

# TANBURI CEMİL BEY AND HIS MUSIC: GENIUS AND MELANCHOLY

TANBURI CEMİL BEY VE MÜZİĞİ: DEHA VE MELANKOLİ

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## Abstract

Tanburi Cemil Bey is considered one of the greatest geniuses who grew up in the classical Turkish music tradition. However, his place in the history of national culture cannot be understood only through his actions and works in the musical field. To accurately determine his position, the conceptual apparatus of a comparative and multidimensional perspective is needed. For this reason, this study discusses the concept of genius attributed to Cemil Bey and investigates the possibilities of evaluating him as a form of historical subjectivity through the structure-agency tension in sociology. While doing this, the concept of melancholy, which has accompanied genius since ancient times, is also included in the analysis. These concepts have a deep-rooted unity that frames the medical, epistemological and philosophical norms of the Western tradition of thought. The closeness between these two concepts, which were mainly established on a medical and philosophical level in ancient Greek thought, is discussed in a wide range of symbols within the framework of the Saturn myth in Renaissance cosmology. By revising the ancient belief that the planets have a certain influence on the character and moral qualities of people, the personification of the melancholic genius is added to the myth of Saturn in the astrological context of Renaissance cosmology. Thus, it paves the way for the maturation of a separate poetic experience of melancholy that focuses on the existential dimension of melancholy as well as its physical symptoms. Romanticism intensifies the perception of melancholy as a sign of self-reflexivity that allows contemplation on the deepest aspects of existence and often symbolizes creative genius. It creates a context in which Cemil Bey can be read, like C. Baudelaire and W. Benjamin, who see themselves as residents of this unique field of subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Genius, Melancholy, Subjectivity, Music, Tanburi Cemil Bey

## Öz

Tanburi Cemil Bey, klasik Türk müziği geleneği içinde yetişen en büyük dehalardan biri olarak anılmaktadır. Bununla birlikte onun ulusal kültür tarihindeki yeri yalnızca müzikal alandaki eylem ve eserleri üzerinden anlaşılabilir değildir. Onun bulunduğu yeri doğru tayin etmek için karşılaştırmalı ve çok boyutlu bir perspektifin kavramsal aparatlarına ihtiyaç vardır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma Cemil beye atfedilen deha kavramını tartışmaya açarak, onu sosyolojideki yapı-fail gerilimi üzerinden tarihsel bir öznellik formu olarak değerlendirebilmenin olanaklarını sorgulamaktadır. Bunu yaparken aynı zamanda kadim zamanlardan beri dehaya eşlik eden melankoli kavramı da analize dahil edilmektedir. Bu kavramlar Batı düşünce geleneğinin tıbbi, epistemolojik ve felsefi normlarını çerçeveleyen köklü bir birlikteliğe sahiptir. Antik Yunan düşüncesinde ağırlıklı tıbbi ve felsefi düzlemde kurulan yakınlık rönesans kozmolojisinde Satürn miti çerçevesinde geniş bir semboller düzleminde ele alınır. Gezegenlerin insanların karakteri ve ahlaki özellikleri üzerinde belirli bir etkiye sahip olduğu kadim inancının yeniden revize edilmesiyle melankolik deha kişileştirmesi, rönesans kozmolojisinin astrolojik bağlamında Satürn mitine eklenir. Böylece melankolinin fiziksel semptomlarının yanı sıra varoluşsal boyutuna da odaklanan ayrı bir şiirsel melankoli deneyiminin olgunlaşmasının önünü açar. Romantizm, varoluşun en derin yönleri üzerinde tefekküre izin veren ve çoğu zaman yaratıcı dehayı simgeleyen bir öz-düşünümsellik işareti olarak melankoli algısını yoğunlaştırır. Kendisini bu eşsiz öznellik alanının sakinleri olarak gören C. Baudelaire ve W. Benjamin gibi Cemil Bey'in de üzerinden okunabileceği bir bağlam oluşturur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Deha, Melankoli, Öznellik, Müzik, Tanburi Cemil Bey

