

**OTTO LIMAN
VON SANDERS**

**MORGEN
FREEMAN**

**THE GAZA
OF CHE**



WRITING IN THE DARK

**ANTHONY
QUINN**



**A Lover
in Defeat**

Argeta sür, ekmeğin keyfi hep sürsün.

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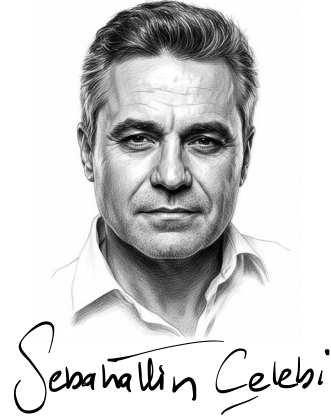
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Setting Sail for a New Horizon

Voyages often begin with a mere intention, but they find their true spirit at that very moment when the wind first meets the sail. As we prepared this magazine for publication, we did more than just gather pages; we built ourselves a “*wooden ship*.”

For wood is a living material. It creaks, it flexes, it carries the memory of the water, and above all, it demands the touch of a master to take its shape. Our magazine sets out with this exact philosophy. We believe that “*knowledge is not merely rapidly consumed data, but a carefully crafted value*.” In this publication, in contrast to the “*plastic-wrapped*” content of the modern age, you will find stories that still bear the scent of sawdust and the echoes of lived experiences.

Last Harbor: The Quest for a Deeper Sanctuary

For minds weary of the steel, concrete, and the relentless pace of today’s world, we were searching for a slower, more tactile, and deeper harbor. Thus, “*Last Harbor*” magazine emerged as the fruit of this search. When you hold this magazine, we want the touch of your fingers on the paper to feel as though you are running your hand across the hull of a boat.

A Cultural Bridge: From the Heart of the Steppe to Global Shores

“*Last Harbor*” carries a distinct mission: to carry the melodies of our own harbors to distant shores. We wished for a world where Neşet Ertaş remains unknown to no one. We wanted the world to recognize “*Neşet Baba*”—who came to Germany to seek treatment for his ailing daughter and became a legend in every street, avenue, and village of Türkiye—and to witness the immense richness of his soul.

A Universal Vision

We aimed for a universal path in publishing. In 2013, while watching the colossal waves of the Indian Ocean on the shores of South Africa, I thought about how small lakes, seas, and streams truly were. Perhaps that is why continents and oceans felt so small to me then. We desired for this culture and this magazine to reach every harbor in the world.

Many of our friends poured their efforts into this inaugural issue. Our magazine has been published under the successful and devoted editorship of Ertuğrul Özgün and Hatice Dikbaş from İzmir. I sincerely hope that our English magazine, the product of great labor, serves as a vessel for beauty and inspiration.



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The thread binding all these novels together was woven from the same question: could a man truly protect what he loves? Dostoevsky had answered no, Myshkin lost everything. Hugo had answered yes, but at a terrible cost. In McCarthy the answer remained uncertain; survival counted for enough. Steinbeck left the question unanswered. He merely showed. And this was, perhaps, the most honest answer of all.

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In Cacoyannis's lens, Crete was not merely a setting. That barren plain, that coastline, that aged Greek village, all were externalizations of Zorba's soul. Mikis Theodorakis's music illuminated the film from within: that sirtaki melody, upon first hearing, was assumed to be a traditional Greek folk tune; yet Theodorakis had composed it specifically for the film. But when Quinn heard that music, something happened inside him.

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These words belonged to a work of fiction. But the moment they fell from the lips of Morgan Freeman, not as a screen character, but as the human being who carries that voice, they took on an altogether different weight. For Freeman's life, much like the Red he portrayed, is a journey in which hope is both dangerous and indispensable: delayed justice, long waiting, and ultimately a quiet victory.

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When a person shares their memories, they return, if only for a moment, to that young self: the one who ran, laughed, hoped. When an older person tells of their past, what enters their voice is not trembling, but strength. For what has been lived carries an invisible resilience that stands in the spine of a human being. And that resilience becomes a light for the present, each time it is given words.

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In the pitch dark she dragged her feet across the ground, feeling her way forward, trying to understand where it was she had come from.

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In 1968, the streets of Paris rose up. Students, workers, intellectuals. Baudrillard was at the very centre of this movement. Theories debated in university lecture halls had spilled into the streets. Young people were questioning authority, consumption, the family, the state, language, that is, all systems of representation. The barricades were not merely physical obstacles; they were also a symbol of the collapse of old ways of thinking.

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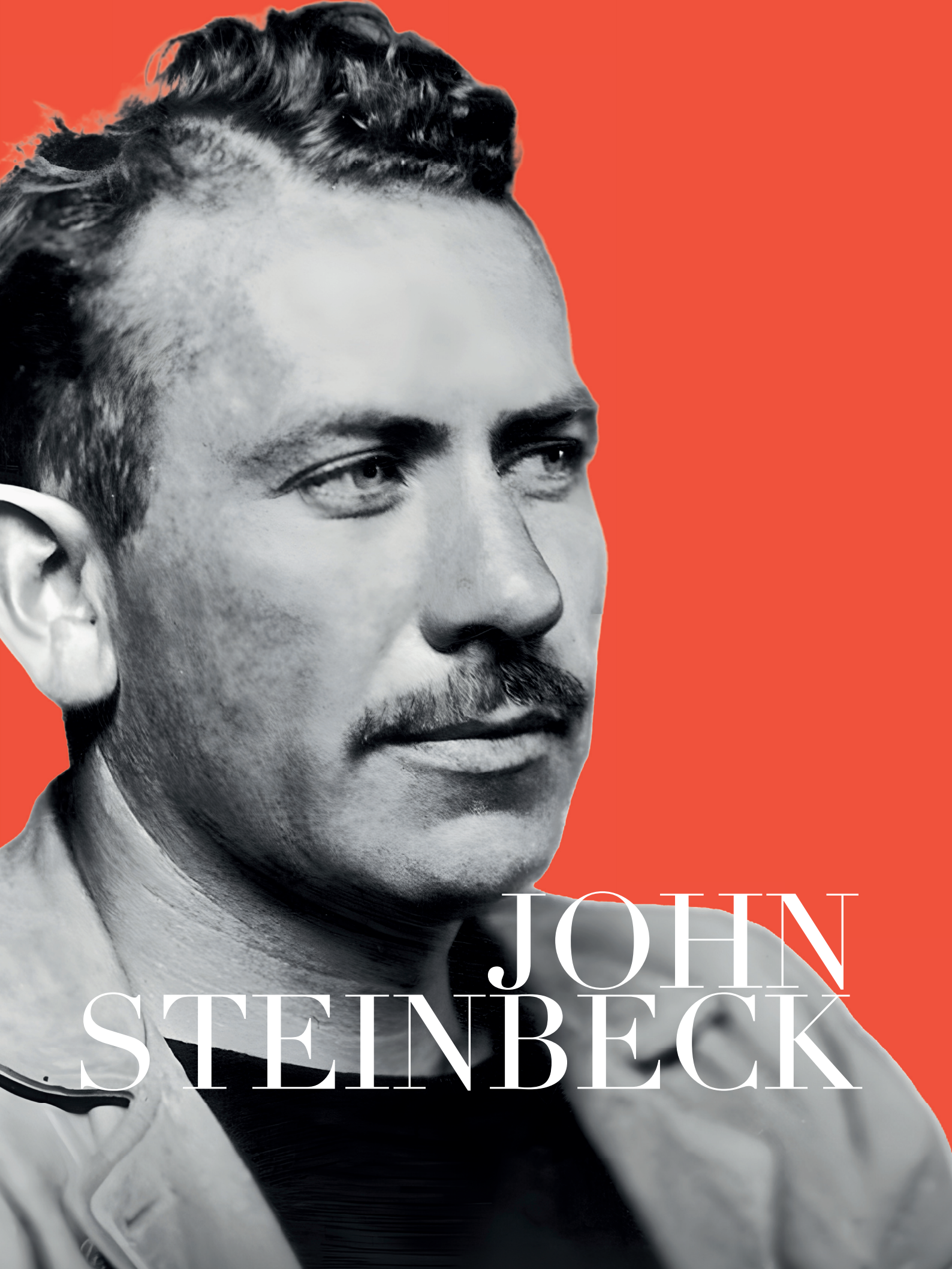
She had seen her in a black-and-white photograph. Virginia sat thinking beside a window, in an armchair upholstered with patterned fabric, dressed in a garment of velvet-like cloth, a brooch at her collar whose exact shape she could not make out from the photograph, and a wide, long skirt cut from the same material.

DOES A MAN KILL WHAT HE LOVES?

On John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*







JOHN
STEINBECK

SEBAHATTİN ÇELEBİ

There are stories that, while you read them, make you feel something closing inside you. Not a door, something deeper. Perhaps a season. Perhaps a belief. John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, written in 1937, was one such story. A slender book, with few pages; yet the weight it carried was the weight of a century's sorrow. What it left behind in the reader was not literary knowledge, but a heavy reckoning with one's own nature.

Steinbeck had deposited his heroes in the sun-scorched plains of California, at the height of the Great Depression. There, between dust and exhaustion, two men walked: George Milton and Lennie Small. One carried the other; and the other, unknowingly, one after another, consumed everything his hands came to touch. The story of these two men had long since outgrown the confines of a novel; it had become an image of humanity's shared grief.

Steinbeck made his first steps in the literary world by working side by side with the poor. John Ernst Steinbeck was born in 1902 in Salinas, California, although it was a fertile agricultural region. This fertility belonged not to the seasonal labourers who worked the land, but to the large landowners who stood above them. Steinbeck did not perceive this inequality as a distant social phenomenon; he lived it. In his youth he worked on farms as a labourer, slept in grain warehouses, endured the arbitrary authority of estate owners, and in that process, he gained the most precious thing a writer can possess: he learned the truth not from written books, but from the smell of the earth.

Steinbeck's convictions did not fit within the frame of any conventional religion. He kept his distance from the Church, from dogma. Yet this did not mean he was a man without a spiritual world. On the contrary, a deep and almost devotional reverence for the human being coursed beneath the surface of all his work. The figure who most shaped this sensibility was his friend, the biologist Ed Ricketts, who introduced Steinbeck to what he called "*non-teleological thinking*", the practice of asking not why something happens, but how it happens. This approach was reflected in his characters: in his novels there were no guilty parties, only circumstances. Lennie did not intend to

cause harm; George was not a bad man. It simply was. This perspective made Steinbeck simultaneously one of the most unflinching and most compassionate writers of his age.

A writer of left-leaning politics, Steinbeck regarded the defence of the labouring class's dignity as a duty. This position made him a target in conservative circles; his books were banned, burned, condemned. But Steinbeck did not chase popular approval. When he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962, the Swedish Academy described his work as the product of a "*realistic and imaginative*" vision. Those two words, realistic and imaginative, described Steinbeck precisely.

The novel was born out of a poem and drawn from a real man. Before beginning it, before beginning the novel, Steinbeck searched for a title. He found it in a poem by the Scottish poet Robert Burns, written in 1785: "*To a Mouse*". While plowing his field, Burns had accidentally destroyed a mouse's nest. The famous lines read: "*The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft agley*". Steinbeck found in those words the entire soul of his novel—for that was precisely what he was telling: the story of those who dream so much, yet never arrive". Lennie Small, meanwhile, was drawn from a real person. During the years Steinbeck spent working on farms, he knew a burly, mentally disabled labourer who one day killed a ranch foreman—not in sudden rage, but as a victim of his own uncontrollable strength.

Steinbeck had carried this man in his mind for many years. He did not see him as a monster, but as a tragedy. Lennie was that stored memory transformed into literature.

Before the novel was first published, Steinbeck had envisioned a different title: "*Something That Happened*". A title he later abandoned, yet the meaning it bore is profound. He regarded the novel not as a document of accusation, but of observation alone. It happened. It happened this way. And bearing responsibility for it was perhaps a burden no one could truly carry.

Everything gentle turned, in Lennie's hands, into an object of mourning.

Lennie was a great child, not only in body, but in the way the world

The thread binding all these novels together was woven from the same question: could a man truly protect what he loves? Dostoevsky had answered no, Myshkin lost everything. Hugo had answered yes, but at a terrible cost. In McCarthy the answer remained uncertain; survival counted for enough. Steinbeck left the question unanswered. He merely showed. And this was, perhaps, the most honest answer of all.

appeared to him. Its narrow, coarse edges seemed not to exist for him. He was the kind of man who loved velvet fur, who spent hours arranging things so a mouse might sleep beside him, who found consolation in the warmth of lamb's wool. But his hands betrayed all that tenderness. He squeezed too hard when he touched a puppy's coat; he silenced a mouse while stroking it, without noticing. To love and to destroy had become, at his fingertips, the same gesture.

George was his exact opposite: small, shrewd, measured. But within every measured man there remains, somewhere, a place that calculation cannot reach. In George, such a place was where Lennie lived.

Perhaps he himself could not fully explain why he carried him. Was it obligation? Habit? Or that irreversible bond forged by years of dreaming together? Steinbeck did not ask. He left it. For some bonds diminish when explained.

That day, George buried his own future in a field.

At the novel's end, George killed Lennie with his own hand. What he held was not merely a weapon but a conscience stripped utterly bare. A mob was at their heels, furious, vengeful, merciless. George had wished for Lennie to go without falling into other hands. He spoke his last words to him: of the small farm, of the rabbits, of the days they would till the soil together. Lennie smiled as though he could already see that dream. George, in agony, pulled the trigger. And on that day, all the future he had carried within himself was buried there alongside him.

Oscar Wilde had written, long before, as though he had already witnessed this scene: Each man kills the thing he loves. Wilde had spoken it as a paradox. Steinbeck transformed it into a fact. George's act in that moment was love in its most humble and most devastating form: the act of a man who knows he can no longer protect, yet performs protection—one last time, forever.

World literature posed this question in different tongues, across different centuries. The tragedy told in *Of Mice and Men* was not Steinbeck's alone; it belongs to a global literary tradition that has posed this same question across different tongues and centuries. In fact, the great narratives of world literature have always grappled with this singular concern: could a pure soul survive in this world? And the answers, almost invariably, lead us to the same place. Take, for instance, in Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, written in 1869, Prince Myshkin was like Lennie's sibling from an earlier age. Myshkin, too, was pure, gentle, well-meaning, but his purity proved not a shield protecting those around him, but rather a mirror that troubled them. His presence unsettled people, for his goodness made the darkness in others more visible. Lennie's presence was the same: he did not wish to change the world; he merely wished to exist within it. But the world could not endure such a presence.

Victor Hugo, in *Les Misérables*, had placed Jean Valjean beneath a similar burden. Valjean, too, was carrying someone, Cosette. And that act of carrying meant a perpetual surrender of his own freedom. George and Valjean, a century apart, faced the same question: how much of oneself could be surrendered in order to keep another alive?

Cormac McCarthy's 2006 novel *The Road* carried this question into a far harsher landscape. In a post-apocalyptic world, a father car-

ried his son; between them only a pushcart and a hope near its end. McCarthy's father, like George, was consuming himself in the act of carrying. But to let go was impossible. For to let go would have been to kill not only his son, but himself.

William Faulkner had posed the question through Benjy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*. The mentally disabled Benjy could not distinguish past from present, and felt everything through raw, unmediated instinct. When Faulkner placed his perspective at the opening of the novel, the reader was suddenly face to face with naked reality: the world, through Benjy's eyes, was meaningless noise, yet it was also precisely the world we inhabit.

The thread binding all these novels together was woven from the same question: could a man truly protect what he loves? Dostoyevsky had answered no, Myshkin lost everything. Hugo had answered yes, but at a terrible cost. In McCarthy the answer remained uncertain; survival counted for enough. Steinbeck left the question unanswered. He merely showed. And this was, perhaps, the most honest answer of all.

In writing this book, Steinbeck may have been composing an elegy for the human condition.

The novel's title came from Robert Burns's lines, but Steinbeck had not merely borrowed a quotation. He had constructed a frame. Mice, too, made plans; men, too, made plans; and these plans, more often than not, went awry. Steinbeck's Great Depression America was too exhausted to endure hope. Yet George and Lennie had dreamed all the same: a small piece of land, a few rabbits, a place where they might light their own lamp.

That dream was like a thin shaft of light passing through the novel. It did not come to be. But it existed. And a thing's having been imagined kept it alive, in some form. Looking across history and literature, we see that unrealised dreams have sometimes outlasted those that were realised. George and Lennie's little farm was never built, yet the dream of that farm has lived on for decades in the minds of millions of readers. Steinbeck had conceived this work not only as a novel but simultaneously as a stage play. The two developed in parallel; the text was structured to be both performed and read. This deliberate choice reflected his wish to bring his story to the greatest number of people possible. For in his view, this was not a literary experiment; it was a truth belonging to everyone.

To this question Steinbeck gave no definitive answer. He gave none, because some questions, when answered, diminish; when left unanswered, they grow, they grow toward us, drawing us in. Perhaps that is why *Of Mice and Men* is still read today: the novel had ended, but the question had not. And every new reader brought to that question an answer from within their own life. Some like George. Some like Lennie. And some, perhaps, both at once.

John Steinbeck published *Of Mice and Men* in 1937.

He was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize the same year, and in 1962 was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The novel remains to this day among the most widely read short narratives in literary history, with tens of millions of copies in print worldwide...

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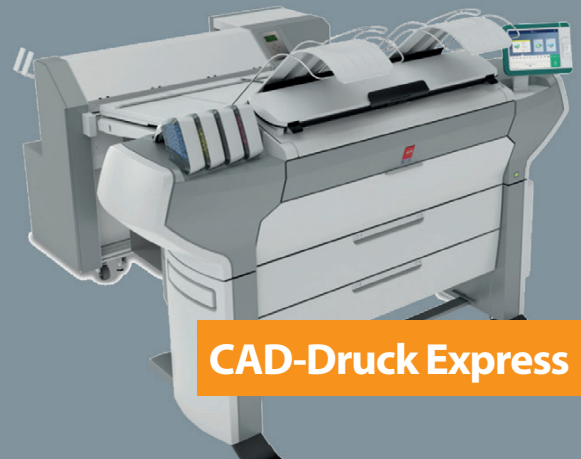


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THE MAN WHO CARRIED THE SOIL OF SEVERAL CONTINENTS IN HIS SPIRIT

ANTHONY QUINN

In Cacoyannis's lens, Crete was not merely a setting. That barren plain, that coastline, that aged Greek village, all were externalizations of Zorba's soul. Mikis Theodorakis's music illuminated the film from within: that sirtaki melody, upon first hearing, was assumed to be a traditional Greek folk tune; yet Theodorakis had composed it specifically for the film. But when Quinn heard that music, something happened inside him.

CEM BAHADIR

dusty roads of Crete.

His family moved to Los Angeles in the wake of the revolution. His father found work as a camera assistant at a studio, where young Manuel came to know names like Tom Mix and John Barrymore in the corridors of that studio, walking alongside his father. But life was not easy; he worked in butcher shops, at slaughterhouses, in boxing rings. He became a speaker for an evangelical movement, preaching on street corners. He won an architecture scholarship with Frank Lloyd Wright, but in the end, he chose the theatre. The stage seized him more deeply than any other calling; on stage, he did not have to be a Mexican—he could be anyone. Hollywood opened its doors to him, and as he walked in, he carried not his ethnic identity, but

The year was 1915. The cloud of dust and blood from the Mexican Revolution had not yet settled; the soil of Chihuahua groaned beneath the hooves of Pancho Villa's guerrilla horses. In the heart of this chaos, the world's most unlikely actor was born: Manuel Antonio Rodolfo Quinn Oaxaca. Born to an Irish-Mexican father and a Mexican mother. The child of two countries, two bloodlines, two cultures. Yet neither Mexico nor Ireland would give him his true identity; the version of him that would shape his future was not yet born. That identity, years later, he would find himself, dancing along the



In 1977, the film was about to open in America. On that day, the Hanafi movement, a Black nationalist group, stormed the B'nai B'rith building in Washington D.C., took hostages, and killed two people. Their stated reason was astonishing: a mistaken belief that Anthony Quinn had portrayed the Prophet Muhammad in the film.

his humanity.

He shot his first film in 1936. Dozens of roles followed; but most were typecast 'foreigner' figures, Native American, Arab, Spanish, Mexican. Hollywood's stereotype factory tried to press him into a mould. He waited to blow that mould apart from within; patiently, stubbornly.

In *Viva Zapata!* (1952), he played Eufemio, brother of Emiliano Zapata, and won his first Oscar. It was noted in history that he was the first actor of Mexican descent to receive the award. Four years later, in Vincent Minnelli's Paul Gauguin biopic *Lust for Life* (1956), he portrayed Gauguin opposite Kirk Douglas and took home his second Oscar. Two different films, two opposite extremes, one a Mexican revolutionary, the other a French Impressionist painter, yet in both, the same Quinn was present: raw, real, and no less complex. Earlier, in 1954, Fellini cast him in *La Strada* as Zampanò, a brutish circus performer. Alongside Giulietta Masina, he delivered a minimal yet

crushing performance. *La Strada* was the symbol of Quinn's encounter with world cinema. He was no longer merely a Hollywood actor, he had become the universal interpreter of the human condition.

Zorba

1964. Michael Cacoyannis was looking for an actor to bring Nikos Kazantzakis's 1946 novel, *Zorba the Greek*, to the screen. The man he needed was Zorba, but Zorba was not a character; he was a force. Raw as earth, overflowing as the sea, intoxicating as wine. Many names were considered. But those who had read Kazantzakis's *Zorba* found only one man in their minds. Anthony Quinn.

The film was adapted from Kazantzakis's novel: a young Englishman named Basil travels to Crete to operate a mine and chances upon Zorba. Zorba is an old, rough Greek who has gnawed and swallowed every corner of life. The two men are entirely unlike each other, one lives inside books, the other lives only inside life. And this contrast

fuels the entire energy of the film.

In Cacoyannis's lens, Crete was not merely a setting. That barren plain, that coastline, that aged Greek village, all were externalizations of Zorba's soul. Mikis Theodorakis's music illuminated the film from within: that sirtaki melody, upon first hearing, was assumed to be a traditional Greek folk tune; yet Theodorakis had composed it specifically for the film. When Quinn heard that music, something happened inside him.

Quinn did not teach himself the sirtaki. Quinn made the sirtaki his own, and Theodorakis wrote the music.

The film's final scene became one of the most unforgettable moments in cinema history. Everything had collapsed: the platform they had built had caved in, the money was gone, the plans had come to nothing. And at that very moment of ruin, Basil asks Zorba: "*Teach me to dance*". Zorba laughs, with that particular, thunderous, deep laugh of his, and on the sandy shore, before the broken wooden wreckage, before the Aegean, he begins to stamp his feet upon the ground.

"A man needs a little madness, or else, he never dares cut the rope and be free".

In that scene, Quinn did not dance, Quinn existed. Bosley Crowther, reviewing the film in The New York Times, called it 'a brilliant performance.' But critics and audiences alike felt the same thing: it was impossible to separate Quinn from Zorba, or Zorba from Quinn. This was one of cinema's rarest miracles, an actor so fused with his role that the role became biography.

The film received seven Oscar nominations. Lila Kedrova won Best Supporting Actress; the film also took Best Cinematography and Best Art Direction. Quinn received a Best Actor nomination for Zorba but did not win — it was his fourth and final Oscar nomination. Whether he won or not hardly mattered anymore; the world had accepted Zorba as Quinn.

For the rest of his life, people would call him Zorba. In interviews, on the streets, on stage. Quinn sometimes found that burden heavy, but he never refused it. Because he had understood Zorba's spirit: to accept life's pain, and to live its beauty with one's entire body. In 1983, he revived the same character on Broadway as a musical, for 362 performances. Lila Kedrova was at his side again. All of New York could see that Zorba had not died, he had gone on living inside Quinn's body.

The Message

It was 1962. A young Syrian named Moustapha Akkad watched David Lean's Lawrence of Arabia at a cinema in Los Angeles. As Omar Sharif emerged like a ghost from the desert, something stirred within Akkad. He saw that an Arab face, an Arab story, a saga told through a Muslim's eyes, could find its place on the big screen. And from that day forward, he lived with a single dream: to bring the life of the Prophet Muhammad to cinema.

Preparation took more than a decade. Akkad received script approval from Islamic scholars in Cairo. He secured financing from Gulf states and Libya. But the greatest challenge was clear: the Prophet could not be shown on screen. Islamic tradition forbade the depiction of the Prophet's image. Would this prohibition make the film impossible? Akkad said no. He shifted the camera's focus: the Prophet's uncle, Hamza, would be the heart of the film.

When Akkad brought the first offer to Quinn, he opened the door for every other actor.

Moustapha Akkad needed an international star to bring his proj-

ect to life, a name that would open doors for hesitant actors and prove the film's seriousness to the world. And Akkad went to Quinn. He told a Mexican-Irish actor that he would portray the brave uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. Quinn accepted, and that acceptance changed the fate of the film. The other actors were persuaded; filming began.

The budget was 17 million dollars, resources gathered from Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. An international co-production spanning Morocco, Syria, and England. The 700,000-dollar Mecca set constructed in Morocco was one of the largest film infrastructures of its era. Akkad shot the film in two separate versions, English and Arabic, using different casts for each. Where Quinn played Hamza in the English version, Abdullah Gaith took the stage in the Arabic version.

The filming process was an unrelenting chain of crises. Shooting began in Morocco; but King Hassan II, under pressure from Saudi Arabia's King Faisal, was forced to halt the production. Akkad met with Gaddafi and screened the raw footage for him. Gaddafi gave his support; filming moved to Libya. When Gaddafi saw the crew suffering in the sweltering desert heat, he sent private air conditioners to the set.

Quinn found something in that desert. Playing Hamza in the English version, he felt the weight of the character. Hamza, the Prophet's uncle, one of Mecca's mightiest warriors, multiplied the courage of those who embraced Islam. And in the film's narrative, Hamza beat like the unseen Prophet's heart; in every scene that followed the Prophet's path, Hamza's eyes, hands, and footsteps did the speaking.

"Quinn's dignity and gravity in the film was precisely what the role demanded"—Charles Champlin, Los Angeles Times.

Before the film opened, a hostage crisis erupted in Washington, caused by a misunderstanding about Quinn.

In 1977, the film was about to open in America. On that day, the Hanafi movement, a Black nationalist group, stormed the B'nai B'rith building in Washington D.C., took hostages, and killed two people. Their stated reason was astonishing: a mistaken belief that Anthony Quinn had portrayed the Prophet Muhammad in the film. Yet in the film, the Prophet neither appeared nor spoke; he was only implied. Akkad offered to negotiate with the group and told them that if they found the film offensive, he would destroy it. The film was pulled from theatres; the crisis ended three days later and the film resumed its run.

This tragic misunderstanding encapsulated the paradox the film carried: a film attempting to build a bridge across one of the world's greatest crises of understanding, between the West and the Islamic world, was nearly burned down by a crisis while trying to build that very bridge.

Akkad said he could never understand this contradiction; how could he, when the film had been made precisely to mend the divide?

The film was banned in Egypt, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. Cairene scholars, despite having previously approved the screenplay, declared the completed film 'an insult to Islam.' But in time, the film's way was cleared. More than forty years later, in 2018, a 4K restoration was released in cinemas across the Middle East and North Africa. Akkad's son Malek described his father's favourite scene: the scene in which the Prophet's followers are tested before the Christian King of Abyssinia, the Negus. There, a character speaks:

"Muhammad teaches us to worship one God. To speak the truth. To love our neighbour as ourselves".

In that scene, Akkad was declaring what the true bridge between civilisations was. He himself was killed in an Al-Qaeda bombing in



Amman in 2005; his daughter Rima died in the same blast. The man who dreamed of building bridges was taken by the hands of those who destroy them.

An Actor's True Identity

Anthony Quinn portrayed more than a hundred characters over his career: American, Arab, Greek, Mexican, Chinese, Mongolian, French, Palestinian, Hawaiian, Italian, Irish, and many more. But this geographic and ethnic multiplicity was also his tragedy. Hollywood used him as an 'ethnic type' and each time, he overflowed the mould and reshaped it.

His life was no different from his roles: three marriages, thirteen children, the last born when he was eighty-one, in the corner of his final years. He sculpted; he painted. He held exhibitions in Vienna, Paris, and Seoul. He spent time with paints and clay on the shores of Bristol, Rhode Island. The Zorba within him kept on dancing long after the studios closed.

Even in death, he spoke several languages, carrying the soil of several continents in his body.

On 3 June 2001 in Boston, at the age of eighty-six, he died of

pneumonia and respiratory failure related to throat cancer. But before he died, in his final years, he had answered a question he was often asked: 'Which of your roles did you love the most?' Zorba, always Zorba, he said. But an inner voice, perhaps, also whispered Hamza, and perhaps Zampanò from *La Strada*.

Quinn's legacy was the victory he won against an industry that tried to confine him to a stereotype. On the road from a poor Mexican child to Hollywood's greatest character, he asked a question in every role: What is a human being? Where is he from? Which soil belongs to him? And each time he gave the same answer: Wherever they are from, whoever they are, a human being finds their true identity when they learn to live. That is why Zorba danced. That is why Hamza fought.

On the shore of Crete, before the wreckage, as he stamped his feet upon the sand, Quinn knew one thing: for a human being, the greatest defeat is to weep. The greatest victory is to dance, after everything has been lost.

"He was a man who bore the full weight of the human condition, both primitive and wise, both savage and tender," – Critic, Cleveland Plain Dealer, 1964.

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PANDEMIC LITERATURE: AGAINST THE INVISIBLE ENEMY

The roots of pandemic literature reach back to the plague-ridden hell of fourteenth-century Florence. Giovanni Boccaccio wrote the Decameron (1353) in the very heart of that hell, or in its immediate aftermath. Ten young people flee a city ravaged by the Black Death, take refuge in a villa, and tell each other a hundred stories.

SEBAHATTİN ÇELEBİ

The plague is humanity's oldest and most silent enemy. It cannot be seen, it knows no borders, it observes no justice. And with each arrival, it brings not only death but also a compulsion to write. As though the pen were obliged to ignite even in the midst of plague fire; as though words could form a shield against microbes, like incense smoke. History has left behind a literary legacy after every great epidemic, because writing is the most primal form of both mourning and survival.

Literature did not merely document the plague; it transformed it, philosophised it, made it metaphor. Viruses became allegory, hospitals became theatre, death statistics became poetry. Every epidemic lifted the veil from society and brought into the light everything hidden beneath: inequality, fear, love, betrayal. Literature's task was to look upon that nakedness, to sustain the gaze, and to record what it saw in words.

Stories Against the Plague

Literature took up arms against the plague with Boccaccio. In the shadow of the Black Death, he gave the world the Decameron — a testament to the enduring power of storytelling. Even as death claimed thousands daily, narrative became a form of resistance, prov-

ing that the human spirit could still create beauty and meaning in the face of annihilation.

The work is not merely a collection of tales; it is a throw of the dice against death, a chorus raised against silence. Boccaccio's discovery would become a legacy for all ages: narrative is a survival strategy. To tell a story is to resist death.

The plague was like a flood sweeping everyone before it, but the pens kept standing in the midst of that flood.

