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Mavi Sürgün by Halikarnas Balıkçısı as a Testament to the Reporter's Discovery of the Mediterranean Sea for Turkish Literature

ABSTRACT

Mavi Sürgün [Blue Exile] by Halikarnas Balıkçısı is a memoir published in 1961, describing the events of 1920–1947. Its hybrid form contains elements of autobiography and reportage, and the leitmotif is an attempt to introduce the Mediterranean Sea into Turkish literature, and introduce Turkish literature itself into the circle of Mediterranean civilization. The article explains the phenomenon of such a late “discovery” of the Mediterranean Sea for Turkish literature and presents Halikarnas Balıkçısı, the Fisherman of Halicarnassus (his real name is Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı), as a person engaged in the literary, touristic, and cultural promotion of the Mediterranean Sea among Turks.

KEYWORDS: Halikarnas Balıkçısı, *Mavi Sürgün*, the Mediterranean Sea, Turkish literature

STRESZCZENIE

Mavi Sürgün Halikarnasa Balıkçısı jako świadectwo reporterskiego odkrywania Morza Śródziemnego dla literatury tureckiej

Mavi Sürgün [Błękitne wygnanie] Halikarnasa Balıkçısı to książka wspomnieniowa wydana w 1961 roku, a opisująca wydarzenia z lat 1920–1947. Jej hybrydyczna forma zawiera elementy autobiograficzne i reportażowe, motywem przewodnim są próby wprowadzenia Morza Śródziemnego do literatury tureckiej, a samej literatury tureckiej w krąg cywilizacji śródziemnomorskiej. Artykuł wyjaśnia fenomen tak późnego „odkrywania” Morza Śródziemnego dla literatury tureckiej i przedstawia Halikarnasa Balıkçısı, Rybaka z Halikarnasu (prawdziwe nazwisko to Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı), jako człowieka

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zaangażowanego w literacką, turystyczną i kulturową promocję Morza Śródziemnego wśród swoich rodaków.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Halikarnas Balıkçısı, *Mavi Sürgün*, Morze Śródziemne, literatura turecka

The Mediterranean Sea¹ has been present in the Turkic consciousness for almost a thousand years. By the second half of the 11th century, just after migrating to Anatolia, the Seljuk Turks had reached the Mediterranean Sea at several distant points, including in Izmir ca. 1081 (Ilgürel, 1993, p. 187) and near Antakya (Antioch) in 1086 (Gök, 2014, p. 245). As concerns Antioch, Turkish chroniclers often repeat a story according to which the Seljuk Sultan Malikshach rode into the sea at Süveydiye on horseback, dipped his sword three times into the water, and sanctioned the boundaries of his empire by reciting prayers of thanks. The Sultan was also rumored to sprinkle sand from the shore over the grave of his father, Alp Aslan, thus announcing to all and sundry the news of his rule over the world (Gök, 2014, p. 245). The Seljuks did not stay long in the global political arena. The desire to conquer the Mediterranean Sea was embraced by their kin, the Ottoman Turks, who dreamed of controlling the whole territory as an internal sea. They came closest to achieving their goal in the 16th century, during the times of the Ottoman admiral Hayreddin Pasha, known to Europeans as the pirate Barbarossa. According to historian Halil İnalcık, his naval conquests secured him the place of “the undisputed ruler of the entire Mediterranean” (Inalcik, 2006, p. 48). The enthusiasm of the Ottomans was somewhat tempered by the lost Battle of Lepanto in 1571, and despite successive victories, the wish to hold dominion over the entire Mediterranean basin remained nothing but a dream. The Mediterranean Sea, however, still served as a yardstick for imperial expansion, as evidenced by the order of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (later known as Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey), issued in August 1922 during the Turkish War of Independence: “Soldiers! Your first destination is