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the paper he submitted to a symposium held on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Tanburi Cemil Bey's<sup>2</sup> death, Cem Behar (2017, 11) states that he does not find it right to describe Tanburi Cemil Bey - and probably other 'great musicians' like him defined with this title - as geniuses. Accordingly, he states that the concept of genius cannot be the subject of any serious scientific study due to its connotations such as divinity. "Genius can only be subject to admiration and praise, not serious analysis and scientific research" (Behar, 11). In this sense, genius will not contribute to the explanation of anything since it will constitute a particular example in history in terms of being an eternal being. "It is only and singular, it is simply a gift from God, and it requires silent acceptance" (Behar, 11).

Here, for some justified reasons, Behar while trying to carry Cemil Bey within the boundaries of the knowable area, or in other words, to put him in the frame of the 'classical episteme', on the other hand, he closes to discussion a framework or conceptual unit that could be quite productive and explanatory even for the same epistemic tradition. When he says 'serious analysis and scientific research', Behar is talking about a 'classical episteme' that inspires the modern scientific perspective, or, as Kuhn puts it, the modern scientific paradigm, which consists of the common techniques, acceptance, beliefs and values of the members of the dominant understanding of science of a specific period. On the other hand, the idea of genius in his mind is a part of the collective imagination implied by romantic inspiration, which developed in parallel with the modern scientific tradition but turned to different - mostly aesthetic - routes in the level of perceiving and representing reality. This being the case, there seems to be no other option left other than sending the 'genius' with endless respect to the bottomless pits of an 'unserious' phenomenological investigation.

Indeed, on a level of factual reality encompassed by the modern scientific paradigm, genius appears extrinsic, as if it belonged to another universe, or at least another era. It cannot meet the analytical expectations of an explanatory sociological analysis, it cannot be quantified, it cannot be categorized, it cannot be emulated, it does not conform to the norm, and it is eventually pushed out of analysis as a discrete, phenomenal unit of existence. Thus, in the best case, genius is, for most social scientists today, a collective image and a mythical fiction created in response to the demands for subjectivity and illusions of individuality that emerged in a specific geography (Western Europe) and in a specific historical period (post-Enlightenment), with the encouragement of the capitalist ethos.

To put it quite simply, we can say that current studies on genius are gathered around two main tendencies. These two main tendencies display aspects of a classical antagonism in sociology, the opposition between structure and agency. Among these, studies that make explanations with reference to action attribute a historical subjectivity to genius. Rather than providing a clear definition, they imply a conception of genius through the impressions gained from a number of common leitmotifs and themes in the genius biographies they are inspired by. Apart from this, a tendency towards the extraordinary rather than the ordinary is also observed. Here, structure is a signifier of genius to the extent that it makes the development of genius possible as well as impossible.

The second category includes a radical structuralist emphasis. In these approaches, it is stated that the "I" is a grammatical construct and the self is a social construction, that neither a historical subjectivity nor any subject can be mentioned, and therefore there is a categorical rejection of the

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<sup>2</sup> Tanburi Cemil Bey (1873, Istanbul - 28 July 1916, Istanbul) was a *tanbur* (*Tanbur* is a fretted stringed instrument originating from Turkey and the former Ottoman Empire. The person who plays is called *tanburi*), *kemenche* and *lavta* virtuoso and composer. He played the biggest role in the perfection of performance by bringing a brand new and modern style and a different interpretation to Turkish music performance with his works.

concept of genius. Here, genius can best be used in the context of understanding and explaining the myth-making processes of societies, or as a variable within market relations whose mysterious content is kept up to date by certain professionals due to its commodity value and which stimulates and exploits people's urges of curiosity.