Cholera Laid Bare the Rotting Face of Civilisation

The nineteenth century was the age of cholera. This epidemic, which built bridges from Asia to Europe and America, also brought to light the dirty legacy of the Industrial Revolution: the sewers of cities collapsed, the poor were ruined, the wealthy fled. Thomas Mann, in *Death in Venice* (1912), deployed the shadow of cholera with great aesthetic mastery. The slow dissolution of Gustav von Aschenbach in the streets of Venice symbolises not only the end of one individual but the inner decay of European civilisation. In Mann's hand, illness is an instrument: it brings to the surface desires suppressed for years, shatters the disciplined bourgeois life, and even loads death itself with aesthetic meaning, making it almost beautiful.

Gabriel García Márquez, in *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), carried this metaphor into an entirely different dimension. In this epic love story set in Colombia, cholera is both a real disease and the

very disease of love itself. Márquez does not romanticise the epidemic; he accepts it as an inseparable part of human experience. He whispers to the reader that love endures even in life's heaviest moments, that perhaps it is lived most intensely in precisely those moments.

The Spanish Flu Was the Massacre Literature Forgot

The Spanish Flu of 1918–1920 was one of the deadliest epidemics in history, estimated to have claimed between fifty and a hundred million lives. Yet its resonance in literature remained disproportionately silent given the magnitude of that devastation. In the shadow of the great trauma of the First World War, under censorship, the epidemic was never fully processed. One of the rare voices to break this silence was Katherine Anne Porter. In *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), Porter told the story of a young journalist in Colorado brought to the brink of death by influenza. Fever, delirium, fear of death, but also war propaganda, social pressure, the instrumentalisation of the female body. In Porter's hands, the epidemic became a multi-layered metaphor. It laid bare the bitter contradiction between individual pain and collective trauma, and between the promises of modernity and its harsh reality. This literary silence is strange and thought-provoking. It may have to do with the flu's rapid passage, with the even greater devastation wrought by the war, or with the epidemic being suppressed as a social taboo. Whatever the cause, in the twenty-first century, in the wake of COVID-19, this "*forgotten*" epidemic returned to the agenda. Historians and writers traced its footprints; suffering long left unclaimed finally found a home.

The AIDS Crisis Carried the Epidemic into a Political Arena

AIDS, which emerged in the 1980s, added a dimension to pandemic literature it had never known before. For the first time, a disease was linked so openly to sexuality, identity politics, social stigma, and state negligence. AIDS literature did not merely narrate the disease and the struggle, discrimination, and grief of the gay community, it simultaneously pushed back, accused, and demanded accountability.

Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* (1985) brought the desperation and rage of the early years of the AIDS crisis in New York to the stage. The play was a document of indictment: it put the government, society, and the media on trial. While patients were dying, the state remained silent, society stigmatised, the media looked away. The protagonist Ned Weeks fights both the disease and the system. His struggle is not medical but political; it is not a dressing for the wound but a call for justice.

Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (1991–1992) took its place at the summit of AIDS literature. This two-part epic theatrical work wove together the AIDS crisis in Reagan's 1980s, gay identity, the collapse of the American Dream, spiritual searching, and the weight of history. Realistic scenes were blended with fantastical images; angels descended, ghosts spoke, historical figures appeared on stage. Kushner's message was clear: AIDS was not merely a health crisis, it was the visible face of American society's moral, political, and spiritual breakdown.

Susan Sontag, in *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (1989), examined how the disease was stigmatised and how that stigma caused harm. Sontag was opposed to AIDS being seen as a "*gay plague*", to the disease being presented as a moral punishment. "*The healthiest way of being ill is one purified of, is resistant to, metaphoric thinking*", she argued. Yet literature breathes precisely through such metaphors; this tension constitutes both the power and the responsibility of pandemic writing.

Dystopian Epidemics Imagined the Darkest Possibilities

Literature did not content itself with narrating real epidemics; it set about imagining, anticipating, and warning. Albert Camus's *The Plague* (1947) was less a real epidemic than an existential and political allegory. The plague besieging the city of Oran was in truth a symbol of fascism, of every form of oppression, of the meaninglessness gnawing at humanity from within. Yet Dr. Rieux goes on fighting even knowing it is meaningless. Because there is no other way to exist.

Richard Matheson, in *I Am Legend* (1954), reduces humanity to a single man through a viral epidemic. Robert Neville, the last surviving human, spends his nights against creatures who have transformed. But the real transformation is within himself; he comes to realise that he is now the one who is 'abnormal'. He has become the legend of the new world.

Stephen King, in *The Stand* (1978), imagined a world in which a flu virus leaked from a military laboratory sweeps away most of the world's population. The survivors divide between the poles of good and evil; the reconstruction of civilisation is simultaneously humanity's rediscovery of itself. King's epidemic is an event that resets the social order, giving humanity both the chance and the obligation to begin again.

In *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and its sequels, Margaret Atwood tells the story of an epidemic caused by genetic engineering. Her dystopian vision explores the responsibilities of the biotechnology age, the savagery of corporate capitalism, and the fractured relationship between humanity and nature. The epidemic is a catastrophe produced by humanity's own actions: the inevitable consequence of unbridled scientific research, the hunger for profit and ecological imbalance.

Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) attempts to filter a light from this darkness. The novel, set twenty years after a flu-like virus has swept civilisation away, focuses on a travelling theatre company formed by survivors. These people, staging Shakespeare under the motto "*Survival is insufficient*", prove that art and human connection remain vital even after the apocalypse. For Mandel, memory, aesthetics and a sense of belonging are instruments of resistance amidst ruin.

Coronavirus and Literature

In 2020, the world confronted the greatest epidemic of a century. This time, literature was not a spectator, it stepped onto the stage from the very first day. Writers kept journals, wrote poetry, composed essays. Italian writer Paolo Giordano had completed *In the Contagion* in the first weeks of quarantine. Arundhati Roy laid bare with merciless clarity how the pandemic deepened India's inequalities. Voices rose from every corner of world literature; each spoke from its own geography, its own solitude, its own fear.

The pandemic simultaneously triggered a rebirth of the classics. Camus's *The Plague* entered bestseller lists across the globe. People found an echo of their own days in a novel written in 1947: quarantine, isolation, uncertainty, fear of death and solidarity. Literature became a guide to living through the pandemic, offering consolation and meaning.

A distinguishing feature of COVID-19 literature was its digital nature. It was written on Twitter, on Instagram, on blogs. Poetry readings were held over Zoom; podcasts relayed quarantine stories. The pandemic also transformed the ways in which literature was produced and consumed. The page shifted to the screen; the writer met the world from the quarantine of their own home.



In Turkish Literature, the Epidemic Was Processed Through Metaphor

The theme of epidemics in Turkish literature has a deep-rooted history stretching from the Ottoman period through to the Republican era. The Ottoman Empire struggled with numerous epidemics over the centuries — plague and cholera chief among them — and this struggle permeated official documents, medical texts and historical records, ultimately finding its way into literature.

In Divan poetry, illness and death were generally treated within a mystical and philosophical framework. The concept of fena, the transience of the world, the inevitability of death, formed the backbone of the verse. Yet direct depictions of epidemics were rare. With the Tanzimat period, under the influence of Western literary forms, social realism deepened and diseases became a more direct subject of narrative.

In Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's *Blue and Black* (1897), for example, tuberculosis, the prevalent disease of the era, shapes the fate of the characters. In *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1928), Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu fuses images of disease with a critique of social decay. In some of his stories, Sait Faik reflects on illness and death as an everyday reality in Istanbul's poor neighbourhoods, depicting them with plain sorrow and without dramatisation. The pinnacle of this tradition in contemporary Turkish literature is Orhan Pamuk's *Nights of Plague* (2021). The plague epidemic that breaks out in 1901 on the fictional



island of Mingheria forms the novel's backbone. However Pamuk's real subject is not the plague, it is the East-West conflict, the crisis of modernisation, the final days of the Ottoman Empire and love as a form of resistance to time. Rebellion against quarantine, distrust of authority, the battle between science and tradition, and the eternal tension between freedom and security are all skilfully embedded within the historical context of the epidemic.

The Anatomy of Pandemic Literature Has Not Changed

Pandemic literature, spanning continents and centuries, insistently repeats certain themes. Isolation is always the first: Boccaccio's villa, Defoe's closed houses, Camus's besieged Oran and the global quarantine imposed by the pandemic of 2020. As social creatures, human beings question themselves in solitude and attempt to reconstruct their identity.

The second theme is the invisible enemy. The virus, the bacterium, the germ are invisible to the naked eye. It is everywhere yet nowhere. Air, water, contact, coughing — everything becomes a potential threat. This uncertainty can lead to paranoia and suspicion, and cause social trust to erode.

The third theme is the contradiction between social collapse and solidarity. Epidemics reveal the true face of humanity. Some become selfish, flee and blame others. Others stand in solidarity, make sac-

rifices and lend a helping hand. In Camus's *The Plague*, Dr. Rieux continues to fight despite his awareness of the absurd. In *Blindness*, Saramago openly and candidly observes humanity's dark potential. "Boccaccio's villa, Defoe's closed houses, In Camus's *The Plague*, Dr. Rieux continues to fight despite his awareness of the absurd. In *Blindness*, Saramago openly and candidly observes humanity's dark potential. The second theme is the invisible enemy. The virus, the bacterium, the germ are invisible to the naked eye. It is everywhere yet nowhere. Air, water, contact, coughing — everything becomes a potential threat. This uncertainty can lead to paranoia and suspicion, and cause social trust to erode.

The fourth theme is the crisis of trust in science and authority. Epidemics demonstrate the limitations of medicine, the state and science. Science cannot cure every disease. The fifth issue is the search for meaning in the face of death. Epidemics bring death to the forefront of everyday life. This triggers existential questions: Is life worth living? If God exists, why does he permit this suffering? Pandemic literature does not shy away from asking these questions, but nor does it rush to answer them.

Future Epidemics Will Also Generate Their Own Literature

Scientists agree that more epidemics are inevitable due to climate crisis, antimicrobial resistance, globalisation and human-animal contact. Perhaps the mildest one was the warning that was the first wave of the pandemic. Future epidemics may be more lethal, spread faster and be more difficult to control.

And literature will narrate those future epidemics too. Perhaps it already is.

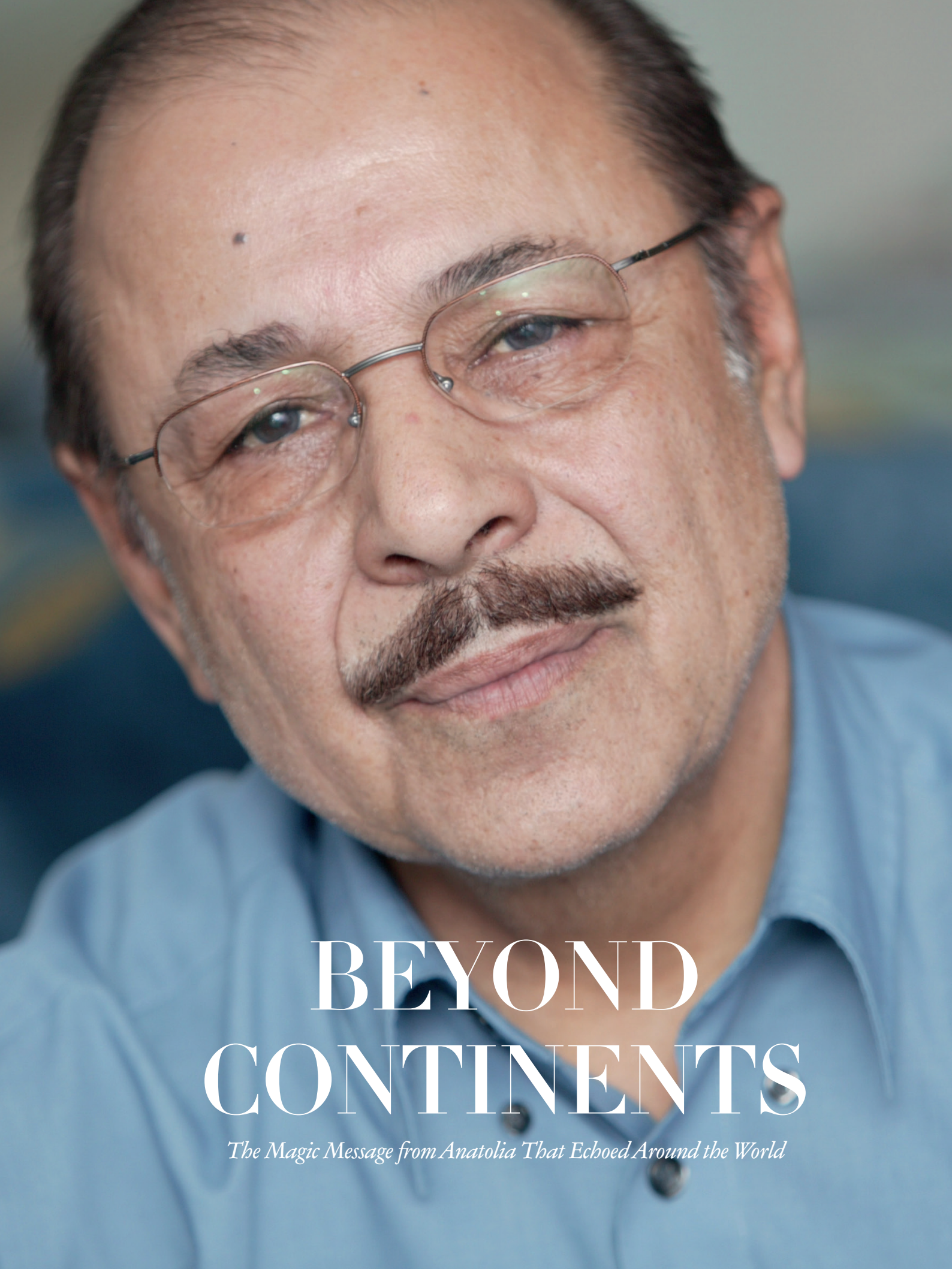
Pandemic literature will occupy an increasingly important place in the future because epidemics will continue to be the defining crises of the twenty-first century.

The Pen Emerged Stronger Than the Epidemic

Pandemic literature is the literature of trauma. But it is also the literature of resistance, of hope, and of meaning. Every line is a challenge written against death. Every character is an attempt to assert their existence against annihilation. Every narrative is a desire to be remembered against being forgotten.

Boccaccio's tales of escape, Mann's decadent aesthetic, Camus' absurdist struggle, Kramer's political rage, Atwood's dystopian warnings and Pamuk's historical panorama all look beyond the epidemic. Disease is merely an instrument; the real subject is the human being. These texts remind us that history is cyclical and that epidemics recur. But each time, humanity narrates and resists again. Literature is the memory of that resistance, a legacy hidden within the pages and left for future generations. 'We were here, we suffered, we died, but we also lived, loved, struggled and wrote.'

As long as the narrative continues, humanity continues. In future epidemics, of which there is no doubt, literature will bear witness and write in order to resist.

A close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing glasses and a mustache. He is looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with greenery and a body of water.

BEYOND CONTINENTS

The Magic Message from Anatolia That Echoed Around the World

Every Turkish guest worker in Cologne's working-class districts knew him — the man with the bağlama. By day he toiled on construction sites; by evening he breathed the soul of Anatolia to life in his modest apartment on Keupstraße lived in Germany for three decades, becoming a legend that transcended the Turkish community.

It is a remarkable story. A folk singer from the Anatolian heartland, who had initially come to seek medical care for his ailing daughter, stayed thirty years in a foreign land and became, in the words of those who witnessed it, one of the most important cultural mediators between Türkiye and Germany. His music provided a sense of home for thousands of guest workers, and his humility and humanity set an example of what it means to belong across borders.

Arrival in Germany: A Father Fights for His Child

In the early 1970s, Neşet Ertaş faced what he would later call the hardest decision of his life. His daughter Döne was gravely ill, and the medical options available in Türkiye were limited. Like so many Turks of his generation, he saw in Germany as offering better care and a new horizon.

He arrived in Cologne with his bağlama and a small suitcase — a city that had by then already become a center of Turkish migration. What was planned as a brief stay became a chapter of his life that would leave its mark not only on his own artistry but on the entire cultural landscape of the Turkish community in Germany.



Between the Scaffolding and the Stage

Neşet Ertaş found his new home on Keupstraße — that street in Cologne-Mülheim now known as the Turkish Mile or Little Istanbul. In a modest apartment, a man already famous in his homeland lived the life of an ordinary guest worker.

By day he swung a hammer on Cologne's building sites, earning his living through hard physical labor. The hands that coaxed the finest melodies from the bağlama each evening were stained with cement and mortar each morning. This double existence — laborer and artist — made him an authentic voice of the Turkish guest worker generation.

In the evenings, his small apartment transformed into a cultural salon. Turkish families from across Cologne and the Rhineland came to him — not only to hear his music but to find a piece of home. In an age before the internet, when the thread connecting people to their homeland was thin and fragile, Neşet Ertaş became a living bridge between Anatolia and the Rhine.

Building Bridges: The Universal Language of Music

What was perhaps most remarkable about Neşet Ertaş was his ability to build bridges to his German neighbors and colleagues without a shared language. His German workmates on the construction sites came to know him as a modest, generous man. Even without understanding his words, they felt the emotion in his music.

At summer gatherings in the back courtyards of Keupstraße, he played for a mixed neighborhood. German pensioners sat be-

side Turkish grandmothers, all of them drawn under the spell of the bağlama's melancholic tones. Music became the universal language that dissolved every barrier.

A Cultural Inheritance: Teacher to a Generation

Particularly profound was his role as a cultural mentor to the young Turks growing up in Germany. Every weekend, young musicians came to him — some born in Türkiye, others born on German soil. They came to learn from the master who embodied the authentic tradition of Anatolian folk music.

For the second and third generation of Turkish immigrants, he was a vital point of reference, a thread back to their roots. In a time of searching — caught between Turkish origins and German lives — he offered something rare: orientation. He showed that one could honor both worlds, inhabit both cultures without betraying either.

His apartment became an informal music school, where not only technique was taught but the cultural and spiritual dimensions of Anatolian folk music were passed on. Many of the next generation's prominent Turkish-German musicians received their first musical formation within those walls.

Longing in Exile: New Songs Are Born

The years in Germany left a deep impression on his art. The experience of migration, the ache for home, the weight of life in a foreign land — all of it flowed into his music. Songs like *Garip Bülbül* (The Lonely Nightingale) and *Sevda Çiçeği* (The Flower of Loving) were born in this period and became anthems of the Turkish diaspora.

Yet these songs spoke not only of yearning for the Anatolian steppe. They also held gratitude — for the welcome Germany had offered, for friendships forged on scaffolding and in shared courtyards, and for the hope of a better future for the children who were growing up between two worlds.

Refusing Commerce: Art Over Business

Although Neşet Ertaş lived in Germany and his music found a wide audience there, he consistently turned down commercial offers from record companies. For him, music was a spiritual matter, not a business. His motto said it plainly: *"I do not sing the songs. The songs sing me"*.

This stance earned him deep respect, including from German cultural figures who recognized in him an artist of uncompromising authenticity. German ethnomusicologists and journalists took notice, drawn to the integrity with which he guarded his craft.

The End of an Era: A Return to the Homeland

In the year 2000, after nearly three decades in Germany, Neşet Ertaş decided to return to Türkiye. His daughter's treatment had run its course successfully; he himself had grown older, and the call of the homeland had grown louder than he could resist.

His farewell in Cologne became a deeply moving occasion. Hundreds came — from the Turkish community, but also German friends and neighbors — to say goodbye to the man who had spent thirty years as a cultural ambassador between two worlds.



A Legacy: The Cologne Years of a Turkish Legend

What Neşet Ertaş lived and accomplished in Germany makes him a singular figure in the history of the Turkish-German relationship. He embodied a generation of guest workers who brought with them not only their labor but their culture, their warmth, and their humanity.

His years in Cologne showed, by example, how belonging can be built: through respect, through openness, through the willingness to learn from one another. He remained true to his roots without closing himself off to his surroundings. He preserved his traditions with-

out turning them into a museum piece.

Today, more than a decade after his death, Neşet Ertaş is venerated as a legend in both Türkiye and Germany. In Cologne, people still remember the quiet man with the *bağlama* who lived on Keupstraße for thirty years and, in doing so, wrote a quiet piece of history.

His music lives on — not only in the hearts of the Turkish community, but in the hearts of all who believe that true art knows no borders and that humanity remains the finest bridge between cultures.



A person is sitting in a floral armchair by a window, looking out at the sea. The person's hands are resting on their lap. The armchair has a colorful floral pattern. The background is a bright, hazy view of the ocean under a clear sky.

THE FLORAL ARMCHAIR

These had been the “dreams” Nesrin had nurtured before her parents’ separation. On the day she “saw her father standing there with a suitcase in his hand”, all those dreams “collapsed at once”. He said only: “Farewell”. What followed was nothing but “a great silence and tears”.

AYSEL YALÇIN

Now Nesrin is sitting, in all likelihood, in the armchair by the window, the armchair her mother loved so dearly and could never bring herself to throw away, not even with its “flowers faded over the years”. She looks out toward the sea and watches the sun go down.

Nesrin was barely a year old when the armchair came into the house; in a sense, she had grown up alongside the “floral armchair”. Her mother loved

to sit in that chair on afternoon after afternoon and watch the sunset, always accompanied by a “lightly sweetened mokka on the small side table” beside her. Over the years, much of the furniture in the house was replaced, but the “pink floral armchair” never moved from its place. No one would have dared to shift it.

One day her mother had said to Nesrin: “*This armchair is my very first piece of trousseau, my daughter. Take good care of it, even when I’m no longer here, will you?*” Nesrin was still too young then to understand the weight of those words. She only nodded and said: “Yes”.

That moment was forgotten, until the day her mother left her forever.

When Nesrin lost her mother, she was only twenty and studying at university. Her mother had been her closest friend; on weekends they would go out together and dance until dawn. During term time they didn’t see each other often, since Nesrin studied in another city. Sometimes her mother would visit without warning.

Whenever Nesrin spotted her waiting outside the building, “*the whole world belonged to her*”. Her friends admired the closeness between them. Many said: “*I wish my mother were like yours*”.

I am quite sure you are wondering now: “*Does this girl have no father?*”

Of course she had a father, but he had separated from her mother some years before and was living in another city. Since they did not get along, Nesrin had no contact with him. Her mother had become her *"everything"*; even her plans for the future were made together with her. When her mother sometimes said, *"My daughter, one day there will be other people in your life and you will go your own way"*, Nesrin would joke: *"I'm not going anywhere without you. Whoever wants me has to take you too"*. And yet as a small child she had been *"Daddy's princess"*. She would stubbornly refuse to go to bed before he came home; *"without his goodnight kiss she could not sleep"*. Like every little girl, she had been *"in love with her father"*.

Until the day he left. Nesrin never truly understood why her father had abandoned not only her mother, but her.

She was in her final year of secondary school, only a few weeks before graduation. Nesrin's dress was to be *"sea blue"*. She wanted to wear her hair *"natural"*, like her mother, she loved *"simplicity"*. Her father was to wear his *"dark blue suit"* with a *"white shirt"*.

These had been the *"dreams"* Nesrin had nurtured before her parents' separation. On the day she *"saw her father standing there with a suitcase in his hand"*, all those dreams *"collapsed at once"*. He said only: *"Farewell"*. What followed was nothing but *"a great silence and tears"*.

Yet time, which *"never stands still"*, moved on even on that day. On the day of the graduation ceremony, Nesrin managed to *"conceal her pain"* while her mother *"smiled a forced smile of happiness"*. In truth she was genuinely proud of her daughter, but now loneliness had been added to her *"broken heart"*. She had to *"stay strong"*; there was *"no other choice but to continue the road alone"*. Her only wish was to *"secure her daughter's future"*.

After the separation, her father had *"begun a new life"* in another city with another woman. Nesrin was resolved *"never to forgive him"*.

She felt that she had *"not deserved to be abandoned"*.

At the graduation ball, Nesrin danced with her uncle while the other girls danced with their fathers. Her uncle held her *"trembling hands tightly"*, and throughout the whole night they avoided meeting each other's eyes, so as not to cry.

The summer holidays were touched with melancholy. At every step she was reminded of the time she had spent with her father. Her mother saw the state her daughter was in, but could not help her. Before university began, she persuaded Nesrin to seek *"professional help"*.

Just as time heals all wounds, it softened Nesrin's pain too, *"a little, at least"*.

They moved to a new flat and took nothing with them except their clothes, a few kitchen things, and the floral armchair. Her mother placed the chair in front of the living room window, the small table beside it. Slowly, everything began to settle back into place. Nesrin continued her studies, and her mother worked with every ounce of her strength.

Just as they thought all their troubles were behind them, Nesrin was to live through *"the bitterest day of her life"*.

When she woke that morning, the house was *"very quiet"*. She looked for her mother in the kitchen, but she was not there. She found her in the living room, sitting in the floral armchair, her gaze turned toward the sea.

"Mama, you gave me a fright! You're in your little corner again. Couldn't you sleep?" said Nesrin, and walked toward her mother...

One of the world's quietest arguments is not taking place inside a pill bottle. It is taking place inside people. Especially when antidepressants are concerned. On one side stands modern medicine with its solutions; on the other, the fragile and intimate relationship each person holds with their own inner world. These two territories do not always move in harmony.

The rapid rise in antidepressant use in recent years deserves to be treated not only as a health issue but as a social one. Because what is at stake is not merely individual suffering; it is also the question of how that suffering is defined, classified, and *"treated"*.

Across Europe and much of the world, antidepressant use has more than doubled over the past two decades. In some countries, a significant share of the population takes these medications regularly. In England, roughly one in eight people is reported to be on antidepressants. This is not a personal preference. It is a mass orientation.

So what does this rise mean?

Is a person who feels sad, anxious, or disconnected from life truly ill — or simply living the natural consequences of the life they are living?

Modern psychology tends to answer this question with categories. Diagnoses, criteria, durations. If you have been unhappy for a certain length of time, you are depressed. If your anxiety takes a certain shape, you have an anxiety disorder. Human emotion is turned into a kind of catalogue.

And yet every person is a world unto themselves. Two people who suffer the same loss do not feel the same thing. The same grief, the same solitude, the same pressure resonates differently in every soul. But the system often overlooks this difference. Because standardization makes management easier.

The systems by which psychological disorders are classified are expanding steadily. More diagnoses, more categories, more explanations. To some, this represents progress in understanding the human being. To others, it is a mechanism for sorting and labeling them.

And at the center of this mechanism, there is a vast economy.

Antidepressants are no longer merely a treatment. They are an industry worth tens of billions of dollars. As of 2025, the global antidepressant market is reported to exceed twenty billion dollars, with projections placing it above thirty billion in the years ahead. This is not simply a healthcare sector. It is a market that grows, expands, and continuously acquires new patients.

Is this growth coincidence?

Or is it the modern system offering its own cure for the problems that the modern system has created?

Many critics see a contradiction at the heart of this. Because the system both produces the conditions that exhaust people and sells the remedy for that exhaustion. A person becomes unhappy; that unhappiness is then treated. But the source of the unhappiness remains unchanged.

Working conditions do not improve. Loneliness does not diminish. Meaninglessness does not dissolve. Only the person's response to all of this is regulated.

This is precisely where antidepressants enter. They are said to restore the brain's chemical balance. And yes, for many peo-

ple they do provide genuine relief. But this effect does not work the same way for everyone.

For some, these medications make life bearable again. But for others, something else happens. A smoothing of the emotions. A loss of sharpness.

Many users describe this in similar terms: I no longer feel very sad — but I can no longer feel joy the way I once did.

Should this be seen merely as a side effect? Or as a weakening of the bond between the person and reality?

More pointed criticisms go further still. It is said that in some cases these medications alter perception and reduce a person's sensitivity to the problems around them. The problem does not disappear, but the person's relationship to the problem changes.

Anger in the face of injustice diminishes. The impulse to question meaninglessness weakens. Resistance to pressure fades.

And so a more compliant individual emerges. Calmer. Quieter. Less questioning.

At this point the debate ceases to be purely medical. It takes on a social dimension.

Because if millions of people in a society begin simultaneously to feel less — that is not an individual condition. That is a transformation.

Within the fast and unforgiving machinery of capitalism, the human being is increasingly expected to produce more and think less. To work constantly, consume endlessly, and question as little as possible. Those who cannot adapt to this structure are labeled as problems.

And at precisely that moment, one of the system's softest-looking but most powerful tools steps in.

Antidepressants.

The matter is no longer simply one of medication. It is the fact that all of this has become a vast industry. There is an economy turning on the human soul. More diagnoses, more prescriptions, more dependency.

This cycle grows. Because the system feeds it.

Today millions of people take antidepressants for years on end. In some countries, rates of long-term use have risen sharply. What was once a temporary treatment is becoming a permanent way of life.

And here a harder question surfaces.

Is the person truly healing? Or are they simply adapting?

To put it more bluntly: in some cases, these medications may make the unjust feel just. The wrong feel normal. The absurd feel reasonable. Because they weaken the mechanism of protest within.

Anger diminishes. Questioning diminishes. Resistance diminishes. And what remains is a more manageable individual.

A robotic equilibrium. Neither fully unhappy nor fully happy.



Simply functioning.

For some, this may be peace. For others, it is disappearance.

Because what makes a human being human is not only the capacity to feel well. It is also the capacity to feel disturbed. To notice when something is wrong, to react to it, to want to change it.

If those feelings are extinguished, what remains is a body that lives. That does not think, does not question, does not resist.

This is why some critics see this process not as a matter of public health but as a mechanism of control.

Manufactured concerns. Expanding definitions. Ever new categories of illness. Every person has a label. Every label has a medication. Every medication has a market. And this market keeps growing.

Because human suffering does not end.