1 The use of the name Mediterranean Sea deserves an explanation here (in Turkish, it is *Akdeniz*, literally “white sea”). Today it is customary to say, in tourist guidebook style, that Turkey is “the country of the four seas,” and to list the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. No inhabitant of Bodrum would likely say today that they live at the Mediterranean Sea, but at the Aegean Sea (which, incidentally, is part of the Mediterranean Sea from a hydrographic point of view). This resulted from the standardization of geographical names in Turkish: the name Aegean Sea began to be popularized in the 1940s. Halikarnas Balıkçısı interchangeably uses the names Akdeniz (Mediterranean Sea), Ege Denizi (Aegean Sea), Arşipel (Archipelago), and Adalar Denizi (literally island sea).

the Mediterranean Sea! Forward!” The historian İlber Ortaylı claimed that these words, engraved, among others, on the Atatürk monument on the Izmir coast, not only cheered and summoned the army to battle and helped them occupy Izmir as early as September 9, 1922, but most of all “marked the natural borders of the Republic of Turkey” (Ortaylı, 2016).²

Being at the center of the political, military, and economic life of the Turks for centuries, the Mediterranean Sea was nevertheless relegated to the periphery of Turkish literature. Admittedly, in a renowned Turkish encyclopedia, *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, İdris Bostan stated that “many works have been written on the Mediterranean Sea, which played such a large role in Ottoman shipping” (Bostan, 1989, p. 233), but he only mentioned 16th-century geographic and cartographic writings such as those by Piri Reis, which are extremely valuable from a historical—not literary—point of view. Cevat Şakir Kabaağacı, better known under the pseudonym Halikarnas Balıkçısı (1890–1973), is considered the true discoverer of the Mediterranean for Turkish literature. İnci Enginün dubbed him “the founder of [Turkish] Mediterranean literature” (Enginün, 2006, p. 298). In order to understand the Turks’ interwar discovery of the allure of the Mediterranean Sea and Bodrum, one of the most popular seaside tourist destinations nowadays, we should bear in mind the specific character of Turkish literature, which for centuries was concentrated in large urban centers, especially Istanbul, was reduced to highly conventionalized poetry, and did not deal with common, everyday topics. Only the changes that began to take place in Turkish literature in the second half of the nineteenth century under European influence led to the flourishing of realism, which was gradually introducing the countryside as a literary subject. However, the lack of access to education and the high level of illiteracy in society meant that the discoverers of the coastal province could only be outsiders, such as an Istanbul journalist sent to Bodrum to serve his sentence.

Kabaağacı came from an upper-class and artistically talented Ottoman family. He was born in Crete, and spent his childhood in Athens and the Princes’ Islands, where his father performed official duties. After completing the prestigious Istanbul school, Robert College, he was sent to the University of Oxford to study history. He married an Italian woman he had met in England, and in 1913 moved with her to Italy, where he spent a year learning Italian, Latin, and drawing. Upon his return to Turkey, he was accused of manslaughter in the death of his father, who was mysteriously shot by a gun belonging to Cevat Şakir. Kabaağacı served seven out of fourteen years of his sentence and was released in 1921 on account of tuberculosis. In Istanbul, occupied by the Entente Powers, and

2 The translations of all quotes from the Turkish language were made by Sylwia Filipowska.

also after the end of Turkish War of Independence, he worked in journalism: he wrote articles and carried out translation jobs, but above all became famous as a caricaturist, illustrator, and cover designer. In 1925, in the magazine *Resimli Hafta*, he published a story about several Turkish soldiers from the Afyon area who were hanged without trial for desertion at the end of the First World War. This article marked a turning point in Kabaağacı's life, as he was accused of encouraging desertion and showing military commanders in a bad light, for which he was sentenced to three years in a Bodrum fortress. After serving his sentence, the journalist stayed voluntarily in Bodrum for a long time, until 1947, when he moved to Izmir to educate his children there. The role that Bodrum played in the professional life of Kabaağacı, who transformed himself from a journalist into a writer, is emphasized by the pen name Halikarnas Balıkçısı, i.e. the Fisherman of Halicarnassus, referring to both the ancient name of the town and the simple jobs and activities that the writer did routinely. As Roger Williams rightly noted, Halikarnas Balıkçısı's novels and short stories about the sea and the everyday life of the seaside town "gained him a wide national readership, but he became involved in the community, too, improving fishing techniques and planting trees in public spaces" (Williams, 2013, p. 10). At the same time, as the subtitle of Williams's book says, he was *The Man Who Made Bodrum Famous*, laying the foundations for the development of coastal tourism. Coming back to the invaluable merits of Halikarnas Balıkçısı in the field of literature on the Mediterranean Sea, Münevver Borzęcka pompously calls him the Turkish Conrad (whose novel *Nostromo* was translated into Turkish by the writer, incidentally):

