

An Address to the Old Inveterate Foe: A Comparative Reading of Anne Finch’s “Ardelia to Melancholy” and Sabahattin Ali’s “Melancholy”

Eski Müzmin Düşmana Hitap: Anne Finch’in “Ardelia to Melancholy” ile
Sabahattin Ali’nin “Melankoli” Şiirlerinin Karşılaştırmalı Okuması¹

Mustafa Zeki Çıraklı

Karadeniz Technical University, Turkey

Öznur Yemez

Selçuk University, Turkey

Abstract

The present study explores Anne Kingsmill Finch’s “Ardelia to Melancholy” and Sabahattin Ali’s “Melancholy” in terms of prolonged melancholia that afflicts the creative psyche of the authors. The study aims to analyse melancholic moods of the speakers represented through self-narratives, which serve as a curative method and means of expression. Based on the critical terminologies offered by Robert Burton and Julia Kristeva, the study argues that the two melancholic poems by Finch and Ali are comparable in terms of melancholic experience and that the melancholic states of the authors renovate into a milder form of melancholia, eventually indicating an aesthetic transformation through discursive *poiesis*. The study shows that the personas directly or indirectly try to overcome the state of objectless and causeless despondency by producing poetic discourse, and both melancholic cases are theoretically subject to an aesthetic transformation, but melancholia is observed to linger on the present cases. The paper concludes that the authors attempt to cure melancholia through poetic expression, and the very poems signpost a temporal possibility of repaired connection with language. Yet, the speakers are seen caught up in the disease in the last lines indicating retreat rather than treatment.

Keywords: Anne Finch, Sabahattin Ali, melancholy, aesthetic transformation, Kristeva

Öz

Bu çalışma Anne Kingsmill Finch’in “Ardelia to Melancholy” ile Sabahattin Ali’nin “Melankoli” adlı şiirlerini sanatçı yaratıcılığını etkileyen kronik melankoli açısından inceler. Çalışma, şiirlerinde sağaltıcı bir ifade aracı olarak öznel anlatılar üreten karakterlerin melankolik ruh hallerini incelemeyi amaçlar. Robert Burton ve Julia Kristeva’nın kuramsal terminolojilerini kullanan çalışma, Finch ve Ali’nin iki melankolik şiirinin melankolik deneyim açısından karşılaştırılabilir olduğunu ve yazarların melankolilerinin üretilen söylem dolayımında daha hafif bir melankoli formuna dönüştüğünü ortaya koyarak söylem üretimi yoluyla deneyimlenen melankolinin estetik dönüşüme uğradığını gösterir. Çalışma, şiirlerdeki anlatıcıların

¹ This paper, including major revisions, new discussions and elaborations, is based on the oral conference presentation delivered at 7th International Comparative Literature Congress, held on October 10-12, 2018 in Sivas, Turkey.

yaşadıkları nesnesiz ve nedensiz umutsuzluk durumunu şiirsel söylem üreterek doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak aşmaya çalıştıklarını; her iki melankolik durumun teorik olarak estetik bir dönüşüme tabi olduğunu ancak melankolinin tamamen sağaltılamadığını gösterir. Makale, yazarların şiirsel anlatım yoluyla melankoliyi iyileştirmeye çalıştıkları ve bizzat dilsel bir üretim olarak şiirlerin anlatıcıların dil ile bağlantılarının mümkün ve geçici de olsa onarılmış olduğu sonucuna varır. Yine de, son satırlardaki ifadeler hastalığın kalıcılığına ve sağaltımdan çok teslimiyete işaret eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anne Finch, Sabahattin Ali, melankoli, estetik dönüşüm, Kristeva

Introduction

Each age manifests its view of melancholy, incorporating new signifiers for each subtype/subcategory of a particular experience. Having been considered a somatic illness, spiritual illness, and mental illness, melancholy, as a persistent and lingering mood, evolved from a settled emotion to a momentary feeling, from personality to a mode of expression. The term has also been conceived through its cultural associations, simply exploring a mode of perceiving the outer world/the inner self. Possibly, no other concept but melancholy has such an exclusively debated historical background, yet “despite the remarkable nature of the term’s internal history, all these interpretations center on the subjective, psychological, and somatic nature” (Ferber 3) of the subjective endeavour.

Stressing the direct correlation between melancholy and black choler, Burton provided a definition of the term, even if not a strict and coherent explanation, for the malady, explicating it as sadness without [adequate] cause. He classifies two basic types of melancholy; melancholy in habit and melancholy in disposition (Burton 127) and distinguishes the former from the latter in terms of following “a chronic or continue disease, a settled humour” (Burton 128), which accordingly constitutes the main topic of his work as he suggests. He highlights sorrow and fear as a particular cause and symptom of melancholy and establishes a connection between the illness and intelligence/diligence.

