

15 Aspects of literary representation in Reşat Nuri Güntekin's *Çalığışu*

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This chapter: As an essay on a *Turkish* novel, this chapter could equally have been placed in Part VII on “Turkish parallels”. Close similarity to the texts discussed in the current section, however, together with its dealing with the question of gender and literary representation, made me go for its arrangement along with the documents of “The Nahḍa at its zenith”. Written and published at about the same time when the Modern School in Egypt formed and ‘Isā ‘Ubayd wrote and published his programmatic foreword to *Iḥsān Hānīm* (see above, Chapter 12), Reşat Nuri Güntekin’s *Çalığışu* (“The Wren”) could easily pass as an exemplary ‘translation’ of ‘Ubayd’s call for an authentic “national literature”, and the novel’s overall character of an optimistic success story reflects very closely the early nation-builders’ ‘Yes, we can!’ enthusiasm as it spoke from ‘Ubayd’s *muqaddima* or the works of the young Taymūr (cf. Chapter 13) and clearly is an extension of the Nahḍawī spirit of departure to new horizons, of rising to higher levels of civilisation, of energetic upswing and surpassing the inherited state of stagnation and decay. However, before success is reached and the novel concludes with a happy ending, the author also shows the many obstacles that still prevent easy progress, and in his description of the female protagonist’s toiling and suffering he almost goes to the limits of what the brave heroine can bear, in this respect coming quite close to Lāshīn’s enactment, in his “Village Small Talk” (cf. Chapter 14), of the clash of the enlightened urban intellectual with the ignorant, backward rural population, the core body of the envisaged nation-to-be. Her cheerfulness always prevents Güntekin’s heroine from falling into complete desperation; nevertheless, her struggle and suffering are often quite similar to the struggle and suffering of Lāshīn’s heroine Ḥawwā’ (Eve, in “Eve without Adam”, 1934) whom the author in the end lets give up all hope and commit suicide.

While the reader will have recognised in these protagonists the Nahḍawī social reformer, the *efendi* working relentlessly towards the bright utopian vision of common progress and a future on a higher level of civilisation, *Çalığışu* displays also many other features of the emerging subject’s wish to assert itself. For instance, the novel not only has a strong focus on the reform of male-female relations, women’s emancipation and their role in traditional society, but it also

stresses the virtuousness and absolute moral integrity of the heroine, a feature reminding of the innocent, chaste, and highly virtuous protagonists of Salim al-Bustānī, Jurji Zaydān, Jubrān Khalil Jubrān, al-Manfalūṭī, and others (see above, Chapters 10 and 11). Moreover, Güntekin's choice of a first-person narrator for the core chapters of the novel emphasizes the emerging subject's perspective that already Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq sought to underline six, seven decades earlier (see Chapter 8). In addition, Güntekin's heroine Ferīde combines the two aspects of emerging subjectivity noted in the introductory section to Chapter 11, namely the personal *and* the collective, as her personal struggles at the same time are the struggles of the emerging nation.

This is also reflected at the emotional level. While the nation-builders' love of independence and their exuberant optimism of departure to new horizons find their literary expression in the heroine's cheerful "wren" character, and while the postulated legitimacy of their aspirations is underlined via the protagonist's moral integrity, the nobility of their endeavour is emphasised, like in earlier Naḥḍawī texts, with the help of sentimentalism. However, Ferīde sheds a lot of tears not only because she, time and again, falls victim to a brutal patriarchal society, but also because she is so sensitive and full of compassion for the suffering of *others*. She is all feeling and caring, and with this, the emerging national subject surpasses the earlier Naḥḍawī subject's desire for self-assertion through self-pity. It reaches out and thereby overcomes its former isolation; emotionalism is put in the service of others now. The new ideal community as imagined in *Çalıkuşu* is a society based on spiritual and emotional kinship, on love, mutual understanding, and sympathy.

