

18 The ‘riddle’ ‘*Aşk-ı memnū*’

Towards assigning the *Şervet-i Fünūn* movement a place in literary history

Originally published in German in *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques*, 51 (1997): 557–576

This chapter: Along with Chapter 15, this and the following chapter form a unit as they center around individual *Turkish* texts. While Turkish parallels have been referenced or discussed *en passant* in many earlier chapters, this chapter also re-connects to what has been said so far about nineteenth century “Reproductionism” (cf. especially introductory sections to Chapters 4 and 9). However, as an essay on the problem of periodisation of Middle Eastern literature (already touched upon earlier in this book, cf. in particular Chapter 2), it is originally concerned, in the first place, with assigning one of the masterpieces from the pen of a member of the *Şervet-i Fünūn* group, Hālid Ziyā (Uşaklıgil)’s famous ‘*Aşk-ı memnū*’ (“Forbidden Love”, 1897–98), a place in literary history. Where then is the link to ‘emerging subjectivity’, the main topic of this book?

We have already seen on several occasions that the main driving force in “Reproductionist” texts was the *individual* subject’s aspiration to establish for him-/herself a new, more humane way of life and thereby transcend the constraints of the traditional order of things with its many rules and dated laws. We will meet this same impulse – the “Potentiality” component of “Reproductionist” texts – again in ‘*Aşk-ı memnū*’. However, we will also observe that despite the efforts of individual subjects to instigate renewal, they ultimately fail to effect *substantial*, *transformative* changes. Their achievements are confined to *individualised* reproductions (a typical marker of the “Resultative” component in “Reproductionism”) of the existing order (“Actuality” component), leaving the essence of the traditional framework intact. Nonetheless, these subjects will have made a step in the direction of the next period and thus left an indelible mark.

Walter Falk posits that the pinnacle of ‘global’ “Reproductionism” occurred between 1820 and 1880. However, the persistence of a “Reproductionist” worldview in ‘*Aşk-ı memnū*’, likely composed in the early 1890s, provides valuable insights into the enduring influence of the old order of things in late Ottoman Turkey and the prevailing societal experiences of that era. This novel serves as a poignant illustration of how deeply individuals still remained affected, towards the *fin de siècle*, by their inability to effect fundamental changes. In the Arab(ic)

context, we have previously encountered a ‘flood of tears’ (cf. especially Chapter 11) that certainly can be associated with “Reproductionist” pessimism. However, while this lachrymosity often also exhibits “Creativist” traits in that it tends to carry elements of comforting optimism by simultaneously producing strong visions of a better world, this dimension is still largely absent from *‘Aşk-ı memnû’*. Despite its highly emotional tone, the novel lacks sentimentalism or excessive tearfulness. Instead, it presents the tragedy of existence as a scientifically established fact – an inevitable, predetermined destiny that can be understood and explained with the help of the subject’s sharp intellect, of Reason, as the result of genetic determinism. Consequently, social critique, anti-Westernisation sentiments, or moralistic undertones are conspicuously absent from the narrative, as they would be futile in the face of the persistence of the old order of things. Instead, the author underlines the aspect of *tragedy*, and he does so from the perspective of the human being, the suffering *subject* (i.e., the perspective of “Reproductionism’s” potentiality component).

This essay contends that *‘Aşk-ı memnû’* belongs to a late stage of “Reproductionism”, one that places “the heart”, i.e., the feeling subject, at its core. The prevailing condition is experienced as heart-*destroying*, with the individual longing for anything that may help to *bear* and *support* his/her heart, his/her humanity; only to find out that, in the end, the world is heart-*less* and *devoid* of compassion. We become witnesses of a worldview centered on the objective external world’s impact on the inner world of the subject, with the essence of human existence in this *fin-de-siècle* work encapsulated by the feeling heart itself.

* * *

18.1 Divergent interpretations

Critics agree that Uşaklıgil’s best work is *Aşk-ı Memnu*; surprisingly, however, opinions are divided concerning the novel’s overarching message or lack thereof. Some [scholars, readers] perceive the central theme of the novel [...] revolving around Bihter’s forbidden love. [...] According to L. S. Akalın, “*Aşk-ı Memnu* narrates a love thwarted by societal conventions and legal constraints, originating from a marriage founded [solely] on materialistic grounds.”[a] Alternatively, according to Cemil Yener, the novel asserts that “wealth cannot make a young woman forget her need for love. A man who marries a much younger woman should anticipate betrayal.”[b] Similarly, Dr. ÖnerToy asserts that the author delves into “marital discord stemming from disparities between a man and the woman he married, and showed the changes in the understanding of Westernisation [...]”[c]

Conversely, other critics challenge the notion of Bihter’s love as the central motif. Cevdet Kudret emphasises another aspect, positing that the novel “chronicles the lives of a handful of people consumed by love, who live without having to work [...] and are

addicted to an *alafranga* lifestyle”. [d] According to Rauf Mutluay, *Aşk-ı Memnu* reflects “the problems of our society, a society that is going through a crisis of Westernisation; [it shows] the desperate resistance of traditional values, the pitfalls of seducing a wealth-obsessed woman, and the conflict of our wavering moral standards”, albeit subtly concealed within the narrative [...]” [e] Conversely, Fethi Naci dismisses the idea of a didactic purpose behind the novel, asserting that Halit Ziya crafted it merely [...] “to tell [the stories of] a handful of people”. [f]¹

(Moran 1983/1990, 69)

This is how Berna Moran summarises the state of research on ‘*Aşk-ı memnû*’ in 1983, in the first volume of his seminal study “A critical look into the Turkish novel” (*Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış*), highlighting the puzzling disagreement among literary scholars regarding Halit Ziya’s intended message in this novel. Moran aptly notes the peculiarity of this scholarly discord, given the prominence of the work and the extensive commentary it has garnered.