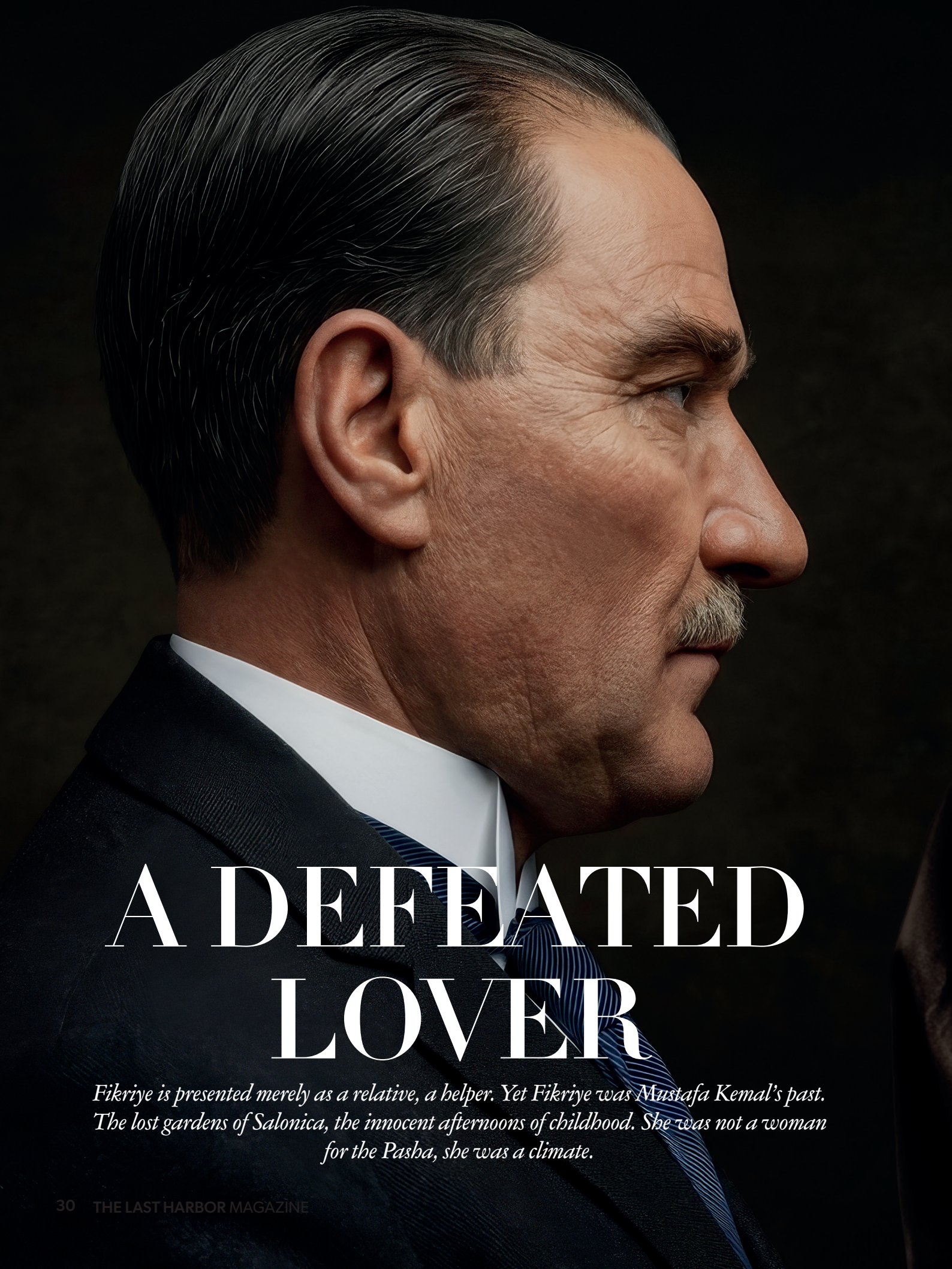
But perhaps the real question is this:

Is the person truly ill — or is it the world they are living in?

There is no easy answer to that question. But perhaps the most important thing remains what it has always been.

THE ANTIDEPRESSANT INDUSTRY

The rapid rise in antidepressant use in recent years deserves to be treated not only as a health issue but as a social one. Because what is at stake is not merely individual suffering — it is also the question of how that suffering is defined, classified, and “treated”.



A DEFEATED LOVER

Fikriye is presented merely as a relative, a helper. Yet Fikriye was Mustafa Kemal's past. The lost gardens of Salonica, the innocent afternoons of childhood. She was not a woman for the Pasha, she was a climate.



History records victories. **Marble** monuments, signed treaties, those thick borders drawn across maps... But history does not record how the hand that drew those borders trembled by candlelight when night fell. Imagine a man. At the map table, he is overturning the world and rebuilding it. At his command, armies pour toward the Mediterranean; at his glance, parliaments fall into line. Yet that same man, locked in his room within the mud-brick walls of those early days at Çankaya, buries his face in his hands and says: One of the mistakes I made in my life was getting married.

To whom does he say this? Perhaps to Kılıç Ali, perhaps to Salih Bozok. But in truth, in that moment, he is speaking to himself, talking to his own echo. You see, he says, his voice slightly broken, slightly abashed, I commanded armies, I commanded parliaments, I fought wars, I won them, but I cannot command a woman.

Mustafa Kemal. A legend, a genius, a supreme commander. But when he removes his uniform, when he hangs those braided epaulettes, those heavy medals on the coat rack, only Mustafa remains. And that Mustafa, caught between two great loves, two great women, two separate worlds; who conquered the globe but could never quite conquer his own heart, was, in truth, a defeated man.

Fikriye: The Mist of Former Times

The story is always told a little incompletely in the history books. Fikriye is presented merely as a relative, a helper. Yet Fikriye was Mustafa Kemal's past. The lost gardens of Salonica, the innocent afternoons of childhood. She was not a woman for the Pasha, she was a climate.

In those darkest, most gunpowder-scented days of the National Struggle, in Ankara's time of deprivation, Fikriye was there. At the Directorate Building, in that ramshackle station house, it was she who listened to Mustafa Kemal's cough, who sewed on his loose buttons, who offered him the warmth of a home with tables she conjured from nothing. Even Zübeyde Hanım, that stern-natured, hard-to-please Rumelian woman, had taken Fikriye to her heart. Because Fikriye loved Mustafa. Not the Pasha, not the Gazi, but Zübeyde's son, fair-haired Mustafa.

Fikriye's love was like a candle flame: silent, calm, but burning without pause. She was a harbour that stilled the storms in the Pasha's life. When she took up her oud, when those slender fingers touched the strings, the room was at once cleansed of the noise of war and transformed by that haunting mountain song into a place of shelter.

But Fikriye was ill. The wasting disease. In her lungs was no ordinary moth, it was the weight of that great, that impossible love. And the Pasha, with that merciful, that Eastern side of himself, wished to protect Fikriye. As he sent her to Munich for treatment, did he know he was sending her into exile? When Fikriye left, she had not only left Ankara behind, she had left her soul there too.

The Flames of Izmir, the Uşakîzâde Mansion, and Paris

And Izmir. The great fire. While the city burned, the real fire had begun in that white marble mansion in Göztepe. As Mustafa Kemal searched for a headquarters amid the dust and smoke of victory, fate led him to the mansion of Uşakîzâde Muammer Bey.

The woman who received him at the door bore no resemblance to Fikriye. She was slight perhaps, but in her eyes there was a cen-



tury's worth of self-possession; in her bearing, the proud air of Europe. Latife. The daughter of the Uşakîzâdes, one of Izmir's most established merchant families. An intellectual who had read law at the Sorbonne, attended political lectures in London, and spoke French, English, and German.

Mustafa Kemal was taken aback. This was not one of those modest Anatolian girls who trembled at the sight of a commander and reached for the hem of his coat. When she said this mansion is yours, Pasha, her voice did not waver. When she said Izmir has been waiting



Latife Hanım



Fikriye

for you, her eyes were saying I have been waiting for you.

Those days, the days when the dream of a new state was being born from the ashes of Izmir. Latife did not merely play host to the Pasha; she enchanted him. Not only with her beauty but with her intellect. She translated his English correspondence, leaned over the maps, and on those evenings in the white mansion, sat at the piano and played Tchaikovsky. The gunpowder scent of war had given way to the crystal sound of the piano and the Paris-scented perfume of Latife. This, said Mustafa Kemal, is the spirit I have been seeking. The woman who will present me to the world.

Latife was also courageous. When assassination reports came in, she was brazen enough to stand guard at the Pasha's door with a weapon in hand, and devoted enough to say the bullet meant for you shall come to me. This loyalty and this modernity erased, for a time, the sorrow of Fikriye from Mustafa Kemal's heart.

A Revolutionary Wedding and the Shadow of Zübeyde Hanım

Yet it was Zübeyde Hanım who saw this love in its clearest, most unguarded form. Before her son entered Izmir, ill as she was, paralysed, she rose and wanted to go to Izmir. What had she said to aide Salih Bozok on the road? There is some Lütüfiye in Izmir. My son has taken a liking to that girl... Let me go and see what sort of girl she is.

She could not even say her name quite right, she called Latife "Lütüfiye". But her heart's eye was open. When she met Latife, when she surveyed this modern girl, that old woman made an observation that would go down in history: This girl does not know that she does not love my son. She loves Mustafa Kemal Pasha, she loves Gazi Kemal Pasha. She does not love Mustafa Kemal Efendi. Zübeyde Hanım was folded into the soil of Izmir before she could say this to her son, before she could say I have a bad feeling about this.

On 29 January 1923, immediately after his mother's death, they

married. But this was no ordinary wedding. It was a manifesto. When they sat at the marriage table, something unprecedented occurred. Latife Hanım had cast aside the thick veil covering her face and sat beside Mustafa Kemal as his equal. The witnesses were Fevzi Çakmak and Kâzım Karabekir. This was not a wedding, it was a declaration of revolution. By marrying Latife, Mustafa Kemal was signalling the new place of Turkish women.

The Heel Symphony and Clashing Powers

They married. But Çankaya Mansion swiftly became not a nest of love but a frontline in a war of authority. Latife, with the refinement of the Uşakizâdes and the education of the Sorbonne, arrived at those mud-brick rooms and declared: I am here too. She was strong. She was forceful.

She changed the order of the mansion, changed the tables. Those famous dinner conversations, those evening-to-dawn blends of ideas where affairs of state were discussed. Latife was uncomfortable with them. She did not wish to be merely a listener at that table. When the Pasha lingered downstairs, extending his conversation with his companions, Latife Hanım upstairs, in the bedroom, would begin striking the floor with her hard-heeled shoes. Tak, tak, tak. This sound was the famous Heel Symphony, passed from tongue to tongue.

That sound was a warning. It was an order: finish now, come upstairs. The great Supreme Commander, the man who had defied the whole world, would grow abashed before those heel strikes and say to his companions: Shall we be off then, boys? Two captains were sinking the ship. While Mustafa Kemal sought peace and tranquility at home, he had found across from him a teacher who was constantly demanding, constantly correcting, and occasionally stepping so far forward as to wave at deputies from the parliamentary balcony. Love was slowly turning into an arm-wrestling match.

A Morning in the Garden: The Moment the Names Were Confused

The moment the threads snapped, how human, how tragic. One morning, in the garden of Çankaya, they were watching a dog that had just given birth to puppies. The Pasha was cheerful, smiling. He turned to Latife beside him, about to say something. But it was not Latife that fell from his lips, it was Fikriye.

A momentary lapse. The treacherous game of the subconscious. But this mistake became the final drop that caused the cup to overflow. For Latife, it was an unforgivable insult. After all that quarrelling, all that noise, for the name of that other woman, the old one, the other, to fall from her husband's mouth. It was more than enough to begin the separation of beds, the beginning of that great crisis. Mustafa Kemal, perhaps in that moment, understood: his soul was not seeking the bright light of modernity, it was still seeking the dimness of that old tenderness.

A Blood-Red Rose and the Sound of Carriage Wheels

At that very moment, the forgotten shadow, banished to those distant, grey rooms of Munich, returned. Fikriye. The longing was worse than the wasting disease. When she appeared at the gates of Çankaya, the doors of the house that had once been her home were shut in her face. Latife Hanım's order was clear: she was not to be received.

The guards at the gate bowed their heads. Fikriye understood. Her home, her country, her love, everything, all had been taken from her. She stepped into a carriage. As it descended the slope from the mansion, she reached into her bag for the mother-of-pearl-handled Browning. The weapon Mustafa Kemal had once given her as a gift. And that sound, a single gunshot tearing through the silence of Ankara.

Fikriye did not die immediately. She lay in a hospital room for days, between life and death. The doctors said suicide; the files were closed. But all of Ankara knew: even if the finger that pulled the trigger was Fikriye's, what had pulled that trigger was loneliness, rejection. When Mustafa Kemal received the news, he shut himself in his room. That gunshot never left his ears for the rest of his life.

Divorce and the Fading of the Yellow Roses

Fikriye's shadow was the final nail hammered into the coffin of the marriage with Latife as well. The dead are sometimes stronger than the living. And at last, that mistake of two years, six months, and four days came to an end.

Latife Hanım left. Proud, head held high, but inwardly in ruins. She was silent until she died. She never spoke a single ill word about Mustafa Kemal; she kept his letters, his secrets, locked in trunks. Mustafa Kemal, for his part, was left utterly alone at Çankaya. Neither Fikriye's maternal tenderness remained, nor Latife's intellect.

In those days, he took to gazing longer at the yellow roses in the garden. In our lands, they say the yellow rose is parting. It is sorrow. From Latife Hanım's home, too, yellow roses never went missing un-



til the day she died. Without speaking, without seeing one another, they communed for years in the mournful tongue of yellow roses.

When on a certain day he turned to Kılıç Ali and made that confession, he was in truth summing up his entire life: I commanded armies, but I could not command a woman. For love obeyed no chain of command. Love was not managed by regulations and decrees. And Mustafa Kemal, that great revolutionary, had been unable to suppress the rebellion in his own heart; in that inner war, he had been defeated.

He lies now in Anıtkabir. Alone. And when we read his story, it is not his victories that we love, it is precisely these defeats, these human frailties. Because then we understand that inside the man who stands so upright, there lives a human being who loves as we do, makes mistakes as we do, says if only as we do.

Clash of Characters

Latife Hanım possessed a strong, wilful, and jealous nature. Atatürk, by contrast, was someone who wanted a constant crowd around him, long dinner conversations, mixed assemblies of men and women. Latife Hanım at times attempted to curtail this environment with considerable firmness.

Allegations of Political Interference

Statesmen and those close to Mustafa Kemal felt that Latife Hanım interfered too much in affairs of state, in the arrangement of appointments, and in Mustafa Kemal's decisions. In certain circles, the murmur circulated: it is she who governs Çankaya.

The Ali Fuat Cebesoy Matter

According to some accounts, Latife Hanım adopted an attitude toward old comrade-in-arms Ali Fuat Pasha that amounted to driving him from Çankaya. This caused deep grievances among Mustafa Kemal's inner circle.

Personal Exhaustion

Atatürk's nocturnal lifestyle, his drinking table, his impulsive decisions, and his unpredictable schedule became increasingly unbearable for Latife Hanım, who desired an orderly and disciplined domestic life.

Separation: A Will Expressed in a Single Sentence

On 5 August 1925, as Mustafa Kemal was departing Çankaya Mansion, he informed Latife Hanım that they were divorced. The divorce was carried out by the talaq procedure of Islamic law, which was still in effect at the time, that is, unilaterally, by Mustafa Kemal's spoken will. The official Civil Code would not come into force until 1926. The end of this marriage was therefore, in the fullest sense, one of the last great applications of the old law, a historical irony.

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Otto Rothmann in Uniform, Berlin ca. 1914; Jüdisches Museum Berlin,
Inv.-Nr. 2006/44/427, Schenkung von John und Ellen Rothmann, Bill
und Renée Rothmann und Susan Rothmann

IN THE SHADOW OF THE IRON CROSS

Jewish Soldiers Who Fought Under the German Flag in the First World War

SEBAHATTIN ÇELEBİ

In the summer heat of 1914, the streets of Germany were drunk with something difficult to name. As the Emperor's proclamation of mobilisation rang through the air, crowds roared and young men jostled one another in the long lines of volunteers. Among them, thousands of Jews — men who felt themselves German before anything else. University graduates, merchants, musicians, students. The time had come to prove their loyalty to the fatherland not with words, but with their blood.

Over the course of the war, approximately one hundred thousand German Jews joined those ranks. Seventy thousand served on the front lines. Twelve thousand did not return. What remained, in the end, were the stories of these men — names that found their way into neither monument nor textbook.

The Fervour of Volunteers and the Weight of What It Cost

In the war's first weeks, twelve thousand Jews enlisted without waiting to be called. In August 1914, the Federation of German Jews helped establish something that had never existed within the German army: military chaplains serving in the field — the Feldrabbiners. Eighty-one rabbis volunteered. The first seven began their service that September. Among them was Leo Baeck, who would become one of the most profound architects of Jewish thought in the decades that followed.

The war itself proved nothing like the gleaming victories propaganda had promised. In the mud-choked trenches of the Western Front, in the freezing winters of the East, these soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder with ordinary German conscripts. Bullets did not ask about faith.

The Iron Crosses on Their Chests

Over the course of the war, eighteen thousand German Jews were awarded the Iron Cross; one thousand of those were first class — the highest distinction. Many names have since been forgotten, yet some stories survive as testament to an almost incomprehensible courage.

Wilhelm Frankl was the first pilot in the German air force to re-

ceive the Pour le Mérite — the highest military honour the Empire could bestow. He was of Jewish descent, and in those years that detail was noted by neither those who presented the award nor those who wrote about it; for in that time, the question of the fatherland made no distinctions, at least not openly.

Fritz Beckhardt claimed seventeen aerial victories. He wore the Iron Cross first and second class, and then the Royal House Order of Hohenzollern. The German Emperor personally congratulated him twice.

Letters from the Front: The Quietest Witnesses of the War

By 1917, German soldiers were sending six million letters a day and receiving eight and a half million in return. Most of these letters were never written to be read a second time. Some passed from hand to hand before the writer ever reached the front. Some were found in uniform pockets, torn by bullets.

A letter written by a young soldier named Gerhard Henschel to his family offered a quietly tender portrait of the camaraderie of those days. Describing the men sharing his billet, he wrote:

"Our room looks splendid — two Christians, and the rest of us a minyan!"

In pressing the Yiddish word for a quorum of ten — minyan — into that single sentence, Henschel captured, with his own particular wit, a truth about war: when the war counted its men, it saw not their faith but their place in the line. Yet Henschel himself was killed on the Eastern Front a year after writing those words. He was twenty-one years old.

Hans Blumenthal enlisted in Berlin at seventeen. After completing his training in Belgium, he served in an ambulance unit, carrying the wounded from the field. Years later, his son Ralph would recount what his father had passed on to him: that comradeship — between Jewish and non-Jewish soldiers alike — was what kept a man alive, in every sense.

Judenählung: The Counting of a Dignity

In the autumn of 1916, the War Ministry ordered a census of all Jewish soldiers in the German army. The official pretext was carefully worded, but everyone knew the truth: there were whispers that Jews

were evading their duty, that they had settled themselves into comfortable postings behind the lines. The *Juden-zählung* — the Jewish Census — was an accusation dressed in bureaucratic form.

The results were never made public during the war. Publishing them would have presented an inconvenient picture for those who had ordered the count; for the real figures showed that the rates at which Jewish soldiers fought and died differed little, if at all, from those of their non-Jewish comrades.

Arnold Zweig — the German Jewish writer who had volunteered and fought on the fronts of France, Hungary, and Serbia — was on the Western Front when the census order was announced. In a letter to Martin Buber, dated the fifteenth of February, he wrote:

"The Juden-zählung was an unheard-of reflection of sorrow — for Germany's sin and for our own pain. If there were no antisemitism in the army, the intolerable duty call would be almost bearable."

In that single sentence lived the bewildered bitterness of a man who still had his rifle on his shoulder, who had faced enemy fire for his country — and who felt, nonetheless, that something had broken. Something that could not be mended by any medal.

An Encounter with the Jews of the East

For many German Jewish soldiers, service on the Eastern Front held an unexpected mirror up to their own lives. Assimilated men — deeply rooted in German culture, shaped by its cities and its universities — found themselves in close proximity, for the first time, to the Yiddish-speaking Jewish communities of the East: communities that still held their traditions with fierce, unhurried devotion.

Helmut Freund, a medical officer born in Berlin, recorded his impressions while stationed in Iŭje, a small Belarusian town between Vilnius and Minsk. He wrote of being moved by the poverty of the Jewish community there — and yet struck, almost to the point of awe, by their serenity, by the self-sufficient strength of their faith. Two kinds of Jews, from two entirely different worlds, had looked one another in the face for the first time, in the middle of a war that had not asked either of them to come.

Remembering While Being Made to Forget: Another War After the War

The war ended. Germany was defeated. And very soon, the legend of the 'stab in the back' began to circulate — that poisonous rumour claiming Jews, leftists and internal enemies had delivered the country into enemy hands. The existence of tens of thousands of Jewish soldiers who had bled for Germany could have been an answer to this slander. But the number of those willing to hear that answer was smaller than the number determined to spread the lie.

In 1919, the Reich Association of Jewish Front Soldiers — the *Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten* — was founded. Its purpose was



Arthur Polack als Soldat in feldgrauer Uniform, Deutsches Reich 1914 - 1917; Jüdisches Museum Berlin, Inv.-Nr. 2013/395/446, Schenkung von Orach Young



plain: to document the contribution of German Jews in the war, and to refute the lies of antisemitism with evidence that could not be denied. In 1932, the federation published a book of remembrance bearing the names of the twelve thousand German Jewish soldiers who had fallen in the First World War. Its title was *Die Jüdischen Gefallenen* — The Jewish Fallen. In his foreword, the federation's national chairman, Dr. Leo Löwenstein, described these losses as a 'blood test in the German sense.' It was a tragic phrase; for the result of that test would never be declared sufficient.

In 1968, Jewish authorities in Germany decided to mark the known graves of three thousand Jewish soldiers from the Western Front with the Star of David and a Hebrew inscription. Fifty years after the burials — the headstones, at last, were placed.

The Nazi Years: The Medals Were Not Revoked. But Their Owners Were Taken.

Jüdisches Begräbnis während des Ersten Weltkrieges, Stryi 1915,
Fotografie, verso: Kopierstift, 8,8 x 13,8 cm; Jüdisches Museum Berlin,
Inv.-Nr. 2013/364/0, Foto: Jens Ziehe



When the Nazis came to power in 1933, veteran Jewish soldiers were initially granted a partial protection. It was temporary. On Kristallnacht — that burning night in November 1938 — Jewish veterans who were arrested were released, for a while. Then they too were gone. The fact of having fought alongside Germans in a war made no difference any more.

Willi Ermann had served in the German army during the First World War. He was murdered in Auschwitz. His Iron Cross offered no protection. The decoration the state had given him was of no use at the door of the furnace that same state had built for him.

What Remains

The story of one hundred thousand Jewish soldiers who fought for the German Empire spent long years caught between two separate silences: one born of deliberate erasure under the Nazis, the other cast

by the vast, suffocating shadow of the Holocaust. It was difficult to commemorate a sacrifice made on the eve of an annihilation — because that sacrifice had not been enough to prevent the annihilation.

But the letters remained. The diaries remained. The names remained. Gerhard Henschel's dry wit remained. Arnold Zweig's grief-laced anger remained. What Helmut Freund saw when he looked East remained. And the register of twelve thousand fallen, written out name by name, remained.

This page of history is as much a record of anguish as it is of honour. It is a hard document — one that shows how loving a country, even dying for it, was not enough. But it also says this: people fight for what they believe in. And that belief, those who come after will either remember — or forget.

This time, the remembering is in our hands.

THE GREATEST POET

NAZIM

HIKMET

Nazım Hikmet, the greatest poet of modern Turkish lyric poetry, is, with the new language and new understanding he brought to the art of poetry, the greatest revolutionary of verse.

MEHMET YILDIZ

"I would like to wake for half an hour after my death—to see my heart, which has caused me so much pain, and to witness your weeping".

His view of the way literature reflects and interprets reality can be seen in this statement: *"Modern realism in literature is the conscious application of dialectical materialism to the field of literature"*. He was the first writer to translate the philosophy and transformative force of societies into literary practice.

Had one wished for a portrait of a beautiful child, his mother Celile Hanım could have painted Nazım. From the marriage of Hikmet Bey, son of Nazım Pasha and Celile Hanım, daughter of the linguist Enver Pasha and Leyla Hanım, Nazım was born on 15 January 1902, on a cold winter's day, with blond hair and sky-blue eyes. The names of both his grandfather and his father: Nazım Hikmet. His father Hikmet Bey served in the Ottoman foreign service. His mother Celile Hanım, was among the first female painters of the country, an enlightened, cultured woman.

Nazım was Türkiye's most vocal champion of socialism that spread across the world with the October Revolution. For this, he was forced to leave his country and was subjected to poverty, imprisonment, oppression, and slander. He did not give up, did not despair; even in prison he bore no grudge against his country and his people, did not turn away from them, and this *"blue-eyed giant"* wrote some of the greatest epics about the people of Anatolia. With his first book, 835 Lines, published in 1929, he proved that he drew from the sources of Divan and folk poetry in Turkish, developed that tradition further,

and created a modern lyric voice. As the first practitioner of free verse, he became the pioneer of contemporary Turkish poetry. Through his plain, distinctive language, the diversity of his themes, and his cosmopolitan perspective, Nazım Hikmet ensured that Turkish lyric poetry gained international recognition. Yet the price he paid was very high. In 1951, his citizenship was revoked.

From a young age, he received his early education from his mother and at the poetic gatherings attended by other family members and began pouring words into verse. Nazım, who completed his secondary schooling at Galatasaray and Nişantaşı schools, entered the Naval Academy in 1915. That same year, his first poem was published in a journal. With the occupation of Istanbul, love poems gave way to patriotic verse. He later left the Naval Academy due to illness. Distressed by the treatment of his people in the territories plundered by the Greek occupiers, he and his close friend Vala Nurettin set out for Ankara in the days when Mustafa Kemal was departing for Samsun, to join the Anatolian movement. Nazım, who until 1921 had been a committed nationalist, met in İnebolu a man named Sadık Ahi, along with Nafi Atif Kansu and Vehbi Sarıdal, who introduced him and Vala about Marx, Engels, and Kautsky, names they had not previously known.

When Nazım and Vala arrived in Ankara, Press Director Muhittin Bey asked them to write poems to win Istanbul's youth over to the cause. When the sultan's followers responded to their poems, Muhittin Bey transferred them to Bolu, Nazım as a Turkish teacher, Vala as a French teacher. During their time in Ankara, the young men met Mustafa Kemal, who recommended they write *"poems with purpose"*. Drawn by the struggle in Anatolia and by communism, and wishing to understand the Soviet Revolution more closely, they travelled via Batumi to Moscow. Nazım became a member of the Communist Party.



Vera is the woman Nazım immortalised with the 1961 poem Saman Sarısı (Straw Blonde), in which he spoke of “straw-blonde hair, blue lashes, and full red lips”. The love of Vera, thirty years his junior, made Nazım lose his head. This young beloved now became the source of inspiration for new love poems. At the beginning of 1960, what had long been anticipated finally came to pass.

Life resembles a game of chance. Had everyone deserved both a presiding judge at the criminal court and a roommate who explained the ideas of Marx and Lenin? Ziya Hilmi was Nazım Hikmet's roommate when the latter was posted as a teacher to Bolu. He was very orderly. Nazım was not. While attending to the housework on one hand, he played the role of elder brother to Nazım on the other. It is astonishing how his long imprisonment under severely restricted and difficult conditions, far exceeding the days he freely enjoyed the sunlight, contributed to his creativity, his relationships, his teaching, his ability to organise himself and others simultaneously, and to his worldwide recognition.

Nazım Hikmet returned to the country in 1924 and became a member of the Communist Party of Türkiye, but when the arrests began, he went to Moscow again in 1925. Although he returned to the country once more in 1928, he could not escape brief arrests. In 1929 his book 835 Lines was published. In 1933 and 1937 he was arrested for various reasons, and finally in 1938, charged with inciting the army to rebellion and combined with earlier sentences, he was condemned to a total of 28 years and 4 months in prison. After some time in the prisons of Ankara and Çankırı, he was transferred to Bursa Prison, where he remained for ten years until he was released in 1950 under a general amnesty law. His release did not set him free. To escape the danger closing in around him, in 1951, following a plan he had worked out with Refik Erduran, he left his homeland forever and made his way via Bucharest to Moscow. He spent the remainder of his life in Moscow, undertaking various journeys across the world. Into his relatively short life were packed many loves, marriages, and children, and his love affairs he recounted to his readers in his poems with open language and full emotional intensity.

Nazım Hikmet, the greatest poet of modern Turkish lyric poetry, is, with the new language and new understanding he brought to the art of poetry, the greatest revolutionary of verse. His boldly composed poems in new form were at first criticised by intellectuals who clung to the old conception, but later found admiring recognition as well.

“Nazım had found his own path at the point where his innovative line of departure crossed with a return to tradition, and was able to develop his personality from that intersection”.

Nazım, one of the greatest masters of the Turkish language, was not only a poet. He was simultaneously a journalist, a prose writer, and a playwright. With his poems and writings spanning thousands of

pages, Nazım Hikmet is a significant thinker who always chose the path of connecting national culture with the shared values of peoples and of humanity, and who reflected on art, philosophy, politics, and the fundamental problems of humankind. He fought his entire life, ceaselessly, for a classless society in which every human being could express themselves freely and every class and stratum would stand equal.

Nazım as Painter

Looking at Nazım's lineage, one finds that the family contained artists, poets, writers, and painters. His grandfather Mustafa Celalettin Pasha had graduated from the engineering school and risen to the rank of Pasha. He could draw maps and painted wonderful pictures. His mother Celile Hanım was at the forefront of those who opened this path for him. The portraits and drawings on the pages of his poems from the prison years are expressions of Nazım's powers of observation.

In prison, Orhan Kemal observed Nazım and even noted the whistling he made while painting. With the portraits he drew in Çankırı Prison for Piraye, whom he called “my wife, my soulmate”, Nazım gave expression to his love and longing for his wife.

Film and Theatre Work

In the 1930s, Muhsin Ertuğrul visited Nazım and asked him to write some plays. Not wishing to disappoint this leading figure of Turkish theatre, Nazım wrote for him the pieces Kafatası (The Skull) and Bir Ölü Evi (A Dead Man's House). Later, in 1933, he wrote the screenplays for the films Söz Bir Allah Bir and Cici Berber.

“That directness, simplicity, plainness, absence of glitter and velvet are necessary in art and in life, this I learned from the operas I saw at the Bolshoi. How the constantly moving, constantly changing composition should be, not only in ballet but also in drama, in the novel, in poetry, I learned from the ballet The Beautiful Joseph”.

Nazım was engaged, both in prose and in lyric poetry, in establishing formal possibilities and searching for their potential usefulness. He even said that he saw the fundamental difference between genres “not in quantity but in quality”. That is, in his conception, what makes a novel is not its length but its nature. The choice of subject in novels, indeed the very social content of the novel, is, from the perspective of the worldview Nazım held, a necessity. It is possible to recognise this stance in all his works and in his views on literature.





His Poems

Although he grew up in an enlightened family environment, during his time at the Naval Academy on Heybeliada he came to know the renowned poet of his era, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı; and in Russia, where he went in his twenties, he befriended Mayakovsky, one of the greatest poets of all time. The turbulent epoch of his country brought him into contact with the human reality, the art, and the social problems of his time. Nazım, who already in his earliest syllabic-metre poems went beyond the conventional and opened the doors to a new and striking poetic world, gave Turkish lyric poetry its first poem in free verse with *Açların Gözbebekleri* (The Pupils of the Hun-

gry), a work he encountered in Russia and rewrote in new form. When his first poetry collection *835 Lines* appeared in 1929 upon his return from Moscow, it triggered a revolution in Turkish lyric poetry. In rapid succession followed *Jokond ile Si-Ya-U*, *Varan 3*, *Sesini Kaybeden Şehir* (The City That Lost Its Voice), *Benerci Kendini Neden Öldürdü* (Why Did Benerci Kill Himself), *Portreler* (Portraits), and *Taranta Babu'ya Mektuplar* (Letters to Taranta Babu).

One could write pages about his personality as artist, writer, and communist. It would have been impossible to speak of this versatile blue-eyed giant without mentioning the affairs of his heart, the women who entered his life or whom he loved. He was a man of the heart.

When his first poetry collection 835 Lines appeared in 1929 upon his return from Moscow, it triggered a revolution in Turkish lyric poetry. In rapid succession followed Jokond ile Si-Ya-U, Varan 3, Sesini Kaybeden Şehir (The City That Lost Its Voice), Benerci Kendini Neden Öldürdü (Why Did Benerci Kill Himself), Portreler (Portraits), and Taranta Babu'ya Mektuplar (Letters to Taranta Babu).