It is highly significant that Güntekin chose a *female* protagonist to represent these new qualities. But the proponent of the new ideals is not as independent as it may seem at first sight. In order to survive, the sensitive, compassionate and cheerful little 'wren' needs, as we shall see, the protection of a benevolent father-figure, and when the latter eventually dies, the 'wren' voluntarily chooses the 'cage' of matrimonium with the man she loves. Here, Ferīde closes her diary, that is, the first-person account in which the emerging national subject said "I", and with this, the process of her emancipation and self-formation is thought to have reached a happy end. In Chapter 16 below, we will look at the significance of such a contradiction from an overall historical perspective, as the individual national subject who has just given proof of his/her capability to act as an independent subject does not seem keen to remain really independent; rather, s/he is happy to deliver him/herself into the arms of a traditional 'male' ruler. Turkey found such a new leader in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the "father" of the Turks'. In a similar vein, Ḥawwā' in Lāshīn's *Eve without Adam* would probably have been happy

to give up her previous life as an emancipated independent woman, had she only been so lucky to find a man who would have loved and married her. But she wasn't, so she committed suicide – in Egypt, 'Abd al-Nāṣir was not around yet... (With the collapse, or smelting together, of individuality and collectivity that we can observe here, Middle Eastern texts exhibit features that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht described also for other parts of the 'global' world at roughly the same time, cf. his 'code' "Individuality vs. Collectivity" and his 'collapsed code' "Individuality = Collectivity (Führer)" – see above Chapter 14, especially 14.4.)

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The novel *Çalikuşu* ("The Wren") by Reşat Nuri Güntekin (1889–1956) is not generally counted among literary works of high aesthetic quality, not even by native critics. Histories of modern Turkish literature nevertheless give it quite a prominent place¹ because of its enormous popularity.² Its publication in 1922 was a sweeping success and ensured the author's breakthrough, even though he had already written several short stories, two other novels and two plays (Kurdakul 1989, 294). *Çalikuşu* was first serialised in *Vaķit* and published immediately following in book form. The 450-page volume went through several editions within only a few years, becoming something of a 'cult book' for the youth in the early years of the Turkish Republic.³ Atatürk himself is said to have read it with fascination while at the front during the *Kurtuluş Savaşı*, the 'War of Liberation' (Karaalioglu 1982, 177) that would peak that very same year.

Çalikuşu is then a document the importance of which lies in the fact that it was able to offer the readers of the early 1920s a story through which many could see themselves represented in literature. As a novel it is worth considering not so much for its doubtful literary merit, but as a literary representation of a more general discourse that extends beyond the work as literature.

Before considering the process of literary representation, a short glance at the events of Reşat Nuri's novel will be useful to understand the imagery used in that work.

¹ Cf., e.g., *TDEA*, ii (1977):111–113; Özkırımlı 1987 (*TEA*, ii), 311–312; Kudret 1987 (*TEHR*, ii), esp. 313–330; Necatigil (1989) 1993, 99; Ünlü and Özcan 1988, 88–89; cf. also Spies 1943, esp. 64–65.

² The work's popularity can be seen from the fact that not only was the book adapted for staging (İstanbul Şehir Tiyatrosu, 1962, 1963) but also made into a film (in two parts, by Osman F. Seden, 1966). Moreover, the book continues to be used as a textbook for schools. Cf. *KnLL*, vii:16, with further references on both the author and his novels.

³ Cf. *TDEA*, iii:419: "gençliğin ellerinden düşmeyen bir eser" (a work the youth would not part with).

15.1 Contents

Çalılıkıuşu is known to have been written as a play to be performed, under the title *İstanbul Kızı* ('A Girl from Istanbul'), at the Darülbeydâî theatre; it was rejected however as 'unstageable', whereupon Reşat Nuri rewrote it as a novel (cf. *TDEA*, ii:113, s.v. "Çalılıkıuşu"). Its rejection by the theatre was due mainly to the fact that the principal events take place not in the late Ottoman Empire high-society world of decadent luxury and pomp which, at that time, was so much favoured by the theatre directors and the Darülbeydâî public alike (cf. *ibid.*), but in far away Anatolian villages and provincial towns, where the novel's heroine, Feride seeks refuge after suffering a serious crisis.

