather 'in a world of multiplicity', which is not suggestive of a divine unity, but of a fragmented multitude of beings. Belonging to a community as such, they correspond to Arabi's 'conditional beings' in Tarhan's translation, bereft of a unifying principle that would situate them in 'the real realm' where their perfect opponent, the moon rests.

Tarhan's text attributes a symbolic function to the moon and stars, and brings them forth as the heads and tails of the coin. By doing so, it gives full credit to the double-layered understanding of 'being', and revives this particular aspect of Arabi's Sufism.

Though there is not any biographical or literary note that would attest to the bond between Tarhan and Arabi directly, the association one may make regarding the former's poetics and the latter's philosophy obtains accuracy when the accessibility of the Sufi thinker to the Ottoman society of letters is recalled. Dina Le Gall illustrates Arabi's defining role as a renowned intellectual figure in the cultural developments and productions of the Empire in her book *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700*, where she explores the emergence and existence of the the Naqshbandi tariqa in Ottoman geography. Her accounts elucidate the prominent status of Arabi especially in Ottoman learning:

Offering mystical insights and perceptions that were freshly articulated yet steeped in the Islamic mystical and intellectual tradition, as well as a massive technical vocabulary that had become virtually indispensable for engaging in any mystical discourse, his teaching not only permeated mysticism and poetry but were taught in madrasas and influenced the main body of scholarship. (Le Gall 124)

On the basis of the information supplied by Le Gall, what Arabi stands for in Tarhan's translation agrees well with Galileo's function in Shelley's poem. Just as Galileo forms the basis of any reference to astronomy in "To the Moon" without coming to the scene as the direct reference himself, Arabi presents himself as an un-cited source for the Sufi temperament of the poem's translation. With their implicit references to the seminal figures of the past, Tarhan and Shelley expand the temporal boundaries of their literary productions beyond their age. And similar to Shelley's recourse to the discourse of a different discipline of another age, Tarhan's return to his ancient Eastern roots signifies more than an aesthetic concern in the scope of this chapter.

His representation of nature in this text crystallizes Tarhan's homage to his Eastern past, and exposes the marriage of the modern and the traditional in his

poetics. The union of the old and the new in his translation of Shelley's poem urge the reader to reconsider the historical arguments attached so far to his poetry. Declaring him an avant-garde poet rebelling against his heritage, or the burden of the Ottoman literary tradition, Turkish scholarship often positioned his Romantic appreciation of nature on a historical break as such. Ali Erol, one of many scholars whose works on Tarhan's poetry are informed by the periodical understanding of literature, reinforces the gap between Tarhan and his predecessors in exactly this way<sup>18</sup>:

As is widely known, nature is among the subjects frequently utilized by the poets of the Classical era of our literature. Employed rather as a motif, or a descriptive trope in that period, nature took a new turn with Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan (1852-1937). Invoking nature in almost all of his works, Hamid introduced new perspectives in sentiment and in form to Turkish literature through his poems included in *Sahra*. (200)

Typical of the claims prevailing in the secondary literature on Tarhan's Romantic relation to nature, Erol's statement mirrors the conventional critical gesture that defines Ottoman poet's Romanticism in a temporal rupture between the past and the present. Still, this approach is challenged by the references to the old tradition of Sufi philosophy embedded in Tarhan's literary productions.

Shelley's aptitude for experimenting with scientific knowledge in his poem "To the Moon" and Tarhan's tendency to evoke Islamic mysticism in his translation, oppose together the temporal confinement that Romanticism suffers in the national and the international secondary literatures. While this particular wing of the scholarship on Romanticism promises to historicize Romanticism by delimitating its gist within a specific period of time, it dehistoricizes the literary phenomenon, overlooking its ties

---

<sup>18</sup> See the Appendix.