The hearts of heartfelt people never remained empty, whatever the circumstances. And so his did not remain empty either.

Celile Hikmet Hanım was on the lips of all Istanbul, both for her paintings and for her beauty. She was the most talked-about woman in Istanbul society. Yahya Kemal, who came to their home to teach Nazım, fell in love with this singular beauty. But due to Nazım's resistance and Yahya Kemal's refusal to marry, Celile Hanım went abroad. The divorce of his mother and father struck Nazım deeply. He held his poetry teacher Yahya Kemal responsible. On a day when the latter came for lessons, Nazım left a note in his teacher's jacket pocket. With that note, the young poet issued something of a challenge to Yahya Kemal, his literature teacher: *"The house you entered as my teacher, you will not enter as my father"*.

Nüzhet had grown up in the same neighbourhood; they were childhood friends, and Nüzhet was Nazım's first love. In 1921, while he was a student at the university in Moscow, they married on impulse. Nüzhet's family did not consent to the marriage. They wrote letters to Moscow: *"Rebellious with every word, every gesture, against everything, even his hair has rebelled against the barber's comb, a docile and gentle girl like you will not be able to get along with this man!"*

But this marriage begun in love did not last long. After two years together, Nüzhet fell ill, returned to Istanbul, and left Nazım also under the influence of her family. This abandonment struck him deeply. He could not forget Nüzhet for a long time. Out of jealousy and the feelings stirred by being left, he wrote the poem Gövdemdeki Kurt (The Worm in My Body).

Piraye was a close friend of Nazım's sister Samiye. Red-haired, striking, enlightened, raised in a cultivated environment and from a prosperous family. And Piraye was at the same time divorced from her husband, a widowed woman with a son and a daughter. At the frequent visits to Nazım's home in Kadıköy they came to know each other and fell in love, but the long prison years that began at that time drove them apart. Yet these long separations, begun with Nazım's prison years, only strengthened their bond and their love further, and Nazım wrote his love poems, among the finest examples of Turkish lyric poetry, always for this *"red-haired woman"*. In 1935, when Nazım was released following the amnesty, he and Piraye finally married. But this marriage too was interrupted by political pressure, economic hardship, and years of forced separation. The hopelessness of the years Nazım was to spend in prison between 1938 and 1948 would be eased by the support of his mother and his friends, and by Piraye's brief visits and her love. In the long prison years, when Nazım fell into hopelessness, he proposed to Piraye that she divorce him. Piraye's reply was: *"Even if you were sentenced to 101 years, know that I stand behind you"*.

This passionate love lost its fervour one day, and Nazım sought the excitement he craved in other relationships. Naturally this situation wounded Piraye's pride and broke her heart. The novelist Cahit Uçuk and the opera singer Semiha Berksoy were among the women who entered his life in his days of hopelessness. In the end, Piraye had to meet all of this with understanding and forgive him. Nazım's relationship with Münevver became the final drop that caused the cup to overflow.

In 1952 he met the young Russian doctor Galina, the beginning of a new love for Nazım. Galina was his doctor, his life companion, his domestic partner, his health adviser, the supervisor of his eating and drinking and his entire life, his wife on shared journeys abroad, and at the same time a state employee who monitored him on behalf of Russia. Although Nazım wrote no love poems for Galina, he had with her his longest relationship.

But on Nazım, who lived with Galina while longing for Münevver, a new love waited. Towards the end of 1955 he met Vera by chance. What the poet did not know at that moment, however, was that Vera was married and the mother of a daughter. This love, striking like lightning, revived Nazım anew, brought back his joy in life and his enthusiasm. He began pressing Vera to divorce her husband so that they could live together, and became consumed with longing for her.

Vera is the woman Nazım immortalised with the 1961 poem Saman Sarısı (Straw Blonde), in which he spoke of *"straw-blonde hair, blue lashes, and full red lips"*. The love of Vera, thirty years his junior, made Nazım lose his head. This young beloved now became the source of inspiration for new love poems. At the beginning of 1960, what had long been anticipated finally came to pass. Nazım's eight-year relationship with Galina ended in divorce. Vera too, after long and agonising years, managed to separate from her husband. At last Nazım reached Vera, the woman he had loved from the first moment of their meeting, that is, his wish was fulfilled, and he succeeded in winning Vera's heart. From then on, Nazım would write his love poems for Vera. On 3 June 1963 he yielded to his heart and flew away in silence. Nazım, whose citizenship had been revoked in 1951, had to wait until 2009 to be recognised once again as a Turkish citizen.

The country and its rulers had once more demonstrated their Cronus nature, devouring yet another of their children. Or they had, with a process that began with Nazım, begun consuming their own. His last wish, after all, had been to sleep his final sleep in his own country, beneath a plane tree. He was among those who felt the cruelty of the fascist worldview most acutely, both during his life and after his death. Yet those who burned his books could erase neither the love for Nazım nor his poems from human hearts. He rests now beneath every plane tree in the villages, towns, and cities of Anatolia.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY, AND A ROMAN ITALIAN

Cinema had barely been discovered before it got its hands on the cowboy film. For years, cowboys, who were in reality nothing more than cattle herders, were presented as flawless heroes, while the innocent and the oppressed, Native Americans above all, were cast without exception as the villains.

HÜRREM ERMAN

A man came from Rome and, with just six films, changed the history of the American Western.

In 1966, a film shot at the Cinecittà studios in Rome was preparing to alter the course of cinema history. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly was not simply a Western; it was a manifesto that challenged Hollywood's cultural hegemony, redefined cinematic language, and permanently rewrote the genetic code of popular culture. Its director, and its everything, Sergio Leone was not one of the American film industry's own children but a visionary who came from the Italian film tradition and interpreted the mythology of the West through an entirely new perspective.

The Western was the most powerful cultural weapon America had developed against its own complex about having no history. While the massacre of Native Americans was presented as "*the advance of civilisation*", the theft of their lands was legitimised through the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. The cinematic universe constructed by John Ford represented the apex of this ideological perspective. The red rock formations of Monument Valley, passing through Ford's lens, became not merely geological formations but sacred spaces in which the American spirit was reflected. With Stagecoach (1939) he launched John Wayne to stardom while simultaneously defining the prototype of the Western hero: powerful yet compassionate, hard yet just, individualistic yet bound to communal values.

Ford's mastery lay in his ability to blend these ideological messages with artistic perfection. His films were cinematic poetry as much as they were propaganda. The interplay of light and shadow reflect-

ed his characters' psychological states; his landscape shots deepened the emotional dimension of his epic stories.

A Genre in Crisis

The late 1950s and early 1960s represented not merely a numerical decline for the American Western but a period of existential crisis, a multilayered phenomenon stretching from technological change and social transformation to shifts in international politics and cultural paradigm. The arrival of television in the hierarchy of mass media produced a tectonic shift that shook the Hollywood industry to its foundations. Television sets, present in only nine percent of American homes at the start of the 1950s, had reached close to ninety percent penetration by 1960. Western series such as Bonanza, Gunsmoke, and The Rifleman offered audiences their weekly cowboy fix and reduced the need for the theatrical Western.

The Vietnam War's effect on the American social consciousness had shaken the ideological credibility of the Western genre to its core. The conflict called into question America's moral authority on the world stage and fractured domestic political consensus. By revealing the consequences of American military interventionism without mercy, it made the Western's glorified narratives of violence deeply problematic. Audiences who had now experienced the real horror of violence began to find the sterilised action sequences of the Westerns naïve.

At the same time, the counter-culture movement of the 1960s directly challenged the traditional values of the genre, while the Civil Rights Movement, Native American rights activism, and the emerging feminist consciousness exposed the assumptions of white male supremacy embedded in Western films.





The Making of Leone

Sergio Leone's birth on January 3, 1929, in Italy was not merely the arrival of an individual but the emergence of one of the most influential director-auteurs in cinema history. His father, Vincenzo Leone, who worked under the pseudonym Roberto Roberti, belonged to the pioneering generation of Italian cinema. A prolific director with more than sixty films to his name, Vincenzo was the first force that shaped young Sergio's cinematic genetic code. This dual artistic inheritance explains Leone's innate affinity for the medium; more importantly, it gave him the opportunity to observe the practical workings of professional filmmaking at close range, from early childhood. The daily rhythms of the household moved in sync with the film industry's rhythms, and the young Sergio grasped early that cinema was not only an artistic endeavour but a complex business operation.

Leone's entry into the film industry coincided with the peak of the Italian Neorealist movement. His work on Vittorio De Sica's set

for *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) was a pivotal experience for him. De Sica's directorial approach, the use of non-professional actors, the authenticity of location shooting, the artistic expression of social reality, profoundly shaped Leone's future aesthetic choices.

Leone's deep admiration for John Ford formed an artistic relationship far more complex than simple fan appreciation. His detailed study of Ford's films expanded the vocabulary of his own cinematic language and provided the sophisticated foundation of his directorial vision. Ford's character prototypes, particularly the masculinity and moral complexity embodied by John Wayne, influenced Leone's future conception of the protagonist. Yet Leone processed Ford's approach not through passive imitation but through critical analysis and creative adaptation.

Among the friendships Leone forged during his formative years, the bond he formed with his classmate Ennio Morricone was the most consequential. What began as an apparently ordinary child-

hood friendship carried far deeper dimensions, it was the birth of one of the most productive creative partnerships in modern cinema history. Morricone's early musical talent and Leone's fascination with visual storytelling would unlock a complementary and extraordinary energy.

The Spaghetti Western: A Slur Becomes a Badge of Honour

The term "*Spaghetti Western*" was one of the most paradoxical terminological phenomena in cinema history. Initially deployed as a dismissive label, it transformed over time into the most prestigious designation for an entire genre. This linguistic reversal was not merely a semantic shift; it was a cinematic manifesto for how cultural hegemony can be turned on its head.

Demand for the Western in Europe persisted even as the genre's popularity declined in America. European audiences, raised in the tradition of art cinema, evaluated the mythological structure and visual richness of the Western from a different vantage point. The outsider's perspective allowed them to focus on the essence of the storytelling rather than getting caught in the genre's clichés.

The role of Cinecittà Studios in the 1960s went beyond being a production facility, it was an international cultural crossroads. Founded during the Mussolini era for propaganda purposes, this complex was reinvented in the postwar years as a symbol of creative freedom.

A Fistful of Dollars: The Beginning

A Fistful of Dollars (1964) was, in fact, an unauthorised adaptation of Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*. This initially created legal difficulties, but it secured its place in cinema history as a striking example of cross-cultural artistic pollination. In transposing Kurosawa's samurai narrative to a Western setting, Leone applied a series of fundamental transformations. Set in a small town on the Mexican-American border, the film introduced the "*Man with No Name*" caught between two warring families, a character who constituted a radical departure from the traditional Western hero. He was defined by moral ambiguity and pragmatism.

The film was the catalyst that transformed Clint Eastwood from a television actor into an international star. His "*Man with No Name*" was characterised by minimal dialogue and maximum physical presence. The squinting eyes, the drooping cigar, and the poncho became one of cinema's most iconic images. Made for 200,000 dollars, the film earned 14 million, a financial triumph that encouraged Italian producers to invest further in the Western genre and laid the groundwork for the Spaghetti Western explosion.

For a Few Dollars More: The Craft Matures

The second film (1965) demonstrated a notable advance in Leone's narrative sophistication. The evolution of the Manco character and the introduction of Colonel Douglas Mortimer (Lee Van Cleef) represented a successful execution of the dual-protagonist structure. Van Cleef's joining the cast signalled Leone's growing maturity in character construction. His sharp features and formidable composure became cornerstones of Spaghetti Western iconography. The use of flashback technique showed Leone's growing confidence in

the manipulation of temporal narrative, while the discovery of the two bounty hunters' professional partnership contributed to the further development of the film's themes of moral ambiguity.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: The Summit

The third film (1966) became the final destination of Leone's artistic vision. The complexity of the three main characters' moral positions had completely overturned the conventional Western's binary oppositions. Even the "*Good*" character's selfish motivations represented a deconstruction of the conventional heroic prototype. The film also demonstrated bold courage in challenging commercial cinema standards with its three-hour running time. Leone's artistic conviction resisted market pressures and pushed the boundaries of cinematic storytelling.



The Good, the Bad and the Ugly represented the artistic zenith of the Leone-Morricone collaboration. Morricone's innovative approach constituted a radical departure from conventional orchestral melody. The integration of whistling, gunshots, whip cracks, and operatic elements produced an unprecedented sonic atmosphere. Leone's signature technique, the combination of extreme close-ups and vast wide shots, reached its ultimate refinement here. The close-up eye shots in the climactic duel achieved an unparalleled level of tension-building. The use of sudden zoom, a departure from the static nature of conventional camera movement, played a critical role in amplifying emotional intensity and emphasising dramatic moments. The use of depth of field, meanwhile, visually supported the hierarchy and psychological dynamics between characters, with its play of focus between foreground and background serving as a powerful tool to direct narrative attention.

Three Characters, Three Archetypes

"The Good" (Blondie): The Perfect Anti-Hero

The "Good" character played by Clint Eastwood constituted a radical departure from the traditional Western hero. Personal self-interest as primary motivation represented the subversion of conventional heroic self-sacrifice. His pragmatic approach was a demonstration of moral flexibility. His moral position was defined not as absolute but relative, being *"the least bad"* when compared to the other two characters reflected an approach that questioned the very concept of conventional goodness. His use of minimal dialogue and his physical, almost silent-cinema-era performance brought the powerful storytelling techniques of the silent era back to life in a contemporary context.

"The Bad" (Angel Eyes): The Personification of Sadistic Evil

Lee Van Cleef's Angel Eyes was the cinematic embodiment of pure evil. His methodical ruthlessness and professional detachment represented a chilling demonstration of the banality of evil. The character sketched the profile of a psychopath whose motivations were money and power, who employed violence for personal pleasure, a characterisation carrying far more complex and disturbing dimensions than the conventional villain of the Western genre. Van Cleef's physical presence, the sharp features, the narrowed eyes, the cold stare, and the menacing posture, supported the character's inner evil visually.

"The Ugly" (Tuco): A Masterclass in Tragicomic Complexity

Eli Wallach's performance as Tuco was a remarkable achievement in character complexity. The combination of comic ease and tragic

depth made possible an exploration of the many-sided nature of the human condition. Driven by the instinct for survival, sometimes sympathetic and sometimes repellent, Tuco was an exemplar of multidimensional character creation. His emotional openness and human frailties gave him both comic and tragic dimensions simultaneously.

Legacy: The Cinema That Changed Cinema

The film's international box-office triumph consolidated the global validity of the Spaghetti Western, and its success in European markets began to be seen as an effective challenge to American cultural hegemony. The explicit references in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* and other films demonstrated Leone's contemporary relevance. Tarantino's use of Leone's music and imitation of his visual style showed Leone's central position in the postmodern cinematic vocabulary. Martin Scorsese would describe Leone as *"a master of cinematic poetry"* and acknowledge learning from him specifically on the subjects of rhythm and timing.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly systematically dismantled the conventional moral certainties of the Western genre. Its characters' materially motivated actions reflected an approach that foregrounded materialism over idealism, one that pre-empted the disillusioned mood of post-Vietnam America. The film's violence, unlike the sterile deaths of traditional Hollywood Westerns, showed the real consequences of physical pain and death. The use of blood squibs and wound make-up took a stand against the romanticisation of violence. The inclusion of torture scenes, particularly the physical and psychological pressure applied to Tuco, revealed a level of brutality previously unseen in the Western genre. With its narrative structure in which no character is wholly sympathetic, the film laid the foundations of the anti-hero tradition in cinema.

In the final analysis, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* was far more than a successful film, it was the summit of cinematic language's expansion and the crossing of cultural borders. Leone's visionary approach demonstrated the limitations of genre convention while simultaneously proving the limitless potential of artistic innovation. The film's enduring influence manifests itself across multiple dimensions: technical innovation, cultural impact, musical legacy, and narrative sophistication. The permanence of Leone's trace in the DNA of contemporary cinema can be read as a testament to the timeless quality of genuine artistic vision.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly will always remain the high-water mark of the Spaghetti Western movement. The film stands as proof that cultural imperialism can be defeated by artistic resistance, that creative vision can transcend geographical and linguistic borders, and that individual artistic genius, in a collaborative environment,



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CHE'S GAZA

The Day a Revolution That Sought to Embrace the World Caught on the Grains of Sand

SEBAHATTIN ÇELEBİ

June 18, 1959. Some four hundred and fifty kilometres from Cairo, along that narrow strip pressed against the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean, an unusual visitor appeared before them. A man in military uniform, his beret tilted, his gaze fathomlessly deep, Ernesto “Che” Guevara had landed in Gaza.

That morning, Gaza was still carrying the ashes of 1948 on its back. One hundred and twenty thousand Palestinian refugees were piled into camps of canvas and timber, waiting. People for whom even surviving had become a form of resistance.

When Che walked into those camps, what lay before him was heavier than any poverty he had encountered in Latin America during his years of medical training. This was the first official foreign mission of the Cuban Revolution. Fidel Castro had dispatched Guevara on a diplomatic tour spanning fourteen countries; the aim was to consolidate the new Cuba's position within the Third World.

Palestinian researcher Salman Abu Sitta described the visit in striking terms: “*Che Guevara's 1959 visit to Gaza marked the historic moment that signalled the beginning of the internationalisation of the Palestinian cause*”.

A Doctor's Road: From Rosario to the Sierra Maestra

Ernesto Guevara de la Serna was born on May 14, 1928, in the Argentine city of Rosario. He was the child of a middle-class family. Throughout his childhood he wrestled with bouts of asthma, yet that fragility never managed to compete with his will.

As he studied medicine at the University of Buenos Aires, a restlessness within him grew. In 1951 and 1952 he travelled the length and breadth of Latin America on a motorcycle. He walked through leprosy hospitals in Peru, bore witness to the conditions under which workers laboured in Bolivian tin mines, and spent nights in the poor neighbourhoods of Chile.

That journey, the great voyage of discovery that would later be immortalised as *The Motorcycle Diaries*, taught him one thing: the poverty that stretched across the continent had no individual remedy. Disease was a symptom; the true malady was the imperial order itself.

He received his medical diploma in 1953. But on that day he walked out of the institution not so much a physician as a revolutionary.

The Lesson of Guatemala and the Meeting in Mexico

1954 was the turning point of his life. He was in Guatemala at the time, where President Jacobo Árbenz's land reform law was transferring estates from landowners to peasants. A CIA-coordinated coup toppled Árbenz. Che witnessed that coup from the inside.

He fled to Mexico. And there, in 1955, he met Cuban revolutionaries living in exile. He and Fidel Castro spent a single night in argument. By the time dawn broke, Che had made a decision from which there was no return: he was now part of the Cuban Revolution.

“At my first meeting with Fidel, we spent the night debating. By the time morning came, I was already the group's doctor. Its doctor, but in truth its fighter,” Ernesto Che Guevara

Sierra Maestra: The Revolution Learned in the Forest

In November 1956, a small group of eighty-two men sailed from the Mexican coast toward Cuba aboard a wooden yacht called the *Granma*. When they came ashore, Batista's forces were already waiting; the greater part of the group was either killed or captured within the first months.

The survivors withdrew into the Sierra Maestra mountains. There, Che was both physician and commander. The *foco* theory he developed during this period, the idea that the spark ignited in rural areas by small revolutionary nuclei would set broader masses into motion, became his most original intellectual contribution.

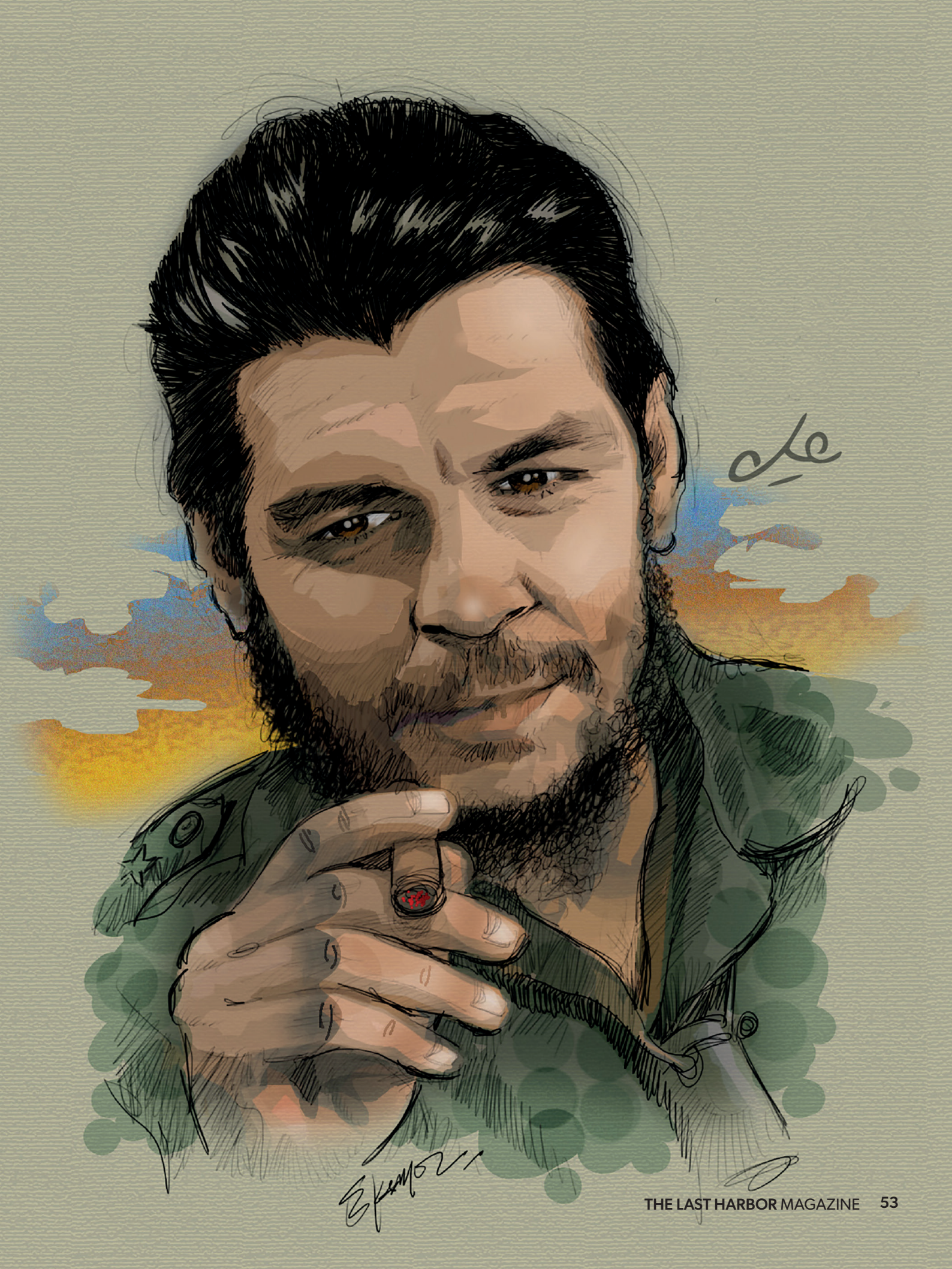
In January 1959, Havana fell. Batista fled. The Cuban Revolution was engraved into the memory of Latin America.

Nasser's Invitation: From Cairo to Gaza

Fewer than six months had passed since the Revolution had proclaimed its triumph when Fidel Castro gave Guevara a new assignment. At the invitation of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, the first stop was Cairo.

Nasser was the standard-bearer of Pan-Arabism; he had nationalised the Suez Canal and defied the West. Egypt at the time bore the name of the United Arab Republic, encompassing Syria and Yemen as well. The ideological distance between the two leaders was real, Nasser was not a Marxist but a nationalist; a significant portion of Egypt's communists were in prison. Yet they shared common ground: a stance against imperialism.

And Nasser made Guevara an offer: he should go to Gaza and see for himself.





The Place Where History Paused for a Moment

On the morning of June 18, Che arrived in Gaza. He wore his dark military uniform, and on his head the starred beret. Deputy Governor Ahmad Salim was there to receive him.

Photographers had been kept to a minimum; the Egyptian government was wary of Cuba being presented as a revolutionary model. The visit accordingly received almost no coverage in the press. Over the years, only a single photograph survived from that day. Its handwritten caption read:

"With Guevara, hero of the Cuban Revolution. At the residence of Deputy Governor Ahmad Salim. Gaza, 1959".

During his visits to the camps, Che entered the Al-Bureij refugee camp. The camp's leader, Mustafa Abu Midyan, voiced complaints about the conditions. Che's response was blunt:

"Instead of complaining, show me what you have done to liberate your country. Where are the training camps? Where are the weapons factories? Where are the mobilisation centres?"

Those words were the essence of Che's revolutionary understanding. Bearing witness to suffering was not enough; suffering had to be transformed into an organised will.

October 9, 1967. He was captured in the village of La Higuera. The following day he was shot. He was thirty-nine years old. When the news of his death spread across the world, millions refused to believe it. His poster grew still larger. Death could not stop him, on the contrary, it carried him into eternity within a frozen instant.

The Al-Shati Camp and "Gaza's Guevara"

In that same year, a child was growing up in Gaza's Al-Shati refugee camp: Mohammed Al-Aswad. Born in Haifa in 1946, he had fled with his family to Gaza in the wake of the 1948 war. At the time of Che's visit in 1959, he was barely thirteen years old.

Over the years, Al-Aswad became one of the legendary names of the Palestinian resistance movement. When Israeli military authorities spoke of him, the words of Dayan passed into history:

"By day we govern Gaza; by night Guevara and his comrades govern it".

The "Guevara" here was of course not Ernesto Guevara, Dayan meant Al-Aswad. Yet the very nickname made plain the symbolic bond that Gaza had forged with the Cuban Revolution. Mohammed Al-Aswad was besieged and killed in Gaza on March 9, 1973, by Israeli forces under the com-

mand of Ariel Sharon.

The Heavy Legacy of a Day That Passed in Silence

After the visit, Che did not record Gaza in his official reports. He did not mention it at press conferences. Viewed from the outside, this



visit appears to be a missed moment, a lost opportunity.

But history does not operate quite so simply. It was through Che's books that revolutionary theory reached the Palestinian youth of the 1960s. Some Palestinian training camps were given the name Camp Che Guevara. In the 1990s, leftist youth in the Nuseirat refugee camp founded the Che Guevara Cultural Club.

Cuba was among the first states to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation. This defined the tone, diplomatic, symbolic, human, that the small step taken in Gaza would carry across the decades that followed.

The Revolution's Unfinished Final Sentence

Che left Cuba in 1965. He went to the Congo, he tried to ignite revolution in Africa and failed. Then he crossed into Bolivia. In 1967, in the mountains, he fought alongside a small group of roughly fifty men against the Bolivian army. CIA-backed operations gradually encircled the group.

October 9, 1967. He was captured in the village of La Higuera. The following day he was shot. He was thirty-nine years old. When the news of his death spread across the world, millions refused to believe it. His poster grew still larger. Death could not stop him, on the contrary, it carried him into eternity within a frozen instant.

"Hasta la victoria siempre, Until victory, always".

What was there in those twenty-four hours, in that single photograph, in those camp visits?

Perhaps this: history sometimes moves not from official docu-

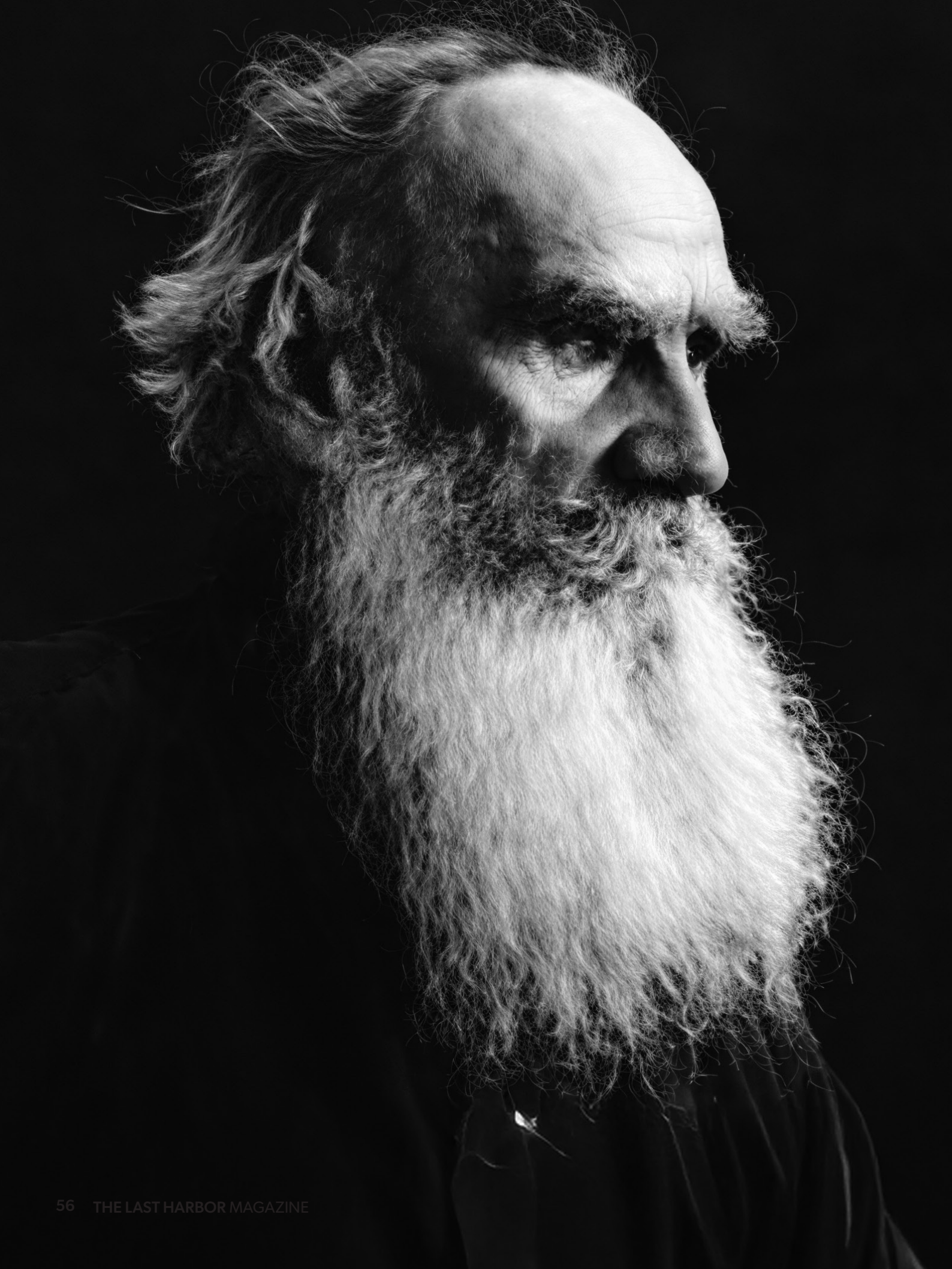


ments but from the mud-soaked floor of a camp, from the eye of a refugee, from the hard words of a commander. Che did not write Gaza into his reports. But Gaza wrote Che into its memory.