Despite his comprehensive analysis, Moran himself acknowledges his inability to unravel this literary ‘riddle’. Unlike the early Fethi Naci, according to whom Uşaklıgil simply wanted to tell an informal, entertaining narrative, Moran suggests that the novel does indeed aspire to convey a profound message. However, he contends that there is not only one such unified overall message, but rather two basic readings, and the question cannot be answered because these two ultimately contradict each other. Through the novel runs a big rift, he says, a rift for which the author’s ambivalence and wavering between two diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive conceptions is responsible.

Moran compellingly argues that, on one hand, *Aşk-ı Memnu* portrays a tragedy, the *tragedy of Bihter*. Despite her initial aspirations to fulfill her roles as a dutiful wife and stepmother, Bihter finds herself ensnared by the overpowering forces of heredity, compelling her to emulate her ‘immoral’ mother, Firdevs Hanım, against her own volition (cf. Moran 1983/1990, 73–75).² Moran convincingly refutes interpretations that hold Bihter guilty for the disastrous course of

¹ On *Aşk-ı Memnu*, cf. in particular *ibid.*, part VI, pp. 68–86. – In the above citation, Moran refers to: [a] L. S. Akalin, *Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil* ([İstanbul:] Varlık Yayınları, 1953), 24; [b] Cemil Yener, *Bir Romancının Dünyası ve Romanlarındaki Dünya* ([İstanbul: ?] 1959), 33–4; [c] Olcay Önertoy, *Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, Romancılığı ve Romanımızdaki Yeri* ([Ankara:] Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, 1965), 67; [d] Cevdet Kudret, *Türk Edebiyatında Hikâye ve Roman* ([İstanbul:] Varlık Yayınları, 1965), vol. I, 165; [e] Rauf Mutluay, *Ondokuzuncu Yüzyıl Türk Edebiyatı*, ([?:] Gerçek Yayınevi, 1970), 208; [f] Fethi Naci, *On Türk Romanı*, ([?:] Ok Yayınları, 1971), 12–3. In the edition I am using, Moran adds in a note that Fethi Naci, in his later *Türkiye’de Roman ve Toplumsal Değişme*, modified the view expressed in the earlier study; however, the opinion expressed in the later statement is not new for the state of research in 1983.

² A similar view about Bihter is expressed also by Finn 1978/84, 176–208, see esp. 179 ff.

events. Probably under the influence of European Naturalism and its emphasis on genetic determinism, Uşaklıgil rather must have seen Bihter as an innocent victim of the sexual instincts inherited from her mother (Moran 1983/1990, 78).³

On the other hand, Moran continues, there is the story of *Nihal* and her gradual *isolation*. When examined as a storyline of its own, independent of the Bihter plot, *Aşk-ı Memnu* must be read as a *bildungsroman*:

Nihal undergoes a transformation from childhood to adulthood, changing from the state of naïvety [*basitlik*] to one of maturity. Through this evolution, punctuated by painful experiences, she gains deeper insights into human nature and life itself, ascending to a higher level of consciousness.

(Moran 1983/1990, 80)

Moran grapples with the integration of Bihter's tragedy within the *bildungsroman* framework centered around Nihal. He is unable to reconcile the two storylines and can only speculate that Uşaklıgil initially conceived the novel solely as a tragedy centered on Bihter. However, during the writing process, Moran suggests, Uşaklıgil may have developed a heightened interest in Nihal, originally envisioned as a secondary character (cf. *ibid.*, 81). (Moran does not ask himself, though, what may have motivated the author to weave the story of a second character into the Bihter plot, given that he actually had *Bihter's* tragedy in mind...)⁴

Moreover, according to Moran, the two storylines not only lack coherence but also exhibit almost diametric opposition. Nihal's trajectory, on the one hand, follows the universal pattern of "birth – death – rebirth" or "paradise – trial [through life] – return to paradise" (Moran 1983/1990, 8). Initially, Nihal experiences an "innocent and blissful" existence in Adnan Bey's *yalı*. However, with the arrival of the "Melih Bey gang", "sin and sexuality" disrupt the idyllic scene, ushering in a phase of "trial" marked by "forbidden love, jealousy and enmity". Ultimately, the narrative concludes with a restoration of the initial paradise. While Moran perceives *Aşk-ı Memnu* as a tale with a favorable outcome for Nihal, it simultaneously assumes a melancholic tone due to Bihter's tragic demise (cf. *ibid.*, 81–2).

³ Also Finn 1978/84, 180, holds: "Bihter's adultery stems more from an inherited weakness than from a conscious decision. She is her mother's daughter, and when she gives herself to Behlül, she is driven by instinct."

⁴ For Moran's *bildungsroman* thesis, cf. also Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 171, who, like Finn, sees Nihal as an "eternal child" and concludes: "Nihal macht keine Entwicklung durch, die sie im positiven Sinne reifen ließe, wie es für die Heldin eines Bildungsromanes der Fall sein müßte" (Nihal does not undergo any development that would make her mature in a positive sense, as should be the case for the heroine of a *Bildungsroman*). – I agree with this reading.

