



THE BEGINNINGS OF SHAKESPEAREAN INFLUENCES ON OTTOMAN- TURKISH DRAMA: NAMIK KEMAL'S AKİF BEY (1874) AND GÜLNIHAL (1875)¹

OSMANLI-TÜRK TİYATROSUNDA SHAKESPEARE ETKİLERİ: NAMIK KEMAL'DEN AKİF BEY (1874) VE GÜLNIHAL (1875)

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Abstract

This article aims at an intertextual justification for the technical and thematic similarities between Namık Kemal's, Akif Bey (1874) and Gülnihal (1875), and William Shakespeare's Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and Tempest to illustrate Kemal's enriched texts and better understand his display of power relations, forms of defiance and non-submissiveness in his own society and hence, his aim for constructing his plays upon what he considered as the best of the Western, Shakespearean material. However, this particular attempt, no doubt signifying the beginnings of Shakespearean influence upon the Ottoman-Turkish drama in the late Nineteenth Century, came considerably late when compared to Europe starting as early as the end of the Seventeenth Century. The reason might be the Ottoman-Turkish tendency of seeing themselves as the centre of the world or their religious reservations or the danger of publicizing revolt against authority. Hence, when a fearless Kemal came forward and openly displayed his resistance against an authoritative rule in his first play, Vatan Yahut Silistre in 1873, he had his share of provoking riots, followed by his arrest and final deportation to Magusa. Few years later in Akif Bey (1874) and in Gülnihal (1875), both of which he wrote during this exile, Kemal only covertly revealed his negative opinions about an authoritarian rule. However, it did not save him from being arrested a few more times, and even die during another exile in Sakız Island. Lastly, it is possible to note that despite his ceaseless critical attitude, Kemal had showed his optimism and love of his country in Gülnihal by suggesting the possibility of a just rule without oppression, and in Akif Bey by displaying a constructive effort through the power of language, to alter the negative Shakespearean/European prejudices about the Ottoman-Turks and Turkish soldiers in general.

Öz

Bu makalenin amacı, Namık Kemal'in Akif Bey (1874) ve Gülnihal (1875) adlı oyunlarının, William Shakespeare'in Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth ve Fırtına'sıyla teknik, tema ve eleştirel bakış açılarıyla olan benzerliklerinin metinlerarasılık kavramı çerçevesinde gerekçelendirilerek incelenmesi ve bu itibarla Kemal'in, kendi toplumundaki güç ilişkilerini ve muhalefet, itaatsizlik gibi konuları anlatabilmek ve eleştirebilmek adına, kendi oyun metinlerini Batı'nın en iyisi olarak nitelendirdiği Shakespeare'le zenginleştirdiğini göstermektir. Ancak bu durum, hiç şüphesiz Shakespeare'in Ondokuzuncu yüzyıl Osmanlı Türk Tiyatrosu üzerindeki etkilerinin ilk örneklerinin ve varlığının ispatlanması anlamına gelse de, bu işe Onyedinci yüzyılın sonlarında başlayan Avrupa'ya kıyasla belli bir geç kalmışlığa da işaret etmektedir. Bunun da nedenleri arasında Osmanlı'nın kendisini dünyanın merkezi olarak görmesi olabileceği gibi, dini çekinceler veya otoriteye karşı başkaldırının sergilenmesi kaynaklı tehlikeleri de saymak mümkündür. Bütün bunlara karşın Namık Kemal otoriter rejimlere karşı olan duygularını ilk oyunu Vatan Yahut Silistre (1872)'de korkusuzca sergilemekten çekinmemiştir. Ancak oyunun sahnelenmesi sonrasında vatan sevgisiyle çoşan halk sokaklara çıktığı için Kemal, halkı kızdırmak suçuyla tutuklanarak Magosa'ya sürgüne gönderilmiştir. Daha sonra Shakespeare'den aldığı ilhamla sürgündeyken kaleme aldığı Akif Bey (1874) ve Gülnihal (1875)'de üstü kapalı olarak ifade ettiği eleştirileri ise onun ne birkaç sefer daha hapse girmesine, ne de tekrar sürgün edilmesine engel olabilmıştır; ki ölümü bile Sakız adasında sürgündeyken gerçekleşmiştir. Son olarak, Kemal'in kendi ülkesindeki mevcut otoriter devlet yönetimine karşı yaptığı tüm eleştirilere rağmen, ümidini hiç kaybetmeyip bunu vatanseverliği ile harmanlayarak yine de vurguladığını söylemek mümkündür: Gülnihal'de baskıdan uzak ve adil bir yönetimin mümkün olabileceğinden söz ederken, Akif Bey'de ise dilin gücüne başvurmak yoluyla, Shakespeare'in/Avrupa'nın o bilindik olumsuz Osmanlı Türkü ve Türk askeri imajını değiştirme gayreti içerisinde olduğunu söylemek mümkündür.

