

REPRESENTATIONS OF DEATH IN THE STORY OF DELİ DUMRUL AND *EVERYMAN*



DELİ DUMRUL HİKÂYESİ'NDE VE *EVERYMAN*'DE ÖLÜM TEMSİLLERİ

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ABSTRACT: Death is a reality of human life that everybody will experience sooner or later. As a universal concept, the reality and fear of death can be observed in many literary works. The Story of Deli Dumrul Son of Duha Kodja and *Everyman* are among the literary works in which death is included as a cultural representation. The Story of Deli Dumrul is one of the stories from *the Book of Dede Korkut* and tells the adventures of Deli Dumrul, who challenges Azrael. *Everyman* is an allegorical English morality play, in which the protagonist *Everyman's* journey of death and reckoning process are told. Both of the texts belong to medieval times, and the concept of death is not handled as just a literary theme but also a fact of life in each. In the Story of Deli Dumrul, as a result of his challenge to Azrael, Deli Dumrul is punished by God via the decision of his death. In *Everyman*, the sinful character *Everyman's* process of pre-death is depicted as a spiritual journey on the basis of the Christian religion. Each text deals with the concept of death in a different cultural context. Hence, they each represent death in accordance with their cultural features. In each text, death is personified and included as a character, namely Azrael and Death. The primary objective of this study is to discuss the way death is portrayed as a character in the light of the cultural milieu in these texts. For this objective, the way death is represented in relation to other characters is tried to be examined and analyzed in a comparative way with regard to the texts' sociocultural and religious background. The arguments are discussed with relevant references to the literary texts mentioned. In the study, representations of death are investigated in terms of three aspects: death as God's wrath; death as a threatening and disturbing character; death as a trigger in the protagonists' awakening/rationalization process. Thus, representations of death in the mentioned texts are discussed in relation to God's and the protagonists' attitudes and actions. This study also investigates how cultural patterns are reflected in each text on the basis of representations of death. Death, in the form of a character in both of the texts, functions as a trigger by which the protagonists go through a maturation process. The fact that death's being a trigger in the maturation process of the protagonists is common in both texts confirms that facing the reality of death has a didactic effect/function and that the representations of death in literary texts could have an educational aspect.

Keywords: Deli Dumrul, *Everyman*, death, comparative literature, culture.

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ÖZ: Ölüm, herkesin er ya da geç yaşayacağı, insan hayatının bir gerçeğidir. Evrensel bir kavram olarak ölüm gerçeği ve korkusu birçok edebî eserde gözlemlenebilmektedir. Duha Koca Oğlu Deli Dumrul Hikâyesi ve Everyman, ölümün kültürel bir temsil olarak yer aldığı edebî eserler arasındadır. Deli Dumrul Hikâyesi, Dede Korkut Kitabı'ndaki hikâyelerden biridir ve Azrail'e meydan okuyan Deli Dumrul'un maceralarını konu almaktadır. Everyman, başkarakter olan Everyman'ın ölüm yolculuğunun ve hesaplaşma sürecinin anlatıldığı alegorik bir İngiliz ahlak oyunudur. Her iki metin de Orta Çağ'a aittir ve her iki metinde de ölüm kavramı sadece edebî bir tema olarak değil, hayatın bir gerçeği olarak da ele alınmıştır. Deli Dumrul Hikâyesi'nde Deli Dumrul, Azrail'e meydan okuması sonucunda Allah tarafından ölüm kararıyla cezalandırılır. Everyman'de ise günahkâr bir karakter olan Everyman'ın ölüm öncesi süreci, Hıristiyan dini temelinde manevi bir yolculuk olarak tasvir edilir. Her iki metin de ölüm kavramını farklı bir kültürel bağlamda ele almakta, dolayısıyla her birinde ölüm temsilleri kendi kültürel özelliklerine göre işlenmektedir. Her iki metinde de ölüm kişileştirilmekte ve bir karakter olarak, yani Azrail ve Ölüm adlı karakterler ile yer almaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, bu metinlerde ölümün bir karakter olarak nasıl tasvir edildiğini metinlerin yaratıldığı kültürel ortamlar ışığında tartışmaktır. Bu amaçla, ölümün diğer karakterlerle ilişkili olarak temsil ediliş biçimi, metinlerin sosyokültürel ve dinî arka planı açısından karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde incelenmeye ve analiz edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Argümanlar, bahsi geçen edebî metinlere yapılan ilgili atıflarla tartışılmıştır. Çalışmada ölüm temsilleri üç açıdan incelenmiştir: Tanrı'nın gazabı olarak ölüm, tehdit edici ve rahatsız edici bir karakter olarak ölüm, kahramanların uyanış/rasyonalizasyon sürecinde tetikleyici bir unsur olarak ölüm. Böylece bahsi geçen metinlerdeki ölüm temsilleri, Tanrı'nın ve kahramanların tutum ve eylemleriyle bağlantılı olarak tartışılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, aynı zamanda kültürel örüntülerin her bir metne nasıl yansıdığını ölümün temsilleri temelinde incelemektedir. Her iki metinde de bir karakter biçimindeki ölüm, kahramanların olgunlaşma sürecinin tetikleyicisi işlevindedir. Ölümün bir karakter olarak başkarakterlerin olgunlaşma sürecinde tetikleyici olmasının iki metinde de ortak olması, ölüm gerçeğiyle yüzleşmenin didaktik bir etkisi/işlevi olduğunu ve edebî metinlerdeki ölüm temsillerinin eğitici bir yönünün olabileceğini doğrulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Deli Dumrul, Everyman, ölüm, karşılaştırmalı edebiyat, kültür.