Today, in Gaza, there are still clubs and streets bearing his name. On its walls, Che's portrait hangs alongside those of Nasser and Arafat. This is no accident. Every resistance that sets itself against imperialism borrows words from somewhere as it builds its own language.

The man who walked into and out of those camps on June 18, 1959, left something behind without knowing it: the dignity of being seen. And for people, sometimes the most revolutionary act of all is just that, to come, to look, to bear witness.

"If a human being is in chains, every free human being is obliged to set them free", Ernesto Che Guevara



TOLSTOY'S PRAYER RUG

Leo Tolstoy: "Please regard me as a good Muslim, and all will be well".

HÜRREM ERMAN

These lines come from a letter written in April 1884 at Yasnaya Polyana. Leo Tolstoy addressed them to Countess Alexandra Andreyevna Tolstaya, both a close relation and a trusted friend. Twenty-six years after that letter, on a cold November day in 1910, it is said that in the room where he drew his last breath at the stationmaster's house in Astapovo, a prayer rug lay aligned toward the Qibla.

And so the question presents itself: was Leo Tolstoy, regarded not merely as one of the greatest writers of Russian literature but of all world history, perhaps a Muslim?

Before we attempt to answer that question, let us come to know this great writer a little more closely.

The Childhood of a Seeker

Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy was born in 1828 on the Yasnaya Polyana estate in the province of Tula, the child of one of Russia's most distinguished families. The loss of his mother when he was barely two years old, and of his father when he was nine, left deep wounds in his soul. These early losses were perhaps the first seeds of his lifelong search for truth.

Among the most significant moments of his childhood were the tales of Leo Stepanych, a blind storyteller who lived in his grandmother's house. In a monotonous, singsong voice, he would recount stories of King Shahryar and his brother King Shahzaman, and of "the just God". These stories drawn from *One Thousand and One Nights* left a profound impression on the young Tolstoy. Years later, in 1891, when the Moscow publisher Michael M. Lederle asked him which books had most influenced his life, he placed *One Thousand*

and *One Nights* among the books of his fourteenth year.

This early encounter laid the groundwork for his lifelong interest in Eastern culture. In the school for peasant children he founded in Yasnaya Polyana in 1862, he adapted some of these tales and used them in his pedagogical writings. The two stories *Dushenka* and *The Forty Thieves* and the *Unjust Verdict* were products of his early contact with Islamic culture.

Kazan and the Orient

He subsequently studied law at the University of Kazan, but also attended courses in Oriental Studies at the Faculty of Arabic and Turkish Studies, in the hope of a diplomatic career. Kazan at that time served as a bridge between Eastern and Western culture. The standard of instruction in Oriental languages at the university was extraordinarily high. As Edward Tracy Turnerelli expressed it: "*In this branch of education there is no other institution in the world that offers students so many advantages as the university of this city*".

It was here that Tolstoy began to learn Arabic. Decades later, in 1909, he would regretfully observe that he had studied Arabic in Kazan but had forgotten almost everything "*except reading and a few words*". Yet he continued to believe that an Oriental education was more appropriate for Russia than a classical one.

In the Caucasus: An Encounter with Islam

In 1851 he went to the Caucasus with his brother Nikolai. There he had the opportunity to meet millions of Muslims living within the Russian Empire. He bore witness to the struggle of Sheikh Shamil, the spiritual and military leader of the Muslim tribes of the Caucasus. These experiences would form the foundation for his masterwork *Hadji Murat*.

During the more than two years he spent in the Caucasus, the

*"In my opinion,
Mohammedanism in its
outward forms stands
incomparably higher
than church Orthodoxy.
If a person is offered
only two options, to
remain within church
Orthodoxy or to convert
to Mohammedanism,
then for any reasonable
person there can be no
doubt about this choice.
And everyone will prefer
Mohammedanism
to the complex and
incomprehensible
dogma of the Trinity,
of redemption, of the
sacraments, the Mother of
God, the saints and their
icons, and the elaborate
forms of worship, and will
instead accept the dogma
of the one God and His
Prophet".*

During the more than two years he spent in the Caucasus, the locals bestowed upon him the title of "Dzhigit", a person of courage and honour. This was an extraordinary distinction for a Russian nobleman. The Islamic mystical tradition of Muridism, with which he came into contact there, left traces in his religious thinking.

The Great Works

War and Peace is not merely a novel; it is an epic of humanity. This work, which traces Russia's historical passage through the Napoleonic invasion between 1805 and 1812, holds a singular place in literature. Pierre Bezukhov's spiritual quest, Prince Andrei's struggle between life and death, Natasha Rostova's innocent beauty, each figure represents a different facet of the human condition.

As the French writer Romain Rolland said: *"Tolstoy's works are like the sea. At each dive one finds new pearls".*

Anna Karenina stands at the summit of the modern novel. This work, which Dostoyevsky described as a "perfect thing", is not merely the tragic story of a woman but a panorama of social transformation, moral decay, and spiritual searching.

The Spiritual Crisis and the Turn Toward Islam

The deep spiritual crisis he passed through in the late 1870s led him not only toward Christianity but toward all the world's religions. As he wrote in his Confessions, the questions *"Does life have meaning? Will death not destroy everything?"* gave him no rest.

In the course of this search, he read the Quran and studied the Hadiths of the Prophet Mohammed. In that celebrated letter to Alexandra Tolstaya of 1884, he responded to the reactions of those around him with these words:

*"Some, liberals and aesthetes, take me for a madman or a sim-
pleton like Gogol; others, revolutionaries, radicals, see in me a mys-
tic, a babbler; government officials regard me as a dangerous revo-
lutionary; the Orthodox see in me the devil... And therefore, please
regard me as a good Muslim, and all will be well".*

The Deepening of Islamic Conviction

Tolstoy's view of Islam deepened over the years. In March 1909,

during a conversation recorded by his physi-
cian Dushen Makhovitsky, he said:

*"Mohammed always stood higher than
Christianity. He does not consider man to be
God, and never equates himself with God.
Muslims worship nothing but God, and Mo-
hammed is His messenger. In this there is no
mystery and no doubt".*

In the same conversation, his response to
his wife Sofya Andreyevna's question, *"Which
religion is better: Christianity or Islam?"*, was
remarkable:

*"It is clear to me that Islam is better and
higher... Islam has enlightened me greatly".*

These words surprised his wife and pro-
voked an objection, half in jest, half in earnest,
on the subject of polygamy.

The Letter to Elena Vekilova

In a letter to a woman named Elena Vekilo-
va in March 1909, the mature form of Tolstoy's
thoughts on Islam reveals itself plainly:

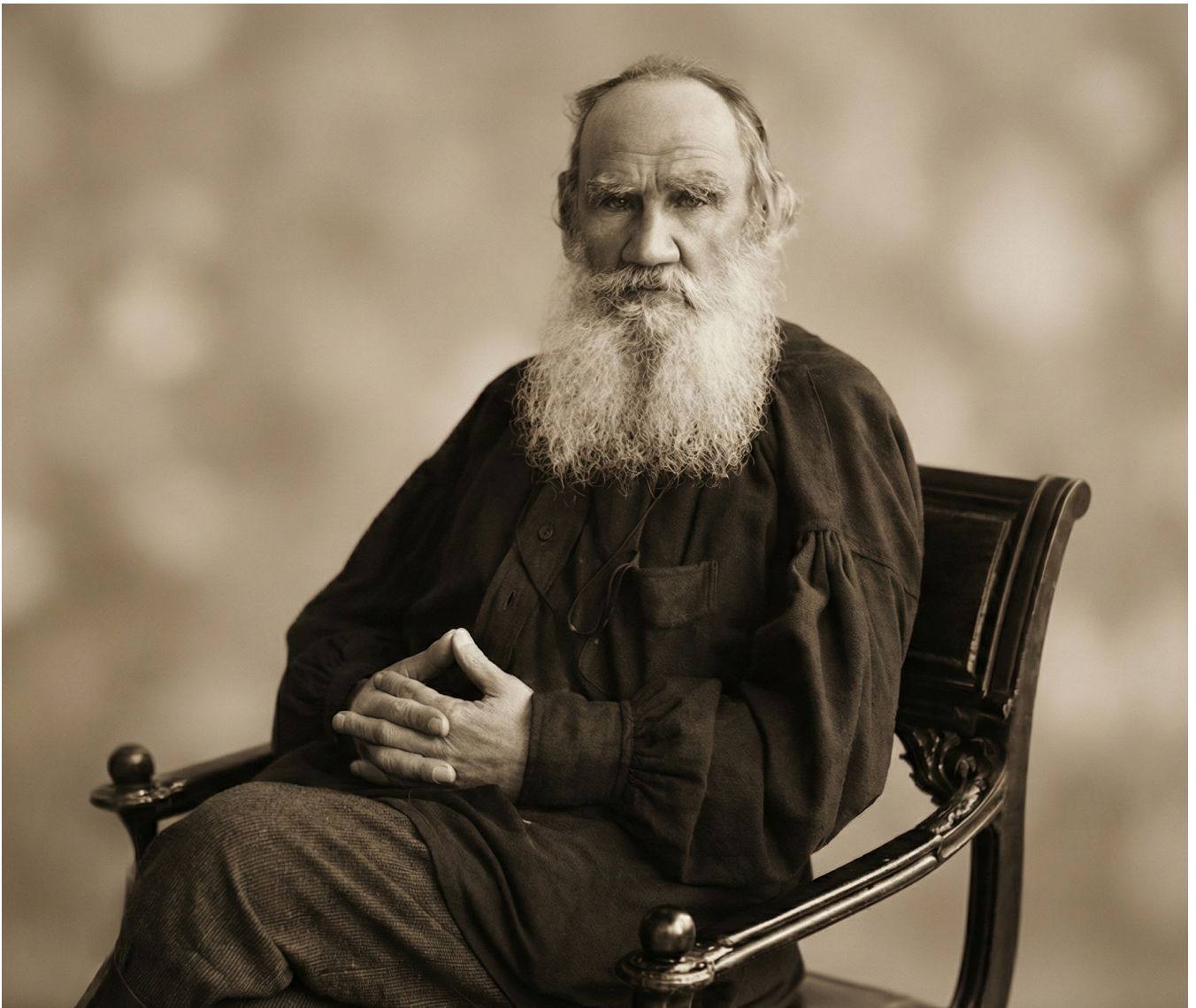
*"In my opinion, Mohammedanism in its
outward forms stands incomparably higher
than church Orthodoxy. If a person is offered
only two options, to remain within church Or-
thodoxy or to convert to Mohammedanism,
then for any reasonable person there can be
no doubt about this choice. And everyone will
prefer Mohammedanism to the complex and
incomprehensible dogma of the Trinity, of re-
demption, of the sacraments, the Mother of
God, the saints and their icons, and the elab-
orate forms of worship, and will instead accept
the dogma of the one God and His Prophet".*

The Hadith Project

In 1905, Tolstoy came across Abdullah al-Suhrawardy's book
The Sayings of Muhammad. This book became a turning point for
him. According to the testimony of his daughter Alexandra, the work
was among the books that lay on Tolstoy's reading table in the final
years of his life.

He was so struck by the work that he began corresponding with
al-Suhrawardy and expressed his wish to translate it into Russian. In
1909 he published his own collection under the title Selected Sayings
of the Prophet Mohammed. In his preface he wrote:

*"Anyone who wishes to confirm the tolerance within Islam should
read the Quran carefully. Its verses reveal the exalted spirit of Islam:
"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become*



divided..." (Āl 'Imrān 103)

Among the hadiths included in this collection were:

"Allah has mercy on those who show mercy. Show mercy to those on earth, and He who is in heaven will have mercy on you".

"A believer is not one who fills his stomach while his neighbour goes hungry".

"What are the most perfect deeds? To gladden a person's heart, to feed the hungry, to help the oppressed, to ease the grief of the sorrowful, and to restore to victims their rights".

The Universal Religion

In a letter to the Egyptian Mufti Mohammed Abduh in 1904, he declared that despite coming from different religions, they shared the same faith:

"Religions are diverse and many, but there is only one faith, the true one... To acknowledge God and His law, to love one's neigh-

bour, and to do unto others what one wishes for oneself. In my view all true religious principles derive from this and are alike for Jews, Brahmins, Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims... The more the religions purify themselves of superstition, the closer they come to the ideal of a common unity".

In his "Reading Circle" project, developed in 1884, he aimed to gather the most valuable thoughts of the foremost representatives of humanity. Of it he wrote:

"We have passed the thoughts of wise men, formed over millennia among all the nations, through the sieve of time... What remained were only those independent, self-aware, and necessary thoughts preached by all the sages of the world: Zoroaster, Buddha, Laozi, Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Jesus, Mohammed, and among the moderns, Rousseau, Pascal, Kant, Emerson, Channing, and others".

Perhaps Tolstoy's true religious identity is as mysterious as the universal truth he spent his entire life seeking. Perhaps he was too vast a soul ever to have remained within the boundaries of any single religion. Or perhaps those words in that 1884 letter were genuinely the voice of his heart.

It is worth noting that he counted the Prophet Mohammed in this list among the great sages.

On the Prophet Mohammed

Tolstoy's admiration for Islam was not merely theoretical. He regarded the Quran as a consistent book that proclaims love and forbids war for the propagation of Islam. In his diary entries of 1909 he wrote:

"What the religions hold in common is found also in the Quran: the proclamation of love. The Quran is consistent, and Mohammed forbade war and killing for the spread of Islam... In truth, we do not know Islam as well as Muslims know Christianity, and a nation without religion is condemned to a wretched condition..".

On the Prophet Mohammed himself he wrote:

"I am among those who are deeply impressed by the Prophet Mohammed, chosen by the One God to send down His final message through his soul, his heart, and his mind. He was chosen to be the last Prophet; therefore after him no further prophet will come... Without doubt, the Prophet Mohammed is one of the greatest reformers who rendered immense service to the human community... He led an entire nation toward the light of truth and guided them to peace and tranquillity".

The Final Days

In October 1910, tensions within Tolstoy's household reached their highest point. The rift with his wife Sofya was not merely personal but philosophical. On the night of the 28th of October, the eighty-two-year-old Tolstoy left the house at midnight. He boarded a train with his daughter Alexandra and his physician Makhovitsky. At Astapovo station he fell ill and was lodged in the house of the stationmaster.

He lay gravely ill for ten days. During that time, telegrams arrived from around the world. Journalists, government representatives, and friends gathered at the door of the railway station, everyone wished to know the final moments of the great master.

On November 20, 1910, in the first light of morning, Tolstoy breathed his last. His final words, spoken in the presence of his daughter, were: *"I am seeking the truth!"*

That morning it passed unnoticed, but it is said that in the room in which he died, a prayer rug lay aligned toward the Qibla. Was this deliberate, or was it a rug that had happened to be placed in that direction? History has left this question suspended in uncertainty.

The Legacy

Contemporary Russian researchers note that Tolstoy's admiration for Islam *"was concealed from readers for many years"*. The Russian government did not want a famous count to be seen spreading Islamic wisdom, fearing that such a situation might encourage Russians to question their own faith.

Perhaps Tolstoy's true religious identity is as mysterious as the universal truth he spent his entire life seeking. Perhaps he was too vast a soul ever to have remained within the boundaries of any single religion. Or perhaps those words in that 1884 letter were genuinely the voice of his heart.

Tolstoy's relationship with Islam is one of the most beautiful expressions of his understanding of universal religion. He said in 1909:

"Throughout my life I have always encountered Islam with great respect, and I believe that Islam compares favourably with Orthodox teachings".

His grave at Yasnaya Polyana stands as one of the most powerful testimonies to his convictions. On the grave there is not a trace, not a sign belonging to Christianity or to any other faith. It is utterly plain. Exactly like the grave of the Prophet Mohammed.

Perhaps the most fitting words ever written about him are these: *"Tolstoy was not merely a Russian writer; he was the conscience of humanity"*.

And the conscience always seeks the same truth, whatever religion it belongs to, whatever book it consults: love, justice, peace.



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THE TEARS OF ARANJUEZ

Joaquín Rodrigo's Concerto: A Masterpiece Born of Darkness

SEBAHATTİN ÇELEBİ

In the small town of Sagunto, in eastern Spain near Valencia, on 22 November 1901, a child came into the world. His name was Joaquín Rodrigo. Life had dealt him a merciless blow before he had even reached the age of three: a diphtheria epidemic plunged little Joaquín's eyes into darkness forever. As his family rushed helplessly from doctor to doctor, the way the small child perceived the world was changing at its very roots. As Joaquín's eyes closed, his ears opened with extraordinary power.

Born the youngest of ten children, Rodrigo grew up in a modest yet cultured family whose livelihood came from his father Vicente Rodrigo Peirats's lands along the Valencia coast. The melodies his mother Juana Vidre Ribelles often hummed around the house, and the theatre performances his father occasionally took him to, already revealed how keenly meaningful his hearing had become. Music had settled in his heart long before he lost his sight.

According to those who knew him, by the age of five or six, the child was listening to every sound in the house, the creak of the door, the sound of his mother's footsteps in the kitchen, the wheels of horse-drawn carts in the street, as though it were an orchestra. His family was not slow to notice his extraordinary gift.

The School for the Blind and the First Compositions (1901–1927)

The Rodrigo family moved to Valencia when little Joaquín was four years old. There the child enrolled in a school for the visually impaired. At eight he began formal music lessons, learning to read notation in Braille and to play piano and violin. His principal teachers were Francisco Antich and Eduardo López Chavarri, leading figures at the Valencia Conservatory.

Having begun harmony and composition classes at sixteen, by the time he reached his twenties Rodrigo was not merely a talented musician, he was a fully accomplished pianist in his own right. Not to emphasise this would be a serious injustice to him: Rodrigo would become famous as a composer for guitar, yet he had never played the instrument. Every work he produced was created at the piano, in his mind, and in Braille notation. Even when writing for guitar, he grasped the instrument's sound, its limits, and its possibilities intuitively, yet always worked out his compositions at the piano, dictating them to a copyist to be transferred to paper.

A suite for piano, *Dos Esbozos* for violin and piano, and a *Siciliana* for cello. In 1924, his first orchestral work *Juglares* was performed in Valencia and Madrid. Rodrigo was already one of Spain's most notable young composers. And the time had come to go to Paris.

Paris: In the Workshop of Paul Dukas

In 1927, Rodrigo entered the *École Normale de Musique* in Paris. What had brought him there was the name of one of the era's most



Having begun piano lessons at four, Victoria Kamhi continued her education first in Istanbul and then in Paris as a young artist. Her teacher in Paris was the Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes, who moved in the same circles as Rodrigo. It was this shared world that brought the two of them together in 1929. At their first encounter, Rodrigo's music had captivated Victoria; Victoria's voice and intellect had captivated Rodrigo.

respected composers: Paul Dukas. This French composer, known for *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, would teach Rodrigo not merely technique but how to capture the very soul of music. Dukas had once said: "A note is not merely a note; you must know what you feel when you touch it". Rodrigo never forgot those words.

Paris in those years was truly the art capital of the world. Picasso was working revolutions on his canvases; Hemingway and Fitzgerald were drinking cognac in cafés; Stravinsky and Ravel were pursuing new sounds. Rodrigo was searching for his own voice within this vibrant milieu. He struck up a friendship with Manuel de Falla, a master who had devoted his years to finding the modern voice of Spanish music. The bond between these two men, both Spanish-born composers, both unable to see, deepened Rodrigo's sense of Spanishness profoundly.

On 14 March 1928, a concert had been held in Paris in honour of

Manuel de Falla's induction into the French Légion d'Honneur. Falla had requested that works by young Spanish colleagues also be performed. That evening, Rodrigo took his place at the piano and performed his own compositions. One of the critics in the hall wrote: "That evening we watched with admiration both a magnificent piano performance and the dazzling originality of his compositions". Among the audience was a young Istanbul-born pianist, a student of Ricardo Viñes. But they did not meet that night. Their meeting would have to wait another year.

Victoria: A Life Stretching from the Bosphorus to Paris

In 1905, in a mansion in Istanbul close to Dolmabahçe Palace, a daughter was born to a Sephardic Jewish family. They named her Victoria. The Kamhi family were descendants of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492; they had put down roots in Istanbul, in the embrace



of the Ottomans, for centuries. At home they spoke Ladino, medieval Spanish, kneaded with an Istanbul accent. Speaking Turkish, French, German, and later the Spanish she would acquire, fluently across five languages, Victoria had been raised as both musician and intellectual.

Having begun piano lessons at four, Victoria Kamhi continued her education first in Istanbul and then in Paris as a young artist. Her teacher in Paris was the Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes, who moved in the same circles as Rodrigo. It was this shared world that brought the two of them together in 1929. At their first encounter, Rodrigo's music had captivated Victoria; Victoria's voice and intellect had captivated Rodrigo.

But this love was not easy. Rodrigo was Catholic, Victoria Jewish. The religious difference between the two families was an obstacle in itself. Moreover, Victoria was an independent woman who wished to pursue her own career; providing the intensive support Rodrigo needed would mean setting her own artistic identity aside. After a long period of turbulent romance, the term used by biographer James Loeffler, and the overcoming of religious, financial, and family obstacles, they married in Valencia on 19 January 1933.

"The light of our eyes". Rodrigo always described Victoria this way. It was not merely a poetic expression; it was the literal truth.

After their marriage, Victoria largely set aside her own career as a pianist. In its place, she began transcribing all of Rodrigo's works from Braille to notation, writing his letters, conducting his business meetings, and organising his concerts. The melody taking shape in Rodrigo's mind was first set down in Braille; Victoria then transferred

it to manuscript paper. At times the words too were written by Victoria: librettos for ballets, texts for certain songs. The two were as much an integrated creative machine as they were a musical couple.

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War broke out. The couple, who were in Baden-Baden in Germany at the time, lived in exile for three years, first in Germany, near the school for the blind in Freiburg, then in France, waiting for the war to end. These were years of extreme financial hardship; the non-renewal of Rodrigo's grant had made their livelihood precarious. They sustained themselves, both as roommates and as musical companions. Without Victoria's strong character, surviving those years would have been far more difficult.

Loss: The Extinction of a Light in the Darkness

The year 1938 left an indelible sorrow in the couple's life. Victoria had become pregnant, and both were awaiting their child with great anticipation. But the pregnancy progressed with complications, and the baby was stillborn. Sources indicate the child was a boy. Victoria narrowly escaped death and spent months in hospital. This loss shook Rodrigo to his core. The fear of losing his wife, the closest light in his world of darkness, had become a weight beyond description.

But Rodrigo buried this pain deep in his heart; he shared it with no one, told no one. For years he kept the secret. After the work had become known across the world and decades had passed, Victoria confessed in her memoirs that the second movement had been written on the day the child would have been born. Rodrigo acknowledged this obliquely. Music had become the language of what could



not be spoken.

The Sorrow in the Gardens of the Palace of Aranjuez

Aranjuez was a small town south of Madrid, on the banks of the Tagus River. Home to the Spanish royal family's spring palace, the town was famous for its magnificent gardens and fountains. In the early years of their marriage, Rodrigo and Victoria had taken long walks through those gardens. Victoria had described every corner of the gardens to her husband: the geometric order of the box hedges, the shade of the plane trees, the melody of water filtering through marble fountains, the scent of roses, and the song of birds.

Rodrigo had stored these memories in his mind like a treasure. In the spring of 1939 in Paris, amid the grief of losing their child and nearly losing his wife, he began to compose by taking refuge in those happy days of Aranjuez. The work would be a guitar concerto, a highly unconventional choice for the time. The guitar was not accepted as a *"serious"* instrument in the orchestral world. It was the instrument of drawing-room music, of flamenco taverns, of street corners. To place it before a symphony orchestra was to challenge the conventions of the musical world.

The fact that Rodrigo had never played guitar makes the question all the more interesting. What led him to this choice was the insistent plea of his close friend, the guitarist Regino Sainz de la Maza. Sainz de la Maza believed that guitar needed to be brought into orchestral music, and that Rodrigo was the composer to undertake it. Rodrigo embraced the idea, for he held a deep conviction that the guitar was the instrument that best embodied the soul of Spain. The piano belonged to Germany, the violin to Italy, but the guitar, six-stringed, delicate, both joyful and melancholy, was Spain itself.

Writing the concerto, Rodrigo did not see the guitar's limited sonic volume as a disadvantage; on the contrary, he transformed it into an advantage that created contrast with the orchestra's magnificent texture. His solution was elegant and effective: he never placed

the guitar directly against the full orchestra, always keeping it in dialogue with smaller and quieter groups of instruments. The guitar's whisper, set against the immensity of the orchestra, became all the more meaningful, all the more human.

The Adagio: The Most Beautiful Elegy in Music History

The concerto had three movements, but it was the second, the Adagio, that would enchant the world. The theme opened with the cor anglais before transforming into a melancholic monologue sustained by the guitar alone. It was as though someone, in an empty room, believing no one could hear, was whispering their deepest secret.

The first movement, *Allegro con spirito*, opened with a cheerful and energetic Andalusian dance. Here Rodrigo had captured Spain's sunny face, its flamenco rhythms, the exuberance of popular festivals. The third movement, *Allegro gentile*, had the air of an elegant court dance, as though couples were dancing in the ballroom of the Palace of Aranjuez by candlelight. But both movements were overshadowed by the Adagio at the centre. The Adagio was the heart, the soul, and the reason for the work's existence.

It came to be understood, years later, through various statements made by both Rodrigo and Victoria on various occasions, that he had written this movement for the baby boy they had lost. The Adagio was a father's elegy; but such an elegy that everyone who heard it could recognise their own loss, their own grief, their own longing within it. The melody drew from Spanish folk music but spoke a universal language. A Japanese listener, a Brazilian, a Norwegian, all could feel the same ache in the heart.

The Night of the Premiere: Barcelona, 1940

On 9 November 1940, with the traces of the devastation wrought by the Spanish Civil War still fresh, the curtains rose at the Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona. What the couple recounted of that evening is known: Rodrigo and Sainz de la Maza had taken the night train



together to Barcelona the evening before the premiere. Throughout the journey, Sainz de la Maza anxiously repeated the same question: *"What if tomorrow, during the concert, the guitar can't be heard?"* Neither man slept that night.

The stage belonged to Regino Sainz de la Maza, one of the greatest guitar virtuosos of the era. The Orquesta Filarmónica de Barcelona was conducted by maestro César Mendoza Lasalle. The hall was packed; no one that evening had any idea that music history was about to be rewritten.

When the first notes of the concerto were played, a stir passed through the hall. Could the guitar truly be this effective against an orchestra? The joyful rhythms of the first movement warmed the atmosphere; the audience's feet began to keep time of their own accord. But the real miracle occurred in the second movement. The first notes of the cor anglais instantly transformed the air of the hall. Joy gave way to melancholy; smiles froze. As the guitar's long, anguished melody alone filled the auditorium, tears ran down many a listener's face.

After the concert the hall rose as one; the applause lasted for minutes. The critics were astonished: how had a guitar concerto managed to stand so effortlessly alongside the most prestigious works in the symphonic world? The next day, the newspapers carried Rodrigo's name on their front pages. The blind composer, with a single work, had changed the musical history of Spain.

A Concerto's Journey Around the World

The fame of the Concierto de Aranjuez rapidly crossed Spain's borders. Even in the dark years of the Second World War, the work continued to be performed in Europe's concert halls. The first gramophone recording in 1948 brought it to the recorded world. Narciso Yepes's 1950 interpretation in Paris won Rodrigo genuinely international renown.

Guitarists across the world were competing to place the work in their repertoire. Giants such as Andrés Segovia, Narciso Yepes, John Williams, and Paco de Lucía carried Aranjuez to the world in their own interpretations. Rodrigo's words about Paco de Lucía's 1991 interpretation had been committed to the record: *"The most brilliant interpretation I have ever heard"*. This was remarkable, the creator of a classical work giving such powerful endorsement to the flamenco master's reading of it.

The work's most unexpected journey was into the jazz world. In 1959, the legendary trumpeter Miles Davis, together with arranger Gil Evans, recorded the album *Sketches of Spain*. On this album, the Adagio theme was reinterpreted through jazz harmonics. Davis's trumpet took the place of the guitar and added an entirely different dimension to the melody. The album created a sensation in both the jazz and classical music worlds. Rodrigo's melody was now no longer the shared heritage of the guitar world alone, it belonged to the entire world of music. Victoria, for her part, noted in her memoirs that she had never been pleased with Miles Davis's interpretation, the justified possessiveness of a composer's wife.

Two Lifetimes, One Music

After the premiere, Rodrigo settled in Madrid and continued composing. In 1941, their daughter Cecilia came into the world. This time the joy was complete. Rodrigo served for decades as Professor of Music History at the Complutense University; he prepared radio programmes, wrote newspaper reviews, and worked for ONCE,

the organisation for the blind. Life flowed in productivity and order.

As the years passed, the works accumulated: Concierto Serenata for harp, Concierto Pastoral for flute, Fantasia para un Gentilhombre for guitar, these among the foremost. Yet none escaped the shadow of Aranjuez. At times this saddened Rodrigo. He wished his other works would be heard with the same care. But he was also proud, the work had touched the hearts of millions.

Victoria's presence did not change in these years either. As they aged, the two grew ever more bound to each other. Rodrigo's compositions could not have existed without Victoria; Victoria's life would have been hollow without Rodrigo's music. As in those rare long-lasting unions where couples have shared thirty years, fifty years, sixty years, the two had become part of each other. Rodrigo said in an interview: *"Victoria is my wife, my eyes, my hands, and my voice. Without her I could have written not a single note, nor entered a single concert hall"*.

In 1991, King Juan Carlos of Spain conferred upon Rodrigo the title of Marqués de los Jardines de Aranjuez, Marquess of the Gardens of Aranjuez. This was one of the greatest honours that could be bestowed upon a composer, and a deeply meaningful choice: the man had become the Marquess of a place he himself could never see. Rodrigo, who had never been able to see the gardens of Aranjuez with his own eyes, had made the world see them with his.

In 1997, Victoria died at the age of ninety-two. Rodrigo's final two years were the first time in his life that his world was truly dark. Victoria's voice was no longer there. That extraordinary woman, so curious about everything, fluent in five languages, who had traced a path from the shores of the Bosphorus to Paris, from Paris to Madrid, was gone. On 6 July 1999, at the age of ninety-seven, Rodrigo too closed his eyes. Both were buried in Aranjuez, side by side, in the city where their guitars played loudest, in the place where they were closest to each other.

A World That Witnessed Rodrigo's Silent Victory

The Concierto de Aranjuez had made Rodrigo famous overnight, yet the composer had not stopped after that. He composed Fantasia para un Gentilhombre, Concierto Pastoral, and many other works, but none escaped the shadow of Aranjuez. Had this troubled him? According to Victoria's account, Rodrigo felt both pride and sadness about it. He was proud because the work had touched the hearts of millions; he was sad because he wished his other works would be heard with equal care.

Perhaps Rodrigo's blindness, paradoxical as it may seem, was his greatest gift. Those who can see accept the world as it is; those who cannot are compelled to recreate it. Rodrigo had recreated Aranjuez, but this time not in stone and earth, but in notes and silences. His Aranjuez was more beautiful, more enduring, more universal than the real Aranjuez. For the real Aranjuez can wear with time; its trees can wither, its fountains can fall silent. But Rodrigo's Aranjuez blooms anew with every performance.