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From the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, Shakespeare began to be translated, staged and appreciated in almost all parts of the European world, but the Ottoman Empire. A major reason for this delay could lay in the Ottoman tendency of seeing itself as the centre of the world or their religious reservations that prevented them from being interested in other cultures (Turhan 49). They believed that they had nothing to fear or learn from what they used to call “the Frankish Europe”.² Yet with the Tanzimat Reform Movement³ of 1839, the absolutist powers of the Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid were limited in favour of his subjects. Moreover, there began a restructuring process during which the Ottoman-Turkish society turned its face towards the West for modernisation and renewal.

Hence, several men of letters came up writing plays in the Western style. That meant, for instance, a written text of drama, because so far, the traditional Ottoman-Turkish theater had been improvisational. “Shadow Theater” with its stereotypes such as Karagöz and Hacivat or “Tuluat Theater” with Kavuklu and Pişekar were acted out through improvisations. Hence, İbrahim Şinasi’s (1826-1871) *A Poet’s Marriage* (1859, 1860)⁴, a comedy of manners appeared as the first play in Ottoman-Turkish theater written in the Western style: that is, for the first time, there was a written text. Originally composed of two acts, the play was reduced to one act when published. Hence, with Şinasi’s play, the Ottoman-Turkish public was introduced to a written text which presented a story with a proper beginning, a middle and an ending. Moreover, characters were portrayed as more than types who acted within a certain logic through an action that developed in a cause-and-effect relationship.

Following the footsteps of Şinasi, Namık Kemal (1840-1888) wrote plays also in the Western style yet one of his additional aims in life was to persuade and lead his disciples as well as friends to follow the footsteps of Shakespeare like he himself did. Because for him, as well as for the rest of the world, Shakespeare was, indeed, a great writer. In a letter dated around 1868 which he wrote to Reşad bey, a

² Vahit Turhan makes a note of the fact that during his excursions to the West, even the well-known 17th century Turkish traveller, Evliya Çelebi “shows an avid interest in everything there except their language and literature” and that the “early English writings on Turks [... cover similarly] all aspects of the Turkish life, except [... for Turkish] language and literature” (50).

³ Reform Bill or New Order or a “*Turkish Renaissance*” as Turhan puts it (51).

⁴ Even though Sultan Abdülmecid is said to have ordered the writing of the play to be staged at Dolmabahçe Palace Theatre, there exists no records of its being staged there (Aydın, *Şinasi’nin Şair Evlenmesi* 138-139).

colleague⁵ , Kemal says, “*My dear Reşad,[...] show a little patience—let me send you a Shakespeare [play] so that whoever sees [i.e. reads] it, could admire it*” (“Londra Sokaklarında”).⁶

In this very manner, he was even believed to have encouraged two of his friends, formerly disciples, to write plays to introduce Shakespeare to the Ottoman-Turkish public. The first of these names was Ebüzziya Tevfik (1849-1913), who had written *Ecel-i Kaza/ Fatal Accident* (1872) as a typical ‘Romeo and Juliet story’ in which the protagonist also displayed pangs of hesitation like Hamlet; and this is noteworthy because Tevfik had done these two years before Kemal had taken his very own advice to introduce Shakespeare.

In another of his letters, we learn about the identity of the second person that Kemal encouragingly “forced” to introduce Shakespeare to Ottoman-Turkish culture. In this particular letter, Kemal expresses his admiration of Shakespeare almost through a scolding of his disciple/ friend Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan (1852-1937) which reads as “*Why haven’t you developed any interest in Shakespeare? I think you would have had contributed a great deal to our literature only if you were to introduce one of his quality plays to our language [and culture] through translation or adaptation*” (qtd. in Mardin 113).⁷ Tarhan took this advice and wrote *Finten* (1918), his one and only play written under Shakespeare’s influence and yet quite some time after Namık Kemal’s death. In *Finten* there appears an Othello-like Davalaciro who accuses his lover, Finten, of unfaithfulness, yet perhaps more justly than it were in *Othello*, for the latter is portrayed almost like a Lady Macbeth, capable of manipulation and perhaps also mischief.

Now in terms of introducing Shakespeare to the Ottoman-Turkish public, it is also possible to refer to the Turkish translations of the works of the great bard. For instance, the very first Shakespeare translation (which was of *Othello*) came quite later in the year 1878 and was undertaken by Hasan Bedreddin and Mehmet Rifat⁸.

⁵ One of the writers, alongside Namık Kemal, of the first political humour magazine of the 1870s called *Diyojen*, which was closed down and reopened several times because of censorship (Aydoğan 16).

⁶ All translations belong to the writer of this article.

⁷ About translating dramatic works into Turkish, Kemal was choosy. He thought that “*only the plays that can teach our public something useful should be translated*” but not the ones that carry no aim (Şahin 226).