Introduction

Death is a universal phenomenon that every creature eventually experiences. Accordingly, it is a shared code within all cultures as an inevitable end for all creatures. The inevitability of death makes it fearful, and this universality of fearfulness can be observed in many literary works. Moreover, representations of death in literature could give clues about the perception of death in relation to the culture in which the literary work is created.

In literature, death can be represented on many levels. For instance, it could be part of the narration, imagery, metaphors, and character traits. Moreover, it could reach outside literature's realm and discuss death-related social issues and emotions that are recognizable to the reader. So, literary portrayals of death do not only consist of painful scenes of dying, individual loss, and so on. Yet, the concept of death could be represented in various ways, such as through metaphors and characterizations (Hakola and Kivistö, 2014: viii-ix). Therefore the scope within which the theme of death is handled in literary works is quite wide.

One of the ways in which death is represented in literature is by portraying it as a character in the literary work. Death, as a character in literary texts, becomes a cultural pattern that reflects the nature of the literary work's cultural milieu. Moreover, it can contribute to the plot as a trigger effect by which the other characters go through several processes of maturation. The Story of Deli Dumrul Son of Duha Kodja¹ from Turkish literature and *Everyman* from English literature are comparable literary texts in the way the theme of death is represented. Since in both of the texts, death appears as a character. Moreover, they are both literary works of the Middle Ages. In this essay, these two sample texts are investigated in terms of how death is represented. The primary objective of this study is to discuss the manner and function of portraying death as a character in these literary texts. For this objective, the way it is portrayed is tried to be examined and analyzed in a comparative way with regard to the texts' sociocultural and religious background.

DD is one of the stories from the *Book of Dede Korkut*, which includes the epic narratives of the Oghuz Turks. There are twelve narratives within the book, which are not in chronological order and structurally unified. Their unity comes from substantive and stylistic elements they include and the cast of characters they share (Sümer and Uysal, 1991: x). Dede Korkut appears as one of the characters in the book, yet he is rather its "chronicler", who composed the tales of the adventures narrated (Reichl, 2012: 687). Dede Korkut narratives include the praises of the Oghuz people, their nomadic way of life, their customs, and their values. As a product of heroic literature, these narratives are action-centered, most of them revolving around hunting expeditions, battles with the infidels and among the Oghuz people themselves, pursuit, captivity, escape, and revenge. Thus, the narratives reflect the sociocultural status of early Oghuz life, so they could be considered as documents of social and cultural history, although they are largely fiction (Sümer and Uysal, 1991: x, xiv). *The Book of Dede Korkut* has three editions of manuscripts. The Dresden edition includes twelve narratives, the Vatican edition includes six narratives, and the Turkestan/Turkman Sahra edition, which is found and published in 2019, consists of one narrative and 23 different declamations ("soylama") (Ekici, 2019: 19-22). It is widely assumed that these epics existed and spread orally before they were written (Gökyay, 2006: 714). The exact time when the narratives were first created and written is a debated issue, yet it is presumed that they probably had their origins in the X. century and were first composed and written in the second half of the XV. century (Gökyay, 1994: 78; Halman, 2009: 7). Thus, these epic narratives, which include heroic deeds of the Oghuz people, reflect the traditions, values, and, in general, culture of these people in the Middle Ages. *DD* is one of the narratives in *the Book of Dede Korkut*. It is about the

¹ It will be referred to as *DD* from now on.

adventures of Deli Dumrul. Deli Dumrul learns of the death of a young man from the tribe next to the bridge he had built. The life of this man is taken by the angel of death, Azrael. Since Deli Dumrul does not know that Azrael is one of the angels of God, he challenges Azrael to save the young man's life and wants to fight him. God gets angry with Deli Dumrul and asks Azrael to take his life. After he meets Azrael, he sees that he cannot defeat him and learns that he was sent by God. After Deli Dumrul asks for God's forgiveness, God wants him to find someone to die instead of him. Deli Dumrul goes to his parents, yet they refuse him. His wife volunteers to give her life for him. Deli Dumrul asks God if he could take both of their lives or let them live together. God forgives him and gives him 140 more years to live with his wife and takes the parents' lives.