Today, in any corner of the world, in a concert hall or on a street corner, when a guitarist plays the first notes of the Adagio, Rodrigo's spirit begins to wander those gardens once more. Victoria's voice in his ears, the ghost of the child he lost in his heart, the sun of Spain upon his face... The blind composer sees, the deaf world hears, and the tears of Aranjuez begin to fall once more.



Architecture from a single source – precise, sustainable and aesthetic

The architectural firm STUDIO ZB Architektur & Projektmanagement is based in Alzenau and was founded in 2020.

The name derives from the initials of the two owners, Architect Zeynep Züleyha Celebi Erdogan and Architect Bünyamin Erdogan, who bring their expertise, creativity and passion to every project.

The young team consists of three architects and a working student, covering a wide range of construction tasks: new residential and commercial buildings, renovation of existing structures, public construction projects, and participation in architectural competitions. The firm offers all service phases 1 to 8 of the HOAI. The focus is on precise planning, cost and schedule awareness, as well as a strong commitment to aesthetic construction and architectural quality. The goal is to create architecture that convinces not only functionally and economically, but also enhances the quality of life of its users through clear design and contemporary aesthetics.

Clients benefit from a holistic approach: STUDIO ZB accompanies projects from the initial idea through planning approval and detailed design all the way to construction supervision. Through an established network of specialist planners and skilled tradespeople, all construction trades can be covered and reliable partners recommended. This enables projects to be realized from planning through execution to sale — all from a single source.

Managing director Bünyamin Erdogan was born in Hanau in 1987 and today lives with his family in Alzenau. After studying architecture (Bachelor and Master) at the Technical University of Darmstadt, he is a registered architect and member of the Hessian Chamber of Architects and Urban Planners.

Co-owner Zeynep Züleyha Celebi Erdogan, born in Langen, contributes her professional expertise and plays a decisive role in shaping the firm's work. Together with Bünyamin Erdogan, she embodies the philosophy of STUDIO ZB: Architecture from a single source – precise, sustainable and aesthetic.



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HOPE IS A GOOD THING, PERHAPS THE BEST OF THINGS

These words belonged to a work of fiction. But the moment they fell from the lips of Morgan Freeman, not as a screen character, but as the human being who carries that voice, they took on an altogether different weight. For Freeman's life, much like the Red he portrayed, is a journey in which hope is both dangerous and indispensable: delayed justice, long waiting, and ultimately a quiet victory.

CEM BAHADIR

"Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things. And no good thing ever dies".

Andy Dufresne, *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994)

These words belong to a work of fiction.

But the moment they fell from the lips not of a screen character but of Morgan Freeman, the human being who carries that voice, they took on an altogether different weight. For Freeman's life, much like the character of Red he portrayed, was a journey in which hope was both dangerous and indispensable: a journey of delayed justice, long waiting, and ultimately a quiet victory.

To understand where that voice comes from, one must return to Memphis. Everything begins there: poverty, uprootedness, deferred dreams, and the silent germination of one of the world's most recognised voices.

That Long Road Beginning in Memphis

He was born on 1 June 1937 in Memphis, Tennessee, the youngest of five siblings. His father, Morgan Freeman, was a barber; his mother, Mayme Edna, a teacher. The family's finances meant that home was always changing. Young Morgan lived for a time with his grand-

mother in Mississippi. His grandmother's death became less a symbol of bereavement than of growing up estranged from himself. Chicago, then back south, then north again; each migration, each city, taught him something: people leave, but voices remain.

He was shy at school; but when the stage appeared, he became someone else. In his middle school years, he won the entire state's Dramatic Reading Competition. The applause he received that day was the first echo of a voice that would never fall silent. Yet the young Morgan, in that moment, did not want to be an actor. He wanted to be a pilot.

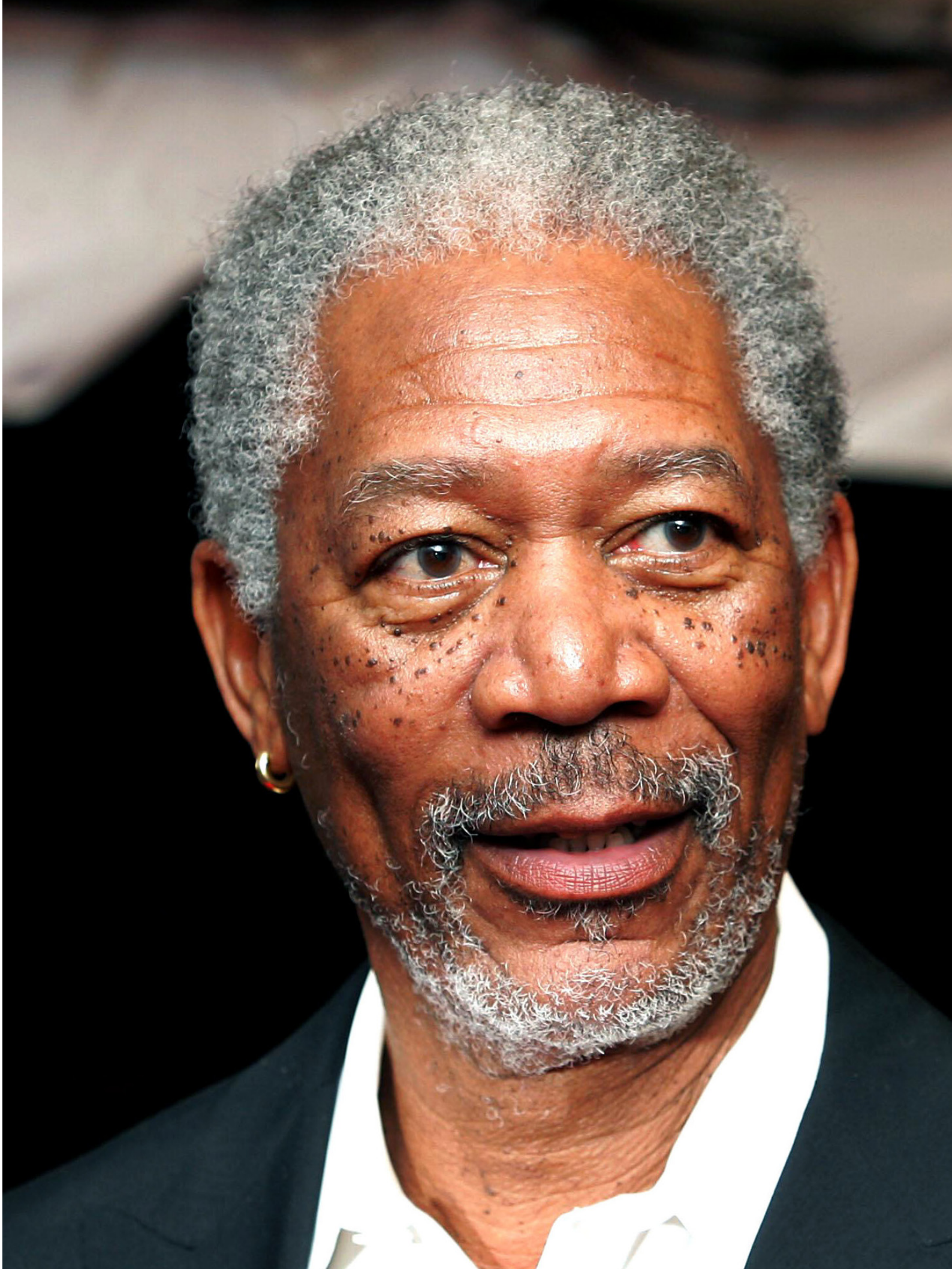
When he graduated from high school in 1955, he turned down the Drama department scholarship and enlisted in the United States Air Force. For four years he lived in the shadow of aircraft. But he never earned his pilot's wings. Unarmed defence, administrative duties, hours spent under the orders of controllers...

Was this failure, or the closing of a door? Freeman would say years later: *"While I was in military service, I sat in the cockpit seat of a jet aircraft. And a voice inside me said, 'This is not your place.' Perhaps I already knew".*

When he left the army in 1959, he had his freedom in hand. And he took that freedom to New York.

New York, but at What Price?

New York in the 1960s was both an opportunity and a living letter of rejection. He took dance lessons in Harlem, knocked on office





doors, did odd jobs. Acting auditions by night, secretarial work and data entry by day. Life was trying to wear him down quickly. He was refusing to be worn down quickly.

In 1967 he took his first step onto a Broadway stage. Then, for years, he performed in the city's small off-Broadway theatres, in municipally funded productions, in children's education programmes. His refinement came from there: he learned the stage, learned to meet the audience eye to eye, learned to be silent. Just as Red says:

"I've watched people come and go here for years. They had titles, they had money, they had nerve. But they never understood these walls. I did. I understood what time means".

(Red, *The Shawshank Redemption*)

In 1978 he won the Drama Desk Award for his performance in

The Mighty Gents and received a Tony nomination. Beneath characters written in street vernacular lay a Shakespearean wisdom. The audience felt it but could not name it. Freeman's peers from that period had long since become stars. He was still being forged on stage.

Hollywood's Long Silence, and the Birth of a Name

Hollywood discovered him late; but once it did, it could not let go. His dangerous and slippery role in the 1987 film *Street Smart* drew the attention of Pauline Kael, one of the era's sharpest critics, and prompted her to ask: *"Is this the greatest actor in America?"* The film also earned Freeman his first Oscar nomination.

Two years later, in 1989, the role of Hoke Colburn in *Driving Miss Daisy* was something singular: the story of a man whose alle-



The film had failed to hold at the box office. It could not find a drama audience in cinemas and Shawshank closed with a modest 16 million dollars. But the critics noticed. And then a movement began in the video rental shelves: cassettes passed from hand to hand, shown to friends and family, found in prisons and in the living rooms of people who had known hard nights. In time, the film rose to the top of IMDb's highest-rated films list and remained there for years.

Who Is Red?

Red was a man of Shawshank Prison, someone who could do nothing on the outside but managed everything on the inside. For years he had appeared before the parole board; each time rejected, each time returning. One must consider how Freeman played those scenes: no anger, no protest, no shame. Only a worn openness. As though dreams had stopped collapsing and the men had begun learning to collapse all over again.

Red's assessment upon first seeing Andy Dufresne was one of the film's sharpest lines:

"When I first saw that man, I thought: he won't make it. I can read the state of inmates serving life. But I was wrong about him. There was something in Andy Dufresne that was beyond us. By the time I understood that, it was too late, not for him, for me".

(Red, The Shawshank Redemption)

When Freeman read these lines, screenplay in hand, what did he think? The man who spent thirty years going to acting auditions, who turned down a Drama scholarship and enlisted in the army, who walked toward hunger in New York, was he now finding in Red's lines a reflection of his own biography? Whether he gave that answer or not, no one knows. But the wisdom he carried while playing Red was so profound that it could not have belonged to a written character alone.

The Hope Debate: Dangerous or Necessary?

In one of the film's most important scenes, Andy speaks to Red about hope; Red resists:

"Hope is a dangerous thing, Andy. Hope can drive a man insane".

(Red, The Shawshank Redemption)

This sentence establishes the film's philosophical axis. Freeman plays it not as a plain warning but as a call for protection arising from deep pain. Red has watched people be destroyed by their dreams. Perhaps he has lived it himself. Hope has cost him dearly. But faced with Andy's strange, insistent optimism, Red too slowly unravels. He learns that resisting hope also carries a price.

In the scene where, after his long prison years, Andy channels music through the walls, Red narrates:

"I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about. Truth is, I don't want to know. Some things are best left unsaid. I'd like to think they were singing about something so beautiful it can't be expressed in words, and it makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you, those voices soared higher and farther than anybody in a grey place dares to dream. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made these walls dissolve away. And for the briefest of moments, every last man at Shawshank felt free".

(Red, The Shawshank Redemption)

Freeman delivers this monologue with his eyelids narrowed and his face tilted gently toward his chest. His voice descends, almost to a whisper, as though he knows the physical weight of the words he is about to use. Red gives everyone who hears this narration the gift

giances were never entirely clear, and of how an inevitable closeness transforms him over the years. Freeman brought a magnificent stillness to the character; Hoke never spoke too much, never collapsed unnecessarily. His dignity filled the scenes. The Oscar remained distant this time too. But Freeman, at that stage of his life, had already learned how to wait.

Shawshank: Living Hope Within Walls

In 1994, he stepped before Frank Darabont's camera and became Ellis Boyd "Red" Redding. The screenplay, adapted from Stephen King's novella, which King himself has said is his favourite story despite all literary criticism, would become the turning point of Freeman's career. But no one knew it at the time.



of that moment. And Freeman's voice is the paper in which that gift is wrapped.

The Summary of Forty Years: A Single Sentence

Red's classic response at his parole hearings carries both a thought-provoking and a trembling silence:

"Rehabilitated? Well, now, let me see. You know, I don't have any idea what that means. I know what you think it means, sonny. To me, it's just a made-up word. A politician's word, so that young fellows like yourself can wear a suit and a tie and have a job. What do I really want to say to you? I'm telling you that every last man in this room, and every man I've met in my years here, is sorry for what he did. Or not sorry enough".

(Red, *The Shawshank Redemption*)

This scene is one of Freeman's most affecting performances: beneath everything he says lies a life weighed with meaning, unspoken. Exhaustion, remorse, and a strange resonance. Freeman calls on no external dramatic gesture for this scene: he sits upright, his eyes do not fill, his voice does not waver. The weight of what he carries inside reaches the audience without assistance.

That Final Monologue

The film's final scene is one of cinema history's most powerful closings. Red, freed after long years, writes in his journal:

"I find I'm so excited I can barely sit still or hold a thought in my head. I think it's the excitement only a free man can feel, a free man at the start of a long journey whose conclusion is uncertain. I hope I can make it across the border. I hope to see my friend and shake his hand. I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. I hope".

(Red, *The Shawshank Redemption*)

Freeman delivers this monologue as a voice from behind the screen. Even after the screen has gone dark, that voice remains suspended in the auditorium.

"I hope".

A single word. And Freeman says it in such a way that whatever the listener feels about that moment, they live it all at once: loneliness, fear, embrace. A door is about to open. And the voice that opens it with you is the distilled essence of decades of waiting.

It is not so difficult to understand why that voice is this consoling: because its owner has earned it. The depth of Freeman's voice comes not from age but from having carried that age with conscious patience. Just as Red, after forty years in prison, can still hope.

When Freeman read these lines, screenplay in hand, what did he think? The man who spent thirty years going to acting auditions, who turned down a Drama scholarship and enlisted in the army, who walked toward hunger in New York, was he now finding in Red's lines a reflection of his own biography? Whether he gave that answer or not, no one knows. But the wisdom he carried while playing Red was so profound that it could not have belonged to a written character alone.

The Oscar Knocked on the Door at the Seventeenth Attempt

After Shawshank, Freeman's filmography began displaying different faces of a consistent character. Detective Somerset in *Se7en* (1995), a man who had washed up at the shore of exhaustion but had still not abandoned doing what he believed right, was another layer of the archetype Freeman had constructed.

Finally, in 2004, his role as retired boxer Scrap-Iron Eddie Dupris in Clint Eastwood's *Million Dollar Baby* opened the Academy's door: Best Supporting Actor. As he walked to the stage, his face held neither exhilaration nor relief, only that familiar, deep composure. As though he already knew, and had been waiting.

Before and after: Nelson Mandela in *Invictus*, as though this role too had spent years waiting for Freeman, for both men knew the depth of a waiting exceeding thirty years, carried it silently, and ultimately spoke; the wise Lucius Fox in the *Batman* trilogy; and in *The Bucket List*, the late-ripening bond of two men rediscovering each other on the threshold of death alongside Jack Nicholson.

In every film, the same thing was present: weight. The weight of being present on screen. Freeman's acting philosophy had over the years summarised itself in a narrow frame: *"I just listen. I truly look at the person across from me. The rest comes by itself"*.

Quietly Doing Good Off Screen

He founded a blues club in Mississippi: Ground Zero Blues Club. In Clarksdale, on the land where blues was born, in a crumbling building in a used-up and abandoned town. Every evening that venue rings out; every evening it cries the universal sorrow of the human being. Freeman did not build it merely to make money; he built it to construct a deep-rooted memory.

Through the Tallahatchie River Foundation he donated to impoverished schools in Mississippi, supported education. He returned to the soil where he grew up, to the children left behind there, but quietly. Without press conferences, without stepping before cameras. The Kennedy Center Honor (2008) and the SAG Lifetime Achievement Award seemed, somehow, the outward reflection back from the world of what he embodied.

Freeman once said: *"Stories have to be told. There is no other way to bring out what's inside us. That's what we actors are here for"*.

The Anatomy of His Voice: Why Is It This Consoling?

Cinema lovers who over the years tried to describe Morgan Freeman's voice had found one word: *gravitas*. This Latin word, meaning *"weight"*, has permeated Freeman's body language, his gaze, and above all his voice. To understand where this *gravitas* comes from was the real subject of writing a biography.

Were we to make a Freudian reading, we might say it is the bodily memory of a childhood exile, a child who moved from house to house, forced to take root anew in every place. Or it was the accumulation carried for years inside the man who returned from the army empty-handed, the actor who waited at the edges of stages, the artist recognised too late. But it would be more correct to ask Freeman himself; and over the years he had

said: *"Don't externalise. Try to keep everything inside. Then the audience finds it"*.

This was also the summary of Red's own philosophy. When Red learns that Andy has escaped from his cell and reached freedom, he is shaken at first. Then he writes these lines:

"I find I'm so excited I can barely sit still or hold a thought in my head. I think it's the excitement only a free man can feel, a free man at the start of a long journey whose conclusion is uncertain. I hope".

(Red, *The Shawshank Redemption*)

And Freeman says *"I hope"*. Just three syllables. But even after the screen has gone dark, those three syllables remain suspended in the auditorium. What makes this possible is that Freeman has truly lived those words.

At Eighty-Eight, Still on That Long Road

Morgan Freeman is currently 88 years old. His hand, from an accident suffered years ago, does not grip fully; his left arm hangs slack. But that bewitching, magical voice of his remains one of the most recognised voices in the world.

Shawshank's famous line has lodged itself in our memory: *"Get busy living, or get busy dying"*.

It summarises Freeman's biography.

The world waited to prepare itself to deserve his voice.

Red's final word was, in truth, his own.

Both spoke it with the patience of a lifetime: *"I hope"*.

GROWING YOUNGER IN OLD AGE

When a person shares their memories, they return, if only for a moment, to that young self: the one who ran, laughed, hoped. When an older person tells of their past, what enters their voice is not trembling, but strength. For what has been lived carries an invisible resilience that stands in the spine of a human being. And that resilience becomes a light for the present, each time it is given words.

SEVAL TUNCER

Old age is the quietest season of life. Like a calm evening after days that once passed too quickly, memories crowded to the brim, and frantic mornings... Viewed from the outside, old age appears peaceful; yet within its inner world it carries a depth that moves in waves.

As the years pass, a person notices that their surroundings are slowly changing. Those who were once always at their side grow distant; the noise of the city no longer reaches the ear as closely as it once did. The silence in the house stretches out toward evening. Loneliness in old age is often not a choice, it is a natural transformation of life.

Yet what hurts most is that the words accumulated in language find no way out. A person grows quieter as they grow older. For the people they wait to tell their stories to are no longer there, or those people no longer take the time to listen.

Old people often carry within them the stories they have kept inside. The excitement of their youth, the scent of their childhood, the shadow of those they loved... Everything is carried on the shoulders as memory. But the heaviest burden is the absence of someone who knows how to value what they wish to tell.

The difficulties of old age are not confined to the wearying of the body. Memory wavers; even when mental sharpness is preserved, words sometimes arrive too late, mornings no longer begin as swiftly as they once did. Tasks once accomplished with ease now demand patience and care. The body grows heavier; the fragility of the soul deepens.

And yet old age holds within it an unbreakable strength: the strength of resistance. The holding fast to life, the grace of slowing down, the meeting of difficulties in one's own rhythm...

Old people struggle against hardship mostly with patience. Sometimes praying, sometimes looking at old photographs, sometimes

speaking to themselves over a cup of tea... For with the years one learns: what keeps a person upright is not quantity but meaning. And meaning is often concealed in the mother tongue.

The Mother Tongue as Anchor

For an old person, the mother tongue is both a form of remembering and a means of holding on. Someone calling them by name, smiling and asking "How are you?", listening patiently to a shared memory... All of this awakens the light inside an old person anew. The mother tongue speaks not only through sentences, but through a warmth that makes presence felt.

A person who cultivates empathy knows that this warmth is what is needed most. For in old age, being spoken to is a person's way of saying: "I am still here". Being understood is the quietest expression of "My life was not in vain".

Faced with hardship, the greatest strength of old people lies in their own quiet resilience. Their slow but steady gait, their silent bearing of pain, their acceptance shaped by the maturity the years have taught... Their resistance is not loud as in youth; but it is rooted, deep, and composed.

And for those who understand, this is what is most moving about old age: inside every old person, a young heart still beats. There is still a story that wishes to be told, still a laughter hidden away, still a memory waiting to make the eyes shine. Their needs are not great things; sometimes a greeting, sometimes a question, sometimes a belated thank-you... And most often, simply that someone truly hears them.

Ageing Is Not Silence

Ageing is not silence; silence is the consequence of not being heard. And what brings a person back to life is often not great miracles, but small yet sincere words.

Old age is the most fragile yet the wisest season of life. A per-



son's story, however old it may be, grows young again when it is put into words. For every story breathes as it is told. The light that once shone in the eyes whispers that it has not been extinguished beneath the weariness of the years.

When a person shares their memories, they return, if only for a moment, to that young self: the one who ran, laughed, hoped. When an older person tells of their past, what enters their voice is not trembling, but strength. For what has been lived carries an invisible resilience that stands in the spine of a human being. And that resilience becomes a light for the present, each time it is given words.

The Hidden World of the Old

The world of old people often appears, from the outside, very quiet. And yet the storms within have long since settled, making way for a sea kneaded with wisdom. That sea is sometimes still, sometimes lightly rippled, but always deep. For every old person carries within them the secrets that a long life has quietly accumulated.

And it is precisely here that the subtlest difficulties of old age reveal themselves: a fragile body carries a strong soul; a fading memory holds feelings that never pale; a loneliness-gathering surroundings gives rise to an enriched inner world. As they navigate each hardship, they quietly wrap themselves in the patience the years have given them.

Some can no longer go on long walks, yet they travel great distances through memory. Some can no longer speak loudly, yet they know how to tell with a single glance what moves in the heart. Some sit in a room of their home, while their thoughts travel back and forth across past years: to the laughter of a loved one, to the voice of a friend, to a child's first step...

Old age is a person's journey into their own interior. Despite the difficulties encountered on that journey, most older people carry their inner strength without saying so to anyone. That strength is unassuming, yet unshakeable. Youth conceals itself in bold steps; old age con-

ceals itself in quiet endurance.

An older person experiences a ritual even in the morning opening of their window. They listen to the direction of the wind outside; when the sun seeps through the clouds, they smile faintly, for they know: life goes on, no matter how late the hour. And in everything that goes on, there lies a new meaning.

It is language that carries this meaning most deeply. An old person's speech can sometimes be slow, sometimes trembling, sometimes very brief. But what they say always leaves a trace. Each word is like a pearl, filtered from the sediment of the years, a grace. And for this reason, every story hidden within an old person, when shared, turns green again. Every life that is put into words defies time.

Old age is therefore not only an autumn; it is at once a painting drawn with the shadows and lights of a long life. Anyone who can look upon that painting sees how resilient, how deep, how precious a human being is.

Growing Younger in Old Age

Old age is not an ending; it is a quieter form of existence. And a person's story becomes immortal when it is told. For every word is a bridge reaching to the quietest place in life. The older a story is, the more it grows young again when it is returned to language. And that youth arises not in the body, but in the light of the soul...

Growing younger in old age, by telling, by being heard, by being understood. For every story that is shared breathes. And every life that lives on in words overcomes time.

Old people struggle against hardship mostly with patience. Sometimes praying, sometimes looking at old photographs, sometimes speaking to themselves over a cup of tea... For with the years one learns: what keeps a person upright is not quantity but meaning. And meaning is often concealed in the mother tongue.

THE FINAL CRIES OF LIVES THAT HAD FIT
THEMSELVES INTO FORTY-FIVE SECONDS

THE MEMORY THE RUBBLE

*In the pitch dark she dragged her feet across
the ground, feeling her way forward, trying to
understand where it was she had come from.*

SÜMEYRA AĞAOĞLU

The old woman jolted awake from her bed in fear.

She could not escape the nightmare that haunted her dreams. For a long time now, a grey wave of fog had been settling over her sleep.

In the dead of night, she had become trapped between desperate tangles of thought, reaching hopelessly toward times she could no longer make right.

The aches of the past lived inside her chest cavity with every breath she drew.

In every fold of her mind, each fraction of that extraordinary tremor she had lived through was hammered in like a nail.

With great effort, she pulled herself upright from where she lay.

With trembling hands, she gently pushed the door ajar...

and stepped outside.

The road was level...

but far longer than it should have been.

She saw the walls begin to crumble as the ground shook beneath them. Drifting in and out of dust and smoke, she moved forward along an unknown path.

In the pitch darkness she dragged her feet across the ground, groping her way, trying to understand where it was she had come from.

The smoke was burning deeper into her throat with each passing moment, drawing a veil over the few bright images still left in



her memory.

Her eyes searched for a light.

Buildings that had not collapsed leaned against one another to remain standing;

heads bowed in sorrow, they simply stood there.

Now the full weight of all her memories had descended upon her.

Some had gone to sleep still holding a grudge that night...

thinking they would make up in the morning.

Some had slipped a single stone into their pocket...

meaning to propose to the one they loved.

Some were going to the hospital for a birth...

they had packed their bag and set it by the bedside.

With the last strength her body could give, she came to stand before the rubble heaped across the pavement.

And all at once...

she stopped, as though turned to stone.

A harmony of voices echoed in her ears, rising from above the clouds.

In those desperate hours when her heart burned to hold onto something, a small fragment of hope fell into her.

She saw a child running toward her.

The pyjamas on its back were torn and covered in dust.

She saw the smile in those sleepy eyes.

She heard everyone shouting.

Was this not once the home where her son, her daughter-in-law, and her grandchildren lived?

If she knocked on the door now... would anyone answer?

Was there anyone inside?

If they came out... wouldn't that be something?

She had made sweet rolls for the children...

wouldn't the smell find its way to their noses?

When morning came, wouldn't they drop the older one at school and leave the little one with her again?

If they couldn't find her at home, wouldn't they wonder?

Where else would they leave that tiny child but with her?

Who else would look after...

a little one no bigger than a hand...

My daughter-in-law will be up by now...

waking the children.

My son loves his sleep so...

he'll bury his head right back under the covers.

Winters are bitter here where we're from...

February has arrived...

snow was a little late this year...

the children will get cold now...

Amid thoughts and memories, her body, grown numb beneath a great roar, could no longer hold itself upright.

An unbroken chain of unfinished stories seeped into her very marrow; memories rising to the surface were constructing the recollections of a future never lived.

Beneath the shame of still drawing breath, in the dark, the final cries of lives that had fitted themselves into forty-five seconds... were dying in her dead heart.



A WITNESS TO A WORLD IN WHICH REALITY HAS EVAPORATED: JEAN BAUDRILLARD

In 1968, the streets of Paris rose up. Students, workers, intellectuals. Baudrillard was at the very centre of this movement. Theories debated in university lecture halls had spilled into the streets. Young people were questioning authority, consumption, the family, the state, language, that is, all systems of representation. The barricades were not merely physical obstacles; they were also a symbol of the collapse of old ways of thinking.

ÖZLEN BİÇER

A Silent Observation Begun in Reims (1929–1949)

Jean Baudrillard came into the world in 1929, in Reims, a city in France still trying to bind the wounds of war. His family was modest; but the silence in the house awakened an extraordinary sensitivity in young Jean's mind. Baudrillard's childhood unfolded on the scarred surface of post-war France. This period sowed the first seeds of the idea of "invisible meanings" that would come to form the foundation of his thought. He spent the post-war years among the shadows of bombed buildings in the city, soldier monuments in the streets, and the reflections of toys in shop windows. Everything he saw contributed to his understanding that reality extended beyond the visible.

On the Fine Line of Reality (1949–1960)

Baudrillard studied German at the Sorbonne, becoming the first in his family to attend university. What influenced him most was not what texts said but how they functioned. For Baudrillard, language was less a tool for explaining the world than a surface that frequently concealed reality. Words, rather than revealing truth, could lose it

among signs and images.

Deep within him, he was pursuing a more fundamental question: how is the real constructed? Under what conditions is a phenomenon accepted as real? Baudrillard observed that the distinction between reality and representation was growing increasingly blurred. In his view, in modern society, events, objects, and experiences were perceived not directly in themselves but through the signs and models that symbolised them. This suggested that real experience was most often lived only through the images that represented and displayed it.

The Sorbonne years were for Baudrillard not merely academic study but the beginning of a practice of observation, questioning, and systematic scepticism. Wandering through texts of linguistics, semiotics, sociology, and philosophy, he began to see behind every concept the shadow of another. This process became the intellectual laboratory in which the seeds of his theories of simulation and hyperreality were planted.

Simulation: According to Baudrillard, in the modern world it is no longer events themselves but their circulating representations that are determinative. In examples such as television war broadcasts or Disneyland, reality is reproduced through signs and models. At this point, representation ceases to be the sign of something; it transforms into a system functioning on its own terms, and the boundary between





Jean Baudrillard

reality and model grows steadily more blurred. (Baudrillard, 1981)

Hyperreality: Shopping centres, brands, and consumer culture present objects not as satisfying needs but as markers of identity and status. Experience thus detaches from the object itself and is lived entirely through images. Hyperreality denotes a further level of simulation; at this stage, reality comes to be determined by models and representations, and individuals no longer experience reality directly, they experience the “*reality effect*” produced by simulations. (Baudrillard, 1981)

At the Heart of Consumer Society (1960–1970)

The Paris of the 1960s was the laboratory of the modern world. Advertisements, shop windows, televisions, new forms of consumption. People were no longer buying objects out of need. According to Baudrillard, consumption in modern society was no longer an act performed to meet needs. This observation became his first major work: *The Consumer Society*.

In his view, modern human beings are increasingly living in a world of signs rather than objects. A brand, a logo, an advertisement, all were producers of meaning. And those meanings had begun to take the place of the real. What was being purchased was no longer the object itself but the symbolic meaning it represented.

May 1968: The Fracture of Thought

In 1968, the streets of Paris rose up. Students, workers, intellectuals. Baudrillard was at the very centre of this movement. Theories

debated in university lecture halls had spilled into the streets. Young people were questioning authority, consumption, the family, the state, language, that is, all systems of representation. The barricades were not merely physical obstacles; they were also a symbol of the collapse of old ways of thinking.

This atmosphere sharpened a question in Baudrillard’s mind: is what we call social reality a structure that genuinely exists, or is it a representation that is continuously reproduced?

Unlike other thinkers, he saw in this very rebellion the danger of its transformation into spectacle. In his view, the boundaries between reality and representation had already become indistinct; even revolution could become a simulation within its own media representation. The flooding of people into the streets, the struggle banners and slogans, though outwardly a sign of radical change, were in truth becoming a spectacle consumed by modern society.