Feride is the daughter of a military officer and an Istanbul lady. Early in life she is orphaned. Nevertheless, she is brought up in the comfortable environment of her relatives, the well-to-do Istanbul circles of governors, *beys* and *paşas* living in *köşks* and noble *yalis*. On holiday from school, the prestigious *Notre Dame de Sion*⁴ directed by French nuns, she and her cousin Kâmuran fall in love and get engaged. Marriage is postponed, however – Feride is still only fifteen years old, and Kâmuran is first made to seize the opportunity of receiving training for a job as a diplomat in Europe. He stays there for several years. On his return – Feride is now in her early twenties – the wedding day is fixed. Three days before this 'ultimatum', however, Feride is told by a mysterious lady in black that Kâmuran, during a stay in Switzerland, promised marriage to another woman. Feride is shocked and runs away.

The narrative now switches (in the earlier editions at least) from the third to the first person,⁵ the second (and main) part of the novel consisting of the *diary* entries in which

4 This school was founded in 1856. Initially only Christian and Jewish girls were admitted, but from the beginning of the 20th century it was open also to Muslim girls. Turkish lessons were obligatory. The other subjects were taught in French, from 1918 onwards even in accordance with the syllabus effective in France. The boarding school was regarded as highly prestigious; it continued to be the educational institution preferred by higher officials and well-to-do circles for their daughters even in the Republican period. For this and similar schools, cf. the entry "Notre Dame de Sion Fransız Kız Lisesi" in *İstAns*, vi:94–95.

5 In the first four editions, Feride's diary (central part with the heroine herself as the first-person narrator) is framed between sections narrated in the third person. For the 5th edition (serialised 1937–1939 in *Yedigün* magazine) Reşat Nuri rewrote the initial section as the protagonist's first-person narrative. From the 6th edition onward, the whole book took the form of a personal diary (cf. Kudret 1987, ii:317). – Unless stated otherwise, my references are to the 3rd edition (Der-i Sa'âdet: İkbâl Kütübhanesi, 1343/1925) which is still more or less identical with the first. For the shape the novel took after the 6th edition I have consulted a modern 'Turkified' print (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 37th edn, 1992). – *TDEA*, iii:420, lists translations into Serbo-Croatian (1925), Bulgarian (1931), and English (1949). I have seen only the translation into German by Max Schultz under the title *Zaunkönig: der Roman eines türkischen Mädchens* (Leipzig: A.H. Payne, 1942), which is based mainly on the novel's second edn (Der-i Sa'âdet: İkbâl Kütübhanesi, 1922).

Feride records what she experiences when, after her flight, she has to fight her way through and survive as an individual in contemporary society: a woman and an orphan who has broken off all connections with her relatives, without family support and fend-ing for herself.

The diploma of *Notre Dame de Sion* qualifies her to work as a teacher. In order to do so she must overcome many obstacles.

The first obstacle involves bureaucracy: an inexperienced, naive girl like her gets easily lost in the labyrinth of school administration and the maze of different sections of the *Ma'ârif Nezâreti*, the Ministry of Education, where she must apply for work and later when she is forced to leave one school to find a job in another. The obstacles present themselves in the form of corruption in the civil service, of arrogance among public officials and from the fact that, to get what you want, you need good contacts (which Feride does not have). Difficulties also emerge from Feride's being a woman, moving around and trying to get es-tablished in a male-dominated system, which is, in itself, part of an overall patriarchal so-cial system.

The second set of obstacles with which Feride has to cope arise from the countryside itself. The bureaucrats send her, the Western-educated young Turkish upper-class woman raised in an environment of urban modernity, to a remote and backward village in Anatolia, a far-away region known to most Istanbulites only as a place of exile (cf. Öner toy 1984, 18), where *kuş uçmaz, kervan geçmez* "neither a bird would fly nor a caravan pass by" (*Çalılıkısu* = Güntekin 1343/1925, 149). There, she has to adjust to both a miserable standard of living and the mentality of the poor and tradition-bound inhabitants. Eventually she is forced to do pioneering work with regard to the village children's education.