Everyman is an English morality play which was probably written before the end of the XV. century. It is preserved only in four printed copies, belonging to four different editions. These editions date from the period between 1510 and 1535 (Cawley, 1922: 205). The theme of the play is *Memento mori*², reminding the target audience (which is Catholic English society) of their mortality. The probable preacher-playwright of *Everyman* is interested in what a man must do to be saved. The actions in the play reveal that performing good deeds is needed to be saved (Ryan, 1957: 724). Since it is a morality play, the aim of the text is to teach a moral lesson. In relation to this aim, some allegorical figures appear as characters in the play. Therefore, all the characters represent something. For instance, Everyman is representative of the human race/mankind (Mackenzie, 1914: 5,8). Goods represent the temptations of earthly wealth. Characters like Fellowship, Kindred, Cousin, and the rest are personified abstractions. More importantly, God and Death also appear as characters in the play. The Messenger states at the beginning of the play that it is called "The Summoning of Everyman", emphasizing how fleeting human life is (Ward, 1995: 36). The play is about Everyman's journey into the grave as a result of God's command. At the beginning of the text, the Messenger summarizes the action in the play. Then God appears and complains about humans because they are blind to him and only concerned with earthly affairs. Hence, he calls Death, and makes him go to Everyman in order to declare him to depart on a pilgrimage and take a reckoning with him. Death declares God's message, yet Everyman does not care about this at first. Then Death tells him that he has to take a journey into the grave and there is no chance of going back to the world again. Everyman wants some more

² *Memento mori* is a Latin phrase meaning "remember that you will die". It is a symbolic concept that dates back to classical antiquity, when philosophers such as Socrates used it to remind people of their mortality. Later, the concept was adapted by the Romans for the same purposes. In Medieval times, it was adapted and used by the Christian church in order to encourage their audiences to live as devout Christians and to remind them to live righteously to be rewarded in the afterlife. Thus, *Memento mori* became a distinguished genre (URL-1).

time in order to find someone who will come with him into the grave. Death allows him to do so, and Everyman appeals to Fellowship, Kindred, Cousin, and Goods, yet they all refuse to come with him to the grave. Everyman realizes that his earthly possessions, friends and kinsmen whom he loved so deeply are untrustable. Only Good Deeds accepts coming with him into the grave, yet she is so weak that she cannot move. His sins are so many that his good deeds are weak in relation to his sins. Having made a full confession of his sins and prayed for absolution, he undergoes penance and feels sorry for the sins he committed. As a result of this process of confession, his spirit is purified. At the end, his soul leaves his body and he is received into heaven.

The main approach of this study belongs to the field of comparative literature, and it is basically thematic. In this context, S. S. Prawer's discussion of five subjects of investigation in terms of thematology in comparative literature should be mentioned: 1) The literary representation of natural phenomena and man's reaction to them, or of eternal facts of human existence such as dreams or death, or of perennial human problems and patterns of behaviour 2) Recurring motifs in literature and folklore 3) Recurrent situations and their treatment by different writers 4) The literary representation of types 5) The literary representation of named personages (Prawer, 1973: 99-100). This study falls under the first category, and tries to discuss the literary representation of death and reactions to it in two different literary texts. As seen in the summaries of the mentioned texts, death is represented as a fact of life which must be faced sooner or later. Deli Dumrul and Everyman, as the protagonists of the texts, are tested by this reality of death. As a result, their actions are triggered by their confrontation with death. Moreover, the attitude of God as the supreme divine power has a leading role in relation to death. In this sense, representations of death in the mentioned texts should be analyzed in terms of three aspects: death as God's wrath; death as a disturbing and threatening character; and death as a trigger in the protagonists' awakening process.

1. An Angry Yet Forgiving Figure: God's Wrath in the Form of Death

God as a character should be taken into consideration in relation to death in both of the texts, since Azrael and Death are positioned as messengers of God. In both of the texts, an angry image of God is portrayed, and they have direct speech as characters. In *DD*, God gets angry with Deli Dumrul because of his challenge to his angel Azrael. He says:

"This crazy pimp knows not My Unity, he shows no appreciation of My Unity. Let him swagger and vaunt himself in My great court!" (Lewis, 1974: 109).