This awareness led him to diverge from the classical Marxist framework. Baudrillard gradually began to reconstruct his thought around the concept of simulation.

Simulation: The Disappearance of Reality (1970–1990)

Baudrillard’s most striking idea developed in this period: simulation. The world was now full of copies of the real. And those copies were gradually taking the place of the real. Disneyland, television news, images of war, advertisements, all had become producers of hyperreality. According to this approach, the outside world was no

The Paris of the 1960s was the laboratory of the modern world. Advertisements, shop windows, televisions, new forms of consumption. People were no longer buying objects out of need. According to Baudrillard, consumption in modern society was no longer an act performed to meet needs. This observation became his first major work: The Consumer Society.

less fictive than Disneyland itself. News selects events, arranges them, dramatises them. What is presented to the viewer is not the event itself but a media version of the event. Television, for this reason, did not produce reality, it produced the reality-effect.

For Baudrillard, Disneyland was not merely a park offering entertainment, it was a vast field of fiction concealing reality. In his view, this space did not so much display the artificial as it functioned as a simulation convincing us that the world outside was “real”.

Advertisements, as he emphasised in *The Consumer Society* (1970), presented objects not merely as meeting needs but as a means of producing meaning and identity.

Some saw Baudrillard as the sharpest-sighted thinker of his age; others interpreted his ideas as a warning anticipating the dark dimensions of the modern world. In international newspapers and journals, Baudrillard was assessed as “an important figure of postmodern theory” and “a penetrating critical thinker” for his work on culture, media, and postmodernity.

The Gulf War: His Most Contested Claim (1991)

In 1991, Baudrillard evaluated the Gulf War, as it was presented in the media, as a representation. The war was, of course, real; there were deaths, bombs, and destruction. But Baudrillard’s emphasis was on the fact that viewers experienced the war through television and media. In his view, the images of war presented by the media constituted a “model of war” that was represented rather than the events themselves. In this context, Baudrillard’s aim was not provocation but to show how reality is produced and represented in the media. His claim was therefore not a denial of the war’s existence, but an effort to draw attention to the fact that what was being presented to us was a media representation rather than reality itself.

America: A Mirror of a Civilisation (1980–2000)

Baudrillard (1986) describes America as the country in which modern simulations could be observed in their most concentrated form. Las Vegas, motorways, shopping centres, and neon lights are, in his eyes, concrete examples of hyperreality. In this context, Amer-

ican culture does not merely offer entertainment and consumption; it also mediates the reproduction of the real. In his view, in this simulation environment, rather than experiencing reality directly, individuals live a “reality effect” through the media and cultural representations of events and objects. (Baudrillard, 1986, pp. 25–30)

Final Years: A Mirror of an Age (2000–2007)

In the last years of his life, Baudrillard observed the rise of the internet, globalisation, and the speed of the media age. Blogs, social media, a twenty-four-hour uninterrupted news stream, every new platform functioned, in his eyes, as a laboratory in which the boundary between reality and representation grew ever more indistinct. In his view, the problem of the modern world now lay not only in images and symbols but in the perpetual reproduction and multiplication of reality. It was true that the internet and globalisation were making the world more visible, but visibility was not revealing reality itself; it was laying bare the layers of representations and simulations.

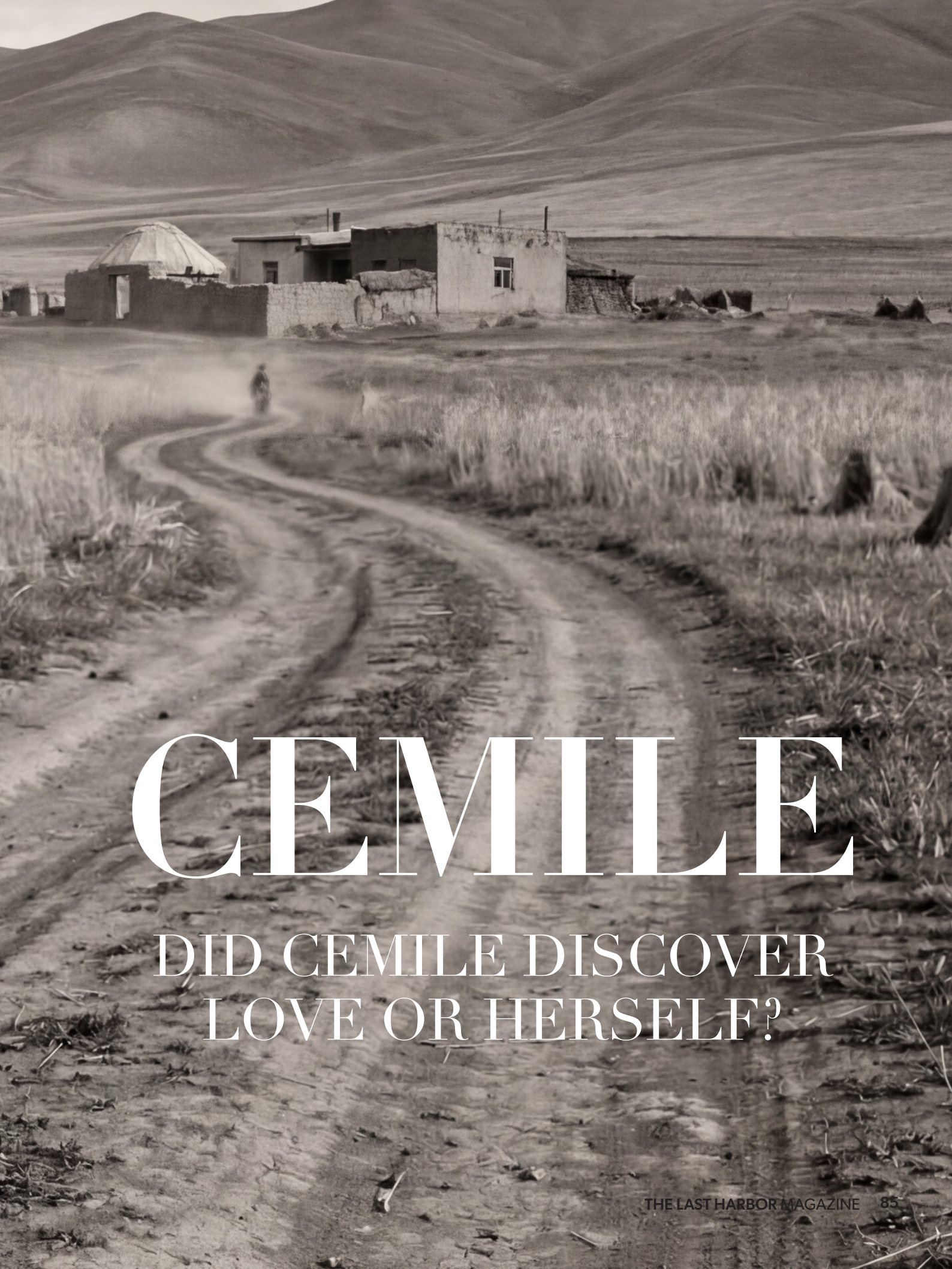
Where Did the Real Go?

When he bid farewell to life in 2007, he left behind a thought: the world had become lost inside its own image.

Jean Baudrillard was one of the thinkers who most clearly reflected the contradictions of the modern world. His thought continues to serve as a fundamental compass for understanding our age, shaped as it is by media, technology, and consumption. Baudrillard’s concept of simulation still provides a foundational framework for explaining how the practice of distinguishing the real from its representation in today’s digital media is becoming increasingly impossible. His theoretical framework, in contemporary social observation and cultural criticism, offers the possibility of systematically analysing the relationship between the real and its representation; his thought thus occupies not only a historical but a central position in current academic debate.

His question remains as valid as ever: how will we distinguish what is real, if anything real remains?





CEMILE

DID CEMILE DISCOVER
LOVE OR HERSELF?

SEBAHAT'TİN ÇELEBİ

Hers was a story set in the final years of the Second World War, amid the endless steppes of Kyrgyzstan, in the yellowed grasses of the Chu Valley. Chinghiz Aitmatov's *Jamila*, written in 1958, was not merely a love story; it was a woman's journey back to herself. Described by Louis Aragon as "*the most beautiful love story of the twentieth century*", the novel broke free from the rigid conventions of Soviet Socialist Realism and rang out like a cry from the depths of the human soul.

The language of the steppe, the poetry of silence

Aitmatov was a child of the Kyrgyz steppe. Born in the Sheker Valley, raised in the foothills of the Tian Shan mountains, he had absorbed the language of the land as if with his mother's milk. In writing *Jamila*, he carved out a space of freedom within the ideological mould the Soviet Union had imposed. The geography of the novel was not merely physical; it was a universe in which the soul opened, silence spoke, and the wind wrote poetry. The fields of the Chu Valley, the snow-capped peaks of the Ala-Too range, the flowing rivers and the stretching roads — all were the outward face of *Jamila's* inner journey.

Aitmatov's narrative voice differed from the linear conception of time in Western fiction. He wrote in an epic register nourished by the Kyrgyz oral tradition. His sentences were short, yet his images were boundless. In rendering the silence of the steppe into words, he was in truth telling the untold. *Jamila's* face was never described; the gaze of her eyes, the way her hair rippled in the wind, the lightness of her step — these were sufficient. Rather than handing the reader a picture, Aitmatov left behind a feeling.

Cemile: the emergence of an unseen woman into visibility

At the novel's opening, *Jamila* was a ghost. She was her brother's wife, but who, truly, was she? Sadyk was at the front; she worked the fields on horseback. The villagers thought her wild. She did not conform to custom. She sang, she laughed aloud, she performed the same labour as the men. She had a marriage but no existence. She had been defined not as a woman but as a unit of labour.

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Events were arranged
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of the Western novel.*

Seit, fifteen years old, watched *Jamila*. He was the story's narrator, but above all he was a witness — the only eye that saw *Jamila* both before and after she met Daniyar. And what he saw was not a transformation but a revelation. *Jamila* had always been there; no one had simply looked.

When Daniyar arrived, the steppe did not change. He was a wounded soldier, returned from the front. He had a voice, and that voice touched *Jamila's* heart. Aitmatov portrayed love not as passion but as awakening. When Daniyar sang, *Jamila* listened; yet what she listened to was not the song but the voice inside herself. For the first time, someone looked at her as a human being. For the first time, a man stood beside her without possessing, demanding, or judging.

Love, or existence?

Jamila's walk toward Daniyar was to be read not as an act of betrayal but as an act of being. For *Jamila* did not abandon Sadyk; she abandoned her own non-existence. Her marriage to Sadyk had not been a marriage but an arrangement. Families had decided, vows had been exchanged, yet two souls had never met. Aitmatov,

countering the Soviet ideology's rhetoric of "*collective happiness*", was defending the freedom of the individual. *Jamila's* flight was not an action against the system; it was a flight from a system that was itself against humanity.

Amin Maalouf wrote in Samarkand: "*Love is the only road that leads a person back to themselves*". *Jamila*, too, found her way back to herself alongside Daniyar. But that road did not belong to Daniyar; it was *Jamila's* own. Daniyar was not a guide but a mirror. For the first time, *Jamila* saw her own reflection and recognised it.

In Aitmatov's telling, love was not physical but spiritual. There were no scenes of passion between *Jamila* and Daniyar. There were only glances, silent walks, songs carried by the wind. Love was expressed not in words but in the language of the steppe. Two people walked side by side, and the world was remade.

Through Seit's eyes: the artist as witness

Seit was the novel's narrator, and that choice was no accident. He was a young painter, and it was as if he were painting *Jamila*. He did



not judge; he observed. As he lived with Jamila and Daniyar's love, Seit himself learned something: courage, freedom, beauty. Through Seit's eyes, Aitmatov was saying to the reader: *"Look — truly look. For what you see is not a scandal but a miracle"*.

Seit's identity as an artist was the novel's textual strategy. Through Seit, Aitmatov was reflecting on the function of literature and art. The artist was not one who reiterated society's rules but one who rediscovered the human being. In narrating Jamila, Seit was rendering her immortal. And so Jamila was transformed from a village woman into a universal symbol.

Geography and the soul: the metaphysical language of the steppe

For Aitmatov, geography was not a setting but a state of mind. The boundless plains of the Chu Valley both isolated and liberated the human being. The steppe, unlike a closed society, was an open universe. Jamila's flight was a movement from enclosed space (village, home, tradition) toward open space (steppe, road, horizon). Aitmatov employed geography as a psychological element. As Jamila and Daniyar walked across the steppe, they were in truth walking toward themselves.

The oral tradition roots of Kyrgyz literature were unmistakably present in Aitmatov's prose. The work could be read as an epic poem. Events were arranged not in chronological but in emotional logic. Time was not linear but cyclical. Past, present, and future intertwined. This mode of narration reflected the Eastern holistic perception of things against the Cartesian rationalism of the Western novel.

Soviet reality and the search for freedom

Publishing *Jamila* in 1958 in the Soviet Union required courage. Socialist Realism demanded that literature serve social utility and that its heroes embody collective values. But Jamila belonged not to the

collective but to herself. She heeded not societal norms but her own heart. Aitmatov, remaining within the Soviet system, was nonetheless questioning the spirit of that system.

That the novel was set during the Second World War was also significant. While men were at the front, women had entered the fields of production. Jamila worked the land, yet this physical freedom had not been transformed into spiritual freedom. When the war ended, the men would return and women would once again be shut away in their homes. Jamila's flight was an act that broke this cycle. She would not surrender to the post-war order.

Jamila's legacy: the cost of freedom

When Jamila and Daniyar left the village, what they left behind was not merely a community but a worldview. The villagers cursed them; Sadyk's family was shamed. But Seit remembered them, and he told their story. And in the telling, he said that what they had done was right.

Aitmatov posed the question to his reader: Did Jamila betray, or was she simply honest? When a woman chooses her own happiness, is that a crime? Is love a disruption of social order, or is it the making of a human being?

Jamila was not merely a love story. It was the story of what it means to be human, to possess the freedom to choose, to hear one's own voice. Jamila did not discover love; through love, she discovered herself. And perhaps the essential question was this: once a person has discovered themselves, could they ever live any other way?

The wind of the steppe still blows. Jamila's footsteps are still heard. And Aitmatov's words, even half a century on, still reach the heart: *"I told Jamila's story. But in telling hers, I told, in truth, my own"*.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

She had seen her in a black-and-white photograph. Virginia sat thinking beside a window, in an armchair upholstered with patterned fabric, dressed in a garment of velvet-like cloth, a brooch at her collar whose exact shape she could not make out from the photograph, and a wide, long skirt cut from the same material.

HATİCE DİKBAŞ

Again, reading the book in her hands, she noticed that her mind had drifted from the text, and she set it down on the coffee table in front of her.

But she had closed it again without marking the page.

She muttered to herself: “*When is this book ever going to end?*” Back and forth like that, losing enthusiasm every time she had to start from the beginning to find her place. And yet she had chosen to read literature herself. She loved it. Novels most of all. She would put herself in the place of the novel’s characters, play her own role in the cinematic scenes she constructed in her mind. Sometimes she would set the book aside, take up screenwriting, and write the story’s continuation herself. But now reading had become an obligation.

Exams were drawing near, and if she wanted to graduate she had to read every one of these books. Perhaps being compelled to read was what was stripping the pleasure from it and pulling her mind away from the story. She had never, from the beginning, liked things done by force. When left to her own devices, she would dash through a task; the moment someone or something pressured her, she wanted nothing to do with it. There was opposition in her soul. She was, after all, the living embodiment of what her mother said in anger: “*Everyone goes the right way; our girl goes the wrong way*”. There was no small amount of truth in that, to be honest. Once, while her mother was heading out to visit and had dressed her in a lemon-yellow party dress with ruffled hems and floral embroidery, warning her: “*Don’t go out into the street and get dirty!*” she had seized the empty house to do precisely that, and had smeared herself with tar watching the road-paving crew, and taken a beating for not listening. If her mother hadn’t said to stay inside, she might well have amused herself by sitting in and watching the guests’ behaviour; but she had done the

opposite of what she was told, as always. How many other things had she defied, countless. She didn’t actually like this trait in herself, because it got her into trouble every single time. Her mother had said “*No*” about that boy too, but she had stubbornly insisted “*Yes*”, and as if family troubles weren’t enough, she had brought this love down on her head like an affliction as well.

She hadn’t counted how many coffees it had been, but she got up and decided to make another. Perhaps it would gather her scattered mind. “*Will my life always be this hard?*” she thought, waiting for the coffee to come to a boil. “*Will everything always pile on top of everything else?*” She knew she would never learn where she was supposed to give up and where she was supposed to carry on. She had been taught not to give up. Yet she too was a human being, and giving up was perfectly human.

Simply to avoid being called someone who gave up and walked away, how many bottomless pits had she fallen into, and only she and God knew the price she had paid to climb back out.

“*If only*”, she said. “*If only I had given up that love*”.

Not long ago she had seen a photograph online, found it interesting, and gone back to look it up. The photograph was of a five-storey, eight-ramp junction that had opened in the Chinese city of Chongqing. A news report about it read: “*A person who takes a wrong turn could spend at least an entire day trying to get out*”.

That, she thought, is an image of the inside of my head. She would take a wrong turn of thought, spend days searching for the right road, and just when she thought she had found it, another bend would appear and she would go on circling inside the junction.

She scrunched her face at the first sip of the viciously bitter coffee, but she loved that bitter taste. She thought of women who drank milky, sweet coffee, fragile, delicate women who had others open even the cap of their water bottle for them. Who was cleverer, who was stronger?

She took her coffee and walked toward the sitting room of the



She hadn't counted how many coffees it had been, but she got up and decided to make another. Perhaps it would gather her scattered mind. "Will my life always be this hard?" she thought, waiting for the coffee to come to a boil. "Will everything always pile on top of everything else?" She knew she would never learn where she was supposed to give up and where she was supposed to carry on. She had been taught not to give up. Yet she too was a human being, and giving up was perfectly human.

flat, a room whose landlord's remarkable taste announced itself in turquoise wall paint, gilded plasterwork cornices, and glass-panel doors she had never been able to make sense of. She dropped herself onto the slightly shiny, flower-patterned blue sofa bought secondhand, the one where you could feel the springs if you sat a certain way. "Right then", she said to herself, "what was this novel's character troubled by? Why did she keep finding herself in such dreary surroundings, and why had her identity, her very gender, suddenly changed in the middle of the book?"

She turned to Virginia, the queen of English fiction, a title she herself had bestowed, the crown she had placed with her own hands upon first reading *Mrs Dalloway*, and said with a laugh: "You were never quite normal either, were you?". She imagined herself in the place of Queen Virginia, picturing the formidable cliffs of the county of Sussex where she had lived, the chalk downs, the forests and heathlands to the north of the town, all in a cold, misty, rainy atmosphere. She had never seen any of these things with her own eyes; she had learned them all from the novels she had read.

She had seen her in a black-and-white photograph. Virginia sat thinking in an armchair upholstered with patterned fabric beside a window, wearing a garment of velvet-like cloth, a brooch at her collar whose shape she couldn't quite make out from the photograph, and a wide, long skirt in the same fabric. She was no longer the Virginia of that scene. She stood up. She was in pyjamas and slippers, technically, but in keeping with the demands of her role she straightened her clothes. She walked toward the window. What lay before her, she imagined, was not snowy mountains but an ice-blue, rippling sea beyond misty trees. She took the coffee cup in her hand. She was careful not to forget to substitute her own table and chair for the indispensable elements of her imagined setting: an old oak chair and desk. She had always wanted furniture like that. A desk whose surface bore the marks of a lived life, with a slim, long, lockable drawer underneath, its key hidden in a box shaped like an old book. And a chair with fabric-upholstered armrests and a wide seat, heavy to lift because it was solid natural wood, and just slightly creaky. She had lost

herself in her daydreams so completely, as always, that as she sat down she smoothed out the non-existent skirt at the back so it wouldn't crease.

Caught in the gloomy spell of the life she was living in her dream, she was dragged back to the real world by the maddening alarm on her phone. After yet another sleepless night, she had to go to class. Her absences had piled up to the bone, and the mercy of her lecturers had been deferred to next term. So she had set alarms to go off one after another. She leapt up and stood in front of the portable wardrobe, a monument to ugliness, with a zipper and bars so warped they sometimes made it lean sideways. In her dream there had been

oak furniture; in reality, plastic. She may not have had a life, but her dreams were quality, at least.

The air was viciously cold outside and if you stayed in it too long it quite literally stabbed you in the legs. She would wear trousers, yes, but she hated the woollen thermal underwear she was supposed to put on underneath. The question "What should I wear today?" always brought her to the same point: "How can a girl wearing thermals ever feel beautiful?" Especially when she knew she was going to be under the same roof as the boy she was in love with. "Oh, enough, do you really have to be this cold? Come on, let's reach an understanding, let's get a bit closer. Maybe we'll warm up", what would it matter if she said that? Wherever was the courage for it in her. She put on her thermals, then her khaki corduroy trousers, then the thick, ribbed-pattern turtleneck jumper her mother had knitted for her the previous year in beige. Her hair had been naturally cooperative since the beginning of time. Her face had at least smiled upon her in that respect. She rarely bothered to style it, yet it generally sat well. She was looking herself over when the clock suddenly caught her attention. If she didn't leave now she would miss the bus. "Skip the makeup then", she said. She hurriedly stuffed her books into her bag. Scarf, hat, gloves, whatever God had provided, she put it all on. And threw herself out into the street, frozen solid as glass.

“PATIENCE WAS EVERYTHING”, ROBIN!

The greatest force that drove Williams toward suicide was the loneliness and sense of exclusion concealed behind the laughter. This frightened him in the most profound sense.

RECEP KADIOĞLU

“Patience is everything. I am learning it from the sorrows to which I feel indebted. Patience is everything”.

This profound and philosophical line by the celebrated German poet Rainer Maria Rilke once resonated across a silver screen. In the 1990 film *Awakenings*, Robin Williams transformed these words into something approaching a life philosophy through his portrayal of the neurologist Dr Malcolm Sayer. The story of Dr Sayer, who displayed extraordinary patience in bringing patients who had slept for years back to life, showed how hope could take root even in the deepest pit of hopelessness.

And yet, in Williams’s own life, that patience was lost beneath the glare of the stage lights. The cheerful, exuberant, laughter-filled man on screen was, behind the curtain, a soul losing itself in its own dark forest.

The film *Patch Adams* was like a mirror held up to Williams’s inner world. The words spoken by the suicidal character he portrayed in that film seemed to be whispering his own future:

“Life is about coming home... The storm was in my mind. As the poet Dante said: ‘In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost.’ I had lost the right path. Afterward I would find the truest path, but in the most unexpected of places.”.

These lines are from *Patch Adams* (1998), adapted for the screen from a true story, with American actor Robin Williams in the lead role. The sentences he voiced there seemed almost to summarise his real inner life. In that film, his character is referred to a psychiatric hospital on the grounds of being suicidal, as required by his role. It is worth watching the film again through that lens. Williams, who set box-office records with a return of nearly four times its budget (202.3 mil-

lion dollars), could not, alas, replicate that success in his own real life.

The Prince of Laughter: Who Was Robin Williams?

His full name was Robin McLaurin Williams, and he was born on July 21, 1951, in Chicago. His father Robert was an executive at the Ford Motor Company; his mother Laura was a well-known model. Williams grew up in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, attended the Detroit Country Day School, and later studied at Redwood High School in California. After graduating from Claremont College, he was accepted in 1973 to the Juilliard School, an institution for those with exceptional talent, admitting just twenty students per year. He left without graduating, but when Williams later became a world-famous actor, the school awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Theatre and Television

He first took to the stage in a church, improvising, and those performances planted the idea of stand-up comedy in his mind. In the meantime, to cover his school expenses, he performed mime shows with a friend in New York’s Central Park. Street photographer Daniel Sorine took his picture during those days; years later, when Williams had become famous, the photographs were identified as his. Interestingly, in the 1991 film *Shakes the Clown* he performed mime in exactly the same way.

Williams launched his performance career with shows at nightclubs, then continued on NBC’s *The Richard Pryor Show*. He swiftly achieved wide popularity playing the alien Mork in the TV series *Happy Days*, before leaving that show for his own starring series, *Mork and Mindy*. The character made him so famous that he appeared on everything from posters to colouring books. Capitalising on this effectively, Williams mounted stand-up shows toward the end of the 1970s, building a loyal following. In 2004, Comedy Central ranked him 13th on its list of the 100 Greatest Stand-Up Come-

Foto: Alamy.com



One of the films in his career that began in the late 1970s was Awakenings, in which he played a doctor treating patients with a rare form of Parkinson's disease. After long effort, he tried his luck with an expensive drug called L-Dopa for the patient Leonard Lowe (Robert De Niro), with the mother's permission. The drug produced a temporary improvement in the patients, but they eventually returned to their former state. How strange it is that Williams, who displayed such patience in his efforts to heal those patients, could not show the same patience when faced with his own illness, Parkinson's disease.



dians of All Time.

Colourful Hollywood Years

He launched his film career with the 1980 production Popeye. Though remembered mainly for comedic roles throughout his career, he achieved his first major success with Good Morning, Vietnam (1987). For his portrayal of Adrian Cronauer in that film, Williams won the Golden Globe and was nominated for BAFTA, Academy Award, and American Comedy Award.

His second great cinematic achievement came with Good Will Hunting (1998), for which he won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.

In earlier times, animation dubbing was done exclusively by specialists in the craft. In 1992, for the animated film Aladdin, Williams voiced the Genie himself, and the performance earned him such popularity that from that day on he became a sought-after name for animated films.

One of the young lead actors of the 1989 film Dead Poets Society was Ethan Hawke. Hawke, who experienced considerable stress

during filming, was put at ease by Williams's jokes, and he recalled those days like this: *"I was eighteen, playing the first important role of my career. I was convinced Williams hated me for laughing at his jokes and that I was going to end my acting career before it had even begun. But after filming wrapped, the agent Williams had arranged called me and said, 'Robin says you're going to do great work,' and that was when we became friends".*

In the 1993 film Mrs Doubtfire, Williams played a divorced father who disguises himself as a nanny to spend time with his children. He had some reservations about the role and wasn't certain the elderly-nanny disguise would look convincing, so he dressed up as Mrs Doubtfire and introduced himself to the child actors in the film. Only when he saw that they genuinely didn't recognise him did he take the role.

He also appeared in Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (2014), playing Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States, who took office on September 14, 1901, at the age of just 42, as a wax exhibit in the American Museum of Natural History.



One of the films in his career that began in the late 1970s was *Awakenings*, in which he played a doctor treating patients with a rare form of Parkinson's disease. After long effort, he tried his luck with an expensive drug called L-Dopa for the patient Leonard Lowe (Robert De Niro), with the mother's permission. The drug produced a temporary improvement in the patients, but they eventually returned to their former state. How strange it is that Williams, who displayed such patience in his efforts to heal those patients, could not show the same patience when faced with his own illness, Parkinson's disease.

Indeed, as in that film, Williams was diagnosed in his sixties with Lewy Body Dementia, a form of Parkinson's disease. Alcohol dependency was said to have played a role in his developing the illness. He had, in truth, given up drinking before the birth of his first son in 1983. But this lasted only until he began filming in Alaska in 2003, and he described that day himself: *"I was in a small town, not exactly the end of the world, but you could see it from there. The first thing I thought of was having a drink. Because I thought, maybe just a little would help. Because I was feeling lonely and frightened"*.

Alone in the Crowd

When explaining why he had returned to drinking, he said: *"I was feeling lonely and frightened"*. Yes, a person can sometimes feel alone in the midst of crowds. But to be overtaken by that feeling with regularity is a sign that a great emptiness has grown within us. And yet, as terrifying as loneliness is, to be surrounded by people with whom one cannot truly connect must surely be far worse. Exactly like Williams, who kept his audiences, from children to the elderly, helpless with laughter right up until the moment he ended his life. In truth, to call him a comedian rather than an actor would be more fitting. And what, in all probability, drove him toward suicide was precisely this: the absence, among all those surrounding him, of anyone who genuinely nourished him, in other words, feeling utterly alone in the midst of crowds. Or perhaps, who knows, the absence of someone who would say: *"Life is beautiful and special in every way; it is worth living"*.

The greatest force driving him toward suicide was, it seems, the loneliness and sense of exclusion concealed behind the laughter. This



frightened him in the most serious way, as his wife Susan Schneider described his condition: *"After Lewy Body Dementia, known also as LBD, the most common form of dementia after Alzheimer's, began, he grew increasingly anxious. Toward the end of his life, being kept apart from the large, crowded environments he had inhabited for years produced serious distress in him"*.

"I used to think the worst thing in life was to end up alone. It's not. The worst thing in life is to end up with people who make you feel alone".

These words belonged to the character Lance in Williams's 2009 film *World's Greatest Dad*. And alas, just as his role required him to say, feeling utterly alone among people, he died by suicide on August 11, 2014. In accordance with his wishes, his ashes were scattered over San Francisco Bay.

When he departed from life so unexpectedly, he who had made everyone from young to old laugh throughout his lifetime, Williams left those who loved him drowned in sorrow. It can sometimes be hard to accept the death of people we love deeply; yet what can one do, death is an inescapable reality of life. As someone who watched his films with great pleasure, I can only say: if only he could have tak-

en his leave as if making one last joke for his admirers. If only.

Unlike Dr Sayer, who was brought to life in *Awakenings* by Rilke's patience-laden words, Robin Williams could not summon the same patience when faced with his own illness. Lewy Body Dementia, slowly taking possession of his body and mind, brought him to the point of total physical and psychological exhaustion. Williams, the architect of laughter, joy, and hope in his films, could not find, at the moment he most needed it in his own life, that patience. Just as the patients in that film reverted to their former state once the drug's effect had worn off, so too did his temporary recovery, created by the brilliant stage lights and the crowds, dissolve into the darkness of his illness and his solitude. In the final moments of his life, in what was perhaps his most tragic performance, his silent and solitary farewell, Williams proved in the most painful way that patience is everything.

"Patience is everything. I am learning it from the sorrows to which I feel indebted. Patience is everything".

Rainer Maria Rilke's lines became both the ironic summary of his life and his final word. Because Williams, who spent his life trying to heal the sorrows of others, could not learn patience from his own sorrows. He could not find the way out of that dark forest.



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ONE SONG. A LIFETIME.

He dropped out of high school at fifteen. It was not a reckless exit, with the money his family had saved for university, he had bought himself a piano. At night he performed in Vancouver clubs with bands like Shock and Sweeney Todd; during the day he washed dishes, packed bags at supermarket checkouts. Fame was distant; money even more so. But music was constant.



On that bleak London winter morning, in the dim light of the studio, two men sat facing each other. One drew attention with the depth of his voice — a rough, real, deep-voiced Canadian. The other was quiet, meticulous, a producer who accepted nothing short of perfection. On the table lay a film reel: *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. Beside it, the film's composer, Michael Kamen. He explained the scene almost pleadingly: Marian is leaving Robin Hood at the edge of Sherwood Forest, stepping into a boat, and turning back to look. She says just four words: *"I do it for you"*.

The young musician Bryan Adams, sitting in that room, felt something settle in his mind when he heard those four words. The words would touch the depths of his soul.

Forty-five minutes later, the song was finished.