The third type of problems she encounters is rooted again in the patriarchal nature of society: since Feride is beautiful, men fall in love with her wherever she goes, even though she does nothing to encourage this. In her naivety, she does not even notice when men are courting her. Although she is herself decent and remains chaste, the mere fact that she be-comes an object of male desire makes her a subject for gossip. Eventually she is repeatedly forced by circumstances to flee those places where gossip and rumours label her a seduc-tress of men and where she is no longer accepted as a teacher.

In spite of such obstacles, Feride never loses her patience, her cheerfulness and merry outlook on life as well as her courage, love of freedom and desire for independence, in-nate qualities which have earned her, since she was at school, the nickname of *Çalılıkısu*, the 'Wren'.

In Kuşadası she meets an elderly military doctor who, despite his coarse manners and crude language, is good-natured and sensitive and adopts Feride as his protégée. Society, however, starts gossiping again, and in order to end all those false accusations and relieve Feride from all the continued attacks on her honour, he convinces her that the only solution is to marry him – a marriage on paper only, which does not change in any way the purely asexual father-daughter relationship between them. With the marriage, although it is only formal, Feride ends her diary because she feels that her life as an independent individual has now come to an end.

The rest of the story is quickly told: Feride's husband Hayrullah Bey dies not long after the marriage, leaving all his fortune – which is quite considerable – to his wife, in this way ensuring that she will not be forced to earn her living again as an unprotected individual. Since he had noticed from the beginning that Feride in reality has never stopped loving her cousin Kâmur an despite all that she felt she had suffered from him, Hayrullah arranges

that, after his death, Feride will meet Kâmuran and the young man will read her diary and know that she still loves him and that her virginity has not been compromised. After further delays, Kâmuran and Feride are united, Kâmuran's lips finally find Feride's and marriage follows – a veritable happy end!

15.2 Analysis

15.2.1 Feride, the New Woman

At first reading, Reşat Nuri's novel might be taken for a literary contribution to a period debate on the emancipation of women.⁶ After the first steps in the nineteenth century, the 1908 Young Turk Revolution initiated a number of new efforts in this field; a society for women's rights had been founded before World War I; magazines designed especially for women (like *Kadınlar Dünyası* "Women's World") had begun to appear; during the Balkan Wars women had started to work in the Red Crescent's military hospitals and later also in the field of telecommunications and in factories of different kinds; in 1917 matrimonial law had been amended in favour of women. In fact, Feride represents exactly that type of New Woman which was being promoted by the social reformers of the age, including those of the Arab world like Qâsim Amîn: a woman must not be excluded from education or secluded within the home, a woman should know what life really means so she can perform her duties all the better – duties that essentially remain unchanged, namely to serve in a male-dominated society, as wife, subservient companion, loving mother to her husband's children, perhaps even as a loving teacher to other people's children, or any number of other professions traditionally labelled 'feminine' because of the factor of 'love' in them.⁷ Thus, the two occupations carried out by Feride, our novel's idealised protagonist, are those of a teacher and a nurse, with the ultimate outcome of her experience of the outside world being voluntary and conscious surrender of her independence to enter her husband Kâmuran's service.

A reading focused on the question of women's emancipation is also supported by a statement the author himself made in 1937 looking back at what he had had in mind fifteen years earlier: "At that time, cheerfulness and love of independence were not looked upon as good points in women." One was afraid that

⁶ Cf. Kreiser 1991, 67. For more detailed information cf. also, e.g., *İstAns*, iv, s.v. "Kadın Der-gileri", "Kadın Hareketi", "Kadın Örgütleri", "Kadın Yayınevi", "Kadınlar Dünyası".

⁷ For Qâsim Amîn see, e.g., *EP*, iv, s.v. "Qâsim Amîn" (U. Rizzitano); his theories are summarised by, e.g., Hourani 1962, 164–166.

such women would become bad mothers and wives. “I wanted to show”, he continues,

that a bit of education, a bit of merriness, lightness and love of independence are nothing to be worried about in a girl, and that such girls will prove, if necessary, that they are much more qualified to master difficult situations than all those dignified and virtuous ones.