The fact that Moran, despite his sharp and exhaustive analysis, fails to resolve the ‘riddle’ he presents can be attributed to certain shortcomings in his assessment. One such flaw is evident in his alignment of Nihal’s storyline with the “Paradise – Trial – Return to Paradise” pattern. Robert P. Finn (of whose work Moran appears to be unaware)⁵ convincingly argues against the existence of a paradisiacal state at Adnan Bey’s *yalı*, neither at the outset nor at the denouement of *Aşk-ı Memnu* (cf. Finn 1978/84, 186). On the contrary:

... her [sc. Nihal’s] relationship with her father, which contains “incestuous” elements, is in no way more honourable in the eyes of society than Bihter’s relationship with Behlül; in some respects it is even more “disgracing”. [...] Nihal’s relationship with her father is not directly sexual, but the bond between them is extremely intense.

(ibid.)

So, this can by no means be called a state of “innocence”. Moran’s misinterpretation stems from his detachment of the Nihal plot from the overall context and an over-reliance on Nihal’s perspective. While Nihal, as a motherless little girl, may experience her close bond with her father as a form of paradise, this interpretation disregards Adnan Bey’s viewpoint. For him, the situation is far from paradisiacal; rather, it represents a life of constant sacrifice, devoid of personal happiness. Considering the societal norms prevalent at the turn of the century, as noted by Finn, it is plausible that Uşaklıgil intended the initial setting to be more akin to a “hell”. This notion is reinforced by the novel’s conclusion, where father and daughter are depicted as even more closely intertwined, solidifying the undesirable state Adnan sought to escape – last sentence: “*Birlikte, hep birlikte. Yaşarken ve ölürken...*” (Together, forever together. In life and in death...)! If life is to be “a feast for all eternity” (Uşaklıgil 1993, 394) after father and daughter are reunited, two things should not be overlooked: (1) Immediately following is the sentence “Only Beşir was missing”. This is of utmost importance, as the potentially ‘paradisiacal’ reunion of father and daughter is juxtaposed here by an allusion to the death of the innocent little slave, which thus casts a dark shadow over any notion of “festive” bliss (cf. Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 171). – (2) Furthermore, one page later the text leaves father and daughter standing exactly at the same place – on a precipice! – where the romantic love scene between Behlül and Nihal had previously taken place, and at this point, Nihal says to her father exactly what Behlül had previously whispered in her ears. The structural parallelism thus clearly suggests (as already noticed by

⁵ The Turkish translation (1984) of Finn’s dissertation of 1978 could have provided additional insights if it had been incorporated into later editions of Moran’s work.

Finn 1978/84, 193) that the father has now taken the place of the lover and, conversely, Nihal has occupied the position of Adnan’s deceased wife, and for good. – Therefore, in light of these considerations, the only element that we may retain from Moran’s “myth” theory is its basic structure: an initial state, which still seemed to carry the moment of possible changeability, is solidified forever towards the end.

If neither the beginning nor the end refer to a state of paradise but rather to a quasi-incestuous relationship that is morally extremely questionable from the perspective of the late nineteenth century, we must assume that the title “Forbidden Love” encompasses not only Bihter and Behlul but also the relationship between Nihal and her father Adnan. Unlike Moran, who struggles to reconcile the Bihter and Nihal plots, we can discern a fundamental similarity between the two, suggesting a unified thematic statement within the novel. This convergence of narratives supports the coherence of the overall message, rendering a unified interpretation more plausible.⁶

18.2 Component analysis

An analytical tool that offers a valuable framework for discovering equidirectional tendencies in a plot and determining the overarching meaning of a fictional narrative is the so-called “Component Analysis”, developed by the late Walter Falk, formerly professor of German Literature at the University of Marburg, Germany.⁷ The basic assumption of this method is that the overall meaning of any literary work can be deconstructed into three interrelated components: a Potentiality component (PC), an Actuality component (AC), and a Resultativity component (RC). In the component-analytical work on a given text, the elements of its content are broken down “into a multitude of individual complexes of meaning, each of which can be understood as a specification of what is said in a more general way in one of the component titles” (Falk 1983, 24). In assigning the various elements of a narrative to either the PC, AC, or RC, the researchers let him/herself be guided by the definition of the components: the AC designates the realm of *existing reality* and “has the character of a *self-contained system, tending towards self-stabilisation*”; the PC, on the other hand, can be described as the ensemble of forces that “*have not yet realised themselves, but are pushing towards*

⁶ For Sagaster-Jurado’s reading, in which the eunuch Beşir is assigned a key role for the overall interpretation, cf. below, note 10.

⁷ In the following, my reference is Falk 1983.

realisation. These innovative impulses represent a *complex of possibility*" (cf. *ibid.*, 70; my italics). When AC and PC meet and interact, producing a certain result (which then manifests itself in the RC), one of the two components always functions as a 'trigger' for the emergence of the other, i.e., it has the character of the "logically (not necessarily temporally) earlier" element (*ibid.*, 183). Falk calls this 'trigger' function "priority" and speaks of "Actuality priority" and "Potentiality priority".

Finn's observation regarding Bihter and Nihal's shared desire for love can serve as a convenient starting point for identifying the three main components of the novel's overall semantics. Finn noticed that Bihter and Nihal are opponents precisely because they want more or less the same – consequently, they *do* have something in common in which they are alike, despite the different outcomes of the efforts they make. It is obvious that this is the – almost excessive – desire to be loved (cf. Finn 1978/84, 186, 189, 195). In both cases, the desire for love stems from a longing to overcome the present life, a life perceived as a state of non-life. Similar observations can be made regarding Adnan and Firdevs and, later, even Behlul. In all these cases, the longing for emotional fulfilment constitutes the Potentiality component: it usually has dreamlike features and is an idea of happiness that compels them all, again and again, to disrupt the existing order in pursuit of their aspirations (as the forces of Potentiality components typically do).