Then in the year 1881, even though Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) was said to have loved Shakespeare (Halman 13), Abdullah Cevdet could choose only three passages from the beginning of *Hamlet* because of censorship about a king being murdered (Şengel 2, 3).⁹ The scope of these abridged translations were very much limited until about the beginnings of the 20th century; however, Namık Kemal had definitely not waited for these translations to appear in Turkish in order to develop his admiration of the great bard, because he already had a taste of Shakespeare's plays through first-hand knowledge during his stay in London.¹⁰ In an Ottoman society almost with no tradition of playwriting and performing in the Western style, Namık Kemal, among others, had taken a great risk and responsibility by actualising this and writing plays (apart from being a poet, novelist and reporter) and using his art as a medium to criticise the ills of his society. The Western dramatic tradition was, indeed, a necessity for Kemal, because as the father of Turkish literary and dramatic criticism in the Ottoman Empire, he believed that "Improvisational *Tuluat* Theater" aimed at entertainment only through farce; "[for Kemal, even though...the] primary aim should [also] be entertainment, it should ... follow that it be beneficial for the society" (Şahin 226). For Kemal, language and literature were means of great power if used correctly and appropriately (Şahin 230; Ünsal 114). "In civilised countries, [Kemal wrote,] the development of humanistic values and morals are very much dependent upon theatre" (Şahin 227). And for realising his ideals in life through literature and drama, Kemal suffered a great deal and was imprisoned and exiled to different places for many years, and unfortunately his life ended also in exile on Sakız Island in the Aegean Sea in 1888.

⁸ Interestingly enough, from a French translation by Jean François Ducis ("*Turkey and Shakespeare*") under Abdülhamit II (1876-1909).

⁹ The first full translation of *Hamlet* into Turkish was to be published in Cairo, Egypt for the first time in the year 1908-09 also by Abdullah Cevdet. However, it was long after Namık Kemal's death that the work was actually published in İstanbul (Turhan 56).

¹⁰ About Namık Kemal's knowledge of Shakespeare, Vahit Turhan (1965:54) makes a reference to Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar who claim that Kemal had learnt about drama in the western style and about Shakespeare through the 1864 publication of Victor Hugo's article of about 300 pages on Shakespeare, which Hugo wrote, in fact, as an introduction to his son's translations of Shakespeare's plays into French. Turhan's claim might as well be true here to have encouraged Kemal to look deeper into the great bard's works and appreciate them as such. In this particular work, Hugo talks about *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *King Lear* and interestingly enough, almost a touch of each of these plays can be felt in Namık Kemal's *Akif Bey* and *Gülnehal*. Yet also according to the records of plays of Shakespeare performed in London during Namık Kemal's stay there, that is, between the years 1868-70, *Othello* was staged the most frequently (Norwood 30), and Namık Kemal must have seen at least once, the production of this particular play personally so as to have written the letters of appreciation to his colleagues and family.

Despite his early appreciation of Shakespeare's dramatic art, Namık Kemal wrote his *Akif Bey* (1874) and *Gülnehal* (1875) quite later in his life time during his exile years in Magusa, Cyprus, and it is in fact through those two plays that Shakespeare's influence or a retelling/ "recycling" (Alfaro 278; Zengin 300) of Shakespeare's drama by Namık Kemal is quite evident. Here, in order to elaborate on this particular recycled influence in his noted two plays, an intertextual¹¹ approach will be employed by looking at the implicit and explicit allusions, repetitions, transformations of the Shakespearean texts so as to signify the multiple ways¹² in which Kemal's texts are interconnected to Shakespeare's and that there is, indeed, a dialogue¹³ between their artistic and cultural artefacts within a historical/cultural context that reveals itself on technical and thematic levels, and hence renders Kemal's works more relatable for the Ottoman-Turkish audiences who, then, sought after Westernization.

¹¹ "Intertextuality" is a term which was coined by the Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva who had a crucial role in theorizing it. She explained that texts of literature are constructed from pre-existent texts and that meaning is extracted through the discovery of the relationship between the writer, the text, the reader and the social and historical phenomena that surrounds them. As part of the post-structuralist philosophy, her intertextuality further underlined the unstable nature of language and meaning leading texts to have multiple meanings. Now, as "intertextuality" is very extensive a theory, it is necessary here to refer to the works of several writers for further details as far as they are either covered or inspired from within the scope of this article: See for instance, Julia Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue and Novel" in *The Kristeva Reader: Julia Kristeva*. (Ed. Toril Moi) New York: Colombia University Press, 1986, 34-61; F. Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*. (Eds. Charles Bally et.al.) (Trans. Wade Baskin) New York: Philosophical Library, 1959; Michael Holquist's "Answering as Authoring: Mikhail Bakhtin's Trans-Linguistics" in *Critical Inquiry*, 10, 2 (1983): 307-319; Heinrich F. Platt's "Intertextualities" in *Intertextuality*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991, 3-29; Roland Barthes' "Theory of the Text" in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*. (Ed. Robert Young). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987, 31-47, etc.

¹² According to Roland Barthes' interpretation of "intertextuality", "a text is...a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (146).

¹³ Almost reminiscent of the Bakhtinian dialogism "as an open-ended play between the text of the subject and the text of the addressee" (Kristeva 34) or "as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context....For Bakhtin, the text is "an absorption of and a reply to another text" (39).