In light of all these explanations, the aim of this study is to question the possibilities of developing a more specific, understandable and, so to speak, more 'reasonable' understanding of genius within the multiple meanings of genius. This can only be achieved by revising the basic arguments (structure-agency) on which the two above-mentioned perspectives are based, in the light of the possibilities of a more eclectic and multi-dimensional socio-psychological and socio-historical perspective. With such an approach, on the one hand, emphasis is placed on the dynamic, formal and -formed by the actions of its agents - qualities of the understanding of structure, which is established as a historical, objective fixity. On the other hand, the focus is on post-structuralist modifications of the Cartesian, atomic subject understanding, which inspires the traditional understanding of subjectivity (the subject established through experience instead of the constitutive subject). These two revisions may help to better understand the specific position of the genius. This position of the genius within a kind of power relations can be understood in terms of a kind of developed sensitivity and perception potential that he has or is exposed to, and the performativity of vitalist resistance that he shows in response to the deterministic and dominating effects of structures that tend to objectivation. Creation, on the other hand, is the contingent result of transition to a new realm of existence, which takes place within this actuality and sometimes when change is inevitable. This insight suggests that genius can be conservative as well as revolutionary. To put it another way, genius can often be seen as a transitional figure – although examples to the contrary can easily be found. Historical breaks or ruptures are chaotic periods when social structures have not yet rigidifying and a widespread climate of social unrest and anxiety creates deep despair. All this creates a favorable socio-psychological basis for the emergence of genius.

Another revision necessary to develop a more complete understanding of genius is carried out through the understanding of the 'classical subject'. The 'subject' in the genius concept of the genius theorists of the Enlightenment period is inspired by a completely Cartesian, autonomous and constitutive understanding of the subject. Here, the genius is the owner of his works and creations in terms of some of their qualities, which are included in the field of subjectivity and some of which cannot be explained by rational thought. On the other hand, in the Postmodern climate of thought, the subject is no longer seen as a constitutive element, but rather as a decentralized structure built by culture and language. According to this understanding, the subject is historical and is conditioned by historical conditions. The decentering of the subject implies a kind of subjective fragmentation and alienation. This also shows us that genius may not always imply a harmonious spiritual integrity, a coherent personality built with rational faculties, and a calm, serene and prudential sense of self. One of the common features in the biographies of the genius is that he is evaluated in the context of an eccentric temperament, to say the least. Many of the mental pathologies in current clinical psychiatry's diagnostic classifications are used to describe the specific mental conditions of genius. Here we can include in the analysis an archaic psychological pathology that accompanies the concept of genius from ancient Greece to modern times.

Throughout history, melancholy has been considered the other and dark side of genius. Although melancholy is essentially a subjectively experienced phenomenon, it actually implies a very social nonconformity, and in this respect, it creates the potential to enter into a flow towards art and creativity. Beyond establishing an imperative or accidental relationship between these two concepts, the abundance of historical examples clearly demonstrates the existence of a certain correlation. Indeed, it can be determined at first hand that many names that are considered geniuses, whether in the field of art, philosophy or science, are evaluated within the framework of a melancholic temperament. However, it is clear that these countless examples will not be enough to establish an imperative relationship between

these two concepts. Melancholy is not an indispensable condition for a creative act, just as melancholy does not owe its existence entirely to the hypersensitivity of an extraordinary mind. However, the continuities and discontinuities or unity and disengagement that this equation with two unknowns shows under the metamorphoses of the *zeitgeist* in the historical process can assume more concrete functions when analyzed as an aspect of the social processes operating at the macro level.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The impossibility of explaining the relationship that is thought to exist between genius and melancholia in all its aspects arises from the fruitless oscillations of an insurmountable paradox that always arises from the effort to explain one unknown with another unknown. This paradox can be overcome to some extent by revealing the historical baggage accumulated by the relevant concepts. In this regard, a comparative analysis of these two concepts, taking into account their conceptual development, will reveal both the paradigmatic evolution of the line of thought and the dominant tendencies surrounding our way of thinking. While doing this, as stated above, the possible contribution of a perspective equipped with contemporary theories of knowledge and multiple methodologies to a more comprehensive understanding of these two phenomena, which are completely included in the field of experience and subjectivity, will be investigated.