Conversely, the characters' experiences of dissatisfaction and yearning reflect the Actuality component. In the novel, it appears to many characters as determined by Nature (genetically inherited).

To further illustrate the above, and the componential-analytical approach in general, I have labelled some textual elements as belonging to either the Actuality or Potentiality components (abbreviated "AC" and "PC"):

Adnan Bey seeks marriage as a means to escape a life marked by sacrifice – sacrifice for his sick first wife, then for his children, especially Nihal; he feels that he has had nothing from life so far (AC). Therefore he hopes to be able to change the situation by marrying (PC). – Bihter, too, at first hopes to escape, via her marriage to Adnan, a situation of which she almost despairs, given that she is the daughter of a woman of such dubious reputation as Firdevs and that there is hardly any chance for her to "become happy" (AC). In the beginning, she thinks the only way for her to reach some kind of happiness may be the acquisition of material goods (PC). At a later point, the same process is repeated in a slightly modified way when she realises, after a year of being married to Adnan, that she still will not experience happiness, despite all wealth and luxury. Again, she believes that she has not yet lived a true life⁸ (AC). At

⁸ Cf. Finn's remark (*ibid.*, 185): "She [i.e., Bihter] perceives of her marriage as a failure and sees her life as an 'empty black abyss' [...]. [...] Bihter's life is dominated by emptiness [*boşluk*]. This emptiness as well as the Hunger [*açlık*] caused by it [...]" etc.

this moment, hope of perhaps being granted real life and happiness shines through again in her passionate relationship with Behlul⁹ (PC). – Similarly Behlul: he has such insights relatively late; nevertheless, recapitulating his previous life already during his time with Bihter, he finds that he has done something wrong (AC) – as can be seen from the fact that he changes his way of life, becomes a “monk” and sees in Bihter a woman who is different from all his previous acquaintances (PC). Like Bihter who got ‘bored’ with Adnan after a while, Behlul too soon realises that the dream of a fulfilled life with Bihter alone was an illusion – over time, it becomes too monotonous for him, and Bihter too possessive (AC). Therefore he, too, subsequently makes a ‘second attempt’, this time with Nihal. And again, now even more clearly and resolutely, he realises that his earlier life has not been a true life at all and that he has never experienced what he actually needed: not such a ‘prosaic’ relationship as with Bihter, but a romantic, ‘poetic’ love (PC). – Even Firdevs fits into this scheme. She suffers from growing old and frail (AC), but she also wants to have something out of life and on the one hand hopes for Adnan; but when nothing comes of that, she does not give up her hope of being married and therefore tries, desperately and with all possible means, to make herself appear younger than she is (PC). – Finally, Nihal goes through parallel developments. The condition she always wants to escape and is loneliness, she is afraid of life as someone abandoned by everyone, orphaned, loved by nobody (AC). She concentrates her hopes for love and/or compassion, through which alone she can maintain or regain her emotional equilibrium, one after the other and again and again in the same way, first on Adnan, Bülend and the *yah*’s staff, then for a year on Bihter, then on Behlul, and finally on her father again (PC).

Recurring throughout the novel and in all the characters is also the result of the hope of being able to attain happiness or spiritual fulfilment once again. This hope is always revealed to be mere illusion. The actions that were supposed to bring about the realisation of ‘true life’ prove to have been grave mistakes, since they did not improve the situation from which one wanted to escape but rather made it worse (“Resultative” component, RC). And since the hope was usually concentrated on a certain person, a desire for revenge arises in the disappointed, which making things still worse. Not only does it not change the initial state; it rather makes it ever more hopeless. It is also characteristic of the novel’s Actuality and its Resultativity that the author does not hold the actors responsible for what they do. They cannot help it because their actions in a given situation are predetermined by various factors, factors that all can be subsumed under the general heading “Nature”: hereditary factors and character dispositions due to various developments in the past. Although this determinacy often forms part of present

⁹ The tension between two different poles described here was also noted by Finn 1978/84, 189–90: “Bihter is caught between dream [PC] and reality [AC], between her passionate sexual inclinations, in short: the traits inherited from her mother, and her moral consciousness, i.e. the character traits inherited from her father.” Similarly already *ibid.*, 180 and 183.

reality already – very clearly so in the case of Bihter, for example, who is constantly aware of the danger of becoming like her mother, or in the case of Firdevs, in whom Nature takes the form of a constant process of aging – nevertheless, the constraints of Nature initially seem surmountable, and only the attempt to overcome them by acting towards the goals of the Potentiality component makes it clear that this was only a vain hope.

The question of the novel's basic 'message' and the kind of world experience that the author wanted to express in it can therefore be answered as follows:

Man's belief in the possibility of transcending a life that is not a real, fulfilled, and emotionally satisfying life, a life above all without love, makes them recognise their hopes as mere illusions. Their attempts to overcome the inhumanity of life serve in themselves to highlight the cold and inhumane nature of the world wherein the pursuit of happiness is rendered futile from the outset by predetermined natural forces. All the moves made in the hope of being able to transcend the initial condition prove to be counter-productive, they only serve to reinforce the futility of their endeavours.¹⁰

Contrary to the view of some of the interpreters summarised by Moran and also to Finn's reading,¹¹ such a content clearly has no socially critical implications.