Deli Dumrul's misbehavior against Azrael results in the anger of God. As seen in this quote, God's anger reflects on his speech. Moreover, he calls

Azrael commanding him to “appear before the eyes of that crazy pimp; turn his face pale, make his soul yelp” and bring it there (Lewis, 1974: 109).

In *Everyman*, God complains about humans because of their sins and wants to be remembered by them. He says:

“I perceive here in My majesty,
How that all creatures be to me unkind,
Living without dread in worldly prosperity.
Of ghostly sight the people be so blind,
Drowned in sin, they know me not for their God” (Ward, 1995: 37).

In order to “do justice on Everyman living without fear” (Ward, 1995: 38) he summons Death to declare the pilgrimage that Everyman must take. Both of the Gods want human beings acknowledge their unity and supremacy. Thus, death is used by God figures in both of the texts in order to shake up the characters who annoy them. On the surface level, Azrael and Death are messengers of God, yet actually they are the wrath of God in the form of death on the part of the protagonists. Moreover, the tone in which the anger of God is reflected is different in the texts. For instance, God in *DD* uses the abusive word “crazy pimp” for Deli Dumrul and wants Azrael to create terror for him. In this respect, specific to God’s attitude in relation to death, Boratav argues that it could be only a nomadic God who speaks of his creature as “crazy pimp” (Boratav, 1982: 105). Thus, this violence of anger could be explained by the nature of the epic as including fights, adventures of heroes, and so on, as well as the warrior society, the cultural milieu that it belongs to.

In *DD*, coming of death is considered as the command of God. It is stated that the young warrior died at God’s command:

“It was ordered by God Most High; Azrael of the red wings has taken that man’s life” (Lewis, 1974: 108).

It is emphasized that he died by the command of God, meaning that decision of death comes from God through Azrael. It could be argued that making a connection between God and death emphasizes the inevitability of death in both of the texts. Similarly, in *Everyman*, while Death declares God’s summoning to Everyman, he emphasizes that it is God’s command:

“For every man I rest and no man spareth;
For it is God’s commandment
That all to me should be obedient.” (Ward, 1995: 39).

Although both of the God figures speak directly as characters in the texts, the protagonists do not face God directly, yet they recognize or remember the existence of God via their encounter with his messengers, Azrael and Death. Their confrontation with death seems to be with death on the surface level, yet actually it is a kind of confrontation with the very existence of God. Because they both remember God via this confrontation.

It could be considered that this points to not only the supremacy of God as not addressing remarks to Deli Dumrul and Everyman directly, but also the unexpectedness of death.

Although Gods are portrayed as angry figures in both of the texts, they also have a merciful nature in relation to death. Both of the Gods give one more chance to the protagonists to save themselves after the protagonists recognize the supremacy of the Gods. Yet the nature of each protagonist's penance is different in the texts. In *DD*, God wants Deli Dumrul to find someone to sacrifice their life to save him:

"Since that crazy pimp has recognized My Unity, has shown appreciation of My Unity, tell him to find a soul in place of his own and his own soul can go free." (Lewis, 1974: 111).

This is actually a folkloric motif which is central in *DD* in the context of death. This motif is mentioned in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* as "Death postponed if substitute can be found." (Thompson, no date: 343). Thus, Deli Dumrul needs to find somebody to sacrifice their life for him in order to be saved from death. On the other hand, in *Everyman*, God wants Everyman to take a journey and give a reckoning of his life, so that he can pay for his sins and then die. Death declares this to Everyman as such:

"On thee thou must take a long journey:
Therefore thy book of count with thee thou bring;
For turn again thou cannot by no way,
And look thou be sure of thy reckoning:
For before God thou shalt answer, and show
Thy many bad deeds and good but a few;
How thou hast spent thy life, and in what wise,
Before the Chief Lord of Paradise.
Have ado that we were in that way,
For, wete thou well, thou shalt make none attorney." (Ward, 1995: 39).

In the case of *Everyman*, there is no chance of going back to life: it is the last journey of *Everyman*. Moreover, as seen in the last statement in the quote, Death stresses that *Everyman* cannot put anyone else instead of himself on this journey. This difference in the nature of the penance within the texts could be explained from a religious point of view. In *DD*, there is a religious undertone in terms of death, as seen in the example of consideration of death as God's command. However, in *Everyman*, Christianity as the religion of *Everyman* constitutes the background of the text. Since it is a morality play and aims to show that a good ending to life is possible only if you perform good deeds. Human beings perform good works in order to please God and fulfill his commandments in Christianity

(Kurian, 2005: 303). That is why it is emphasized that God wants Everyman to take this last journey individually and give a reckoning without anyone else putting themselves in his place. Thus, it could be argued that in *Everyman*, death seems to be a wrath at first, yet at the end of the story, he saves his soul and dies as a true Christian. This could be why Death is portrayed as a messenger from God, giving everybody one last chance to die as a true believer.