Melancholic mood, for artistic, philosophical or socio-political reasons, appeared to be a recurrent motif particularly after the 18th century. Men of letters are recurrently associated with a personality trait or a pretension of sensitivity, intelligence, solitary, naivety or depression. It was romanticised and idealised in the different circles of the authors and turned into a style of life and a public posture for them. Many writers clung to the melancholic narratives, primarily autobiographical, to find a form of therapy for their non-communicable and causeless despair. In contrast, the others made use of melancholy as a popular poetic subject. Melancholy fell within the scope of psychiatry in time and emerged as a new object of research. Hence, it was even categorised as a mental disorder and gave up on all romantic associations, now being regarded as a grave illness that at times required hospitalisation.

Melancholy as a Response to Loss and Lack

The critical difference between mourning and melancholia was explained in the early 20th century, which enabled the critics to analyse the melancholic agents or speakers, whose voice is heard through the lines in the texts. Describing melancholy and mourning as a reaction to a form of loss, Freud makes a clear-cut distinction between the two terms, stating that mourning is due to a conscious loss of the object of desire (in the case of the death of a loved person or any other thing that may replace that loved person, such as ideals or homeland) whereas melancholia is a pathological mood due to nothing conscious (the thing). The subject becomes unable to articulate the reason behind the “affect”² (inability of referring to the loss), but the feelings of dejection are indirectly indicated through verbal expression. The language represents the affect and effect interwoven with the symptoms of melancholy, yet “the thing remains” untold.

The loss the melancholic subject experiences leads to the loss in the ego/self of the subject in a way that the melancholic directs the urges of aggression into herself/himself instead of the object that is believed to be lost. The melancholic who is obsessed with/fixated on the lost object of desire becomes unable to give up on that object that is gradually destroying her/him, and fails to replace that object with another, eternally mourning for the loss and in the end losing also herself/himself amid that loss. Resisting against surviving in the world dominated by the actual or imaginary loss of the object, the melancholic subject creates a world for himself/herself as “the world of the living dead is the fantasy world of the melancholic subject that cannot accept the reality of death and refuses to bury the object of his/her desire” (Berthoin 87). So, the subject becomes spiritually dead as well with the actual/imaginary death of the object.

The melancholic subject acutely experiences a kind of loss, but s/he becomes unable to classify and define what is lost, which grows into an ultimate loss of desire for a particular object. In other words, the persona no longer desires the unknown object itself. Hence, “if the love object, which cannot be given up, takes refuge in narcissistic identification, while the object itself is abandoned, then hate is expanded upon this new-substitute-object, railing at it, deprecating it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic gratification from its suffering” (Freud 161-162). This sadistic pleasure is redirected into the ego/self of the subject so that the melancholic takes a pleasure from the pain/agony of the sufferings caused by the loss. Therefore, the melancholic becomes at the same time a masochist. It might be said that the melancholic subject, in fact, might distinguish between the object and the image so s/he accepts the loss of the object even though he keeps the image/imago still buried within himself/herself. So, within time, the boundaries of the object’s

² Melancholic affect is frequently confused with melancholic effect; the former refers to an active (and creative) state of the mind while the latter refers to the inactive self-paralysed by the loss.

shadow and the subject are blurred, and the melancholic loses his/her subjectivity.

Kristeva reinterprets the Freudian theory of loss about melancholia and associates the mental state with the concept of lack, replacing the object with the Thing. Referring to melancholia as “a noncommunicable grief” (3), Kristeva explains the state as “the institutional symptomatology of inhibition and asymbolia that becomes established now and then or chronically in a person, alternating more often than not with the so-called manic phase of exaltation” (9). Comparing melancholia to clinical depression, she defines the state as melancholy/depressive composite, which comes to mean that the borders of both are in fact merged. The melancholy/depressive composite is characterised by two basic symptoms, such as “object loss” and “a modification of signifying bonds” (Kristeva 10), and the melancholic subject mourns for the loss of the Thing that is as a matter of fact nonsignifiable. This Thing is “the center of attraction and repulsion, seat of the sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated” (Kristeva 13). In this respect, Freudian melancholia causes regression in libido of the subject, whereas Kristevian melancholia affects the sexuality itself.

The melancholic subject cannot comprehend and articulate the Thing, which cannot be signified and represented on the symbolic realm. The Thing manifests itself only with the presence of the melancholic affect and “is inscribed within us without memory” (Kristeva 14). Moreover, the subject does not lose the Thing, but instead suffers from the lack of the Thing, which means that it cannot be replaced and turns out to be pathological. The melancholic identifies with the Thing through “incorporation-introjection-projection” (Kristeva 11) and, thus, fails to distinguish the borders of the self and the Thing. Therefore, the melancholia ends up with the loss of the self, transforming the state into a kind of eternal mourning for the lost self, losing the loss itself with the self.