In this direction, this study will try to understand in what intellectual context these two specific forms of subjectivity brought forward an autonomous interpretation of existence, especially in the fundamental moments of the history of Western European thought. Therefore, in the first part of the study, a brief summary will be given, focusing on the ways in which the relevant concepts are recognized and used within the thought traditions of different periods, which are not homogeneous but have a certain integrity to some extent. Then, we will try to understand the modern mediation of this relationship, especially through two figures who put the concept of melancholy at the center of aesthetic (C. Baudelaire) and methodical (W. Benjamin) interest. Finally, it will be discussed whether Tanburi Cemil Bey, who is the subject of the study and accepted as one of the most important figures produced by the national culture, can be seen as a part of this long tradition followed throughout the study, with his personal biography and testimonies obtained from his close circle.

## 3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF GENIUS AND MELANCHOLY FROM ANCIENT GREECE TO MODERN TIMES

The relationship between genius and melancholy is found in the following statement, first attributed to Aristotle, in a chapter titled Melancholy in the XXX. book of *'Problemata Physica'*: *Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic, or are infected by the diseases arising from black bile?* It can be said that this statement has served as a founding text for the relationship between the concepts of genius and melancholy for centuries, and just like the two faces of Janus, these two concepts have exhibited the distinct appearances of a form of co-existence that justifies or precedes each other. Aristotle bases outstanding or extraordinary personality on a proto-psychological theory, the theory of four temperaments, derived from the body fluids theory of Greek medicine. This approach basically argues that a person's temperament is shaped according to the dominant body fluid in his body, and according to Aristotle, melancholic individuals whose dominant body fluid is 'black bile' (*Lat. ātra bīlis, Greek. mélas+kholḗ*) are likely to carry out extraordinary actions when their body fluids reach a suitable temperature.

It can be stated that after Aristotle, the sympathy for the compensatory qualities of melancholia gradually decreased throughout the Hellenistic period and the Middle Ages. With the establishment of Christian doctrine, melancholy in this period was despised as one of the deadly sins (*acedia*) that was

incompatible with the Christian spirit, while the notion of genius was understood as a kind of companion spirit within the pagan belief traditions in daily life. On the other hand, the connection seems to have revived during the Renaissance. When Renaissance scholars began to translate and interpret Greek philosophical and medical texts, they gave a special place to the connection between genius and melancholy. Florentine neo-platonist M. Ficino, establishes the connection this time in an astrological context and claims that everyone born under the influence of Saturn, the planet generally associated with contemplative life, is prone to ingenious melancholia (*melancholia generosa*). Ficino develops an interpretation that synthesizes Platonic supernaturalism with Aristotelian naturalism and enriches it with the occultist, mystical, magical and astrological practices of the Renaissance. This is where the Saturn myth comes into the analysis. In fact, the source of this idea comes from the Arab astrological tradition, which assumes that the stars, which are thought to have a significant impact on the functioning of the universe, should also have an impact on human character and moral characteristics. The planet Saturn is connected to melancholic temperament through an analogy based on its natural characteristics. Saturn's cold nature and darkness due to its distance from the Sun and its slow round due to its size are the most important factors in the emergence of a melancholic temperament. Ficino, as in the tradition before him, confirms the ambivalence of the associations developed on Saturn. Accordingly, Saturn indicates an ominous fate full of fear, sadness and anxiety for the people it influences. But on the other hand, it is also a unique gift as it is the most powerful and noble of the planets. It is a symbol of the intellectual nature oriented towards understanding and contemplation. Directing the mind towards the contemplation of transcendent and hidden things, Saturn brings the inquirer to its pinnacle and creates those extraordinary thinkers who are so completely absorbed in the transcendent that they eventually become instruments of divine things. A negative consequence of this contemplative and isolated life, or the natural price of mental concentration, is melancholy.