Akif Bey borrows mostly from *Othello* and *The Tempest*¹⁴ whereas *Gülnihal*, which is considered to be a more successful play, borrows mainly from *Othello*, and *Hamlet*¹⁵ and also¹⁶ from *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*. Yet, although in these two plays Kemal defends both his country and traditions against the Western prejudices, he also acts as a teacher to show his own people about the positive aspects of Western mentality and civilization which he believes that they should adopt. And to do this, he does not hesitate to adapt Shakespeare's plays into Ottoman-Turkish culture and by making changes accordingly, he seems to have discovered and conducted new perspectives and possibilities to bring forth a related understanding of both Shakespeare's and of his own works.

First of all, like in all Shakespearean plays, the story in *Akif Bey* develops in the Aristotelian five-act technique¹⁷, and with a rejection of the three unities except for the unity of action.¹⁸ The story of Kemal's play is about Dilruba's betrayal of her husband, Akif, a naval officer, after he goes away on a campaign with the Ottoman Navy. Spreading the news that Akif was killed during a fight with the enemy, Dilruba arranges a marriage ceremony at Akif's house with another suitor, Esat. Nevertheless, Akif appears on the same night and is ignorantly happy that his wife has invited musicians and is giving a party. When Akif's father Kaptan tells Akif about what is going on, Akif divorces his wife¹⁹ and leaves. Then in order to prevent Akif from coming back and killing Dilruba as the traditions require, Akif's father Kaptan secretly enters the house, but is not able to prevent his son from becoming a murderer, yet not of Dilruba, but of her allegedly new husband, Esat. Nevertheless, Esat stabs and kills Akif, too. Then as Dilruba is about to escape,

¹⁴ Here, the noted influence is limited to the gullibility of King Prospero who lives confined on an island for years because of trusting his evil brother, is referred to.

¹⁵ Namık Kemal considers *Macbeth* to be a more successful play compared to *Hamlet* through his following comment: "*Shakespeare's Hamlet is a brilliantly written play; yet not one of the best of its kind. Literary critics of our society do not unanimously agree that Macbeth is a more successful play*" (Tansel 466-467).

¹⁶ Here, the noted influence is limited to the resemblance character portrayals: *Gülnihal* to *Lady Macbeth* and *Muhtar* to *Duke/King Prospero*.

¹⁷ Shakespeare's technical as well as thematic reliance on the classical literary and non-literary sources is a well-known fact that can also indicate an intertextual use of previously written/chronicled material by the "great bard", as he did in *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, plays that cover the scope of this article.

¹⁸ The plot of *Akif Bey* has a unified story which is complete in itself.

¹⁹ According to the *sharia* law, Ottoman-Turkish men were then given the right to divorce their wives instantly, without a hearing at court.

most probably to find herself a new husband, and a new fortune (which we understand from her trying her chances with Akif's father Kaptan, right at that chaotic moment), Kaptan kills her.

Technically speaking, in *Akif Bey* and in *Othello*, the main plots are constructed upon a single dramatic irony. That is, Namık Kemal's Akif Bey believes that his wife Dilruba is an honest, faithful woman who truly loves him, but the audience knows that it is otherwise, whereas Shakespeare's Othello believes that his wife Desdemona is a dishonest, unfaithful woman who has never truly loved him and yet the audience knows it to be otherwise as well. Moreover, in both the plays, the plot reaches to a climactic point in Act III, typically Shakespearean, where both of the characters decide to kill their wives. And in the end they both become murderers and they both die.

For character portrayal and development, Kemal had made allusions to *Othello*. For instance, Dilruba is like a she-devil who seems—as in the following quotation—as if sharing in an intertextual dialogue, her pretence and feelings of hatred towards Akif Bey, with Iago, the he-devil in Shakespeare's play, because it would best be understood by him. At that moment where Dilruba's true character is revealed, the soliloquy reads as follows:

The man is truly insane! One can almost be made into believing in the truth of a fairy tale like Ferhat and Şirin's love²⁰[...] Methought [...] the day will come that we will be like true husbands and wives. Yet we are like lovers still [...] One [that is, Dilruba herself] acts strangely because of the shame of trying to imitate compassion. I don't know what I would have done if he didn't insist that I should not weep for his leave [...] (I.iv.47).²¹

²⁰ Similar to the story of Romeo and Juliet, Namık Kemal refers here, undoubtedly, to a more relevant or culturally well-known Turkish folk-tale in which there are also two hopeless and desperate lovers that commit suicide because of being misinformed about each other's death.

²¹ All references hereafter will be to Namık Kemal's *Akif Bey*. 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1972.) In case of interest, the original texts will henceforward be provided in footnotes:

Bu adam gerçekten delil! İnsanın Ferhat Şirin masalına inanacağı geliyor [...] Ben bir gün gelir adeta karı-koca oluruz, [...] zannettim. Biz ise hala aşık maşuk [...] İnsan utanıyor da muhabbet göstermek için ne tuhaf taklitler yapıyor. Lakin gittiği vakit ağlama diye üstüme varmasaydı, bilmem ne yapacaktım?