Kristeva establishes a strong correlation between the melancholic author and melancholic writing, stressing the fact that literary creation becomes the verbal evidence of the melancholic affect that surrounds the melancholic authorial persona. Literary writing enables the subject to transform the unnameable and nonsignifiable lack into textual narrative so that the subject might comprehend and perceive what s/he suffers from and manage the state or the melancholy mood at least on the textual realm. The lack of the Thing that coerces the melancholic subject into asymbolia in real life provides a bond through literary creation for the subject to hold onto and verbalise the affect. Berthoin states that the writers perform this through introjection which he explains as

Introjection is traditionally defined as the process by which grief is overcome through the gradual replacement of the lost object by signs that symbolise it. It is the act that consists of putting the original void into words. Introjection occurs when death can be related and when the use of past tenses opens up the prompted prospect of future healing. Melancholy is precisely born of an impossibility to condole,

condone and acquiesce in the symbolic murder that accompanies the act of symbolisation. (95)

The melancholic subject refuses language and experiences denial of the signifier, emerging as a mutilated self, roaming in an asymbolic realm due to the permanent prevalence of the lack. Literature provides the author with a semiotic space so that s/he might hold on to the signs again. It offers a third form, except for the loss/lack of the object/Thing itself, for the subject to attach himself/herself to. Thus, it produces a space for the melancholic to be reunited with the Thing/object itself.

Kristeva associates melancholia with the failing matricide of the subject and emphasises that what the melancholic man loses is replaced with another female substitute as in the case of a wife or girlfriend, but the female subject becomes unable to replace the loss unless with the risk of insanity or at the cost of homosexuality. Literature maintains a maternal space for the melancholic female subject who has already experienced a symbolic breakdown. Through negation and sublimation, the subject transforms the affect into “rhythms, signs, forms” (Kristeva 22) and transposes the agony into works of art. Kristeva defines negation as “a process that inserts an aspect of desire and unconscious idea into consciousness” (45), and sublimation as a kind of defence mechanism helps the subject transmute desire, mostly self-destructive in this respect, into more sublime form, narrative within this context. Hence, melancholy writings, mostly self-narrative within this framework, constitute a curative effect for the self-inflicted authorial persona and the melancholic implied (and historical) readership. Through the textual representation of the affect, the masochistic drives take the form of creative energy.

Melancholy is additionally a way of perceiving the outer world and inner self, and the subject and the object are both amalgamated within themselves. Describing the act of writing as a way of self-actualisation, Sartre states that “writing is not an unconscious act, it is the actual structure of my own consciousness,” and to write, Sartre suggests, is to “acquire the active consciousness of the words born into the pen point” (47). As a self-reflexive act, writing enables the melancholic authorial persona to be conscious of and overcome herself/himself so that s/he might hold onto the world again. Through writing, the subject becomes able to comprehend and perceive the object/the Thing, so in the final analysis, the subject transforms himself/herself following the act itself. Hence, we can basically distinguish two types of melancholia that may refer to passive or active sadness. Passive sadness or melancholia is a psychosomatic condition characterised by paleness, love of darkness and solitude, the need for silence and irritability. It requires the subject to keep going/surviving and be active without sufficient cause/inner motive, since “most of the potentials in the world (such as daily chores, people to meet, daily routine) remain the same, yet the instruments that are necessary for these things to be carried out, the paths that constitute the *hodological* space are wholly changed” (Sartre 55). The subject that resists

against or fails at adapting to the presence of a new mode falls into the grip of passive melancholia and pretends, in a way, to be dead. Active sadness/melancholia takes any form and shape and causes the subject to develop the delusion that so much is unjustly expected from her/him as a human being. Therefore, s/he perceives the world as both hostile and antagonistic towards herself/himself. This type of melancholia arouses restlessness, agitation, and an extreme amount of joy in the subject as “the desire of the subject is fuelled by the very sight and vision of the object of desire” (Sartre 57). Historically and theoretically, writing and authorship require an acute and active state of sadness associated with Kristeva's “melancholic affect”. The subject, on the one hand, becomes unable to act and falls into a pensive mood, which, on the other hand, makes him/her express himself/herself verbally. The very palpable evidence for this expressive ability is the discourse (written product) of the writers. Thus, active and passive phases of sadness/melancholia can be characterised by inaction or overactivity, both tempting the subject into the verbal realm of poetic discourse.

Finch's “Ardelia to Melancholy”: A Narrative of Illness

Anne Kingsmill Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661-1720), stands as one of the most prominent eighteenth-century woman writers of British literature. She adopts the pseudonym *Ardelia* in her verses, which textually serves as her poetic persona. In “*Ardelia to Melancholy*,” she recounts her subjective experience of melancholy that afflicted her during lifetime³ and which constitutes the basic theme of the majority of her works.