Ficino's texts devoted to the 'man of genius' developed the notion of the 'melancholic genius' and influenced sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English melancholy writers such as Burton and Bright. Thus, it paved the way for the maturation of a separate poetic melancholy experience that focuses on the existential dimension of melancholy as well as its physical symptoms. Hamlet, one of the most famous melancholic characters in Shakespeare's canon, is one of the most important indicators that melancholy has begun to be understood in philosophical terms rather than medical terms. Similarly, Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Melencolia I* constitutes an iconic representation of all the assumptions and symbols of the notion of melancholic genius. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, known as the 'golden age' of melancholia, the experience of melancholy was re-ennobled and incorporated into the concept of the sublime, one of the central aesthetic concepts. In the side of this, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also define the periods in which a concept of genius close to the meaning we know today reached maturity. One of the entities that has its share of the Enlightenment thinkers' skeptical attitude towards the sacred is genius. The common goal of a significant part of the researchers who wrote on the phenomenon of genius throughout the eighteenth century was to clear the curtain of mystery on the cult of genius and make it knowable through empirical and rational concepts. In contrast to Christianity's otherworldly, fatalistic, mystical and theological universe design based on revelation, the enlightenment movement develop an atomistic, sensory, autonomous and rational universe design based on mechanical causality. The total demystification effort of the Enlightenment directed towards the religious field makes the existence of intermediary beings (angels, saints, demons) between humans and God increasingly doubtful. God's declining interest in the course of humanity and his remoteness and detachment from human affairs point to one of the fundamental symptoms of the modern cultural crisis. The rise of modern genius cannot be considered apart from this conjunctural context. "Geniuses offered assurance that special beings still animated the universe, that someone stood between the ordinary and the unknown, the sacred and the profane, that a privileged few could see where the many were blind"

(McMahon, 2013, 147). To put it briefly, genius is a secular embodiment of the transcendent bond between man and God, the modern consolation of an irreversible separation and rupture, and the tragic hero of an increasingly deepening melancholy.

With the Romantic period, themes such as secularization and disenchantment resulting from the disintegrating cosmic unity with the enlightenment mind's universe design were experienced as a collective crisis in the intellectual circles of the period. However, the self-reflective reaction to disrupted harmony and the increased focus on the self-constitute the specific context of romantic melancholia. Romanticism intensifies this perception of melancholy, a sign of self-reflection that allows contemplation on the deepest aspects of existence and often symbolizes creative genius. It is through this intellectual context that the formation of the modern genius cult in the Romantic period and the rise of melancholic sensitivity and their gradual convergence take place. It is understandable in this context that Goethe equates the classical with health and the romantic with illness. For the romantic person, illness is the avoidance of solving life's problems rationally. Illness is the 'other' of the mind. As Dellaloğlu (2002, 108) expresses, “melancholy is being unwilling to be the subject or object of life. When viewed from the romantics' world of thought, melancholy is not a disease, but an opportunity; It is a way of coping with life. The melancholic subject is a subject who designs life, just like an artist”.

The Romantic period perhaps represents the last consistent intellectual ground where the phenomena of genius and melancholy converge in their cyclical history. At the final point reached by passing through the physiological context of the Aristotelian connection and the astrological context of the Ficinoian theory, the melancholic genius is established in the reflexive self of romantic sensitivity. This time the struggle is internal, over spiritual life, and the resistance that tries to achieve the aesthetic revision of the subjective and contingent world also begins from within.

Romantic sensitivity rises at the dawn of modern life experience, and in this respect, it defines a very modern counter position. In other words, romanticism is, in a sense, a self-criticism of modern capitalist civilization, and the critical discourse it uses derives from modernity itself, not from somewhere else. In this case, the question of what this modernity means, which, on the one hand, develops a certain field of subjectivity by glorifying a specific state of sensitivity, and on the other hand, suppresses it with certain objectification tendencies, but in any case, allows the concrete appearances of a certain melancholic subjectivity, comes to the fore.