10 This interpretation thus complements Sagaster-Jurado's who followed Tanpınar (1988, 292) in assigning a pivotal role to the little slave Beşir and his death in understanding the novel's overarching message. Against the background of our analysis, too, it can be said that Halit Ziya may have placed his central message in this character, in so far as Beşir is possibly intended to make others aware of their lack of freedom: they only *seem* to be free (cf. Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 174–75). In terms of Component Analysis, the Beşir plot just doubles the plots of the other characters: Beşir too longs for another life, a life of love, united with Nihal (PC); but he too is bound to his actual existence as a slave and a castrate (AC); while he seems to have been reasonably content and well-balanced before he fell in love with Nihal, the forces of love and total surrender then lead him into suffering, illness and death (RC). Unlike Beşir, however, the others do not want to admit their impotence in face of Destiny or Nature and still think that something can be changed. The fact, however, that this is a vain illusion and that the determinacy and the actual lack of freedom are so strong *from the outset* that all dreams of happiness must prove to be completely unrealistic, is shown most clearly in Beşir. The same is true for the fact that it is precisely the hopes for a more humane life that make life even more inhumane and heartless: Beşir's infirmity and death make it clear that, in the end, after long suffering, the others too are now completely 'dead'. – The high significance ascribed to the death of the little slave can perhaps also be understood in terms of motif history: In a conspicuously large number of works of the *Edebiyat-ı Cedîde* movement, the tragic main characters die of tuberculosis (which is why the joking term *verem edebiyatı*, "consumption literature", has become a widespread label for the entire production of the group – information from Ms Sagaster-Jurado, thank you!). If such a central motif recurs in the case of the slave Beşir, it is without doubt of some significance.

11 Cf. Finn 1978/84, 176 (referring to Dino 1973, 230): "As Güzin Dino remarks, [the novel] [...] comes with [social] criticism on a broad level."

Aşk-ı Memnu is therefore not an anti-Westernisation novel. From this point of view, it also seems rather daring to interpret man's lack of freedom politically.¹² Nor does the novel – as already demonstrated by Moran, and our analysis confirmed this – offer a moralising perspective on infidelity. Instead, the author refrains from assigning blame to any of the characters,¹³ emphasizing the belief in the lack of human control over destiny; rather, man is seen as in the hands of fate.¹⁴ The novel portrays the inexorable nature of Fate/Destiny, depicted through the deterministic influence of genetic factors and unchangeable character traits. A main motif of the Actuality, and even more so of the Resultative component, is the idea that all human action emerges from natural disposition with almost mathematical necessity and precision.

18.3 The novel's place in literary history

It is well known that Halit Ziya in this novel – and the *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement in general – were inspired by Western authors. Moran cites French authors such as Balzac, Zola, and Flaubert for their influence on the causal dependence of action on character disposition. Regarding Bihter's tragedy, Moran thinks the idea of determination through hereditary factors and its incorporation into the idea of the tragic was inspired by the "Naturalists" (Moran 1983/1990, 78). This remark may help us to make more precise statements about the broader *Zeitgeist* that is speaking from *Aşk-ı Memnu*, by comparing it with European works of the same

12 Determinacy by natural forces can hardly be equated with political oppression, and the longing for a real life, i.e., one filled above all with love, lacks a political dimension, too. By contrast, Sagaster-Jurado would like to attribute to the author "the prophetic vision of the imminent end of the 'slave existence' of Ottoman man under the rule of 'Abdülhamid [...], which was to be fulfilled [...] in 1909" (Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 176-77).

13 For this reason I consider untenable Sagaster-Jurado's reading which assumes that Halit Ziya implicitly wanted to pass a mystically-religiously founded *judgement* (cf. *ibid.*, 176: "'aşk' should be understood here, above all, in the mystical sense of the word, as a striving for perfection. In *'Aşk-ı Memnû'*, the characters fail because they seek a wrong, *merely wordly* love – such an ambition *must* be forbidden because it denies man's imperfection and limitedness vis-à-vis the divine" (italics as in the original German text; my translation, S.G.).

14 This is recognised also by Moran when he says: "The network of the novel's plot(s) is not knitted by the characters, but by configurations created by Fate" – Moran (1983) 1990, 68–69. – See also Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 175–76: "[a] thesis inherent in the novel [is] that man is 'unfree', due to his dependence on the absolute power of Fate which determines his actions" (German: seine absolute Determiniertheit gegenüber einer höheren (göttlichen) Schicksalsmacht).

period. Such statements may then perhaps also shed new light on the entire *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement which previous research used to portray as being completely detached from the world and as not wanting to have anything to do with their environment. Such an accusation can claim some validity insofar as the *Edebiyât-ı Cedîde* group consciously refrained from making political or socially critical statements in their works (as is the case also in *Aşk-ı Memnu*). It is rather unlikely, however, that they should have hovered in a vacuum with their ideas, and this is also evident from Halit Ziya's novel – not only because of the milieu he chose as the setting or because the novel features a character so 'typical' of its time as Behlul.¹⁵ The latter features explain that the novel could be suspected to have been intended as a piece of social criticism. As we have shown, this is not the case. However, the *overall* statement made by the author with his novel could nevertheless well resonate with broader attitudes towards life and the world, aligning with similar sentiments expressed by European authors of the period.