At last, my old inveterate foe,
No opposition shalt thou know.
Since I by struggling, can obtain
Nothing, but encrease of pain,
I will att last, no more do soe... (1-5)

Finch starts the narrative with a direct address to the personified melancholy, referring to it as her eternal foe. The persona has come to accept the superiority of the disorder and provides an explanation for this complete submission. She has finally discovered that fighting against the illness brings nothing but “encrease of pain” (line 4). Therefore, she regards reconciliation as a technique, at least on the textual realm, as a way of soothing her melancholy fits. The persona assumes that the act of othering melancholia ends up her being othered by the disorder, which is then aggravated more and more. Denial of the problem and displaying contempt and hatred, even repulsion, for the

³ Analysing the works of Finch from a historical-biographical viewpoint, Rogers establishes a strict connection between her life and works, stating that “she suffered from periodic neurotic depressions, probably triggered by emotional losses. Like many depressed patients, she had lost her parents as a child: her father died when she was an infant, her mother when she was three and her stepfather when she was ten” (21). It was common for the authors of the period to reveal their personal experiences in their works and Finch also follows the same path.

disease that becomes a metaphor for her authentic selfhood and authorial persona does not relieve the agony. Hence, she believes that she should stop objectifying melancholia to keep her subjectivity from both within and without the narrative. What she negates on the symbolic is then confronted and reconciled within the semiotic.

Tho' I confesse, I have apply'd
 Sweet mirth, and musick, and have try'd
 A thousand other arts beside,
 To drive thee from my darken'd breast,
 Thou, who hast banish'd all my rest.
 But, though sometimes, a short reprove they gave,
 Unable they, and far too weak, to save;
 All arts to quell, did but augment thy force,
 As rivers check'd, break with a wilder course. (6-14)

In these lines, the voice recounts the symptoms of her melancholia and which methods she applies to calm the attack that at times turns out to be severe. The persona experiences her melancholia as a psychosomatic condition she tries to alleviate with several techniques, such as musicotherapy and laughter, which in the end fail no matter what. The female speaker associates her disorder with her “darken'd breast” (line 9) or heart, which is mostly regarded as the common indicator of feminine melancholy of the period. As a sign of the assumption of the weak feminine personality, the female sex is afflicted with melancholia, or spleen, that surrounds mostly the heart unlike the male sex that becomes melancholic due to the pure genius and suffers from the type of melancholia that affects the head/reason.

Friendship, I to my heart have laid,
 Friendship, th' applauded sov'rain aid,
 And thought that charm so strong wou'd prove,
 As to compell thee, to remove... (15-18)

The melancholic persona changes her mode; the disorder becomes a soulmate rather than an enemy. The speaker aims to persuade the personified melancholy in a coaxing manner to protect herself from the fits. She achieves that purpose, at least on the narrative level. As a matter of fact, she comes to accept the significance of the disorder in her subjectivity as a woman and female writer. Melancholy constitutes the essential part of her identity, and the best way to deal with the disorder is to be aware of the state as an object in her subjectivity. Hence, she tries to learn to live with this condition instead of wasting time and energy fighting against it.

And to myself, I boasting said,
 Now I a conqu'rer sure shall be,
 The end of all my conflicts, see,
 And noble tryumph, wait on me;
 My dusky, sullen foe, will sure
 N'er this united charge endure.

But leaning on this reed, ev'n whilst I spoke
 It peirc'd my hand, and into peices broke.
 Still, some new object, or new int'rest came
 And loos'd the bonds, and quite disolv'd the claim. (19-28)

The idea of reconciliation with the disorder is in fact a strategy followed by the speaker to cope with the causeless despondency, at least at the moment of writing/creating. Yet, it proves useless for the poet who is interrupted by the sudden attack. Within this context, the relationship between the disorder and the poet is compared to the two parties that fight at the battlefield. Hence, the persona thinks of establishing peace with no success. Till now, the speaker only reveals the symptoms and the impact of the disorder upon her personal and professional life as an author, yet she never provides the implied and historical reader with explicative content about the cause/origin of the disorder which she might be unaware or fully aware. This additionally suggests that melancholy is considered as a pathological disease within this context. It also seems to imply that for the poet, the cause of the disorder is lost as and with herself. The persona as a whole turns out to be extremely self-conscious and self-obsessed over the course of the narrative for that reason.

These failing, I invok'd a Muse,
 And Poetry wou'd often use,
 To guard me from thy Tyrant pow'r;
 And to oppose thee ev'ry hour... (29-32)

The persona reveals that she makes use of poetry as a form of therapy in order to seek a cure for the disorder and regulate the order of thought that at times becomes extremely chaotic. This is the common notion of literature prevailing the era. Authors applied literature as an antidote to melancholy; thus, literature served both a symptom and cure for the self-inflicted melancholia. As a self-reflexive act, the writing provides the historical author to comprehend and perceive what afflicts him/her and how it might be managed on the textual realm. The pathos that coerces the poet into denial of the speech becomes the basic subject matter of their works which they prefer to talk about.

The poet's invocation of the Muse in the midst of the self-narrative is significant in terms of deconstructing the poetic tradition. Keith explains this by stating that

Through a variety of approaches to the eighteenth-century writer's tropological heritage, Finch's poetry redefines the boundaries between the poet and the nonrepresentable object. Her poetry does this in part by revising the classical tradition's tropological structure for poetic utterance: the poet's invocation of the Muse. (467-468)

In classical literature, the male poets invoke the Muse, mostly described as female, comparing the relationship to a love affair between two persons. However, as a female poet, Finch invokes the Muse, deconstructing this tradition as "Finch's poems counter this masculinisation of the poet and feminisation of the object of representation by establishing the poet's

identification with these objects” (Keith 498). As a poet, Finch overidentifies with the object she represents, melancholy, and the Muse she addresses to.