#### 4. BAUDELAIRE'S *SPLENETIC* MIND

Nowhere has the experience of modern life, in all its aspects - provocative as well as worrisome dimensions - been observed and experienced more thoroughly than Charles Baudelaire. In Baudelaire, we find subjective expressions of a specific cultural situation in which dizzying effects are recorded with new and fluid images in an urban space where “all that is solid melts into air”. Baudelaire's inclusion in the Saturnine constellation takes place through a developed self-awareness that allows him to recognize the permanence in the temporary, the aesthetics in the ordinary, and the sadness in the joyful in all this chaos. This is also a sign of a melancholic act of withdrawal. As Pensky puts it:

“Baudelaire's modern melancholy is “heroic” for precisely the same reasons that the Renaissance melancholy of Ficino or Melanchthon was heroic. The melancholic realizes that the sentence of melancholia is, if inescapable, also endowed with a dialectical force. The same powers that torment the subject with sadness, despair, and the *taedium vitae* can, through the self's submission to a discipline, be transformed into the powers of a higher insight into the occult secrets of nature. Ficino, for these reasons, understood the dialectic of Saturn to promise the elevation of the soul into the transcendent realm of mystical correspondences even as the soul remained tormented by the symptoms of melancholy sadness” (Pensky, 1993, 94).

For the modern version of Ficino's melancholic hero, nature is no longer an option. His tragedy is set in urban space. First of all, "Baudelaire says, the modern artist should "set up his house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and Row of motion, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite," in the midst of the metropolitan crowd" (Berman, 1983, 145). In his work titled '*Spleen de Paris*', the city of Paris plays a central role in this spiritual drama. Baudelaire's observations coincide with a period when the city was being systematically dismantled and rebuilt under the authority of Napoleon III and the rule of Haussmann. A period in which the old Paris was destroyed and replaced by the wide boulevards of Haussmann and the arcades of the new capitalism. Baudelaire's melancholic subjectivity catches him precisely while he is caught up in this bright and sparkling cityscape and the impressions of the dynamic and magical pastoral images of the city. As Berman (141) states that, "the lesson to be learned from Baudelaire, is that modern life has a distinctive and authentic beauty, which, however, is inseparable from its innate misery and anxiety, from the bills that modern man has to pay". The subversiveness and destructiveness of modernity, which rises on the idea of progress, soon causes a counter pastoral image to form in Baudelaire's mind.

The word melancholy appears only in a few places in Baudelaire's texts. This situation is generally explained as the semantic erosion of the word as a result of its widespread use. The term Baudelaire prefers to use is *spleen*. Instead of this, melancholy forms the spiritual topography of Baudelaire's writings. As Godbout states:

Spleen in Baudelaire, is an assemblage of figurations, many of them drawing on the faces and masks of melancholy, its symbols, emblems and images (...) "Spleen is a reference point for much of Baudelaire's writing because it most uniquely represents the dilemma of modernity. It is trapped between an idealized in-the-past way of life cut-off by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, as well as the futures those historico-social events brought into being" (2016, 145-149).

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About half a century after Baudelaire, Simmel talks about a kind of insensitivity developed by urban people in the face of the abundance of stimuli contained in the urban environment. The city, with its lively and fluid dynamics, creates a set of impressions that the human mind cannot cope with. This is exactly what Baudelaire and his personifications feel compelled to do. "The painter (or novelist or philosopher) of modern life is one who concentrates his vision and energy on "its fashions, its morals, its emotions," on "the passing moment and all the suggestions of eternity that it contains" (Berman, 1988, 133). On the other hand, in Baudelaire, this deep reflection turns into a kind of pessimism as time progresses. In this temporal context, where the old order of the world is long gone and the future does not look very promising, attempts to revive this world seem futile. The consciousness of unhappiness resulting from the inevitable failure to achieve the impossible also represents the vital force of melancholia, the capacity to get lost in thought and produce thoughts at unbearable depths. The melancholic mind can only resist the alienation of modernity through the familiar comforts of the phenomena of contemporary times that reflect a past way of life and its unique character. In this respect, as Godbout (2016, 150) states, "Baudelaire's spleen is not gloominess for its own sake. Spleen is never weepy; spleen is a resolute, sobering stoicism. It is the recognizing that malaise, not health, is primary to Parisian life and is essentially a challenge to the modern sense of emptiness".