In his oeuvre, adoration for the beauty of the sea and its coasts is intertwined with old legends and myths and an inquisitive observation of the surroundings. He himself knows the profession of a fisherman and sponge diver very well, and his work is a true epic in honor of the sea and its people. For him, the sea is something of a mythical deity, which he describes with a Homeric panache. (Plaskowicka-Rymkiewicz et al., 1971, p. 224)

The history of the transformation of Cevat Şakir Kabaağacı into Halikarnas Balıkçısı, as well as a testament to the discovery of the Mediterranean Sea and the growing infatuation with nature and the Mediterranean civilization, is the subject of the book *Mavi Sürgün* [Blue Exile], published in 1961 and describing the events of 1920–1947. It is surprising that literary scholars pay little attention to this work. While the writer's purely fictional narratives and biography attract the ever-enduring interest of researchers (as evidenced, for example, by the post-conference publication

on the subject of the Mediterranean in literature, in which three articles concern Halikarnas Balıkçısı [Turan & Yinanç, 2010, pp. 11–18, 45–52, 121–125³]), *Mavi Sürgün* remains on the sidelines of literary studies. Perhaps the reasons for this can be found in the hybrid form of the work, which is not easy to define. It is most often classified as memories (*anı* or *hatriat*) (Orman, 2005, p. 67; Okay, 2016, p. 698; Yalçın, ed., 2010, p. 503; Atilgan & Çoban, ed., 2019, p. 193), which is common practice in Turkey in order to avoid detailed theoretical distinctions within autobiographical writings. Turkish researchers sometimes label *Mavi Sürgün* with terms such as autobiography (*otobiyografi*) (Asiltürk, 2015, p. 28), essay (*deneme*) (Opperman, 2011, p. 24), or travel literature (*gezi yazısı*) (Köse, 2007), which also includes travel reportage in the Turkish tradition. Some academics (Kaplan, 2013) even attempt to classify this book as an autobiographical novel (*otobiyografik roman*), pointing to its high artistic value; however, their arguments are not convincing, especially in the context of the author's clearly expressed intention: in the preface, Halikarnas Balıkçısı wrote that his purpose was to describe "a fragment of his life" (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 9). Apart from the discernible autobiographical "I", the structure of the work also contains elements of reportage, and here, too, the author himself comes to the rescue, explaining his purely reporter's desire to observe and inform in his narrative:

In my daily life, I would not be able to move from place to place and observe people and events around me, so my sense of perception, which in the West is called *observation*, would not be so advanced. Meanwhile, even the limited sense of freedom after all the trials and tribulations and after months spent in confinement increased my ability to be interested in the world around me a thousand times. (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 88)

Without a doubt, in *Mavi Sürgün* we can find elements of both autobiography and reportage; however, what is more important for us here than aspects of the theory of literature, are Halikarnas Balıkçısı's observations on the Mediterranean Sea, which are inscribed in the story of his life.