New troops of fancy’s, did I chuse.
 Alas! in vain, for all agree
 To yeild me Captive up to thee,
 And heav’n, alone, can sett me free.
 Thou, through my life, wilt with me goe,
 And make ye passage, sad, and slow.
 All, that cou’d ere thy ill gott rule, invade,
 Their uselesse arms, before thy feet have laid;
 The Fort is thine, now ruin’d, all within,
 Whilst by decays without, thy Conquest too, is seen... (33-42)

In the last lines, the speaker confirms the absolute superiority of the disorder over her psyche and life, using this as a kind textual strategy to deal with the issue. Comparing the illness to a kind of victor, she states that she is possessed by melancholy even though she appears as serene and calm from outside but all rotten inside, referring to the spiritual aspect of the illness. Thus, prayers might help her regain a more tranquil mood.

The melancholic text as a whole serves as a narrative of illness for the self-inflicted melancholic persona. The speaker solely provides the psychosomatic symptoms of her illness which constitutes the essential part of her subjectivity as a female writer and woman, and gives no hint about the cause or probable origin of the illness. The represented object within the narrative and the representing subject are amalgamated within themselves so that “by the end of the poem, representation has given way to presentation, and imitation to identification” (Keith 470). The speaker overidentifies with, projects and introjects the personified melancholia so that it becomes a subject in her life in which she is turned into an object.

The self-narrative functions as a form of negation and sublimation through which the historical author aestheticizes her dark melancholia and transposes the agony into creative pleasure. The text, therefore, serves as literary evidence of the non-signifiable melancholy. The persona’s never referring to the cause of the disorder might be interpreted as that it is in fact brought about by a pathological lack, rather than loss, even though the life of the historical author is filled with many losses which might take the form of lack. The female persona achieves recuperation and reconciliation in the semiotic realm through the textual representation. As a female individual who fails on the symbolic due to the illness, she reforms an identity as an author via literary creation and transforms the label of the patient into a bohemian with creative genius. Therefore, the narrative provides a maternal space for the persona.

The mode of representation within the narrative is significant in terms of revealing the relationship of the speaker with the disorder. The speaker starts the narrative in a milder mode that aggravates within the text and ends up with acute despondency and helplessness. The poetic persona fails at

overcoming the state of melancholia from both within and without the text as a result. Hence, it might be said that the semiotic provides temporary relief, as in the case of antidepressants but does not heal the persona completely. Therefore, the persona pleads for mercy and help from God, assuming that prayer helps the symptoms decrease.

The text as a whole signifies the melancholic affect that cannot be put into words in any other way or remains nonrepresentable, nonsignifiable or noncommunicable, not only for the common folk and medical authority of the era but also for the historical author herself. The speaker's address to the Muse and finding refuge on the semiotic realm might be interpreted that melancholy is caused by the lack, that is, by the failing matricide of the maternal figure. Hence, she achieves a temporary cure through the semiotic, unlike the symbolic she fails at as a human being and woman. In accordance with the classical notions of Melancholy as a female figure, the persona might be said to introject the maternal figure/body that resists being murdered. The subject and the objects (melancholy and Muse) being described as female confirms this situation, creating embedded melancholia for the persona. In addition to all these, it should be emphasised that melancholic destruction of her subjectivity as an individual paves the way for the ultimate lack of the Thing that constitutes her identity and subjectivity as a female poet.

Death of the Mind: Sabahattin Ali's "Melancholy"

Of all modern Turkish authors, Sabahattin Ali (1907-1948) is among the most excruciating figure, who remained one of the most eminent authors of the 20th century Turkish literature. Even though he was a prolific writer who produced works in various genres, including drama, he was specifically known for his novels. He was primarily concerned with aesthetics and psychology through the panoramic lens of society. His elegantly melancholic romance *Madonna in a Fur Coat* (1943) attracted paramount critical acclaim from the readers and critics (Arslanbenzer). Furthermore, Ali penned more than fifty poems, published in a single volume, *Mountains and the Wind* (1932), where his exploration of poignant themes continued. His poetry would exhibit an amalgamation of romantic aspirations with modernist distress and anxiety through somewhat pastoral and natural elements, and depression, mourning and melancholy were among his favourite themes as well as nature. The poem "Melancholia," which was performed as a song by a famous Turkish pop singer, was composed in 1932 and related the subjective melancholic experience of the implied author.⁴ Recurring the theme in a different socio-political

⁴ Some scholars adopt a historical-biographical approach and suggest that the author in fact revealed the hysteria of his mother in this poem, devoting the work to her in this respect. Bezirci states that his mother, Hüsniye Hanım, suffered from hysteria, a hereditary disease, and that was why she was prone to melancholia. She did not get on well with her husband, often arguing with him for no apparent reason and attempted suicide many times. She was even hospitalized a few times during her life (11). Bezirci additionally claims that her mother was extremely fond of her other son, Fikret, and showed no love and affection for Sabahattin Ali. These feelings of inferiority and inadequacy might form the basis of Ali's melancholic personality in his later life.

modernist context, he explores and represents the melancholy of his isolated inner world and communicates with the previous authors in a timeless realm of melancholic discourses.