"When we finished the song and listened to it together for the first time, we looked at each other", Adams would say years later. *"We knew we had made something truly beautiful"*. The long orchestral opening was trimmed, the piano intro simplified; the counter-melody between the vocal entry and the piano had not been found by accident, it had been discovered by instinct, within those forty-five minutes.

But Warner Bros. failed to recognise the song's worth. There was not a single word in the lyrics about Robin Hood, the Middle Ages, or the forest; this unsettled the studio. The song was buried at the end of the film, swallowed into the credits. This magnificent six-and-a-half-minute piece remained background music, playing as the names of cast and crew drifted across the screen.

The film ended. The credits ended. But the song did not end.

Bryan Guy Adams came into the world on 5 November 1959 in Kingston, Ontario. But Kingston became nothing more than a birth certificate for him, never a home. His father, Conrad Adams, was a British military diplomat; the family moved ceaselessly by necessity. England, Israel, Portugal, Austria, France... In each new country, young Bryan was first a stranger, then he adapted, then he packed his bags again.

At twelve, he learned that his parents were separating. His mother took him and his younger brother Bruce, to Vancouver. Grey skies, wet streets, the cold breath of the Pacific. And the guitar he received that year, the one fixed point a rootless child had found.

School felt too small for him; music never did.

He dropped out of high school at fifteen. It was not a reckless exit, with the university money his family had saved for him, he had bought himself a piano. At night, he performed in Vancouver clubs with bands like Shock and Sweeney Todd; during the day, he washed dishes and packed bags at supermarket checkouts. Fame was distant; money even more so. But music was constant.

In 1977, he recorded an album with Sweeney Todd. Nobody heard it. In 1978, he left the band. Nobody noticed.

That year he met Jim Vallance, and that meeting was a turning point in Adams's life. The two began writing songs together; first for Canadian bands, then for Bonnie Tyler, then for Kiss. An ordinary young Canadian writing songs for a group in leather jackets and makeup, breathing fire on stage. Even that was a story in itself.

The *Reckless* album he released in 1984 was like an earthquake. Six singles simultaneously entered the Billboard Hot 100's top fifteen, until then, only Michael Jackson and Bruce Springsteen had achieved

that. It sold twelve million copies worldwide. Adams was now a major name; tours, grand stages, wild nights.

Then 1987 came, and *Into the Fire* sold only two million copies. In the music world, two million was not small, but in the shadow of colossal expectations, it was a quiet collapse. Adams felt it. He waited until 1991.

And those forty-five minutes arrived.

There is one more interesting detail in the story of the song's writing: others had been tried before Adams. Michael Kamen had initially wanted the song sung from Maid Marian's perspective, not Robin Hood's. This early version was found lifeless; Kate Bush, Annie Lennox, and Lisa Stansfield each turned down the offer in turn. Peter Dinklage, the lead singer of Chicago, also wrote a song, but Kamen's verdict was clear; *"Cetera's was very beautiful. I write sweet melodies; I need someone who won't let them put you to sleep"*.





Foto: Alamy.com

With his rough, insistent, heartfelt voice' parçası önceki cümleye bağlanmalıdır: Adams was that man — with his rough, insistent, heartfelt voice.

And in those forty-five minutes, upon all those rejections, all those alternatives, and all that deferred fame, one of the most listened-to love songs in history was born. Released in June 1991, the song remained at the top of the UK charts for sixteen consecutive weeks, and reached number one in America for seven weeks. It sold three million copies. It became the longest-running number-one single in British music history. In 1992, it won a Grammy and received an Oscar nomination.

And all of this was born from the song Warner Bros. had buried in the credits.

Adams did not merely write songs, he lived a life.

Bryan Adams's story was not written by charts alone. For decades he fought for animal rights, living strictly as a vegan. He performed at Live

Aid and Live 8. In the wake of the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, he brought together musicians from around the world for a benefit concert and established a humanitarian aid foundation in his own name.

He had a second art as well: photography. He built a wide portfolio stretching from fashion shoots to victims of war. Together with journalist Caroline Froggatt, he published the photography book *Wounded; Untitled*, composed of abstract images, followed in 2016.

When he learned that his grandmother was Maltese, he travelled to the island in 2007 and gave a concert for the public, a quiet greeting reaching toward roots, from someone who had grown up without them.

Forty-five minutes. One song. A lifetime.

Perhaps the most powerful songs are born this way: without calculation, without planning, without anyone sitting down at a table and saying *"let's make something great"*. Just a four-word scene, two men, a pen, and forty-five minutes.

OTTO LIMAN VON SANDERS

The last of the officers from the collapsing empires and the deep respect that could never quite be expressed between them.

SEBAHATTİN ÇELEBİ, FRANKFURT

Some men find themselves on both the darkest and the most luminous pages of a history to which they do not belong. Otto Liman von Sanders was such a man. Born on the plains of Pomerania, he was tempered by the discipline of the Prussian army before coming to Istanbul to bear witness to the final five years of the Ottoman Empire. Yet, in bearing witness, he sometimes felt that he was carrying not so much his own destiny, but another man's. That other man was a Turkish officer born in Macedonia who experienced the empire's collapse from the inside and the outside. He was a man who was more inclined to give orders than receive them: Mustafa Kemal.

Liman von Sanders wrote his memoirs in Malta. He put them down in the cold rooms of his British captivity in 1919, while meditating on the ghost of a defeated empire. When *Fünf Jahre Türkei* (Five Years in Türkiye) in Türkiye, was published in Berlin in 1920, it was as much a confession as a defence. And in the lines of that confession, the name of Mustafa Kemal occupied little space; yet directly behind those few pages, an unspoken astonishment stood with tremendous weight.

A man cannot serve two empires at once, but sometimes he has no choice.

Otto Victor Karl Liman was born in 1855 in Stolp, today the Polish city of Słupsk. He combined his father's surname, his mother's maiden name, and the name of his village to become Liman von Sanders.

The lineage, and three competing accounts

Liman von Sanders's Jewish origins form a story that was absorbed into a Christian genealogy through the conversion of his great-grandfather, or possibly his great-great-grandfather. Yet even German sources could not reach full agreement on who was who.

Three different accounts circulate among German sources. According to the first, his great-great-grandfather was Wolff Nathan Liepmann, a Jewish merchant born in Halberstadt around 1740,

whose son Heinrich was born in Hamburg in 1788 and was baptised in 1807. The *Neue Deutsche Biographie* gives a different name: the great-great-grandfather was Isaak Nathan Liepmann (1762–1819), a Jewish-faith banker from Berlin who, after baptism, changed his name to Isaac Nathanael Christian Lieman (Liman).

According to the definitive record in the *Deutsche Biographie*, the great-great-grandfather Isaak Nathan Liepmann (1762–1819) was a banker of the Jewish faith in Berlin who, upon being baptised in 1809, changed his name to Isaac Nathanael Christian Lieman (Liman). In other words, the very surname "*Liman*" carries the trace of that passage from Jewish identity to baptism.

In short: his great-great-grandfather was Jewish. He changed his surname upon baptism. His descendants would grow up as Christian Prussians. Liman von Sanders, in the fourth generation of this process, was a Christian Prussian military man.

Being a general of Jewish descent in Prussia

At the outbreak of the First World War, he was one of only three German officers at general or admiral rank of Jewish descent. Some fellow officers regarded him with hostility on account of his origins. The pervasive anti-Semitic atmosphere that dominated Germany's bourgeois circles, particularly among the conservative officer and bureaucratic classes, cast a shadow over his career.

Liman himself had been raised as a Christian and was not personally a practising Jew. However, in Prussia's military aristocracy, the concept of "*purity of blood*" was determined by lineage rather than baptism. The conversion that had taken place several generations earlier was not enough to make him fully "*Prussian*" in that milieu.

The genealogical trace within his name

In 1877 he married Amalie von Sanders, and when Kaiser Wilhelm II granted him a title of nobility in 1913, he added his late first wife's maiden name to his own, becoming Otto Liman von Sanders. The "*von Sanders*" portion is thus a surname taken from his wife's Scottish-Prussian family. His original surname was "*Liman*", itself a name transformed from the Jewish "*Liepmann*" at the time of his



great-great-grandfather's baptism in 1809.

His view of his own Jewish identity and its paradoxes

Here one encounters a historically remarkable contradiction. On the Palestinian front, when Liman von Sanders learned that Enver Pasha had ordered all Jewish soldiers in the 7th and 8th Armies to be sent to the Caucasian front, he immediately forbade the implementation of that order, thereby saving those men from being thrust into an uncertain fate.

Thus, a German general of Jewish descent was personally halting a deportation order directed at Jews on Ottoman soil. He had adopted a similar stance on the Armenian deportations. Throughout the war, Liman was the only high-ranking German officer to object to the mass arrests and deportations of Armenians. In the İzmir region, he threatened to intervene by force of arms to prevent the mass deportation of the Armenian civilian population; this threat resulted in the cessation of the deportations in November 1916.

The paradox was this: the man accused of being of Jewish origin became one of the few German officers who attempted to protect both Armenians and Jews from deportation on Ottoman soil. His surname "*Liman*" had been derived from the Jewish identity his great-great-grandfather shed upon baptism. He himself, four generations later, was a man raised entirely as a Christian, with no knowledge of Hebrew and no connection to a synagogue. Yet in the antisemitic atmosphere of the Prussian army, that past was never entirely erased.

Over the course of his military life, a series of titles was added to his name: Generalleutnant, Generalinspekteur, Feldmarschall. But perhaps the strangest title of all was this: Müşir of the Ottoman Army, a German officer carrying the highest rank of an empire to which he did not belong.

This went far beyond an ordinary assignment. Liman von Sanders was the embodiment of the military alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, yet the contradictions within that embodiment never ceased. The two empires' interests did not always coincide. There was a perpetual chasm between Enver Pasha's dreams and military reality. And Liman von Sanders stood at the very centre of that chasm, as both an outsider and an indispensable man.

Before the waters of Arıburnu ran red, someone had already made up his mind

The morning of April 25, 1915. Anzac forces were landing at Arıburnu. Liman von Sanders that morning was absorbed in calculations about the positioning of his five armies. He still held the conviction that the principal threat would come from Saros Bay, and had massed the weight of his forces in the north of the peninsula. He was wrong.

Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal, commanding the 19th Division, chose not to wait for orders that morning. Sensing that the landing at Arıburnu constituted a genuine threat, Mustafa Kemal took his finest unit, the 57th Regiment, and marched it toward the Conkbayır ridges without a single order from above. The Anzac soldiers were still climbing those ridges when Mustafa Kemal was already there. It was that morning that he issued his famous command:

"I am not ordering you to attack. I am ordering you to die".

Liman von Sanders recorded this moment in his memoirs. He described how Mustafa Kemal had positioned the 19th Division in those first critical hours, and how that positioning had held the defence. Rather than expressing his admiration directly, he allowed the weight of events to speak for itself. Which was, from a Prussian gen-

eral, the most honest form of praise possible.

"The 19th Division, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal Bey, had proved itself indispensable through its resolute operations in the first critical hours".

— Liman von Sanders, *Fünf Jahre Türkei*

This sentence was plain enough for a memoir; yet there was something within it. When a superior says so much with so few words while writing about a subordinate, what has been left unsaid exceeds what has been said.

Two Characters on the Same Front, at the Same Moment, in Conflict with One Another

The relationship between Liman von Sanders and Mustafa Kemal was not as straightforward as the surface of victory photographs suggests. There was a persistent tension between them, one that arose not merely from a clash of personalities but from the collision of two fundamentally different understandings of what they were doing there.

Liman von Sanders wished to fill his staff largely with German officers. Mustafa Kemal openly opposed this. He argued that Turkish units should be commanded by Turkish officers, and expressed this view not in diplomatic language but directly and sharply. The disagreement between the two men at times spilled well beyond institutional boundaries.

The account of Chief of Staff İzzettin Bey reveals that Mustafa Kemal's departure from his Arıburnu command was covered up with a medical pretext. When he returned to Istanbul in December 1915, what he left behind was not convalescent leave but a crisis with Liman von Sanders that had hardened into permanence. As Andrew Mango notes in his biography of Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal used this time in Istanbul to bring his own successes to the attention of those in high places, which in itself said something essential about his character.

And yet Liman von Sanders never underestimated Mustafa Kemal. His decision to hand over command of the Anafartalar sector to him was no accident. The respect he felt for Mustafa Kemal's war-time ability and his power to carry men with him persisted even in the shadow of their disagreements. It was a strange relationship: two magnets that attracted and repelled each other simultaneously, yet continued to orbit the same axis.

A piece of shrapnel bound two men together in the most unexpected way

In mid-August 1915, Mustafa Kemal was struck by a piece of shrapnel. It hit him in the chest and stopped. The watch in his pocket had stopped it. That watch, like a miracle, saved his life.

Most scenes in the history of war are told with a bloody and solemn gravity. But sometimes they conceal within them small, almost poetic details. This was one of them: Mustafa Kemal gave the watch that had saved his life to Otto Liman von Sanders. And Sanders gave his own watch in return, the one engraved with his family crest.

The two men had said something to each other that day without saying a word. In the middle of a war, at a moment when death had passed so close, this exchange was an agreement. It was the outward expression of a respect that was difficult to speak, of that silent bond that persisted beneath all the friction and all the protocol.

The fate of the watch: "*The Lost Watch*"

After von Sanders's death in 1929, it is not fully known how or to whom the watch passed. The claims that it was stolen or sold to an American are unverified. Omega, the company that made the watch,



The war ended. It was time for reckoning. Liman von Sanders was arrested by the British at the start of 1919. The charges were grave: mass killings and deportations of Armenian and Greek civilians.

launched a campaign in 1939 to locate it. Since that date, numerous articles about the watch's whereabouts have appeared in the Turkish press, and various searches have been undertaken.

Sanders's watch is held at the Anıtkabir Museum; Mustafa Kemal's watch, though enquiries were made of the Sanders family, was never found, and it will pass into the annals as *"the lost watch"*.

The eyewitness left a record. Staff Colonel Haydar Mehmet Algan recalled the moment: Mustafa Kemal said, *"At this point a piece of shrapnel struck my chest and smashed my watch. This watch saved my life. If you will permit me, I would like to present it to you as a memento of today's success"*, and he took it out and handed it to Liman von Sanders. Algan added: *"I saw that Liman von Sanders Pasha was trembling with emotion, his eyes misted over"*.

As empires expired in Palestine, two men in exile shared the same front

At the beginning of 1918, the Falkenhayn disaster on the Palestinian front pushed Liman von Sanders into the field as Commander of the Yıldırım Army Group. Mustafa Kemal, on the same front, commanded the 7th Army. Liman's headquarters were at Nazareth; Mustafa Kemal was at Nablus.

Surveying Syria for the first time, Mustafa Kemal was shaken by what he saw. One day, in his own correspondence, he used a metaphor that passed into history: the Turkish forces were no more than a thread of cotton stretched across the path of the British advance. This was not merely a military assessment but a declaration of despair. Mustafa Kemal had spent five years trying to hold the last trench of a collapsing empire.

The Palestine chapters of Liman von Sanders's *Fünf Jahre Türkei* carry the air of a personal defence. Enver Pasha's strategic mistakes, the empire's exhausted resources, the lack of coordination with allied forces, all these factors are rehearsed again and again. When General Edmund Allenby's Battle of Megiddo, launched on September 19, 1918, shattered the Ottoman lines, Liman von Sanders had barely escaped from his headquarters in Nazareth. He was forced to burn most of the documents he carried with him. The incinerated archives of a dying empire, this is one of the most melancholy scenes a historian can encounter. Liman von Sanders knew what was burning as he left Nazareth that morning.

Across a table in Adana, two men discussed a finished war for the last time

October 30, 1918. The Armistice of Mudros. That day, Mustafa Kemal Pasha was summoned to Adana to take command of the Yıldırım Army Group. The man he was relieving was Liman von Sanders.

Two men sat facing each other across a table. The exhaustion of five years, the dust of Gallipoli, the sand of Palestine, the mist of Ana-

fartalar, all of it, every last trace, seemed to hang suspended in the air of that room. Liman von Sanders took his seat in the command chair and turned to Mustafa Kemal.

"I am very glad that I am handing command of this important force to a distinguished Turkish commander whom I have known closely since Ariburnu and Anafartalar", Liman von Sanders, Adana, October 1918

This was simultaneously the most guileless and the most honourable farewell a general could offer. According to the account of Cevat Abbas Güler, one of Atatürk's aides-de-camp, Mustafa Kemal replied:

"Be at peace. I hold no fault or blame against you. The greater fault and blame belongs to those who placed you at the head of an army of a nation to which you did not belong. You may now be facing terrible outcomes. Perhaps I, and not only I, but the entire Turkish nation, will face the same outcomes. Yet there is a point on which we can both be at peace: the disaster's authors are neither you nor I. They are those who stood at the helm of the empires to which we belong".

These two statements were the final reckoning between two men who had clashed, at times respected one another, and never fully understood each other. Liman von Sanders was a stranger, and he knew it. Mustafa Kemal was trapped inside a crumbling empire, and he knew that too. And both of them, in their utterly different ways, were condemned to the same fate.

The official handover declaration that day also bore Liman von Sanders's signature:

"At the moment when I find myself obliged to hand command of the Army Group to the victorious hands of His Excellency Mustafa Kemal, who has triumphed in many glorious battles, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all officers, officials and men for the duties they performed in the service of the Ottoman Empire under my command", Liman von Sanders, Yıldırım Army Group Handover Declaration, October 1918

Turkish translations have sometimes rendered these lines as: *"handing the front to his sacred hands that have witnessed great victories"*. These words of a German general to a Turkish commander were memorised across Türkiye for decades. Because within them lay both a surrender and a genuine confession.

In the cold rooms of Malta, the last witness of an empire found words

The war ended. It was time for reckoning. Liman von Sanders was arrested by the British at the start of 1919. The charges were grave: mass killings and deportations of Armenian and Greek civilians.

It was one of history's stranger ironies. Liman von Sanders had been among the few German officers to oppose the Armenian deportations throughout the war. In the İzmir region, he had notified the local governor that he would intervene by force to prevent the



mass deportation of Armenian civilians, a threat that resulted in the halting of the deportations in November 1916. In his assessments of events within the German military mission, he had openly criticised the fact that German officers had allowed themselves to be implicated in such a disgrace.

Yet the court did not settle on these particulars. Liman von Sanders was held in Malta for six months. In the end, the charges could not be proved and he was released. He returned to Germany. Those six months produced a by-product: *Fünf Jahre Türkei*. In that narrow room in Malta, Liman von Sanders wrote his five Ottoman years. The book was published in Berlin in 1920 by August Scherl Verlag, and in the same year was translated into Turkish, with the Ottoman Military History Commission appending its own objections to certain of his assessments. The defeated party was publishing the victor's memoirs alongside its own commentary, a dialogue within history that sometimes illuminated the past with a clarity no polemical text could achieve.

The death of a retired man in Munich, but the question he left behind never ended

Returning to Germany, Liman von Sanders was, in the turbulent political climate of the Weimar Republic, no more than a figure from the past. He found insufficient place in public life, and was insufficiently remembered as one of the architects of the Gallipoli victory. The empires had fallen; and with them, the fame of their generals.

He died in Munich on August 22, 1929. He was seventy-four years old. Without ceremony, without pomp.

At that time in Türkiye, Mustafa Kemal had long since become the founder of the Republic, Atatürk. The Gallipoli victory had been placed at the centre of the national narrative, yet within that narrative, only a narrow space was reserved for Liman von Sanders. Turkish national memory rightly foregrounded the Turkish command-

er of that victory. The German general's strategic contribution was pushed to the background by political choice. The same tendency existed on both sides. Germany did not wish to carry the legacy of the Ottoman military mission. Türkiye did not wish to leave the founding myth of the new Republic in the shadow of a German general. And so Otto Liman von Sanders remained, in both histories, a half-visible, half-effaced figure.

Yet *Fünf Jahre Türkei* continued to be read. Turkish editions were reprinted again and again. Because within that book there was a human reality that no national narrative could fully contain: the years in which two men, belonging to neither each other's world, drew slowly closer to one another in the midst of a shared catastrophe.

What is left unsaid reveals more than what is said

What Liman von Sanders wrote about Mustafa Kemal was, as one might expect, sparse. The pages of *Fünf Jahre Türkei* contain, amid the wide-ranging accounts of clashes with Enver Pasha, brief but careful passages about Mustafa Kemal. It was an inner reckoning in which what was said was little and what was left unsaid was much.

Amin Maalouf writes somewhere: *"To understand a man, one should look at whom he respects, and how he conceals that respect"*. Liman von Sanders had become practised at concealing the respect he felt for Mustafa Kemal. Yet he revealed it in an exchange of watches. He revealed it in signing a handover declaration. And he buried it in the lines he set down on paper in those cold nights in Malta.

Two men, the last officers of collapsing empires. One came to know that empire from the outside; the other lived its ruin from within. One died quietly in Munich. The other became the father of a new republic. And between them there remained that deep, silent, genuine respect, never fully spoken, but never entirely erased.

DR. SAFIYE ALI

A Turkish physician in the midst of the Second World War. The first female doctor of Türkiye, and the German connection of the Ecevit family.

SEBAHATTİN ÇELEBİ, FRANKFURT

In the early 2000s, I sat across from Bülent Ecevit. In the course of our conversation, words passed his lips that lifted the veil from a family history hidden in darkness for decades. In simple yet heart-breaking words, he told me:

"The sister of my grandmother, whom I also regarded as a grandmother, was a doctor. She married a German named Krekeler and settled in Dortmund. Then the war broke out there. They first returned to Türkiye to escape the war. But her heart would not allow it. So that the children there would not be left without a doctor, she went back to Dortmund, and died there".

In that moment I sensed that these sentences told far more than the story of a family bond. They told the life story of an extraordinary woman. It was the story of Dr. Safiye Ali, one of the most luminous names in Turkish medical history. The ties of a family interwoven with Germany, the humanity and self-sacrifice shown by a woman in the midst of war...

What I learned in that interview never let me go. The research into this story became a journey through two countries, two cultures, and through the darkest as well as the most hopeful chapters of the twentieth century.

The Daughter of an Aristocratic Family

2 February 1894. In the villa of one of Istanbul's aristocratic families, Safiye came into the world, the youngest daughter of Ali Kırat Pasha, who had served as adjutant to Sultans Abdülaziz and Abdülhamid II. Her mother, Emine Hasene Hanım, was the daughter of Hacı Emin Pasha, who held the office of Sheikh ul-Islam in Mecca for seventeen years. The eldest of the four sisters would become the great-grandmother of Bülent Ecevit.

Safiye grew up in the bosom of a long-established family. But her fate would resemble that of many such families. As a child she witnessed the deportations of 1915. This family, born in the Şahinyan Mansion, one of the most magnificent civilian buildings in Sivas, left behind countless properties in the region and took refuge in Istanbul.

bul. They moved into a modest apartment in Harbiye. Under the new conditions the Republic brought, a new life began.

The Road to Würzburg

The year 1916. In the Ottoman Empire, women were forbidden from studying at medical faculties. But the twenty-two-year-old Safiye Ali had made a courageous decision. With a scholarship from the then-Minister of Education, Ahmet Şükrü Bey, she went to Germany. She enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Würzburg.

Walking the streets of Würzburg, she attended 68 lectures, seminars, and practical sessions from the summer semester of 1916 to the winter semester of 1920/21. Even during the holiday periods she assisted in the practices of German doctors. She took courses in philosophy and history. Her diligence, her determination, her perseverance, all of this led her toward a single goal.

May 1921. With her doctoral dissertation *Über Pachymeningitis haemorrhagica interna im Säuglingsalter*, she received her doctorate from the University of Würzburg. With the approval of the Bavarian Ministry of Culture, she was now officially a physician.

But that was not enough for her. After completing her doctorate she spent six weeks in Istanbul, then returned to Germany once more to specialise in gynaecology and paediatrics. On this return, an encounter would take place that would change her life.

A Love Story: Ferdinand Krekeler

She met him in Würzburg. Ferdinand Krekeler, born in 1895 in Ottenhausen, was a medical student. He had lost a leg in the First World War. He went on to specialise in ophthalmology.

Ferdinand's love for Safiye was so great that he set aside his university career and moved with his wife to Istanbul in the mid-1920s. A German doctor gave up his career in Germany and came to Istanbul, out of love.

Their marriage, too, was unconventional for its time:

28 November 1924: Civil ceremony at the German Embassy in Istanbul.

25 October 1928: Church ceremony at the Stift Haug Church in Würzburg, with special permission from the Vatican. And most significantly: Safiye Ali did not convert to Catholicism.



For Europe at that time, this was a true novelty. A Catholic German and a Muslim Turk married without the woman changing her religion. Ferdinand Krekeler used the name “*Ferdi Ali*” in Istanbul, though this did not necessarily mean he had converted to Islam. That the Vatican should grant its approval to such a marriage at that time was nearly without precedent. Two people, two religions, two cultures, but one love.

In Istanbul: The First Female Doctor

June 1923. Safiye Ali received her licence to practise as the first female doctor of the Turkish Republic. Together with her husband, she opened a practice on Nuruosmaniye Caddesi in Cağaloğlu. Ferdinand Krekeler was an ophthalmologist; Safiye Ali a specialist in gynaecology and paediatrics.

But success brought no peace. There was the jealousy and resistance of male colleagues. Women of high society hesitated to trust a female doctor. Some refused to pay the full fee. The first female doctor of Türkiye was not sufficiently valued in her own country.

Perhaps these difficulties influenced the couple’s decision to move to Dortmund in 1929.

Dortmund: A New Life on Hohe Straße

The year 1929. Safiye Ali and Ferdinand Krekeler settled in Dortmund. At Hohe Straße 15, they opened independent practices, Safiye Ali for gynaecology and paediatrics, Ferdinand Krekeler for ophthalmology.

In the city archives of Dortmund, records of the couple’s professional activity can be found. Both were registered in the Reich Physicians’ Register, a register encompassing all doctors in the German Reich.

Perhaps it was a quiet life. But in 1939 the world was shaken.

In the Midst of War: The “Turkish Bunker Doctor”

When the Second World War began, Safiye Ali and Ferdinand Krekeler made a very important decision: they stayed in Dortmund. In the city’s darkest days, they continued their work for the people.

During the war, the couple lost their home and their practices five times to air raids. Five times. Each time they began again from nothing. They eventually found temporary shelter at the Wintrup estate of Count Wolff-Metternich zur Gracht in Vinsebeck.

In a death notice published in the Rheinische Post in 1952, signed by Dr. Krümmer, Safiye Ali is referred to as the “*Turkish bunker doctor*” in recognition of her work during the Dortmund air raids of 1944/45.

That title says everything. On the days when the bombs fell and the city was reduced to rubble, she treated people in the shelters. Risking her own life, she fought for the health of women and children in particular.

Ecevit’s words echo again: “*So that the children there would not be left without a doctor, she went back to Dortmund*”.

That was true heroism. To remain, in disregard of one’s own safety and one’s own life, in order to save the lives of others.

The Final Years: The Battle Against Cancer

After the war ended, the couple attempted once more to return to Türkiye. But in 1945, Safiye Ali was diagnosed with cancer. They returned to Dortmund for treatment.

In 1948 they settled permanently in Dortmund. Safiye Ali opened



a new practice at Hiltropwall 2. She continued working until her death.

5 July 1952. At the age of fifty-eight, she died in Dortmund of cancer. Her funeral service was held on 9 July 1952 in the grand hall of Dortmund’s main cemetery. The death notice on her gravestone, bearing the words “*my beloved wife and faithful companion in life*”, reflects the depth of the love Ferdinand Krekeler held for Safiye Ali.

Ferdinand Krekeler continued working as an ophthalmologist in Dortmund after his wife’s death. On 11 November 1970 he died in Dortmund at the age of seventy-five. With that, eighteen years after Safiye Ali, this extraordinary Turkish-German story of love and professional partnership came to an end.

A Belated Honour: Dortmund’s Act of Reckoning

Safiye Ali’s presence in Dortmund had been nearly forgotten for many years. But in the 2020s, the city administration initiated a comprehensive programme to honour this extraordinary woman.

Dr.-Safiye-Ali-Straße (2022–2023)

In November 2022, the Inner City-North district council of Dortmund resolved to rename Speestraße as “*Dr.-Safiye-Ali-Straße*”. The old name had been considered problematic on account of its colonial past and its glorification during the Nazi era, it referred to Admiral Maximilian von Spee.

On 16 August 2023, the street was officially inaugurated in a ceremony attended by the Turkish Consul General in Essen, Taylan Özgür Aydın, and Dortmund city authorities. District Mayor Han-



nah Rosenbaum (Greens) described the naming as “an important sign for multicultural coexistence”.

The Dr. Safiye Ali Krekeler Prize

The city of Dortmund established the “*Dr. Safiye Ali Krekeler Prize for Paediatric Medicine and Child Health*”. It is awarded every two years and carries a value of 20,000 euros, for achievements in paediatric medicine, paediatric surgery, and the promotion of child health.

City Director Jörg Stüdemann stated: “*Although Dortmund is home to the largest children’s centre in Westphalia, there are not many prizes in Germany for paediatric medicine and child health. Honouring Dr. Safiye Ali Krekeler offered the opportunity to make amends for a recognition long overdue*”.

A belated, but just, honour, seventy-one years in coming.

The life story of Dr. Safiye Ali does not only illuminate the connections of one family with Germany; it reflects the universal values of humanity, science, and intercultural understanding. This story, which began with Ecevit’s simple yet moving words, led us from the aristocratic families of Istanbul to the Faculty of Medicine in Würzburg, from there to the first female medical practice in Istanbul, and finally to the devastating bombardments of the Second World War in Dortmund.

Safiye Ali lived in three countries, united two cultures, and made profound contributions to both societies. Her legacy endures, in Türkiye as the first female doctor, in Germany as a physician who showed extraordinary self-sacrifice during the war.

In Türkiye: founder of the institution Süt Damlası (Milk Drop), active member of the Turkish Women’s Association, the first female lecturer in medicine. She published numerous medical articles and two books. She attended international congresses for women doctors

in London, Vienna-Budapest, and Bologna.

In Istanbul’s Çekmeköy district, the “*Dr. Safiye Ali Health Centre*” bears her name. On 2 February 2021, Google published a special Doodle for Safiye Ali on the occasion of her 127th birthday.

The Last Word

The story of Dr. Safiye Ali Krekeler is proof of the power of science, love, and humanity to transcend all borders.

A Turkish woman, a German man, two cultures, two religions, but one love, one profession, one humanity.

She who treated children in the shelters on the days when the bombs fell; who lost her home five times but began again five times; who risked her own life to save the lives of others,

Seventy-one years later, her name lives on in the streets of Dortmund. But more importantly: she lives on in hearts. The first female doctor of Türkiye, Dortmund’s “*Turkish bunker doctor*”...

That is a woman. That is a life. That is a legacy.

“*So that the children there would not be left without a doctor...*”

These words of Ecevit summarise Safiye Ali’s entire life. They tell us how great a woman, a doctor, a human being can be.

And when we tell her story in 2025, we tell not only the past, but also the future. For Safiye Ali’s legacy illuminates not only history, but tomorrow as well.

Dedicated to Dr. Safiye Ali, and to the universal values of science, love, and humanity that transcend all borders.



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