## 5. THE SATURNINE VISION OF BENJAMIN

The place where Baudelaire's splenetic mind fell into pessimism with all the inventories it had accumulated, turns into a valuable mining area for Benjamin to both create his own methodology and establish his own subjectivity. That Benjamin himself - as he noted, "I came into the world under the sign of Saturn.. the star of the slowest revolution, the planet of detours and delays..." – (Benjamin, 1928; as cited in Sontag, 2013, 91) tended toward depression is well known. Melancholy constitutes the

reference point of all his major works, especially *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and his reflections on Baudelaire. Benjamin was a thinker who located and charted a figural representation of melancholy across. Melancholic gaze forms the original context of his methodology and theory of knowledge. Melancholia cuts vertically across the evolutionary scheme of history, in other words, it is transhistorical. To use Benjamin's metaphor, it is a vortex, a historical intensity. As Flatley stated:

“Where the flip side of the pathological melancholia from Aristotle to the Romantics was individual intellectual ability and creative genius, for Benjamin it is a historical-allegorical insight. Even though melancholia is a subjectively experienced phenomenon for Benjamin, its source of (potential) value is not the individual or solipsistic creative tendencies or abilities it might bring with it but the way it might allow one to gain access to the historical origins of one’s suffering, and indeed to the logic of historicity itself” (2008, 65).

Benjamin's melancholic hero is Baudelaire. “Baudelaire’s melancholy is heroic in the sense that he used his own experience of loss—indeed purposefully sought out experiences of loss—as a way to research historical change” (Flatley, 2008, 65). On the other hand, instead of sacrificing the sublime melancholy he observed in Baudelaire to the power of its splenetic counterpart and thus falling into pessimism, Benjamin develops the formula of transforming splenetic melancholy into a personal form of modern heroism. In *The Origins of German Baroque Drama*, Benjamin writes that Saturn's influence makes people “unfeeling, indecisive, and slow” (Benjamin, 1928; as cited in Sontag, 2013, 94). However, this slowness or indecision is valued in Benjamin's melancholy experience not as something that stops action, but as something that deeply affects the creative potential of thought. Baudelaire’s “spleen interposes centuries between the present moment and the one just lived” (Flatley, 67). For the melancholic mind, time is not perceived as a discrete measurable phenomenon, but is experienced in its motion:

“Time does not give one much leeway: it thrusts us forward from behind, blows us through the narrow funnel of the present into the future. But space is broad, teeming with possibilities, positions, intersections, passages, detours, U-turns, dead ends, one-way streets. Too many possibilities, indeed. Since the Saturnine temperament is slow, prone to indecisiveness, sometimes one has to cut one’s way through with a knife” (Sontag, 2013, 96).

In this respect, as Sontag (2013, 96) puts it, Benjamin's recurring themes are characteristically means of spatializing the world: for example, his notion of ideas and experiences as ruins. In the example of baroque allegory, the outer world, which settles as a collection of ruins under a melancholic allegorical gaze, defines for Baudelaire a world of inner memories that is in ruins and ready for allegorical transformation. Flatley (2008, 68) states that in the nineteenth century, allegory retreated from the world around us and settled in the inner world. At this point, traces in memory are the most effective tools that can be used to reach and interact with the essence of true historicity, just like the transfer of historical facts through books. Collecting, which constitutes both theoretical and practical interest of Benjamin, gains meaning in this context. The collector represents a figure who sees value in all objects and serves as the savior of time, lost objects, and phenomenality. As Sontag puts it:

“He perceives that the deep transactions between the melancholic and the world always take place with things (rather than with people); and that these are genuine transactions, which reveal meaning. Precisely because the melancholy character is haunted by death, it is melancholics who best know how to read the world. Or, rather, it is the world, which yields itself to the melancholic’s scrutiny, as it does to no one else’s. The more lifeless things are, the more potent and ingenious can be the mind which contemplates them” (Sontag, 2013, 98).

Benjamin's purpose in collecting the phenomena of the nineteenth century represents the liberation of these phenomena from the forces of capitalism and commodification. For Benjamin, modernity represents an increasing impoverishment in the field of experience. While dead objects of the past are the only familiar areas that trigger memory, people's alienation from themselves continues at an increasing rate.