with the other eras. Walling its emergence and evolution off from the other modes of literature, science and empirical philosophy in Shelley's case and Sufism in Tarhan's, this scholarly perspective removes Romanticism from its rich historicity while assigning it narrow temporal definitions. This comparative reading of the poem and the translation of these poets targets the reductive literary historicism, bringing out the interaction of different discourses of different ages and disciplines in the making of their respective Romanticisms. With their peculiar representations of nature, informed by philosophies hardly compatible with the way Romanticism is defined both in the local and the continental milieux, Shelley and Tarhan call for a revision of the positioning of Romanticism in alternative historical terms.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Considering their attitudes towards the representation of nature, the present study begins by delineating the distance between Shelley and Tarhan. The first chapter's attempt to reveal the rational and empirical quality of Shelley's relation to nature was followed by the second's endeavor to disclose Islamic mysticism's influence on Tarhan's portrayal of nature. These distinct characteristics of their Romanticisms have lastly been covered in chapter 3, where I have discussed the significance of bringing their differences together so as to expand the territory of critical commentary on them. The thesis has followed an inductive strategy, moving from particular distinctions to general similarities between two poets, especially in terms of their scholarly appreciation.

I have argued that alternative ways of reading the Romantic poetics of Shelley and Tarhan enrich our understanding of Romanticism by problematizing the scholarly historical categorizations that reduce our ways of thinking about the poems. Shelley and Tarhan's own accounts contribute to this study because they support the reader who is willing to step outside monolithic historical classifications of Romanticism. Shelley, in his *Defense of Poetry*, instructs the reader with this intent by introducing and examining 'imagination' and 'reason' in an integrative manner:

Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to the imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance. (Shelley, *Defense of Poetry* 494)

Although Shelley warns that there is a contemporary bias toward the cultivation of science over the cultivation of the imagination in mid-nineteenth century England and Europe, “man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave,” he engages both in his poetics (Shelley, *Defense of Poetry* 516). Unlike many scholars biased against the coexistence of reason and imagination in their definition of Romanticism, Shelley knits both faculties of mind together, and finds each indispensable for the other. Shelley’s remarks defy the dualistic thinking that informs the secondary literature that is invested in a belief in the estrangement of the Enlightenment from Romanticism. Treating reason and imagination as the essential units of the same organism, Shelley recovers the gap situated by critics between discourses of the different ages. His recognition of a collocation, as such, can be seen as a harbinger of his aptness to welcome scientific empiricism, rational philosophy, and poetic imagination side by side in his works. Contrary to scholarly desire to divide discourses of different ages in order to come up with a sterile historical comprehension of Romanticism, Shelley does not *murder to dissect* but embraces the supposedly incompilant members in their togetherness.

Shelley’s open celebration of this unconventional fusion runs parallel to Tarhan’s respect for the Eastern literary tradition he expresses in his letters. In one of them written to *Servet-i Funun*, a prestigious literary magazine of his period, Tarhan lists Sadi, Hafiz, Firdevsi, Baki, Nabi, Nef’i, Nedim and Galib among the figures who left their marks on his works. His recognition of the eminence of these old poets goes as far as to confess his tendency to imitate their style (qtd in Koc, 90). Considering, however, his project to depart from the tradition and supersede it through novel means which I highlighted in the second chapter by quoting a quatrain that declares his modernist ambition in this regard, it was not always easy for Tarhan to come to terms

with the inevitable revival of the past in his literature. His acceptance of this influence was sometimes accompanied by an anxiety that reflected his discomfort with the *aporia* he suffered regarding the old and the new, East and West, and most important of them all, the traditional and the modern. Tarhan's failure to escape the silhouette of the past, accepted mildly at times, while lamented wildly at others, is also mentioned by Ozturk. Focusing on the letter written by Namık Kemal in response to one Tarhan sent him in which the poet shared with his literary mentor his frustration with his unwilling return to traditional rhetorical devices, Ozturk draws attention to Tarhan's awareness of the fact that his novel poetics is fortuitously interrupted by the past (75-76).

Be it through an anxiety of influence, or a modest negotiation, Tarhan's backward journey towards his Eastern ancestors of letters renders it unfair to read his poetry as the 'fruit' of a single period of Ottoman history. With his branches leaning towards tradition in numerous ways, Tarhan's Romanticism goes back and forth in time, making it impossible to root it only in a certain age. The hybrid characteristics of his poetics, which this study took into account by exploring its ties with early Sufi philosophy, resist a certain trend in Turkish scholarship that interprets his Romanticism only on the basis of the modernization and Westernization politics of the Ottoman Empire. Read with an eye open to this hybridity, his poems guide the reader in a critical voyage that might have multiple points of departure and arrival.