(Interview in *Yedigün*, 24 Dec. 1937, quoted in Öner toy 1984, 20–21)

15.2.2 Feride and personal/national identity

The interpretation of the novel as a literary argument for a ‘New Woman’ hardly explains its vast popularity. There must be more to it than a set of problems that occupied the minds of a rather small, educated elite. Indeed, Sibel Erol has shown that the novel is concerned with a much more general problem; “the search for personal identity”, she writes, “is pushed into a larger question of social and national identity” (Erol 1991, 65–82). This is done, she argues, by a number of powerful allusions to contemporary Turkey, such as the shifting of the scene – for the first time in a Turkish novel (*ibid.*, 80) – to Anatolia, the mention of the War of Liberation (Feride for some time works as a nurse in a military hospital looking after wounded soldiers), or the blue eyes of Feride’s adoptive father, Dr Hayrullah, a clear allusion to the blue eyes of that other great ‘father’, Atatürk, himself a kind of ‘doctor’ for the so-called ‘Sick Man of the Bosphorus’. The novel’s high potential for personal identification also derives from the “dynamics of the narrative” which consists in a “crumbling and reconstitution of family” as well as from the centrality of family itself through which “identity is defined”, as convincingly shown by Sibel Erol; in the course of the novel’s events, Feride’s adoptive family is replaced by a new family, one which is not simply given, but consciously chosen, based not on genetic or kinship relations but on spiritual and emotional affinity.

The appeal of Güntekin’s work may also be appreciated in terms of the simplicity of its plot. The *Encyclopaedia of Turkish Language and Literature*, for instance, notices that the story is clearly derived from traditional love stories known from Divan literature (like *Leyla and Mecnun* or *Ferhad and Şirin*) as well as from folk literature (e.g., *Kerem and Ashi*),⁸ archetypal stories of separated lovers, endured hardships and personal trials only to be re-united for a happy

⁸ Cf. *TDEA*, ii:113: “Romanda konu bakımından da bizdeki belli bir geleneğin sürdürüldüğünü görürüz” (We see that, thematically, too, a clear tradition of ours is continued in the novel). Kudret (1987, ii:314) calls *Çalığışu* “a modern *Kerem ile Ashi*”.

ending. Closer examination may even show that the plot structure of *Çalılıkusu* follows, *mutatis mutandis*, exactly the scheme drawn up by Vladimir Propp for (Russian) fairy tales (cf. Propp, ed./trad. Eimermacher, 1975).

15.2.3 Feride as the intellectual individual

The novel's attractiveness to a broad reading public has diverted the attention of earlier researchers, and until now our own, from the personality of the author, which is unfortunate, since I believe the novel's great success is largely a matter of coincidence, especially since its major themes are neither woman's liberation nor a search for collective identity, but mainly the author's own very personal problems and a 'self-glorification' of the intellectual.

If we consider for a moment the way in which the process of Feride's emancipation is depicted, we notice that emphasis is laid not so much on her being a woman, but on her *individuality*. This is expressed clearly in her name, Feride, which in Arabic (*farīda*) means "the unique, the exceptional one; hence also: the pearl". While she may be seen as a prototype of the New Woman, she is first and foremost an individual (facing society).⁹ Apparently, Reşat Nuri conceived women's emancipation as a struggle, essentially, of *individuals* against a hostile environment, which becomes evident from yet other elements of the text:

- Everything in the novel is centred around Feride, she is the narrative's single pole and only focus.¹⁰
- The author is interested in the way the individual subject experiences society. This is evident from his decision to have the events told in form of a diary.
- The heroine is not an average girl but one who is different from the very beginning – different from the girls in her family, from her classmates and from her female fellow teachers.
- While the obstacles she must overcome are complicated by her being a woman, most of them are not gender-related (e.g., the inflated bureaucracy, the backwardness of the Anatolian hinterland, or the practice of social control through gossip).