The sea was the background of the writer's life from childhood: he was born in Crete, went to school in the Princes' Islands, and studied in the British Isles. Back in Istanbul, he searched for homes overlooking the Sea of Marmara, even at the expense of the inconvenience of a third-floor apartment. When he gave up this location with a heavy heart, swayed

³ Recently, ecological interpretations of the works of Halikarnas Balıkçısı, whom Serpil Opperman called "Turkey's most environmentally oriented Modernist writer" (Opperman, 2011, p. 23), have become fashionable.

by his wife's complaints, he settled on the Asian side of Istanbul to have a view of the Bosphorus and to be able to cross it every day on his way to work. However, only living in Bodrum became a real inspiration for him and awakened the writer in him: an eulogist of the sea. This very moment of breakthrough was described in *Mavi Sürgün*:

After I opened the door, my eyes and my heart saw the full sea, coast, and islands. Streaks of orange and scarlet in the western sky meant that the sun was saying goodbye to the horizon. The sharp silhouette of Bodrum Fortress towered over everything. The white houses on the coast turned pink, and the blue sky turned deep purple. The crests of waves flowing towards the house caught the last rays of the sun and splashing red sparks sideways dabbed the shore with pink foam. The area between the foam and the garden door was covered with sand and dried seaweed gleaming like silver wires.

I fell to my knees and, for the first time since childhood, I cried loudly like a baby. I was excited and torn by violent feelings: delight, relief, gratitude! I ran my fingers over the sand and seaweed. I was picking up grains of sand, pebbles, and sea plants to my eyes as if they were precious pearls and diamonds. I was scooping them in handfuls and showering myself with them. This sea, these islands seemed to me a hundred times more beautiful than the most glorious picture of paradise. And the clear sky, how calm in the distance! I heard the sound of the sea and the rustling of leaves. I dreamed of the happiness that I could experience here, living even on stale bread and water.

Falling to the knees can be a kind of an upsurge and a rising. While Cevat, saddled with the yoke of Babiali Hill,⁴ lay struck down like an empty shell, Halikarnas Balıkçısı, huddled inside it, was preparing to rise with a sound similar to the chirping of a million birds. The shell remained on the ground. A completely different person emerged from within it. (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 153)

This scene takes place in the garden at the back of the house that Balıkçısı rented just after reaching Bodrum. In order to understand the writer's feelings at the time, we need to follow the story of his several months of wandering. A court in Ankara sentenced him to three years in prison, and he was to serve his sentence in Bodrum. The very name of this place caused fear, because it means "a cellar, a dungeon." After several months of uncertainty, it turned out that due to the fortress's dilapidated state, he would not be jailed there, but would be permitted to settle down

⁴ A place in Istanbul, where the publishing houses and editorial offices of many magazines were located.

in Bodrum, without leaving that small town for three years. Kabaağaçlı guarded the document issued by the governor of Muğla province as a precious treasure, and when he arrived he showed it to a local official who helped him find a house to rent—a four-room seafront house with unexpectedly low rent. Walking past simple, whitewashed houses, with flowers in the windows and green plants around, feeling the salty gusts of wind on his face, and listening to the women singing while working in the gardens, he asked himself, “This is supposed to be Bodrum, the place of exile?” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 151). The town, whose name was associated with darkness and had made his skin crawl for months, proved to be a sunny and radiant place, a new home.

Kabaağaçlı expected that the journey to the place where he was supposed to serve his sentence would take him no more than 12 days (by train to Izmir, and then by the ferry, which ran once a week, to Bodrum); meanwhile, due to numerous delays and a lack of funds for the gendarmes escorting him, he arrived at Bodrum three and a half months after leaving Ankara, and six months after leaving his home in Istanbul. In the end, he traveled from Izmir by road—by bus, on horseback, and even on foot—which considerably extended the journey and prompted him to muse about the condition of the roads: “There was no road to Bodrum, the old Halicarnassus. Perhaps the wheels have not been seen there since the time of Alexander the Great, whose oxcarts and wagons surrounded the city?” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 123). Turkish literature undoubtedly benefited from it, because the feeling that overcame the wanderer at the sight of the sea which had not been seen for so long stayed with him for good and confirmed his belief that he had to translate these impressions into the language of literature. In addition, the effort he had to make to cross the mountains inspired him to place Bodrum within the broad circle of Mediterranean culture: “Bodrum, although part of Anatolia, remains separate from it and seems closer to the Aegean Islands, Crete, Alexandria, and the Mediterranean ports as far as Marseilles and Barcelona” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 133).