In a similar well-known fashion, Iago shows his true face, and again in a physically non-existent intertextual dialogue, Iago comforts Dilruba about the necessity of appearances and that like her, he is only pretending as a true-friend of Othello, affecting compassion out of necessity: *“Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains, / Yet, for necessity of present life, / I must show out a flag and sign of love, / Which is indeed but a sign”* (I.i.13).²²

Kemal’s portrayal of his protagonist Akif once more reminds us of Shakespeare’s protagonist Othello (Kılıçkaya 203-204), yet with Kemal altering Akif a little in accordance with his own nationalistic feelings and placing him in an Ottoman-Turkish cultural context. So, although both Akif Bey and Othello are described as naval officers of great skill and might who fight for the well-being of their countries, we hear from Othello the well-known pejorative use of the phrase, *“turning Turk”* (II.ii.75) to refer to people acting like barbarians, Muslims or simply like the “enemy”. Upon such a prejudiced comment coming from Shakespeare, Kemal cannot remain silent: through the use of an intertextual pastiche or dialogue with the Shakespearean text, he uses the noun “Turk” in his own play to correct, and thus re-establish its use in a positive sense: So, when Othello asks: *“Are we turn’d Turks, and to ourselves do that/ Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?”* (II.iii.75), Kemal gives the following answer as if to allude to the Europeans in the person of Shakespeare:

I saw the cannon balls dropping near me every now and then but instead of hitting me, they almost went walking shyly around me as if they were the enemy who had encountered a single Turk armed with a simple sword (III.V.87).²³

Displaying a similar, but perhaps a universal type of gullibility, these mighty commanders can neither understand the true nature of their wives nor of their friends. A cunning Iago-like Dilruba explains this situation very well when she says in an aside: *“We have been together for seven months, [and Akif] could not understand anything from my behaviour. [...] I am amazed how a man takes every lie as truth for he himself is an honest man”* (I.iv.47).²⁴ More skilfully put by

²² All references hereafter will be to William Shakespeare’s *Othello*. St. Paul, Minnesota: ECM/Paradigm Publishing, 2005.

²³ *“Yanıma dakikada bir gülle düşerdi de, sanki eli kılıçlı bir Türk’e rast gelmiş düşman gibi çekine çekine etrafımda dolaşırdı, bir tarafıma dokunmazdı.”*

Shakespeare, Othello declares his own gullibility through the ironical suggestions in his following words right after his marriage, and amazingly enough, it is not even a full sentence: “*My life upon [...Desdemona’s] faith! Honest Iago*” (I.iii.37).

As for the use of language in *Akif Bey*, it is perhaps not surprising to see that there is only Dilruba uttering sentences of rhetorical nature, though not as developed as the rhetorical strategies of her devilish master Iago. However, her sharp turns are good enough for a naive man like Akif to immediately trust her:

AKİF. Why should you shed tears when I am gone? [...] Oh how I wish you would be with me on the sea, at least for one time, to witness my glory; how I stand against violent weather and sea, and how you would watch me! [...]

DİLRÜBA. No [...] I won’t have it!

AKİF. What kind of a reaction is that? Don’t you want to be with me?

DİLRÜBA, *pulling herself together*. Are you asking me? What would I want more in this world than just to be with you? What else could I wish, could I desire? I wouldn’t want to see your glory and grandeur at sea, because then you may think that ‘Dilruba loves me only for my rank and my prosperity’.

AKİF. My dear child, don’t I see through your heart? Don’t I understand anything from your behaviour? [...] Come, come my dear master-mistress, let’s say our farewells”. (I.iii. 44)²⁵

Similarly, a more cunning and skilful Iago constructs a blind trust in Othello by invoking emotions of indignity and guilt in him, and consequently makes him submit when he rhetorically asks, “*Are you a man? have you a soul [...]?*” (3.3.115). Here, Iago skilfully puts forth these questions to deflect Othello's anger and lead him towards actions of seemingly his own decisions, but similar to a Dilruba

²⁴ “*Yedi aydır birlikteyiz, tavrımdan bir şey anlayamadı [...] Şaşarım, bir adam doğru olunca her yalanı nasıl da doğru zanneder.*”

²⁵ AKİF. Arkamdan niçin gözyaşı dökceksin? [...] Ah bir kerecik birlikte bulunsan da denizde nasıl saltanat sürüyorum; havanın, sunun şiddetine nasıl karşı duruyorum, seyretsen! [...]

DİLRUBA. Yok [...] istemem!

AKİF. O nasıl lakırdı? Benimle birlikte bulunmayı mı istemiyorsun?

DİLRUBA, kendini toplayarak, Ben mi? ... Sizinle birlikte bulunmayı istemem de, dünyada ne isterim? Benim başka ne emelim ne muradım olabilir? Gemideki saltanatınızı, büyüklüğünüzü görmek istemem, sonra belki ‘Beni Dilruba mesnedim için, ikbalim için seviyor’ dersiniz.

AKİF. Çocuk, ben senin gönlünü bilmez miyim? Ben senin halini anlamıyor muyum? [...] Gel, gel efendiciğim, seninle veda edelim.

manipulating Akif Bey, everything that Othello does is actually the result of Iago's manipulations. Here one possible explanation for Kemal's intertextual adaptation of a gullible Othello into an Akif bey with similar behaviour and mentality on face of evil, can be his effort to show the Ottoman-Turkish public that even rulers of high rank could be tricked into misjudgements as result of which injustice may take over.

