

A Book Review of Human Landscapes from My Country

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Abstract

Poems of Nazım Hikmet (Romantic Communist) constantly remind his readers of sadness and longing. This book has a great deal of evidence that verifies the same sentiments. To begin with, Nâzm Hikmet, son of Mr. Hikmet and Mrs. Celile, was born in Thessaloniki on January 15, 1902. His father is the son of Nâzm Pasha, who was the administrator of several provinces. He served in several civil service positions as well as the Ottoman Foreign Ministry's General Directorate of Press. Mrs. Celile, his mother, is the daughter of linguist Enver Pasha. Mrs. Celile, one of Turkey's first female artists, is a cultured woman with an artistic soul. He enrolled in Heybeliada Naval School on September 25, 1915, and graduated eighth out of 26 students in 1918. He was appointed as a deck trainee officer on the school ship Hamidiye after graduating. Due to his difficult circumstances, he was discharged from the service on May 17, 1921. Afterwards, he spent much of his time in Russia, and between 1921 and 1924, he was influenced by Russian futurists and constructivists and began to design a new shape by abandoning the classical form. He returned to Turkey in 1924 and began working for *Aydnlk Magazine*, but he returned to the Soviet Union a year later when he was sentenced to fifteen years in prison for poetry and essays written in the magazine (LEONTIÇ, 2012).

In regard to his work "*Human Landscapes from my Country*", the poet Nazım Hikmet stands out as an artist who takes a different path with his sharp and clear lines and aims to convey this in a simple way. He guided his art with the influence of the artistic and nationalist lifestyle of his family and carried his knowledge to a different dimension over time. The way he shaped his writing style is unlike anything else we have seen in earlier publications. He illustrates his

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innermost thoughts and feelings through an epic tale written in verse. His poetic style is expressive. In each of his poems, he provides his folks and the readers with much crucial information about the Turkish people and republic. Though the epic depicts the difficulties of (everyday heroes) in the early-to-mid-twentieth-century class conflict, they are not ordinary heroes for Hikmet; he writes his words with care, love, and yearning. He wishes to be with them, seeing and touching their sensations vividly.

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Human Landscapes from My Country is set primarily in Turkey between 1908 and 1950; the full version was released in the Turkish language (as *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*) in 1966–67, and in English; translated by Randy Blasing and his partner Mutlu Konuk Blasing in 2002. The book is long because it appears as a collection of 5 books, some of which contain sections. Nazım Hikmet's novel may tire readers out. As a reader, I think it's a little confusing that he narrates an event in long pages. In truth, readers may immediately grasp what he is trying to convey, yet it is hard to comprehend section by section due to the epic style.

As a critic, I believe there could have been a method to simplify the book; for example, he might offer each book as a single chapter or recount an event in a few pages. Secondly, he could have given each portion or book a title to help readers understand the events and the major idea; titles and subtitles are used as hints and cues to help readers interpret an epic book. Apart from that, political affirmation and ideological beliefs are two further aspects that I would like to speak on. In addition to patriotism, he pays close attention to the political aspects of life. In my opinion, it would be better to condense this subject into a few pages. The

man we see in front of us, though, is still a passionate revolutionary whose aim remains sufficient and sanctified.

In terms of the book's interior, he begins by depicting the enormous city of Istanbul and the Haydar-pasha station, notably Master Galip and his sad living. Master Galip represents Turkish children and teens. Reading his phrases allows readers to create a close connection to Turkish society. Through his sitting posture, Nazim Hikmet emphasizes his tiredness and sorrow. Master Galip looks forward to making a change in his childhood life. He spent his childhood wondering and overthinking. Hikmet imagines such people inhabiting his land with no hope.

Nazm Hikmet is a great Turkish poet. He pens the whole book while imprisoned in the 1940s for his political beliefs. It paints a stunning picture of Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s. His sentences on the Turkish peasant, the Independence War, and many more are still clear in my mind. He began writing this epic poem in Bursa prison in 1941, mailing pieces to friends and family for protection. It was mostly finished by 1945. He kept refining it till 1950. "Life is so various, people and their lives so curious, and I am so greedy, so eager to put it all in one book, that I can never call an end to it" (Hikmet, 2002: xi), this statement in his book demonstrates how much he loves his country that he does not want to stop and finish writing this book. Through words, he is with his people and citizens; in other words, he is accessible only when he writes.

"Mustafa stopped,

Mahmut was a little taken aback:

"That's a strange epic," he said,

"This guy in prison has written a different kind of epic.

He's stirring up something.

But your voice is sad, son,

and it reads like music:

it touches a man"

Book Two, Sextion III, P.151.

On one occasion, Hikmet gives us some reliable information about his book. When Mustafa (waiter) picks up a notebook and begins to read it to his chef Mahmut, he delivers some information regarding the book. The words and the lyrical verses astonish them both. Hikmet's style is transparent and easy to read, even though he writes (mainly) in blank verse.

If you ask me, as a reader, which portion has most influenced you? I would suggest the second book, in which the romantic communist reflects on the mixed sensations of loss and hope that followed World War I. One thing I observed was that he explained the Turkish War of Independence in one section. I am sure readers will be salivating over how many people the war has impacted. Despite everything, there is a love called "LOVE OF THE LAND," in other words (Patriotism). Regardless of his religious ideology, the war is divine and important to Nazm Hikmet. According to Edward J. Erickson (2021: xiv-xvi): After World War I, the victorious Allied forces resolved to settle the Eastern Question by partitioning the Ottoman Empire during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. All of eastern Thrace and western Asia Minor were ceded to Greece by the Ottoman government in 1920, along with a substantial portion of Armenia's territory, and southern Asia Minor, Iraq, and Syria were ceded to the Italian, British, and French governments. Even before 1920, a resistance movement against imperialism began to take shape in central Asia Minor. They even formed a resistance government, defying the Ottoman sultan's collaboration. Its members fought for the country's independence, and soon a contemporary Turkey was on the verge of being born. In this case, I am trying to highlight the idea that it is not always simple to capture the essence of a country in verses. Spaces and defuse forms have been the most effective ways to illustrate this point.

Here is an example of a poetic description of the battle:

"Cities fell one after another:

Istanbul (October-November 1918),

Izmir (May 1919),

and Manisa, Menemen, Aydin, Akshia

(between mid-May

and mid-June,

the time for cutting tobacco,

when the barley has been harvested

and the wheat lies ahead)...

Adana

Antep

Urfa

and Marsh

fell

fighting..."

Book Two, P. 152.

Throughout the book, the author wants to convey his true feelings to his readers for his homeland and the Turkish nation. He never complains about his confinement. The prison is crucial in his development as a writer of this tremendous epic work. Things are different for Hikmet; although the book is too long to complete and firmly founded in political reality, he beautifully describes the best of Turkey. He is maybe physically separated from his people, but he never forgets to write about them. He invites his readers to "Human Landscapes" from Turkey and the world. Emphasizing love, pain, betrayal, and courage, and takes readers with him on a long journey; a journey might never end up.

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Five Suggested Books to Read

- 1- 'Poems of Nazım Hikmet' (1986).
- 2- 'Life's Good, Brother' (1963) by Nazım Hikmet.
- 3- 'Madonna in a Fur Coat' (1943) by Sabahattin Ali.
- 4- 'The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey' (2012) edited by Metin Heper & Sabri Sayari.
- 5- 'Serenade' (2013) by Zulfu Livaneli.

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