Longing for the sea, Kabaağaçlı asked the gendarmes escorting him when they would reach the shore. Already in Ankara, he was happy to think that he would follow the direction once set by Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Quoting the words of the order mentioned in the first paragraph of this article, he added, “So we’re going to Izmir. The sea is there. Long live the Mediterranean Sea!” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 83). He made note of all the details that evidenced the proximity to the coast: the changing vegetation and soil, the smell of the wind, the presence of seagulls. He listened for the wailing and murmurs of the sea from a distance, and by using musical terms to describe it, he tried to guess its mood. He understood the

irregularity and monotony of the sounds when he reached the rocky coast in Güvercinlik. The technique of the personification of the sea ended in a conversation:

Today the vastness has a serious tone:

“Where have you been?”

“Ah, don’t ask! Outposts, prison cells... you name it! [...] I’m finally here. Give me some of your blue, let me cool down, and take my soul.”

(Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 138)

In *Mavi Sürgün*, the enrapture with the sea is gradual and inscribed in the natural rhythm of the hike towards the coast. After leaving Güvercinlik, the prisoner and his escort set off towards Torba, a small town guarding the entrance to the peninsula. Although his feet were getting stuck in the sand and it was difficult to walk among the branches knocked down by storms, Kabaağacı noticed the beauty of the panorama changing with every turn. However, only the view from the hill above Bodrum completed his awe and swoon. This effect was strengthened both by the glare of the setting sun and the opportunity to look at the open sea, because there was no obstacle blocking the view, as the nearby island did in Güvercinlik. The feeling of breathlessness in the prisoner’s chest resembled the elation that accompanies someone entering a large temple. The sound of the waves was reminiscent of the sound made by thousands of believers, repeating the words spoken by the religious leader, and the weary wanderer felt “as if he was looking into eternity” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 144).

The writer was aware that many descriptions of nature and his admiration for its beauty might seem exaggerated, so he made a point of informing the reader about his love for the Mediterranean Sea:

My reader, do not think that I am exaggerating in describing all the places I pass. If you have been told that I am a reasonable person, it is not true. Even now, at the age of seventy, I am in love. [...] And if you don’t already know it, I will confess to you that a person in love experiences certain things more intensely. Ah, lie with restraint, speak the truth with restraint, believe with restraint, love with restraint. Damned be this restraint! I write as I feel. After all, I will not describe according to one template or another! (Balıkçısı, 1986, pp. 140–141)

Kabaağacı gladly returned to this place, where he had seen the sea for the first time in months. Most often he came by boat, looking not so much for a respite as for a companion who would listen to him and give him advice. During the first days of his stay in Bodrum, the sea was his best friend, and over time it became an inseparable element of his life:

immediately on the first day, he chose a room for his bedroom, from which he could see the boundless water; he spent time with fishermen, learning their craft and listening to their stories, which earned him the nickname Curious (*Meraklı*) and gave him literary inspiration; he spent many evenings and mornings sitting on the roof of the house, watching his boat with its nets thrown and thinking, he also wrote many times on a boat, going on lonely trips for several days (in such circumstances, he translated *Man and Superman* by George Bernard Shaw and wrote most of the novel *Aganta Burina Burinata*). He felt that the sea was calling him and drawing him almost physically, “grabbing his fingers and pulling the ends of his hair” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 169).