⁹ Cf. *TDEA*, iii:419: "Reşat Nuri, cemiyet içinde yaşayan ferdi ve ferdin iç dünyasını gözden kaçırmaz" (R.N. does not fail to show the individual living in society and in the individual's inner world).

¹⁰ Cf. Bakırcıoğlu (1983) 1986, 116: "Feride, baştan sona kadar olayların merkezindedir" (Feride is at the centre of events from the beginning to the end), and 117: *Çalılıkusu* "[...] yalnızca Feride'nin romanıdır [...] *Çalılıkusu*'nda bir 'karşı taraf' yoktur denilebilir" (... is only Feride's novel... It can be said that there is no 'counterpart' in *Çalılıkusu*).

- Feride's most characteristic features all imply a tendency to differ from social norms: from the beginning, innate traits such as the child's "uselessness/naughtiness" (*yaramazlık*) and "unruliness" (*afacanlık*) are underlined. Throughout the novel her childlike naturalness serves as a metaphor for her opting out of society, for her nonconformity and her disregard for taboos.¹¹
- The heroine's exemplary nature not only derives from her patience, virtue, and courage, but also from her individual taste and creativity: she loves to paint (*Çalığışu*, 140, 249), designs and sews her own clothes (*ibid.*, 247), and she is hardly conventional, making rational decisions on a case-by-case basis.

We may therefore assume that Feride represents not only the 'New Woman' but also a class of Western-educated intellectuals estranged from society and struggling as individuals, somewhere in a 'vacuum' between the upper classes, from which most of them derived but from which they felt estranged (cf. the metaphor of Feride's flight and break with her upper-class relatives), and ordinary people from whom they were separated through education (but upon whom they counted despite the social gap).¹² We may also assume that Feride is representative of the author, who is himself a member of that intellectual class who considered themselves the nation's teachers. Like Feride, the members of this group were convinced that they had a mission to spread, since only *they* possessed the right knowledge that would lead the country into a better future.

That the novel should be read, in the first place, as a clash between individual and society is also suggested by what I would like to call the 'Arabic analogy', i.e., the fact that the heroes of *Arabic* novels of the same period mostly display the very same central problem (Individual vs. Society) as well as very similar narrative features.¹³

11 Clearly Güntekin is influenced here by Rousseau (natural vs. social state). The importance of this philosopher is evidenced within the novel by the fact that Dr Hayrullah loves reading his books and takes them with him even when moving to his country estate (*çiftlik*) (cf. *Çalığışu*, 385, 449).

12 Still a child, Feride's best friend is an ordinary soldier in her father's service (cf. *Çalığışu*, 15 f.). Later she admires, e.g., the women of the garrison town "C." because "they are faithful, diligent, sociable and simple-natured people, content with their life" (*vefakâr, çalışkan, hayatlarından memnûn, munis ve sâde*, 281). Such people may be a bit unpolished (*kaba çaba*: e.g., 141, 351), but what matters is that they are all good-hearted (*iyi rûhlu*: *passim*).

13 Cf., e.g., Kilpatrick 1974, 19–58 (= ch. 2 "The Pioneers").

15.2.4 Male author – female protagonist

The fact that these early Arabic novels almost all have strong autobiographical traits leads one to look for corresponding features also in *Çalılıkıuşu*, and here too there is much to be noted:¹⁴

- Güntekin's father was a military doctor (like Hayrullah Bey, Feride's spiritual father).¹⁵
- The father's appointments led the Güntekin family to move from place to place in Anatolia just as the child Feride and her mother followed the appointments of their father/husband in the Ottoman provinces.
- Reşat Nuri received part of his secondary education in the *İzmir Frère'ler Okulu*, a school run by Christian monks (Feride's *Notre Dame de Sion*, we recall, is a Christian school run by French nuns).
- Following completion of his education, the author, exactly like his heroine, worked as a teacher all over Anatolia. Thus, the places abbreviated in the novel as "B." or "C." are very likely to be identified with Bursa and Çanakkale both of which Reşat Nuri knew very well.¹⁶
- The state of affairs that Feride encounters in the educational bureaucracy is the same as the one the author himself had faced as a teacher.¹⁷
- Most significantly, Reşat Nuri kept a journal of his experiences in Anatolia, as Feride does. (The author's diary was published in two volumes much later, together with notes and reflections on Anatolia. The first volume appeared in 1936, the other in 1966, under the title *Anadolu Notları* 'Notes from Anatolia'.)