2. A Disturbing and Threatening Reality: The First Encounter with Death

In both of the texts, death is personified as a disturbing and threatening character that is inevitable and appears suddenly. Although their mission is the same as being messengers of God, they appear with different names in the texts. In *Everyman*, death is called “Death”, yet in *DD*, it is embodied and called “Azrael”. Although the name “Azrael”, probably a Hebrew word, is not mentioned in the *Koran* and authentic hadiths, it is involved as a motif as it is believed to be the angel of death in Turkish literature (Kilavuz, 1991: 350-351). This is one of the examples that reflects a distinctive cultural feature between the two texts. Thus, cultural patterns in the representation of death in these texts can be traced.

In comparison to Death, Azrael is described by his physical features as well as his attitude towards Deli Dumrul. He is the character who receives the most descriptive information in the text (Gökyay, 2006: 1150). He is described physically with the expressions “red-winged Azrael”, “dreadful old man”, “white-bearded old man”, “blear-eyed old man” (Lewis, 1974: 109) and nobody notices him other than Deli Dumrul. “In Islamic eschatology, as in rabbinic Judaism, God delegated the power of death to an angel of awesome appearance who separates the soul from the body.” (Martin, 2004: 175). Thus, descriptions of Azrael offer a terrifying old male, red-winged human image, and this image horrifies Deli Dumrul:

“The gate-keepers did not see you,
The stewards did not hear you.
My eyes that saw have ceased to see,
My hands that held have ceased to hold,
My soul is trembling and convulsed,
My gold cup has fallen from my hand,
The inside of my mouth is like ice,
My bones have turned to salt.” (Lewis, 1974: 109).

Other than his human-like image, Azrael turns into a dove when Deli Dumrul lunges at him with his sword. This is a folkloric motif which is mentioned in Stith Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* as “Transformation: man to bird” (Thompson, no date: 20). This motif points out to cultural imagination of Turks in which disembodiment of the soul is

symbolized with the image of bird and especially dove. This imagination stems from the belief that the soul is immortal and it lives in the form of a bird in the sky (Küçük, 2020: 103; Roux, 2011: 63). Therefore, Azrael's portrayal as a dove could be associated with this belief, and this is another trace that signifies a cultural pattern in terms of death. Moreover, it is not a coincidence that Deli Dumrul follows Azrael on his horse in order to hunt him. Since horses have had a significant place in Turkish culture. It is the indispensable companion of the nomadic Turks, their assistant, "wings", savior, and friend (Saydam, 1997: 134).

On the other hand, Death is not described physically in *Everyman*, yet his effect on Everyman is rather depicted as "making his heart sick" (Ward, 1995: 40). Thus, Death frightens Everyman, not because of his physical but because of his spiritual appearance. This could be explained by the allegorical existence of the characters in accordance with the function of the play. Since his journey is spiritual and the aim of the text is moral, his state of mind is described. Moreover, when Everyman talks about Death with Kindred, he states that he has "a great enemy" (Ward, 1995: 45). Thus, Death is portrayed as a threatening figure in *Everyman*.

The moments of encounter with Azrael and Death have important connotations in relation to the cultural and religious aspects of the texts. Azrael finds Deli Dumrul feasting with his forty warriors. This points to the warrior-like nature of the community to whom this narrative belongs. However, Death finds Everyman walking alone. This is significant since he will take his last journey all alone, although he seeks someone to come with him. Thus, his walking alone at his encounter with Death could be interpreted as a foreshadowing of his loneliness throughout his journey.

The word "Deli" as the title of Dumrul should be taken into consideration in order to explain his challenge against Azrael. "Deli" meant something like "berserker" (Lewis, 1974: 23) which also points to his rebellious character. It could be argued that Deli Dumrul has *hubris*. *Hubris*, a word of Ancient Greek origin, is intentionally dishonouring behavior. It was a powerful term of moral condemnation in Ancient Greece and, also treated as a serious crime. The common use of the term suggests pride, over-confidence, or alternatively, any behavior which offends divine powers. (URL-2) His *hubris* can be seen at the very beginning of the story:

"He had a bridge built, over a dried up stream. He took thirty-three silver pieces from all who crossed; those who did not cross he beat soundly and took from them forty silver pieces. Why did he do so? Because he said, 'Is there a man wilder than I, braver than I, to come and fight me? Let word of my manliness, my heroism, my courage, my gallantry, spread abroad as far as the land of the Greeks, the land of the Syrians?" (Lewis, 1974: 108).