This spiritual and physical bond with the sea yielded his rich literary output. Sighing, “What a pity that only Istanbul is adored as a homeland” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 188), the writer decided to make amends and to introduce the Mediterranean Sea to Turkish literature, and introduce Turkish literature itself to Mediterranean civilization. He lamented that “this paradisal coast is so forgotten” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 142), although it is in no way inferior to the Cote d’Azur or Dalmatia. Standing in the evening by the deserted seashore, he remembered the resorts he knew well, such as Nice, Monte Carlo, or Biarritz, where hundreds of thousands of women would be sitting at dressing tables at this hour to do their makeup and squeeze into tight outfits preparing for the nightlife. Although he did not value these women highly, and called them “empty packages” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 142), he was aware of the impact of the entertainment industry on the global economy. It seems that in the very first moments of his stay in Bodrum, Kabaağacı made a decision to promote the Turkish Mediterranean coast not only in literature but also in tourism. The writer is considered to be the originator of the “blue cruises” (*mavi yolculuk*) in Turkish coastal waters, which paved the way for the development of yacht tourism (Yılmaz & Yetgin, 2018, p. 847). The idea of these trips was not only to rest on the water and admire nature, but also to discover and visit the remains of ancient Greek culture and other civilizations of ancient Anatolia scattered throughout this part of the coast. Thus, Kabaağacı took on the role of an educator, being aware of how little his countrymen know about the past of the places where they have lived for generations.

Well-educated himself and having travelled around the world, it was with real pleasure that he discovered the traces of the past in Bodrum and its surroundings. Like a seasoned reporter, he looked for mythological curiosities that could interest his readers. At the same time, he cared about the historical truth and its bearing on the present, as exemplified by the description of Bardakçı, a part of Bodrum which was called Salmakis in ancient times. When recalling the story of the love of the nymph Salmakis for

Hermaphrodite in one of the chapters of *Mavi Sürgün*, he recounted his search for the ruins of the temples of Hermes and Aphrodite. He also carried out field research: he compared the terrain with the record of the myth left by Ovid in *Metamorphoses*, he looked for traces of the spring, and when he was sure that he was in the right place, he spent the whole day fishing, wading in the water, and enjoying the beauty of nature and the atmosphere of history. His mood was only spoiled by the awareness that “although this place is in our homeland, hardly anyone knows about it” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 167). It was because of this awareness that he grounded many of his fictional works on myths, and “he did not treat them as belonging to only one civilization” (Sivri & Kuşca, 2013, p. 52). In his opinion, myths were more closely tied to geography, and all the communities which settled in a given place one after another took them over and adapted them to their needs, creating the foundations of a common Mediterranean civilization. The goal of Halikarnas Balıkçısı was therefore to make his fellow countrymen aware that as inhabitants of Anatolia they are part of this civilization. That is why he believed that historical and archaeological research based on mythological knowledge should be conducted in Turkey and its results should be disseminated. Thanks to his literary and popularizing activities, he became “the voice of this earth, revealing its secrets” (Sivri & Kuşca, 2013, p. 52).

According to Furkan Öztürk, “Halikarnas Balıkçısı builds his poetics around the concept of ‘Mediterraneanness’ (*Akdenizlilik*)” (Öztürk, p. 123), and belonging to Mediterranean culture became an extremely important element of his identity. He did not simply convince his countrymen about it, his educational efforts went beyond the borders of the country. The best evidence of this is an article published in 1974 in the French magazine *Carrefour*. In this article, whose title is a beautiful metaphor of “the eternal youth of the Mediterranean” (Balıkçısı, 1985, pp. 25–59), Halikarnas Balıkçısı not only displayed his erudition in knowledge of the history and literature of the Mediterranean countries, but also defended the thesis about the cultural liaisons between them. Skillfully maneuvering between the Minoans and Dante, Alexander the Great and Petrarch, Homer and Cervantes, and dropping countless names of famous people, he argued that “the inhabitants of the Mediterranean basin are children of the sun that illuminates days with its invigorating rays” (Balıkçısı, 1985, p. 56). This statement echoes the belief in the almost magical, culture-forming role of the Mediterranean Sea—a role that he himself experienced in his life and described with great reverence in *Mavi Sürgün*. The views of Halikarnas Balıkçısı can be easily juxtaposed with the holistic concepts of French historians Fernand Braudel and Georges Duby, “that it is in the Mediterranean region that the deep source of great culture originates” (Duby, 1994, p. 241).