If the novel is basically a narrative dealing with the conflict between individual and society in general and between the author himself and his environment in particular, why then did Güntekin choose his protagonist to be a *woman*? Arab authors of that time, just like Reşat Nuri, tended to avoid 'real' autobiography and transformed themselves instead into heroes of autobiographical novels; such transformations often seem to be motivated by an author's fear of exposure as an antiheroic failure. They are unable to present stories of success, and the winner is more often society than the individual, just like in real life (cf. Guth 1998). One

¹⁴ For biographical information on Reşat Nuri see (always s.v. "Güntekin", unless otherwise specified): Necatigil (1989) 1993; Kurdakul 1989; Kudret 1987, ii:306–307; *TDEA*, iii; Özkırımlı 1987, ii; Işık 1990; Ünlü and Özcan 1988, ii:83–87. For further references see *KnLL* (as in note 2).

¹⁵ Spies 1943, 65, thinks that Dr. Hayrullah was modelled on a close friend of the father's.

¹⁶ Cf. Erol 1991, 69, fn.3 (referring to Bakırcıoğlu 1983, 112–113).

¹⁷ Cf. *TDEA*, ii:113: "yazar, [...] çok iyi tanıdığı eğitim ve öğretim teşkilatını gözler önüne serer" (the writer... shows the organisations of education and teaching that he knew very well).

might imagine that this kind of situation had some affinity to the situation of women and that the choice of a female protagonist suggested itself. Arab authors, however, appear unwilling to slip into the role of a woman; in order to dramatise the individual's suffering in society, for them it may seem sufficient to simply stylize themselves as heroes of a novel. To project oneself as the hero of a novel one needs not change one's sex. Why then would Reşat Nuri, who resists making the novel autobiographical – at least in the early stage – decide to adopt a woman's role to express his concerns?

The reason for this kind of 'cross-dressing' in literary representation is, without doubt, that the author found a female heroine more appropriate than a male hero to symbolise his own and his social group's situation. What then led him to identify with the feminine cause? Sibel Erol has already pointed out that in *Calıküşu*, masculinity, as inherited from traditional society, is associated with brutality and brutal male characters in the novel are connected in one way or another with the oppressive regime and legacy of 'Abdülhamid (cf. Erol 1991, 72).¹⁸ It is very likely therefore that the author saw himself and intellectuals like him as innocent victims of that patriarchal regime, a situation obviously more similar to that of women in traditional society than that of men (cf. Erol 1991, 66–67). Intellectuals like Reşat Nuri, I argue, see themselves as powerless and underprivileged, in a situation best rendered through the condition of a woman who, like Feride, suffers constantly the blows of quasi-fatal circumstances. Perhaps Feride's naivety¹⁹ has its parallel in a kind of naivety, conceived of as 'unmanly', among intellectuals unfamiliar with the mythical Anatolia in which they see the country's future. Their suffering is an inner reality that seeks to reveal itself through storytelling; it is however a very private, intimate reality suitable for an intimate journal – a literary form traditionally classified as specifically female (as opposed to other forms belonging more to the 'male' or public sphere).

In spite of all the suffering and the feeling of powerlessness, intellectuals like Reşat Nuri did not surrender to their fate; on the contrary, they offered a way out and sketched alternatives. In order to place themselves in opposition to a past rife with treachery and a present content to marginalize the educated individual, they made themselves advocates of honesty, tolerance, compassion and humanity and they painted the picture of a new society that integrated outsiders, a society

¹⁸ The despotism of the period before the Second Constitution (*II. Meşrutiyet*) is a theme Güntekin also dealt with in other novels, cf. Öner 1984, 20.