His attitude and speech are reflections of his *hubris*. He takes money by force from people who pass through his bridge. This attitude points to

his greed for money, which is sinful in Islam as well as Christianity. With his hubristic attitude, he offends not only people but also God. He seeks victory or mastery over other people, even Azrael, as a result of his hubris. Yet, this does not work on Azrael.

Also, it could be argued that the image of the bridge contributes to the representation of death in the text. Since a bridge, as a point of connection, (Özdarıcı, 2011: 379) makes the transition from one status/place to another possible. Death's being the focal theme of the narrative, it could be argued that the bridge connotes transition from the physical world to the spiritual realm of God and vice versa. Moreover, the death of the young warrior on the slope of the bridge and Azrael's visits between the world and the realm of God also offer an association of the bridge with death.

Other than his hubris, Deli Dumrul also lacks religious knowledge; he does not know who Azrael is:

"Who is this person you call Azrael, who takes men's lives? Almighty God, I conjure you by Your Unity and Your Being to show me Azrael, that I may fight and struggle and wrestle with him and save that fine warrior's life - and he will not take any more fine warriors' lives?" (Lewis, 1974: 108).

Here, Deli Dumrul does not accept the idea of a warrior's death by the hands of Azrael. That is why he struggles with him. The triggering effect of his challenge against Azrael is not a personal but rather a social interest (Abdulla, 2012: 174). Thus, it could be argued that the phenomenon of death is represented as a social issue in *DD*. His hubris is so great that even after he realizes that Azrael is sent to him by God, he begs God to take his life himself, not by Azrael (Lewis, 1974: 111). Nevertheless, he suffers due to his hubristic attitude.

However, Everyman does not have hubris, yet just like Deli Dumrul, he lacks religious knowledge, and as a result, he does not recognize the seriousness of Death at first since he is totally careless about God. That is why he does not take Death seriously. He wants Death to postpone his reckoning until he has more time (Ward, 1995: 39) and even offers him money to do so:

"Yet of my good will I give thee, if you wilt be kind,

Yea, a thousand pounds shalt thou have,

If thou defer this matter till another day." (Ward, 1995: 39)

His attitude towards Death shows his interest in earthly/materialistic affairs, just like Deli Dumrul, who wants money from people whether they cross the bridge or not. So, their excessive love of worldly goods is emphasized. Yet, at their encounter with Azrael/Death, the protagonists do not take them serious at first. However, after their speech, they are disturbed and threatened by the existence of death and acknowledge the

fact that it comes from God.

Azrael and Death reflect their ideas about the protagonists as sinful beings just like the God figures. Azrael addresses Deli Dumrul as *kavat*, meaning “pimp”, “pander” or “person without honour”, which is an abusive word (Lewis, 1974: 23). Before he goes to Everyman, Death uses the word “folly” for sinful human beings. Moreover, he makes fun of Everyman saying “sir” when Everyman asks him why he wants to know where he is going (Ward, 1995: 38). As a result, both Death and Azrael are judgmental characters. They are also angry with the protagonists, and this reflects in their discourse.

3. An Awakening: Death’s Role in the Protagonist’s Maturation Process

In both of the texts, the protagonists go through a spiritual education for improval in their spirits. Death, in the form of a literary character in both of the texts, functions as a trigger by which the protagonists go through a maturation process. The starting point of this maturation process is when they realize that death actually does not come from Azrael, or Death, but from God. Their preoccupation with the reality of death makes them more serious. After this realization, they change their attitude towards both death and God. When Azrael defeats Deli Dumrul, he says:

“O Azrael, mercy!

There is no doubt that God is One!

I did not know that you were like this;

I never heard that you were the stealthy taker of souls.

...

I was full of wine; I was out of my mind;

I did not know what I said.

I have not tired of being a prince; I have not had my fill of being a warrior.

Do not take my soul, Azrael, mercy!” (Lewis, 1974: 110).

As seen in his speech, Deli Dumrul’s hubris makes him suffer, and he realizes his inferiority. Moreover, he confesses his lack of religious knowledge. Similarly, when Everyman realizes that he cannot escape from Death, he changes his attitude towards him and says, “Death, I pray thee, for God’s mercy” (Ward, 1995: 40). In their begging to Azrael and Death, their mentioning of God is also remarkable. So, Death is the trigger that starts their maturation process. The change in their attitude could also be seen in the terminology of their speech. Deli Dumrul begs God as such:

“You are higher than the high,

No one knows what You are like,

Beautiful God!