Research to date shows that the elements of the melancholic mood of the persona and possible biographical disappointments of the poet have so far been frequently recognised and stressed. There were critics diagnosing a kind of romantic inclination through isolated passiveness and contemplation or mystic overflow of powerful feelings in his poetry (Sağlam; Narlı). So are there remarkable critical debates as to whether his poetry can be conceived as a continuum of sūfî tradition in modern Turkish poetry (Kara 2000). Furthermore, the majority of the readers are attracted by social themes or modernist elements in his poetry. There appeared some comparative studies highlighting the melancholic symptoms in Ali's poem and explaining it through historical references (Yıldırım 2020). Yıldırım highlights the "unbearable grief" that drives the poetic persona into melancholy, and argues that "melancholia occurs during times when deep unresolvable thoughts are at a dead end" (84). The melancholy represented in Ali's poetry, however, calls for further critical and theoretical analysis. Ali's oeuvre became popular and achieved a wide readership but the underlying melancholia in his poetry did not receive critical and theoretical response adequately.

Ali's self-narrative poem, "Melancholy" is included in his single volume of poetry *Dağlar ve Rüzgâr* (*Mountains and the Wind*: 1932), a collection of poems with belated Turkish romanticism. The poem "Melancholy" is one of the most succinct representations of the melancholic persona experiencing a melancholic mood and exhibits it as mental suffrage out of intrinsically imposed self-restrictions and crippling of the cognitive skills of the speaker. The persona experiences melancholy as simply a passing mood as fuelled by nothing. He cannot comprehend nor explain his mental state to anyone, textualising his desperate mood punctuated with the symptoms of melancholy. His discourse is a manifestation of his desire to gain an accurate perception of what he experiences. The text as a whole, therefore, provides the reader with verbal indicators of the melancholic affect (not merely melancholic effect). Throughout the narrative, the persona is portrayed as attacked by the sudden fit of melancholy, exasperating more and more all through the text. The psychological death of the author is verbally hinted, but the abrupt death of the mind at the end of the text indicates a verbal recovery.

Ali's somewhat narrative text functions as a way of negation (Kristeva) and sublimation on the part of the melancholic historical and implied authors as well as the melancholic historical and implied readers. Through negation (Kristevian dissolution of the symptom but negation is also a defining symptom of melancholia) or sublimation, the speaker transforms and transposes his nonrepresentable/nonsignifiable agony into the sublime form of art, making the sadness visible to both himself and the others. He transforms the urges of aggression into creative skills, creating a new identity for himself as an author/creator instead of the madman, and protecting his Self and body

from these urges. The text, thus, protects the implied and historical authors from masochistic drives.

The melancholic text opens up with a desperate and questioning reference to melancholy, the old inveterate foe in Finch's terms. The paradoxical situation portrayed by the persona in the lines "grief and most blissful day" sounds as if giving the definition of melancholy. The persona's retrospective memory becomes active when caught up by the pointless and vain state of melancholia, which refers to the unconscious object, the Thing, in Kristevian sense. Finch's mention of the powerful and "uncontrollable" melancholy goes along with depression. This "grip" of melancholia shows that the persona cannot control it. From the very beginning, the speaker talks about the symptoms and implies that it is not due to external factors, rather it occupies and lurks inside, even in the very beautiful day:

A pointless grief holds me
On the most blissful day
My whole life is in my brain
A bitter residue remains. (1-4)⁵

The implied author is painfully aware that he experiences feelings of dejection and despondency without no particular reason amidst joy and pleasure. What he is afflicted with in fact turns out to be a transient mood instead of a personality and character determined by routine and habits even though the mood becomes a pattern in his life. Once he is under the influence of melancholia, his retrospective memory functions in a destructive way so that the persona re-experiences the burden of the past, which might be shaped by traumatic events or moments. Even if the past is filled with joys of moments and relatively moderate events, the memory fails to provide positive aspects, giving the delusion that the past is simply agony. The use of the word "brain" (line 3) for the implied author to reflect his melancholia is significant in terms of associating the mood with the head, giving the impression that the disorder is in fact, related to neurology/mental state. The adjective "bitter" (line 4) is related to the taste, creating a connection between melancholia and sensations, and signifies that the mood prevents the persona from taking pleasure in any activities as melancholia causes inhibition and loss of interest in everyday life. Within this context, it might be said that the poetic persona has melancholia as a way of perceiving the outer world and the inner self.