Both poets' prose writings seem to justify this study's pursuit of another critical-periodical look at Romanticism, since they lucidly allude to the hybrid history of their Romanticisms. As Shelley's sympathy towards the interrelation between reason and imagination foreshadows his textual references to the works of Locke, Newton, Darwin and Galileo, Tarhan's application of Arabi's Sufism to his verse

looks hardly exceptional when his embrace, deliberate or arbitrary, of the past Eastern heritage is not overlooked. The essays and letters of Shelley and Tarhan also encourage the revision of the scholarly historical location of Romanticism that has been problematized up to this point.

Studying Shelley and Tarhan together has shown that a particular wing of the scholarship on Romanticism invents definitions of the term based on periodical dualities such as the ones between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, Tradition and Modernism at the cost of ignoring its close ties with different disciplines of other ages. This critical trend prunes off the plant and fences it in to bar its growth beyond the calculated zone. Such an inhibitive method leads to a miniaturized depiction of Romanticism in the secondary literature, and uproots the term from its complex and rich history by simultaneously meaning to root it in a specific historical period. What this historical compartmentalization amounts to, as the Romanticisms of Shelley and Tarhan warns, is a dehistoricized appreciation of Romanticism. If one truly wishes to historicize the large term, he can achieve it only by being constantly on watch to catch the relation between different parts of history and geography.

As twenty-first century readers, we will continue to explore further the inexhaustible temporality of Romanticism by questioning the definitions, titles and classifications we have attached so far to this term. Inspired by Lovejoy's proposition, this study suggests that consciousness of Romanticism's irreducible plurality should lead us in our inquiries so that we can build up a secondary literature as rich in its historical approaches to Romanticisms as the term is in itself. Bringing Shelley and Tarhan together under one critical roof, I have tried in this thesis to contribute to the scholarship on Romanticism, both in local and international milieus, by investigating and challenging one of its most main stream attitudes. An anachronistic

positioning of the term might make way for a broader and fairer understanding of it,  
the study concludes.

## APPENDIX

Original texts of the translations from Turkish into English by the author of the thesis:

1- The quotation from Gündüz Akıncı's text on page 5:

Gerçi o da Divan şiirini okumuş ve onu sevmiştir; ama, onunla yetinmedi, ondan başka şeyler de söylemek istedi. Bu da ancak, Batı'nın penceresinden bakmakla oldu. *Belde* ve *Sahra*'nın gerçek değerini bugünle değil, yazdıkları devirle ölçmek gerekir; onlar, Batı düşüncesine yöneldiğimiz dönemin yemişleridir.

2- The quotation from Tarhan's poem on page 28:

Evet, tarz-ı kadim-i şi'ri bozduk, her ü merc ettik,  
Nedir şi'r-I hakiki sahfa-I irfana dercettik.  
Bu yolda nakd-i vakti cem-i kuvvet birle harcettik,  
Bize gelmişti zira meslek-i ecdad na-kafi.

3- The quotation from Ali İhsan Kolcu's text on page 29:

Tanzimat devrinde edebiyatımıza giren yeni temalardan biri de yeni tabiat görüşüdür. Eski şiirin statik ve içinde çeşitli çiçeklerin resmedildiği donuk bir tabloyu andıran tabiat anlayışı ile romantizmle birlikte ortaya çıkan dinamik ve her bakımdan bir gözlem gücünün ürünü olan yeni tabiat anlayışı eşya/harici alem ve tabiatın değişik halleri ile arasında kurduğu empresyonist ve ekspresyonist ilişki çerçevesinde edebiyatımıza renkli sayfalar ilave eder.

4- The quotation from Ali İhsan Kolcu's text on page 31:

Abdülhak Hamid'in romantizmi Divan şiirinin romantic tablolarından çıkmaz. Terminolojisi eski şiir ve tasavvufi lugat olmasına karşın onun ilham kaynağı Rousseau, Lamartine ve Chateaubriand'dan gelen Fransız romantizmidir. Bu yüzden romantic bir özne olarak kendi duygularını çevresiyle birleştiremeden ifade etmeye kalkar.