Many the ignorant who look for You in the sky or seek
You on earth,
But You are in the hearts of the Faithful.
Everlasting, all-powerful God!
Eternal, all-forgiving God!" (Lewis, 1974: 111).

Like Deli Dumrul, Everyman also uses religious discourse such as "O Gracious God", "Our Lord Jesus help me", "God my Creator", "O eternal God", "Our Lady, help" (reference to the Virgin Mary) in his begging. He also says "high judge Adonai" to refer to God (Ward, 1995: 42). Adonai means "Lord, God" in Latin³ (Stelten, 1995: 8). Latin expressions also reflect the religious dominance in *Everyman*. Since Latin was the language of the church in medieval times. Moreover, the prayers of Everyman consolidate the religious tone of the play. There are direct references to Christianity in the text. In one of his prayers, he mentions Adam with reference to his disobedience to God (Ward, 1995: 51). In Christianity, Adam's disobedience to God by eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge causes the Fall of him and this is called "the original sin". As such, all personal sins of human beings are ascribed to the sin inherited from Adam (Kurian, 2005: 516). As a result of this sin, human beings are meant to die. Thus, this reference to Adam should be interpreted in light of the association between the original sin and death.

God's name is mentioned as "Allah, Hak Taala" in the original text of *DD* (Ergin, 2021: 177). When Deli Dumrul prays to God, he addresses him as "Tanrı" (Ergin, 2021: 180,184). In *the Book of Dede Korkut*, when the heroes are in trouble, they invoke the Prophet Muhammad and perform the rites of Muslim prayer. Yet other than this situation, there is no mention of praying. This points out that Islamic references do not reflect a profound understanding of Muslim beliefs in the narrative (Lewis, 1974: 12). Saydam (1995: 9) argues that the adoption of Islam was narrated by Dede Korkut as an orator of the transitional period during the "rationalization" process of Deli Dumrul. In a way, Deli Dumrul's encounter with death reveals this transition to another religion in parallel with his awakening process. Thus, after their realization, their change of discourse reflects a religious tone.

After their realization that death comes from God, Deli Dumrul and Everyman try to save themselves and beg God. Both of the Gods give them a chance to save themselves, yet the conditions for this salvation are different. Everyman requests twelve more years to prepare for death (Ward, 1995: 40), but he is expected to travel and give a reckoning for salvation. In *DD*, God wants Deli Dumrul to find a life instead of his own. This process is another aspect of the protagonists' examination with death: their refusal of their loved ones. Their awakening processes via the

³ There are other Latin statements in the text which are references to the Bible (See Ward, 1995: 59).

encounter with the reality of death differ from each other. In *Everyman*, this process is reflected via the journey pattern through which Everyman must travel alone. "In the Middle Ages, the dying man was faced with the following alternatives: either to go on enjoying people and things, and lose his soul, according to the men of the church and the whole Christian tradition, or else to renounce them and obtain his eternal salvation." (Ariès, 1981: 194). Yet Everyman still seems to choose earthly things/loved ones: he wants Fellowship, Kindred, Cousin, and Goods to accompany him on his journey into the grave. Similarly, in *DD*, the awakening process is reflected by the examination of his loved ones. In place of his own, Deli Dumrul asks for the lives of his parents. The protagonists' motivation for calling for help from others is, for the former, to find a companion in the grave and for the latter, to be saved from dying. In both cases, they are abandoned by the people that they thought would help them and value. Nobody other than Good Deeds accepts Everyman's request. So, he acknowledges that all things other than good works are transitory. Similarly, Deli Dumrul learns his lesson when his parents refuse to give their lives for him. So parental relations could be inoperative when it comes to earthly life. They both turn into different people as a result of their epiphany.

At the end⁴, Deli Dumrul is saved by his wife, who offers to sacrifice her life for him.⁵ God takes the lives of his parents and gives Deli Dumrul

⁴ A significant aspect that is common in the texts is that in both of them, closure is done by wise people of their community: Doctor and Dede Korkut. "Doctor" means "teacher" in Latin (Stelten, 1995: 79) and there is a status called "Doctores Ecclesiae", meaning "Doctors of the Church". They were the theologians acknowledged by the church as outstanding teachers of the gospel (Kurian, 2005: 219). Requirements for being a Doctor of Church was orthodoxy of teaching, eminent learning, a high degree of sanctity, and explicit declaration by the Church (Stelten, 1995: 304). In *Everyman*, whether he is a medical doctor or a doctor of the church, it seems that he is a wise person who tries to tell the audience how to save their souls. Accordingly, Dede Korkut is also the wise counsellor of the Oghuz people (Reichl, 2012: 687) who is respected so much among them. He is described as this:

"He was the consummate soothsayer of the Oghuz. Whatever he said, happened. He used to bring all kinds of news of things unseen. God Most High used to inspire his heart." (Lewis, 1974: 190).