Component Analysis, the method used above to determine the overall message of "Forbidden Love", can help us to achieve this goal as well, as it offers a theoretical framework that extends beyond individual works with their individual idiosyncratic configurations of meaning. Juxtaposing and comparing the components of a larger variety of individual texts written in roughly the same time interval and extracting from them their common denominators, Component Analysis can discern "period"¹⁶ components and, consequently, also PAR structures characterising overarching configurations of meaning prevailing at specific times. In yet another bottom-up step, Component Analysis developed a new type of literary history (or rather history of "meaning", *Sinngeschichte*, in general) by examining in temporal succession the period 'formulas' obtained from individual work analyses. Moreover, Walter Falk and his team did so not only on the basis of *German* literature. During a longer stay in Egypt, he also initiated a re-reading of selected pieces of *Egyptian* literature with the aim of describing Egyptian *Sinngeschichte* with the help of the analytical categories of Component Analysis and compare the Egyptian case to the German one. Surprisingly, the structures of meaning discovered in the course of this project in Egyptian texts seemed to *coincide* temporally with those detected earlier in German literature.¹⁷ Falk therefore suspected that the *Sinngeschichte* he had discovered not only applied to German

¹⁵ Cf., e.g., Finn 1978/84, 194: "Halit Ziya's portrayal sheds light on an entire generation for which Behlul stands as a 'model'."

¹⁶ Falk distinguishes (in descending order of duration) "ages" (*Zeitalter*), "eras" (*Ären*), "periods" (*Perioden*) and "phases" (*Phasen*).

¹⁷ The results of this study are collected in Falk 1984.

and Egyptian literature, but was possibly universal.¹⁸ In a study of my own (Guth 1994), I pursued this suspicion and found it corroborated by a modern Turkish novel. It therefore does not seem unreasonable to ask whether Falk's findings could not perhaps also be used for the epochal localisation of *Aşk-ı Memnu* and a more precise determination of the experience of the meaning of 'the world' that is characteristic of the entire *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement.

Given the timeframe within which Halit Ziya must have composed his novel – probably in the early 1890s¹⁹ – *Aşk-ı Memnu* should align with the period of "Creativism", i.e., exhibit a PAR structure similar to the prevalent configurations of meaning in the German-speaking world from around 1880 to 1920. Condensed in a PAR formula, "Creativism" shows the following structure:

- Actuality – The limitedness of Life, due to its being a life in Time;
- Potentiality – The creativity of the subject, nourished by Nature- and space-related forces;
- Resultativity – The transnatural, exempted from the laws of Time.

(Falk 1984, 34)²⁰

It is evident that the component titles that we have identified for *Aşk-ı Memnu* can not be seen as specifications of this general formula. Nor does "Forbidden Love" correspond to Falk's overall characterisation of the "Creativist" period:

From now on [i.e., from around 1880], the *artist* became the exemplary figure. Artists, we may say, not only register existing reality, like a scholar, but they also seek to transcend it

18 Against Falk, I would prefer to speak of 'global' phenomena, as the findings can be valid only in the context of 'global time', i.e., in regions that are connected by 'worldwide' communication and therefore share a 'global' temporality; see above, Chapter 2.

19 First published as series in *Şervet-i Fünûn* 1897–98.

20 German: "AK: Der durch die Zeitlichkeit bedingte endliche Charakter des Lebens | PK: Die Kreativität des Subjekts, getragen von naturhaft-raumbezogenen Kräften; | RK: Das Transnaturale als das Zeitenthobene". – Falk describes the peculiarity of this period by taking Gerhart Hauptmann's (1862–1946) naturalistic drama *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (Little Hanne's Ascension, 1893) as his example: "In the past preceding the main plot, little Hanne, an orphan, had sought death in the wintry village pond because she thought she could no longer bear the sadness of Life and, above all, the mistreatment by her mostly drunken stepfather. Moreover, she longed to be reunited with her mother, whom she believed to be in heaven now. When the main plot sets in, we find Hannele rescued from the icy water, but suffering even more from fear of the cruelties of Life, as she is seized by fever and in her fantasy brings up new images of the terrifying. But the ability to produce such images of the soul also proves positive for Hannele. It allows her to create blissful fantasies, images of her mother and of Heaven. In looking at these images, Hannele, while dying, leaves cruel Life behind and beneath her. In the drama, [...] Hannele's frightening environment constitutes the Actuality Component, Hannele's longing the Potentiality, and the images of the afterlife produced by her longing the Resultant" – Falk 1983, 33–34 (my translation, S.G.).

– not, however, like the thinker, by producing new consciousness but by creating new things. [In Creativism], what came to matter most [...] was man's own – and also Nature's – capacity of existence-changing creativity. In contrast to the will to change existence that was now at work in Potentiality, Actuality in its immobility took on the character of the lifelessly fossilised, while images of a new kind of existence emerged in Resultativity.

(Falk 1983, 161)²¹

It is not unusual, however, that authors sometimes lag behind their time, creating works that reflect a worldview already surpassed by many contemporaries. In German literature, Thomas Mann's novella *Der kleine Herr Friedemann* (written around 1896) may serve as an example:

The hero of this story is a man disadvantaged by Life [..., a man] who tries to protect himself against this Life through aestheticism and the adherence to correct formal appearances. At first, he seems to have in fact succeeded. But when there comes an attack on his inner world, and when it comes precisely in the form of (physical) beauty [he falls passionately in love with the beautiful wife of the district commander, who is intent on keeping distances], the futility of his efforts becomes apparent. There is no such thing as a happy life for an outsider. Life turns out to be something from which one has to suffer; it brings about death.