5- The quotation from Veysel Öztürk's text on page 32:

Klasik şiirde bir mekan olarak tabiat her zaman aşkın bir düzlemin yansıması

olarak şiire girer. Bu aşkın mekan ise cennettir. Tabiat için kullanılan bahçeler, ırmaklar da tek tek değil, bir bütün olarak başka bir mefhumu, görülmekeyen ama özellikle Kuran'daki tasvirlerin yardımıyla inşa edilen cennet mefhumuna bağlanır. Görünen dünyanın geçiciliği ile öte dünyanın ebediliği bir anda düşünüldüğünde, divan şairi için hakikatin görmekle ilgili olmadığı ortaya çıkar. Hakikat sahte olan bu dünya değil de öteki dünya ise, hakiki tabiat da ötle alemdeki aşkın cennet olacaktır.

6- The quotation from Nüket Esen's text on page 53:

Şiirin odak notası olan ayı Hamid, Shelley'den başka türlü görür. Ayı algılayışı kendi kültürüne, kendi dünya görüşüne, kendi duyarlılığına göredir. Abdülhak Hamit, Shelley'nin "sabit, dikkatli bakış" anlamında kullandığı "constancy" kelimesini "sadaqat" anlamıyla alıp "ihlas" olarak çevirmiş ve ayı yüce bir varlık olarak kabul ederek, onun, temiz sevgisine ve bağlılığına karşılık bulamadığını, hak ettiği dostluk ve sevgiyi göremediğini söylemektedir.

7- The quotation from Nüket Esen's text on page 54:

Çeviride ay aynaya benzetilir. Ayna tasavvuf felsefesinin imgelerinden biridir. İslam düşüncesinde Gazali, Mevlana, İbn Arabi ve İbn Haldun aynayı felsefi bir eğretileme olarak kullanmışlardır. Hamit'in çevirisinde, mükemmeli içeren tabiatın bir parçası olan ay bir ayna gibi gerçeği, mükemmler, Tanrı'yı yansıtmaktadır. Oysa, Shelley'nin şiirinde ayna yoktur. Abdülhak Hamit özgün şiirde olmayan bir kelimeyi şiire sokarken bilinçli olmalıdır. Bunu yapmaktaki gayesi, şiiri çevirirken İslami imgelere, kendi kültürünün imgelerine uygulamak istemesidir.

8- The quotation from Ali Erol's text on page 58:

Bilindiği üzere tabiat, Klasik edebiyatımızda şairler tarafından oldukça sık kullanılmış unsurlardandır. Ancak bu dönemde daha çok tasviri bir malzeme ya da bir motif olarak ele alınan tabiat, Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan (1852-1937) ile birlikte yeni bir çehre kazanmıştır. Hemen bütün eserlerinde bir şekilde tabiata yer vermiş olan Hamid, Sahra ile Türk edebiyatına hem şekil hem de duygular açısından yeni bir bakış açısı getirmiştir. (Erol 200)

## REFERENCES

- Akinci, Gunduz. *Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan: Hayati, Eserleri ve Sanati*. Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1945. Print.
- Barrel, Joseph. *Shelley and the Thought of His Time*. U.S.A.: Archon Books, 1967. Print.
- Bezirci, Asım. *Abdülhak Hamit*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Istanbul: Altın Kitaplar Basimevi, 1991. Print.
- Bloom, Harold. "Introduction". *Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. Print.
- Brown, Marshall. "Romanticism and Enlightenment". *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*. Ed. Stuart Curran. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. 25-31. Print.
- Davenhall, Clive. "James Ferguson: A Commemoration". *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*. 13.3. (2010). Web.
- Economides, Louise. "'Mont Blanc' and the Sublimity of Materiality". *Cultural Critique*. 65. Fall (2005): 87-114. Web. 20 Dec 2013.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Nature". *The Portable Emerson*. Ed. Carl bode and Malcolm Cowley. New York: Penguin, 1981. Print.
- Enginün, İnci. *Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan*. Ankara : Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1986. Print.
- Erol, Ali. "Tabiat Karsisinde İki Sair: Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan- Alikul Osmanov". *Journal of Turkish World Studies*. 5.2. (2005). Web.
- Esen, Nuket. "Abdülhak Hamid ve Shelley". *Modern Turk Edebiyati Uzerine Okumalar*. Istanbul: İletisim, 2012. Print.
- Ferber, Michael. *Romanticism: Avery Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford UP,



2010. Print.

Galilei, Galileo. *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems, Ptolemaic & Copernican*. Trans. Stillman Drake. London: University of California Press, 1967. Print.