Namik Kemal's allusion to the well-known "Willow-song" of Desdemona through the simple Turkish folk-song that is played at Akif Bey's mansion in honour of Dilruba's marriage to another man, does not seem to be there without reason either. Between the two songs that almost function as choruses, Kemal seems to formulate an intertextual dialogue in which to Desdemona's submission to an untimely death²⁶, he objects, and shows Desdemona the possibility of finding new lovers, instead of dying for unworthy ones. Hence, in her "Willow song", when Desdemona sings:

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree [...]

Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,

Sing willow, willow, willow: [...]

Her salt tears fell from her and soften'd the stones; [...]

Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve,

.....

He was borne to be fair, I to die for his love.

Sing willow, willow, willow (4.3.171-73)²⁷

the musicians at Akif's mansion sing "back as if in reply" quite a different song: *'Don't you ever believe in her words / Thinking that her heart is only yours / No, not even when her passion shows / Never can you rely on a beloved / The girl can get many a beloved'* (III.iii.81).²⁸

²⁶ See the next footnote.

²⁷ In their edition of Shakespeare's Othello, Barbara A. Mowat et. al. state that Willow is symbolic of weeping and death (170).

²⁸ Even though the original song is written in octosyllabic meter, my translation is a combination of octosyllabic and decasyllabic metre. The original text is as follows: "*Sakın sözüne inanma / Gönlü bir sendedir sanma / Yüz verirse de aldanma / Yara itimat olunmaz / Kıza aşık mı bulunmaz.*"

Namık Kemal's five-act play *Gülnihal* or *Raz-ı Dil* (Secret of the Heart) was never put on stage because of riots provoked by the production of *Vatan Yahut Silistre* (Homeland or Silistre) in 1873, yet technically speaking, it is considered to be his most successful play. In the main plot, Kaplan Paşa, the governor of one of the Ottoman *sanjaks*²⁹ in Rumelia has a notorious reputation for his despotic rule, and for that reason the public hates him. Yet the same public loves this governor's cousin Muhtar Bey who is an honest and brave man. Nevertheless, both the cousins are in love with their niece İsmet—who is actually in love with Muhtar—and this makes things between the two men go bad. So when Muhtar goes to the palace to see İsmet, a jealous Paşa fabricates a reason to put him in prison. In order to save Muhtar, İsmet's governess Gülnihal persuades her to get engaged to the Paşa. Yet, as Muhtar believes this engagement to be real, he does not want to get out of prison. Hence, Gülnihal arranges Zülfikar to save Muhtar from prison, and in return for his favour she promises to marry him. Zülfikar saves Muhtar also because he is already an enemy of the Paşa who had killed his brother in the past. After getting out of prison, Muhtar goes to the Governor of the Province and tells him how the Paşa has been ruling his sanjak in an unjust manner. The Governor then gives him a written order for the execution of the Paşa with Muhtar to replace him. Then, together with his men Muhtar goes to the Paşa's palace and overhears that İsmet has consented to the engagement only to save him. So Muhtar saves İsmet from the hands of the Paşa just before their marriage takes place. Then the Paşa is executed immediately by Zülfikar for having also killed Gülnihal who had been trying to delay İsmet's marriage. Showing his regret for the way he treated and said unpleasant things to İsmet, Muhtar is eventually forgiven by her and then they live happily ever after with Muhtar, later also elected, as the new and righteous Governor of the *sanjak*.

In *Gülnihal* we have the five-act plot structure again, yet when compared to *Akif Bey* it is more complicated for having also sub-plots and therefore, the unity of action in the classical Shakespearean style³⁰ is not quite achieved. Curiously enough, the play's action is based on the manipulations of the great rhetorician

²⁹ An Ottoman province.

³⁰ In his *Preface* to his 1765 edition of Shakespeare's plays, Dr Johnson, for instance, refers to the use of "unity of action" by Shakespeare and defends him by saying that since Shakespeare had observed and applied in his plays the vital principle of "unity of action", his failure to observe the other two unities of "time" and "place" can, in a way, be excused (Abrams et. al. 2729-2734).

Gülnihal who, with no ambition for power but like a Lady Macbeth, and who, with no intentional evil but like an Iago, acts unwaveringly till the end, and manipulates everybody's actions in the way she plans them. As can be seen in the following scene, Gülnihal manages to persuade a young girl, İsmet, to get engaged to the Paşa, a man she hates, even though she is very much in love with another man called Muhtar:

GÜLNİHAL. You have sacrificed Muhtar to your rage! Do you see now that you don't love him [?] No need for insane behaviour [...?] Accept everything as I tell you! [...] for the sake of Muhtar's head, for the sake of your mother's soul [...] Do you think that a gallant like Muhtar could love you?

İSMET. Ahh!

GÜLNİHAL. Not everybody is as childish as you are [...]

No need to be shy or be embarrassed. Today, [...] you are getting engaged. Today!

İSMET. Oh, my dear nurse. [...]

GÜLNİHAL: Very well then. I do forgive you. I will make the Paşa forgive you as well. [...]