The word "soothsayer" is actually used for the saints and miracle workers (Sadiq, 2021: 289). Moreover, "Dede" and "Ata" are among the titles that are used for old and wise Turkish men. In each narrative, Dede Korkut also gives advice to khans and begs (Djindjic, 2021: 336-337). The Oghuz turn to him in times of trouble for advice and practical help (Lewis, 1974: 12). At the end of each story, Dede Korkut says prayers and completes it. In this sense, it could be argued that he is the religious leader of the Oghuz community in the narratives. These similar figures of wise people point to the cultural patterns unique to these texts.

⁵ Another point that is worth stressing is that both of the protagonists are saved by the help of female figures. In *Everyman*, the genders of Good Deeds and Knowledge, who are the sisters that make the salvation of Everyman's soul possible, are both female. Knowledge helps him to acknowledge or be aware of his sinfulness. In a way, Knowledge is his guide. However, Everyman represents all humanity, yet this does not include women. Similarly, the saviour of Deli Dumrul is his wife, yet she does not even have a

140 more years to live with his wife. Thus, his salvation is an earthly one, yet he also becomes wiser as a result of his examination with death. However, Everyman's salvation could be evaluated in the context of Christianity. Since he turns his face to Good Deeds and pays for his sins in accordance with the requirements of his religion. "He confesses, expresses contrition, asks for absolution, and repents fully, preparing himself for death through the appropriate sacraments and receiving grace through God's mercy" (Cawley 1974, xx). So, he is finally judged on the basis of his good deeds (Ryan, 1957: 723-729). As he approaches to death, Strength, Beauty, Discretion and Five Wits leave him. Thus, being near to death is portrayed as all earthly possessions of soul and body being transitory, and the representation of death makes this fact acknowledgeable in the text. Everyman comes to terms with the reality of death and goes into the grave. His salvation, as well as his journey, is based on religious values. Thus, death offers a meaningful closure in terms of the Christian religion in *Everyman* since his life comes to an end after the things he does as required by his religion. Deli Dumrul's and Everyman's examination with death and awakening could be read as a *memento mori* message to the audiences and readers.

Conclusion

DD and *Everyman* are the two sample texts in which death is represented as a character, namely Azrael and Death. It could be argued that death's portrayal as a literary character in each text solidifies the inevitableness and fearfulness of it. Also, Azrael and Death play a significant role in both of the texts as realities of life that need to be encountered. In relation to the theme of death, the characters of God use Azrael and Death in order to shake Deli Dumrul and Everyman, who are blind to God and sinful in their actions. In relation to this fact, God and Death/Azrael figures as characters stand out in the representation of death, and they have a strong impact on the maturation process of the protagonists. On the surface level, Azrael and Death are the messengers of God, but actually, death is a means of spiritual education for the protagonists. In this sense, death serves as a catalyst and initiator of their rationalization process, and the Gods allow the protagonists the opportunity to save themselves. Through their test with death, they both awaken to their reality of life and change their attitude and discourse as a result of becoming wiser. Moreover, their way of examination could be seen as a means of showing the audience/readers that one must not trust their wealth, strength, and even loved ones. In a way, death is a means of spiritual education for the protagonists since they acknowledge the supremacy of God and the transitoriness of life through confrontation with death. So, the readers/audiences should remember God and death all the

name in the text. These gender preferences as saviours could be explained by the selflessness that is imputed to females.

time, perform good deeds in the world, and not trust anybody or anything. Thus, it could be claimed that the representation of death as a character could be an educational tool in literature.

As a result of this study, it could be argued that similar motivations are at work in relation to the reality of death in different literary traditions in spite of the uniqueness of literary works. Both Deli Dumrul's and Everyman's fear of death is a universal emotion, yet their processes of maturation and salvation are reflected in different ways in terms of certain aspects. Hence, cultural implications could be traced to the representation of death in both of the texts. In *DD*, the attitude, discourse, and actions of God, Azrael, and Deli Dumrul reflect the sociocultural and religious patterns and tendencies of its cultural milieu. In *DD*, death is something to be challenged or fought against. This could be interpreted by the epic nature of the text and the warrior-like character of the society. However, as a morality play, *Everyman* has a dominant religious tone and references to Christianity. In accordance with the aim of the text, death is not something to be feared only if one can do good deeds in the physical world and, as a result, one can save their soul and go to heaven. Thus, they both give some ideas about their cultural/religious milieu on a certain level. As a result, it could be argued that literature is like a mirror that reflects unique cultural patterns although it deals with universal themes.

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