Goulding, Christopher. "Shelley's Cosmological Sublime". *Review of English Studies*. 2006. Web.

Hitt, Christopher. "Shelley's Unwriting of 'Mont Blanc'". *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*. 47.2 (2005):139-166. Web. 20 Dec 2013.

Hogg, Thomas Jefferson. "Shelley at Oxford". *The Project Gutenberg*. Web. 17 Dec 2013.

Homer. "Hymn to the Moon". Trans. Percy Bysshe Shelley. *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. London: Oxford UP, 1947.

Kaplan, Mehmet. *Türk Edebiyatı Üzerinde Araştırmalar*. İstanbul : Dergâh Yayınları, 1976. Print.

Kara, İsmail. "Çağdaş Türk Düşüncesinde Bir Tenkit/Tasfiye Alanı Olarak Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar". *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler*. Ed. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005. Print.

Keach, William. "The Political Poet". *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 123-143. Print.

Kelley, Theresa. "Life and Biographies". *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.

King-Hele, Desmond. *Shelley, His Thought and Work*. Great Britain: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971. Print.

---. "Shelley and Science". *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*. 46.2 (1992): 253-265. Web. 9 Oct 2013.

- Koc, Murat. "Mektuplarda Edebiyat Dünyamız I Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan'ın Mektupları". *İlmi Araştırmalar*. 13 (2002). Web.
- Kolcu, Ali İhsan. *Abdülhak Hamid'in Poetikası*. Erzurum: Salkımsöğüt Yayınları., 2010. Print.
- Le Gall, Dina. *Culture Of Sufism: Naqshbandis in the Ottoman World, 1540-1700*. New York: University of New York Press, 2005. Print.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975. Print.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms". *PMLA*. 39. 2. (1924). Web.
- Nettler, Ronald L. *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'anic Prophets*. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2003. Print.
- Ozturk, Veysel. *The Romantic Roots of Turkish Poetry: Romantic Subjectivity in Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan's Poetry*. Dissertation, Department of Turkish Literature, Bogazici University, 2010.
- Phillips, Jerry, ed. *Romanticism and Transcendentalism*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2010. Print.
- Reisner, Thomas A. "Some Scientific Models for Shelley's Multitudinous Orb". *Keats-Shelley Journal*. 23 (1974). Web.
- Richardson, Alan. *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print.
- Romanticism*. Ed. David Blayney Brown. New York: Phaidon, 2001. Print.
- Ruma, Mustapha Bala. *A Study of English Romanticism and Sufism as Literary Movements*. Saarbrücken: Lampert, 2012. Print.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "To the Moon". *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy*

*Bysshe Shelley*. London: Oxford UP, 1947.

---. "Mont Blanc". *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*. Ed. Carlos Baker. New York: The Modern Library, 1951. 369- 373. Print.

---. "Defense of Poetry". *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. London: Oxford UP, 1947.

Silverstein, Brian. Sufism and Modernity in Turkey: "From the Authenticity of Experience to the Practice of Discipline". *Sufism and the 'Modern in Islam*. Ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007. Print.

Tanpınar, Ahmet Hamdi. *19. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları., 2006. Print.

Tarhan, Abdülhak Hamid. "Kürsi-I İstiğrak". *Bütün Şiirleri*. Ed. İnci Enginün. İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları., 1991. Print.

---. "The High Seat of Contemplation". *An Anthology of Turkish Literature*. Trans. Walter G. Andrews. Indiana: Cem Publishing, 2006. Print.

---. "Na-kafi". *Abdülhak Hamit*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar Basımevi, 1991. Print.

Wordsworth, William. *Selected Prose*. Ed. John O. Hayden. New York: Penguin, 1988. Print.