İSMET, *sadly*. As you wish (Namık Kemal, *Gülnihal* II. viii. 53-54).³¹

As result of this engagement, which Muhtar misinterprets, it seems that Namık Kemal gets carried away with his creation, and significantly adorns his character, like Hamlet, with reluctance to take revenge from the Paşa. Hence, highlighting also the suspense in the play like Shakespeare had done, Namık Kemal transforms Hamlet for a short while, into a Muhtar character and converses with the Ottoman-Turkish audience to say that although taking revenge in such matters is culturally imposed upon persons, it is a detestable concept, and that it does not bring back the lost happiness:

³¹ GÜLNİHAL. Muhtar Bey'i öfkene feda ettin! Onu gerçekten sevmediğini şimdi anlıyorsun ya [...] Deliliğe gerek yok [...] Muhtar'ın başı için, annenin ruhu için,[...] ne söylersem kabul et! [...] Muhtar çapkını sanki seni seviyor mu? [...]

İSMET. Ahh!

GÜLNİHAL. Herkes senin gibi çocuk değil [...] Utanmanın sıkılmanın gereği yok. Bugün nişanlanacaksın, bugün!

İSMET. Dadıcığım [...]

GÜLNİHAL. Pekala, pekala! Ben kusuruna bakmıyorum. Suçunu Paşa'ya da affettiririm. [...]

İSMET, *hüzünlü hüzünlü*. Sen bilirsin.

MUHTAR BEY. Revenge [...] How unlikeable, [...] how disgusting a word. What use will it bring to take revenge? Will it bring back the happiness once lost? [...] Ooh, I am not meant for this world [...] I don't love anybody, and I don't like hurting anybody [...] Ooh İsmet! İsmet! You don't even know what you have done! [...] You will haunt me in my grave like hatred, like revenge! I fear that you will find me in afterlife, too (IV.v-vi.110-115).³²

Through the well-known Shakespearean graveyard setting where Hamlet holds a skull in his hand and philosophises about life that from one minute to the other you may die and disappear regardless of rank or class, Kemal shows his consent to the argument once more through his protagonist Muhtar. Hence, as can be seen in the following two scenes, it appears as if the two protagonists had arrived at an intertextual agreement that since everybody dies sooner or later, there is no reason to be scared of death:

HAMLET: Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, ... Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay (V.i.251)

MUHTAR BEY, *laying upon his own family grave*. It fits exactly! Now that I am laying on it, who knows that in two hours' time I'm not going to be under it? [...] Everybody knows that nobody lives eternally, but they don't believe that they, too, will die. I wish life would offer something to fear death [...] What madness! [...] If the essence of flesh is [...] made of earth, why fear to become a part of it? [...] Who knows for what reason this earth as graveyard is created? [...] Everybody is scared of death, but nobody is scared to live though life that ends in death (IV.vi.113-14).³³

³² MUHTAR BEY. İntikam...Ne sevilmaz söz, ne iğrenç laf! İntikam alınacak da ne olacak? Kaybolan mutluluk geri mi gelecek? [...] Ah, ben bu dünya için yaratılmamışım. Kimseyi de sevmiyorum, kimsenin canını yakmayı da sevmiyorum! [...] Ah, İsmet! İsmet! Ne yaptığını sen de bilmezsin! [...] Hayalin insanı kin gibi, intikam gibi mezarında bile gelip buluyor! Korkarım beni ahirette de rahat bırakmayacaksın.

³³ MUHTAR BEY, *kendi mezarının üstüne yatarak*. Tam da benim boyum kadar! Şimdi üstümde [sic.] yatıyorum, iki saat sonra altında yatmayacağımı kim bilir? [...] Herkes kimsenin sağ kalmadığını bilir de, kendinin öleceğine inanmak istemez. Bari, yaşamakta ölümden korkmaya değer bir şey olsa [...] Ne delilik! [...] Hiç, vücudun asıl toprak olduğu ortadayken, toprağa girmekten mi korkulur? [...] Kim bilir dünya dediğimiz şu mezarlık niçin yaratılmış? [...] Herkes ölümden korkar, fakat kimse sonu ölüm olan yaşamaktan korkmaz.

Furthermore, an exchange of another intertextual “dialogue” between *Hamlet* and *Gülñihal* can be seen in the very existence and similar habits of the grave-diggers and their use of similar syntax and even wording while singing songs for comic relief during the act of digging graves. That is, as a response to Shakespeare’s grave-digger who sings about the sweet feelings of love during young age while ironically digging a grave for young Ophelia who had recently committed suicide for love’s sake, Namık Kemal’s grave-digger digs, and sings a Turkish folk-song in which he warns young people like Ophelia not to die for love’s sake, because, he says, once you are dead you will immediately be forgotten by him/her, only to be remembered by mothers:

GRAVE DIGGER, *digs and sings*.
 In youth when I did love, did love
 Methought it was very sweet.

 But age with his stealing steps
 Hath clawed me in his clutch, [...], *he digs up a skull*.