The power of agony, pain is compared to the fire on skin develops with the restlessness, inner turmoil, accompanying paranoia and anxiety. The literary critics so far generally interpret it as a reference to the aspiration for "freedom," but it seems that it is critically a misreading and lagging remark. Here, the sense of melancholia has little to do with the literal sense of imprisonment, rather the following lines represent the acute phase of depression and paranoia, which irritates the nerves of the speaker. His

⁵ Our translation.

isolation from the world, his strong desolation and anti-social behaviour, if not a personality disorder, is portrayed:

I do not understand my grief
 A fire burns my skin,
 I find my place narrow,
 My heart roams in the hills. (5-8)

The speaker experiences his melancholy in a unique way that turns out to be solely special to him. He displays both bodily and spiritual symptoms. His melancholy turns out to be a more socially categorised concept. Due to the melancholic attack, he becomes both misogynistic and self-alienated. He runs away from the crowded places to the rural areas in order to hide and manage the mood that at times becomes impossible to deal with. His introjection identifies with the melancholic mood, reuniting with the “affect” in the landscapes.

The persona suggests that he cannot comprehend the mood or make it comprehensible to anyone without sufficient reason and a noncommunicable and non-signifiable state. Yet, he experiences the melancholic affect with bodily symptoms, such as a fever that surrounds the body. It should be emphasised that these physical symptoms might not be genuine or, in other words, delusive, or the persona compares the affect to fever in order to make it understandable to the implied and historical reader. Moreover, this sadness manipulates the perceptions of temporal and spatial time of the persona in a way that it brings about restlessness and anxiety. This leads to the search for a fresh outdoor place and a strong inclination for the landscape, which further implies the persona’s reunion with nature. It all fails no matter what on the part of the poetic speaker, in no way aggravating the mood state more and more.

Neither winter nor summer
 Nor a friendly face I would like,
 I just want a little light,
 Then comes pain, and agony. (9-12)

In the grips of the melancholic affect, the persona becomes extremely introverted, experiencing difficulty with interpersonal functioning. This causes denial of the speech and alterations in the perceptions of the persona. Therefore, he goes far away from people, even from the closest ones, to mourn for the lost self. He only dreams of liberation from his desperate mood and desires for space and freedom, the healing from the pathos that seems to never end and torment him forever. Yet, he suffers from a dull ache and feels a prick of agony.

My arms fall numb besides me
 My paths become invisible,
 My wishful desires
 Lay dead in front of me... (13-16)

The paralysed speaker's deep state of despair is marked with confusion and anxiety and refers to hopelessness and ultimate passivity. Due to the melancholic mood, the speaker undergoes a self-estrangement in addition to social alienation during the fits of disorder. His constant references to himself through possessive adjectives (my) and object pronouns (me) indicate his isolation as well as estrangement. In other words, the introverted persona is redirected towards himself, wrapping upon himself, losing his sense of self and giving up all that he has. Güngör's research as to the statistics of Ali's poetry supports such arguments, which demonstrates that the subject pronoun is the second most repeated word in Ali's poetry. This state of self-isolation, self-alienation, self-consciousness and introjection seems due to his loss of hope to recover the desired object, which makes the persona suffer from lack resulting in an ultimately passive sadness in the given context. The self loses his capacity to overcome his mood and recurrently fails to have prospects for a better and bright future. He wants to succeed the things he aims for in the first place, but the reversal in the mood alters his perceptions and destroys the necessary instruments to carry out this goal. Hence, the plans he has made at times of calmer mood appear to be dreamy and are doomed to fail at times of melancholic attack. He thus feels dead and numb both from within and without. Melancholy sets up barriers to self-actualisation.

Neither a friend, nor a lover,
 A madman away from the world...
 It's melancholy that wraps me:
 And my brains die. (17-20)

Melancholy destroys mental faculties such as thinking, fancy and imagination. The following lines where the persona cannot think, cannot imagine, cannot feel (numb) indicate the significance of "brain" in an author's life and implies a fear of "mental disorder". This is a critical reference to the "primacy of thought and imagination" in an artist's existence. The persona's self-diagnosed statement shows that he perceives himself from without. He is aware of his sheer state of anti-social behaviour and mere isolation from the outer world. The persona has a misogynistic outlook on life, rejecting social gender roles because of the permanent melancholy. He becomes unable to perform the roles ascribed to the male sex in society. In terms of self and style of life, he is distinguished from the others, feeling as an outcast in himself and for himself. Yet, as he cannot comprehend the reason lying behind such dejection, he calls himself a madman. Once again, in the narrative, he associates the mood with the head/brain, revealing that the mind of the persona is destroyed due to the attack.

The mode and the style of the speaker is significant in terms of revealing the melancholic affect. The speaker associates his melancholy with mostly physical and mental concepts, such as pain, agony and madness. He defines the experience as being dead from both within and without. He solely depicts and describes the affect, aiming to provide a vivid image, even though he fails to understand and rationalise it. It might be interpreted as that the speaker

suffers from the loss of the self and loss of the Thing instead of the loss of the object of desire. Yet, he loses both himself and desire itself as an object. He loses the speech as well at times of melancholy, turning out to be a social misfit. His desire is fixated chiefly on melancholy as an object, which in return affects his sexuality/sexual identity. The text provides a bond with the language itself that, in fact, is destroyed due to melancholy. It generates a semiotic space for the persona who fails to exist in the symbolic realm.