Convinced in the first days of his stay in Bodrum that “three years will pass quickly” (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 196), Kabaağaçlı did not expect how attached he would become to this place. True exile (this is the title of a chapter, *Asıl Sürgün*) was the unexpected need to return to Istanbul. After a year and a half in exile, Halikarnas Balıkçısı received word from the court that he was to serve the rest of his sentence in Istanbul. The next year and a half spent in this city once dear to him was quite a punishment. Looking at the leaden, winter Istanbul sky, he dreamed of the Mediterranean blue and spent his stay in the metropolis learning about modern plant cultivation and fishing. One day he even climbed a palm tree in the garden of the hotel where Trotsky once used to stay to obtain the seeds of a rare variety of tree. He was determined to leave Istanbul as soon as possible: the moment he finished serving his sentence, he immediately bought a ticket for a boat to Bodrum, even though his newborn daughter was only 21 days old. The return to the Mediterranean was once again described in terms of symbolic salvation: Halikarnas Balıkçısı felt like he was on Noah’s Ark with all his family, fishing gear, and bags of seeds. Also this time, the whole natural world seemed to confirm that his life had taken the right direction:

As the ship set course for Bodrum, the sky and sea became bluer and more serene. We got to Bodrum in the morning and headed straight to my mother-in-law’s house. Instantly after entering the garden and saying hello, I put the palm seeds into the ground, the ones I had collected in the Princes’ Islands in Trotsky’s garden (I think we may call it that). Ah, for a year and a half, I had been imagining how I would plant and cultivate beautiful plants in Bodrum! How could I wait any longer? Sowing seeds half an hour earlier meant gaining half an hour of life. (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 198)

Halikarnas Balıkçısı could barely wait to finish dinner to go to the seaside. Wanting to go to sea straightaway, he bought an old boat, the cheapest one, as that was all he could afford. His goal was not to fish, but to feel the breeze on his face and to visit his favorite spots.

The next twenty years that he spent in Bodrum were summarized as brief mentions of the most important events, such as the birth of his son, catching a shark, an earthquake, building a reinforced concrete house to withstand the greatest storms, or planting exotic plants from the ends of the earth in Bodrum. These several pages also include beautiful descriptions of the sea, but the main goal of *Mavi Sürgün* was already achieved: The Mediterranean has become a full-fledged character (and not just a background) in Turkish literature. The narration is closed with a description of the departure from Bodrum in 1947:

The day of parting has come. It was morning. [...] A truck ran through the trees that I had planted myself and reached the top of the hill. It is from that spot that, escorted by gendarmes twenty-five or twenty-seven years ago, I saw Bodrum and the Archipelago for the first time. I also cast a look now. The children burst into tears when they saw on the coast the roof of the house where they grew up. We turned a corner. You couldn't see Bodrum or the Archipelago anymore! And that's it... (Balıkçısı, 1986, p. 225)

Mavi Sürgün is the work of a mature writer, aware of his style and purpose, which he wants to achieve by recalling the events from decades past. Halikarnas Balıkçısı wants to explain his infatuation with the Mediterranean Sea, which became the dominant force of his entire adult life: a literary inspiration and the background and protagonist of his works. From the pages of *Mavi Sürgün* an image emerges, of a man sensitive not only to the beauty of nature, but also to the history of places, completely unknown to the Turks who have lived there for centuries. The Fisherman from Halicarnassus—even his pen name shows that the sea and antiquity are two inseparable elements of his life and work—presents his own country to his countrymen with the flair of a reporter, and *Mavi Sürgün* is a testament to the process of discovering the importance of the Mediterranean for Turkish culture.

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