 A pickaxe and a spade, a spade
 For and a shrouding sheet,
 O, a pit of clay for to be made
 For such a guest is meet,
he digs up more skulls. (Hamlet V.i.243, 245)

Yet *Gülñihal*’s

GRAVE DIGGER [’s song is as such:]
 When you die your mother weeps
 The İmam prays and sees to your sins
 Wolves and birds and moor and mounts
 Eat your flesh, once you die!

 I dig a grave with my pickaxe
 Comes out bones in bits and pieces
 Don’t you die trusting your loved one
 Forsaken you will be, once you die! (*Gülñihal* IV.v.110)³⁴

³⁴ MEZARCI. *Sen ölürsen anan ağlar / İmam iskatını sağlar. / Kurtlar, kuşlar, kırlar, dağlar / Etini yer ölmeye gör!.../Kazmayı vurdum mezare /Kemik çıktı pare pare / Can verip aldanma yare / Senden geçer, ölmeye gör!*

In the portrayal of his character of Muhtar Bey, Namık Kemal seems to have borrowed both from Othello's and Prospero's personalities. That is, even though Muhtar is as strong a character as Prospero, and Othello in performing his duties as ruler or commander, all of the three characters are paradoxically incapable of differentiating between their enemies and friends. For instance, even though at the beginning of the play *Gülnehal* tries to warn him about a possible threat coming from his cousin the Paşa, Muhtar does not listen to her, because similar to a Prospero betrayed by his very own brother or an Othello betrayed by his "trustworthy" friend Iago, Muhtar cannot imagine a threat coming from his closest kin. On the contrary, both Othello and Muhtar prove to be threats for their beloveds, because as in the scenes that follow they blame their women with betrayal and insult them through a harsh but universal wording because even though men of power and might, they ironically see only the surface of things:

OTHELLO. Was this fair paper, [...]
 Made to write "whore" upon? [...] Did I speak thy deeds [...]
 Heaven stops the nose at it and the moon winks, [...]
 Impudent strumped!
 DESDEMONA. By heaven you do me wrong [...]
 I am none.
 OTHELLO. What, not a whore? [...]
 I took you for that cunning whore of Venice
 That married with Othello. [...] You, mistress,
 [...] keep the gate of hell! (IV.ii.159)
 [...]

MUHTAR. What are you doing?

İSMET. When İsmet sees you tied up, what else can she do other than cut your chains?

MUHTAR BEY, *stands up storming*. Hold back! [...] You, in radiant snakeskin, hold back! You, sun-clothed scorpion, hold back! [...] You broke your vows, and not enough! [...], *pointing at Gülnehal*. You've come to save me, with your devil by your side (III.v.83-84).³⁵

³⁵ MUHTAR BEY. Ne yapıyorsunuz?

İSMET. İsmet, seni bağlı görür de, zincirini kesmeye başlamaktan başka ne yapar?

MUHTAR BEY, *büyük bir kızgınlıkla yerinden fırlayarak*. Geri! [...] Nurdan derili yılan geri! [...] Güneş kıyafetli akrep, geri! [...] Yeminini bozdun yetmedi! [...] (*Gülnehal'i göstererek*.) Şeytanını yanına almışsın, beni kurtarmaya geliyorsun!

Fortunately for Muhtar, his story does not end in a tragic death like Othello's, but in a happy re-union with his beloved İsmet so that the Ottoman-Turkish public would be happy³⁶ and thenceforward, could be governed by rulers like Prospero and Muhtar who seem to have learned from their mistakes by the end of these two plays.

As for conclusion, it can be said that, as being one of the major literary figures of the Tanzimat Era, Namık Kemal had written an extensive number of literary works—poems, novels, articles, letters—among which I think especially, his two plays, *Akif Bey* and *Gülnihal* stand out as his greatest efforts to introduce to the Ottoman-Turkish public with European drama and culture in general, and Shakespearean drama in particular to show, as Shakespeare did, that drama can be used as a medium not only for entertainment but for giving messages about life with no censorship but with all its positives and negatives. To do this, Kemal had drawn intertextual parallelisms with that of Shakespeare's noted plays and of his own and had paved the way for endless, possible syntheses of Western and Turkish literary and cultural conventions to underline messages of revolt and freedom for his public. Through the use of actual or non-existent dialogues "inherent" in language, or sometimes through the use of pastiche, Kemal had provided mediums in *Akif Bey* and *Gülnihal* to share, to discuss, to re-evaluate, to change, to criticise, and even provide answers/solutions for problems/issues like the existence of evil, prejudice, love, hatred, jealousy, revenge, and the problem of existence itself which are, in fact, culturally/historically common for both East and West.

Finally, it can be said that, through a blending of Western mentality with that of his own, Namık Kemal had discovered in Shakespeare, a taste of drama where the potential power of language stemming from its continual "dialogue" with the classics is used to its utmost level. Hence, he wanted to do the same for the Ottoman-Turkish public/spectators and become an early and fearless volunteer to present drama in the Western/ Shakespearean style. Yet although we can never be sure whether the Ottoman- Turkish spectators had understood the meaning of his efforts or not, the government officials certainly did, and hence did everything in their power to silence him in prisons and in exiles.

³⁶ A happy ending where the two lovers finally unite has always been a favourable expectation of the Ottoman-Turkish public.

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