Conclusion

Finch and Ali's poems (self-narratives of melancholy) indicate critical points of comparison and contrast in terms of the experience and representation of melancholy. Both texts imply that there is just a little gap between the historical and implied authors, then the personas appear to be female and male, respectively. Finch associates her melancholy with heart, whereas Ali associates it with head, which manifests the distinguishing characteristics between the historical periods they produced art as well as gender differences. It is additionally significant that the subjective experience of melancholy differs in two poems: In the first poem, the persona experiences melancholy as a disease, whereas the persona in Ali's poem experiences it as a kind of mood disorder. Finch's speaker directly addresses the personified melancholy, whereas Ali's merely talks about his melancholy. Finch's persona struggles and confronts melancholy on the textual realm, whereas Ali's persona just describes it. Two poems' attitude towards a cure is accordingly different: The former remains to be in search of recovery, whereas the latter never refers to any curative method. We can argue that Finch's discourse represents physical melancholy in Burton's sense, whereas Ali's discourse represents a mental case of melancholy in a Kristevian sense. Hence, the poems suggest that Finch deliberately and consciously uses poetry as a form of therapy, whereas Ali never implies it, but applies poetry in search of a therapeutic effect. Both accept the superiority of melancholy both from within and without the narrative. Finch's text, most probably under the influence of the era, exploits personification and allegory as an extended metaphor; however, Ali's poem describes melancholy indirectly, mainly focusing on its effect on the mind of the persona. In other words, Finch's speaker tells us about the stages of a figurative battle and the siege of melancholy while Ali's deals with the symptoms and results of melancholy. Finch depicts a persona struggling against melancholy, but Ali portrays a desperate persona numb and passive. Lastly, the only thing they can do is to alleviate the symptoms through language. They are suffering from lack; they are losers; yet not ultimately lost, for they still produce poetry, keeping connected to the verbal discourse and language (the symbolic).

Works Cited

Ali, Sabahattin. *Dağlar ve Rüzgâr [Mountains and the Wind]*. Yapı Kredi Publishing, [1932] 2017.

- Ali, Sabahattin. *Madonna in a Fur Coat*. Translated M. Freely and A. Dawe. Penguin, 2017.
- Arslanbenzer, Hakan. "Sabahattin Ali: Tragic Romance and Dark Realism." *Daily Sabah*, 2015.
- Berthin, Christine. *Gothic Hauntings: Melancholy Crypts and Textual Ghosts*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Bezirci, Asım. *Sabahattin Ali: Yaşamı, Kişiliği, Sanatı, Hikayeleri, Romanları*. Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2007.
- Bowring, Jacky. *A Field Guide to Melancholy*. Oldcastle Books, 2008.
- Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Retrieved from Ex-classics Project, 2009.
- Ferber, Ilit. *Philosophy and Melancholy: Benjamin's Early Reflections on Theater and Language*. Stanford UP, 2013.
- Finch, Anne. *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea*, edited M. Reynolds. University of Chicago Press, 1903.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." In *Collected Papers*, 2017, pp. 152-170. Retrieved from <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/hs/medical/clerkships/psych/misc/articles>.
- Güngör, Bilgin. "Bir Poetikanin İstatistiği: Sabahattin Ali'nin Şiirlerini Kelimeler Işığında Yeniden Düşünmek." *Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2019, pp. 174-182.
- Kara, Mustafa. "Tasavvufi Şiirin Gücü: Nazım Hikmet, Sabahattin Ali, Samih Rifat, Hasan Ali Yücel Tekke Şâiri Midir?" *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 9, no. 9, 2000, pp. 7-32.
- Keith, Jennifer. "The Poetics of Anne Finch." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, (1998), vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 465-480.
- Kristeva, Julia. *The Black Sun*. Columbia UP, 1989.
- Narlı, Mehmet. "Sabahattin Ali'nin Çağlayan Dergisindeki İlk Şiirleri." *Tübar*, vol. XV, 2004, pp. 127-137.
- Radden, Jennifer. *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression*. Oxford UP, 2009.
- Rogers, Katherine, M. "Finch's "Candid Account" vs. Eighteenth-Century Theories of the Spleen." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1, (1989), pp. 17-27.
- Sağlam, Mehmed H. "Sabahattin Ali'nin Şiirlerinde Dağ İmgesi." *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Researches*, vol. 21, no. 46, 2020, pp. 86-101.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. *Heyecanlar Üzerine Bir Kuram Taslağı* [Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions] Trans. K. Sarıalioğlu. Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2018.
- Storr, Anthony. *Freud: Kısa Bir Giriş*. Trans. N. Aydemir. Alfa Yayıncılık, 2017.
- Yıldırım, Oğuzhan. *A Comparative Study on the Poetry of Mikail Müşfik and Sabahattin Ali*. MA Thesis. Karabük University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, 2020.