(Heidi Becker, in Falk 1983, 90)

The componential structure of this novella can be summarised in the formula:

[AC] Beautiful but cruel, all-demanding Life

[PC] The attempt [...] to protect oneself [against Life's absolutism] through aestheticism and sticking to form

[RC] The assertion of Life's claim to absoluteness. The destruction of the human being. The unmasking of Life as deadly precisely *in/because of* its beauty

(H. Becker, *ibid.*, 94)²²

21 Original German: "Zur exemplarischen Figur wurde nun der Künstler. Von ihm kann man sagen, daß er die bestehende Wirklichkeit nicht nur, wie ein Gelehrter, registriert, sondern transzendiert, aber nicht, wie der Denker, durch das Hervorbringen neuer Bewußtseinsinhalte, sondern durch das Schaffen neuer Dinge. Maßgeblich wurde (...) [im Kreativismus] die dem Menschen eigene – und auch in der Natur angelegte – Fähigkeit zur existenzverändernden Kreativität. Gegenüber dem jetzt in der Potentialität wirkenden Willen zur Existenzveränderung nahm die Aktualität in ihrer Unbeweglichkeit den Charakter des Lebloos-Versteinerten an, während in der Resultativität Bilder einer neuartigen Existenz hervortraten."

22 Original wording: "[AC] Der Absolutheitsanspruch des schönen, aber grausamen Lebens; [PC] Der Versuch (...), sich durch Form und Ästhetizismus zu schützen; [RC] Die Durchsetzung des Absolutheitsanspruchs. Die Zerstörung des Menschen. Die Demaskierung des Lebens als todbringend gerade in der Schönheit".

On closer examination, such a structure does not – as one might have expected from the novella’s date of origin – reflect a “Creativist” worldview. Rather, it mirrors the way life was experienced in the preceding period of “Reproductionism” (ca. 1820–1880). In “Reproductionism”, the general mood speaking from most authors’ works typically exhibits the following componential structure:

- Actuality – The general and lawful, prevailing in space [The old order of things, experienced as dated and governed by destructive forces of Nature]
 - Potentiality – The particular and unique, tending towards renewal [The subjective will to renewal in the spiritual and human(e)]
 - Resultativity – The individualising reproduction of the general [The new order of things, consisting of the absolute power of the forces of Nature and the destruction of all that is otherwise human. (Formally reinforced Actuality)]
- (Falk 1984, 31)²³

Falk describes this system in more detail:

Since c. 1820, experience showed that the mere knowing of something new [as in the preceding period] would not essentially alter the human condition. Unknown and known elements of the [...] world [now] combined, jointly constituting the Actuality of known and unknown laws of life. This Actuality took priority and interacted with a Potentiality that [...] continued to push towards the formation of material novelty, but in so doing limited itself to the reproduction of Actuality. Therefore, the Resultativity emerging from the interaction of Actuality and Potentiality did not consist of something substantially new but only showed changes in form. [...] [Reproductionism] manifested itself in all arts as a tendency towards “realism”, supplemented sometimes by a tendency towards formal embellishment, in politics as law-abiding restoration or progressism conforming to the law, in the sciences as positivism.

(Falk 1983, 160–61)²⁴

23 Component titles given in square brackets reflect earlier terminology as in Falk 1983, 206. – Original German wording: “[AC:] Das Allgemeine und Gesetzhafte, herrschend im Raum [Die veraltete Ordnung zerstörerischer Naturkräfte]; [PC:] Das Besondere und Einzigartige, tendierend zur Erneuerung [Der subjektive Wille zur Erneuerung im Geistigen, im Menschlichen]; [RC:] Die individualisierende Reproduktion des Allgemeinen [Neuartige Ordnung der Dinge, bestehend aus der absoluten Macht der Naturkräfte und der Zerstörung alles wesentlich Menschlichen. (Formal gesteigerte Aktualität)]”.

24 German: “Seit etwa 1820 machte sich die Erfahrung geltend, daß die bloße Erkenntnis von Neuem [wie in der vorausgegangenen Periode] die menschliche Situation nicht entscheidend verändere. Das Unbewußte und das Erkannte der (...) Welt traten zusammen und machten nun gemeinsam die Aktualität bekannter und unbekannter Lebensgesetze aus. Diese Aktualität übernahm die Priorität und wirkte ein auf eine Potentialität, die (...) zwar weiter zur Gestaltung dinglicher Neuartigkeiten drängte, aber sich dabei auf die Reproduktion der Aktualität beschränkte,

In *Aşk-ı Memnu*, the cementing of the initial state at the end (RC) aligns with the concept of a formally reinforced Actuality characteristic of a “Reproductionist” Resultativity. The other two components, too, can easily be compared to the corresponding components of the period. The fact that Halit Ziya’s protagonists believe that they are living a ‘dead’ life stems, as we have seen, from the fact that they perceive the prevailing order of things as dated and themselves as subject to the destructive power of the laws of Nature. This is particularly evident in Bihter’s character disposition which she believes to have inherited from her mother. But also Nihal’s suffering from loneliness and her fear of not being loved by anyone ultimately result from the givens of Nature. Afflicted with an illness from childhood (she often suffered epileptic seizures) and then orphaned by the death of her mother – both destructive interventions of Nature, or Fate/Destiny, in her life – her character seems pre-determined from the beginning. Desiring to be loved by others, she tries, again and again, to free herself from her ‘destiny’. But precisely this shows that she is at the mercy of the forces of Nature. In the same vein, Adnan Bey’s desire to marry and change his life can be understood as an expression of suffering from a situation created by the destructive power of Nature (the death of his wife), a situation he seeks to overcome from a certain point on because he thinks enough time has passed now. The characters’ hope that they may be able to overcome the situation described in the Actuality through the loving care of others corresponds to the “Reproductionist” Potentiality of the subject’s strife for renewal in the spiritual, the human(e).