¹⁹ Cf. *TDEA*, ii:113: "Eser, romantik ve hayatın gerçeklerini hiç bilmeyen bir genç kızın macerasıdır" (The work is the adventure of a young romantic girl who does not know at all life's realities.)

based not on power, kinship or nepotism, but on love, mutual understanding and feelings of sympathy. It is for this reason, too, that a female protagonist must have seemed a more appropriate literary representation than a male character. Indeed, Feride's character displays all of these qualities; she suffers heroically because she is sensitive, she is all feeling, interiority and self-sacrifice for the sake of others.²⁰ Her virtues are absolute moral integrity and a personal humanity that reveals itself in her modest behaviour towards ordinary people (this is the uniting force between the intellectual and the uneducated, whether urban or Anatolian). She is compassionate and caring. Yakup Kadri, another famous author and social critic, even praised and thanked Reşat Nuri for having given his contemporaries a Turkish "Iphigenia" or "Chimène".²¹ Feride is the one who cares about children, especially marginalized children, the disfigured and poor. And she cares about orphans, a critical element in the story because it mirrors her own orphanhood and social abandonment, the very image the author chooses to represent the intellectual's isolation.

The qualities needed to build up and hold together a new society and its quintessential literary expression as the new family are stressed over and over throughout the novel. These qualities are best expressed through Munise, a poor village girl whom Feride adopts and saves from life as an outcast. She and Munise form the nucleus of the new family, the girl benefitting of course from this kind of integration, but also fulfilling the purpose of becoming Feride's *munise* (< Arabic *mu'nisa*), i.e., "one who entertains with her company".²² In this way, Munise helps Feride overcome her own isolation bringing her into the society by assigning her the role of motherly leader. The intellectual then tries to overcome his isolation by reaching out. First, he reaches out to ordinary people, the masses (Feride is shown breaking with her own social background, replacing it with a network of helpers from the lower layers of society, such as the elderly Armenian hotel servant, Hacı Kalfa, and his ridiculously uneducated family, or the black nurse Gülmisal, a former slave in a pasha's household). The intellectual then turns to spiritual values to create a community of spiritual kinship, epitomized by Feride's relationship with a colleague who is not only a music teacher but a composer and practising Sufi; the harmony between the two, the "secret spiritual

²⁰ For similar ways in which the educated middle-classes seek to express themselves through Arabic literature see Guth 1997b [= Chapter 11 in the present volume].

²¹ Cf. Kudret 1987, ii:316, quoting Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu)'s obituary on Reşat Nuri: "Edebiyatımızın Büyük Kaybı", *Tercüman*, 14 December 1956.

²² Stretching the Arabic etymology a little bit, one may even identify the essence of this companionship as 'human', given that Arabic *mu'nisa* is taken from the same root ('-n-s) as *'insān* "human being" or *'unās* "people, humans".

bond” (*gizli rûh ‘alâkası*, 348) is so complete that they need no words to communicate: understanding comes about non-verbally, through silent glances, listening to music, or weeping together.

The final reason for interpreting Feride’s character as the personification of the intellectual may be found in two other features of the novel: first, Feride is adopted by the old blue-eyed military doctor Hayrullah Bey, and second, she marries Kâmuran.

On the surface, these acts of subordination to men can be interpreted as manifestations of the belief in an essential subordination of the female *vis-à-vis* the male (see above). We might, however, also read this image as expressing the idea that the intellectual, too, longs to hand over responsibility to a superior leader and spiritual father, and only afterwards to a younger, chaste ‘cousin’, i.e., to Atatürk first and then to his heirs in the same way Kâmuran takes over from Hayrullah and assumes the latter’s legacy. “Yes”, says Feride, the independent intellectual and female incarnation of Reşat Nuri Güntekin, “Yes, I almost enjoy paying obedience” (*bu iğâ‘at ‘âdeta hoşuma gidiyor...*, 385).