However, what corroborates the thesis that *Aşk-ı Memnu*, too, bespeaks a “Reproductionist” spirit, is not only the novel’s Resultativity component – which clearly exhibits a formally reinforced reproduction of Actuality – and the alignment of its AC and PC with the “Reproductionist” AC and PC, but also the fact that in this novel the initiative that sets action in motion comes from Actuality, i.e., the narrative displays what Falk calls Actuality “priority” – which is always the case in “Reproductionism”. Throughout *Aşk-ı Memnu*, the desire to change the previous life (PC) arises from the realisation that this previous life is not a genuine, real life (AC).

Furthermore, it is obvious that *Aşk-ı Memnu* belongs to a late stage of “Reproductionism”, a phase that Falk calls that of a “concretisation” (cf. *ibid.*, 184–89).

weswegen eine Resultativität entstand, die sich als nur formal, jedoch nicht substantiell neuartig darstellte. (...) [Der “Reproduktionismus”] manifestierte sich in allen Künsten als Tendenz zum “Realismus”, ergänzt bisweilen durch eine Tendenz zu einer formalen Verschönerung, in der Politik als gesetzsgläubige Restauration oder gesetzlichkeitskonformer Progressismus, in den Wissenschaften als Positivismus.”

In the case of Reproductionism, he has titled this concretisation stage “Reflexism”. At the stage of Reflexism, the component titles of Reproductionism can be specified as

- AC What destroys the heart
- PC What bears/supports the heart
- RC What has no heart, is heartless

(Heidi Becker, in Falk 1983, 208–9)²⁵

In terms of content, this applies even more clearly to the situation expressed in *Aşk-ı Memnu*. For in this novel, too, the “peculiarity of the experience of the world [...] seems to lie in the fact that ‘the essence of humanity is perceived as reduced to the feeling suffering heart’. All other forces in the world may prove to be inhumane” (Becker, *ibid.*, 208).²⁶ In Actuality, Halit Ziya, too, describes forces “that have a destructive effect on the human heart”, in Potentiality those that “carry the feeling and suffering heart”, and in Resultativity, “the forces that kept the heart beating have ceased to exist” (*ibid.*, 209).²⁷

Our analysis thus confirms that *Aşk-ı Memnu*, too, is a representation of the worldview of “Reproductionism” in its final, concretisation phase. The fact that Halit Ziya was influenced in this work by European Realism and the ideas of Naturalism becomes all the more plausible after this attribution, as in Europe, the experience of life in the era of “Reproductionism” often manifested itself – as Falk points out – “in all arts as a tendency towards ‘realism’”.²⁸ Furthermore, the abstention from politics and social criticism in Halit Ziya’s novel and the wider *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement becomes understandable now not only as motivated by an alleged necessity of circumventing Abdülhamit’s censorship, but also as a much more general, less Turkey-specific phenomenon: During the last phase of “Reproductionism”, people – in the Ottoman Empire just as in the German-speaking world – were primarily concerned, obviously, with the “feeling, suffering heart”, i.e., with the effects of certain external circumstances on the human being’s emotional condition. The detailed portrayal of each character’s psychology and Halit Ziya’s use of internal perspective in the narrative style are consistent with this emphasis.

²⁵ German: “AC: Das Herz-Zerstörende | PC: Das Herz-Tragende | RC: Das Herz-Lose”.

²⁶ The quotation within the quotation is from Walter Falk, *Der kollektive Traum vom Krieg: Epochenale Strukturen der deutschen Literatur zwischen ‚Naturalismus‘ und ‚Expressionismus‘* (Heidelberg 1977), 71, 72.

²⁷ Quotation within quotation from Falk 1977 (see preceding fn.), 74.

²⁸ Cf. above, p. 411, with note 24.

However, the alignment of “Forbidden Love” with “Reproductionism” does not necessarily mean that *all* works of the *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement fall into the concretisation phase of “Reproductionism”. By the time indicated (among others) by Akyüz (1964, 509) as the group’s major ‘life span’ – from 1896 to 1901 – , most authors in Europe had already embraced a “Creativist” attitude towards the world, and it is well possible that some of the movement’s authors had done so, too. It would therefore be necessary to find out, with the help of Component Analysis, whether the majority of the *Edebiyât-ı Cedîde* writers had not already overcome the pessimistic worldview of “Reproductionism” and become convinced that their environment, perceived as lifeless and petrified, could be transcended by the transformative potential of Creativity towards a better world, a world of the Spiritual and Eternal. There is much to be said in favour of this assumption...²⁹

²⁹ It is quite interesting in this context that in this phase of “Creativsim”, as Falk remarks, the *artist* became a typical, “exemplary figure” (cf. quotation on p. 409, above). It is thus probably not by mere chance that Halit Ziya’s *Mai ve Siyah*, a novel revolving around the life of a *writer*, is generally regarded as the *Şervet-i Fünûn* group’s literary manifesto.