“A range of historical processes, such as urbanization, the commodity, new forms of technologized war, and factory work required people to shield themselves from the material world around them, to stop being emotionally open to that world and the people in it. Even the simple experience of riding on a bus or railroad, which puts people “in a position of having to stare at one another for minutes or even hours on end without exchanging a word,” would be overwhelming if we felt compelled to have some emotional contact with all the people we see” (Flatley, 2008, 69).

This situation is best clarified in Benjamin's distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. While *Erfahrung* refers to an archaic experience, *Erlebnis* refers to a more recent experience that is more clearly drawn from memory. It can be said that while *Erlebnis* describes events that are included in the field of daily consciousness and thus can be more easily brought to memory, *Erfahrung* describes the area of experience that is not clearly remembered but has left a trace in the memory. Benjamin's emphasis on *Erfahrung* cannot be separated from the cultural context of the nineteenth century. Modernity has made *Erfahrung*, which expresses a real experience, impossible and has instead established a field of experience free from historical subjectivity. Melancholic contemplation expresses a *super-awake* state of consciousness that wanders around these spaces, labyrinths, passages, ruins, absence and deprivations, creating a point of resistance against the challenging conditions of this storm in which historical progress sweeps away everything in its path.

## 6. UNDER THE SIGN OF SATURN: TANBURI CEMIL BEY AND HIS MUSIC

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Tanburi Cemil Bey's son, Mesud Cemil, says in an article he wrote on music issues in Turkey, "It was not the *Koch* virus that killed my father, but its idiosyncratic romanticism and repressions" (Cemil 1922; as cited in Altar, 1963, 252). Tanburi Cemil Bey is one of the figures closest to the definition of genius in the field of national culture, and in addition to all the mythologizing and sanctifying narratives directed at him, a second consensus is based on his melancholic temperament. It can be said that the only source from which we can get some information about Cemil Bey, about whom we have very little information and documents compared to Western examples, is a biography book written by his son. Under these circumstances, it is quite clear that we lack the necessary resources to conduct any psychological analysis of Cemil Bey. On the other hand, in the biography study, which is the most compact text we have, the impressions gained from both his son's singular experiences with his father and the personal testimonies of his close circle provide some consistent clues about Cemil Bey's temperament. At this point, there seems to be no other option other than relying on the childhood memories of Mesud Cemil, who lost his father at an early age, and the personal testimonies of the intelligentsia close to him of the period.

First of all, there is something that should be noted that, when including Cemil Bey in the Saturnine constellation, as in the general work, melancholy should be considered beyond an individual, subjective experience. The period in which Cemil Bey lived coincides with a historical breaking point, known in the West as *fin de siècle* and in the specific context of Ottoman history as the 'longest century of the empire'. Therefore, the qualities attributed to Cemil Bey's temperament or crystallized in his field of subjectivity cannot be considered and understood separately from the socio-psychological and socio-cultural conditions of the period in which he lived. While Baudelaire's splenetic contemplation resisted the alienating effects of Paris, the victorious capital where modern civilization developed in all its glory,

it can be appreciated that these effects would be felt doubly alienating in Istanbul, the ruined capital of a defeated empire.

A common aspect of non-Western modernity experiences, as Esenbel (2000, 18) expresses, is that the awareness of living in a modern world brings with it the awareness that, at a certain point, the individuals in question are experiencing a daily existential crisis. In this sense, it can be stated that these individuals, who cannot be a part of modernity by neither remaining loyal to the past nor being a complete Westerner, are forced to live in a constant "double tension". It can be said that in this cultural environment where Western influence spread to the public in waves, starting from the upper classes, Cemil Bey was among the first generations to experience this tension due to the social class he belonged to. As we learn from Mesud Cemil, his uncle's house, where he moved after losing his father at an early age, in terms of both decoration and lifestyle displays a perfect example of East-West eclecticism, which was the trademark of the spiritual chaos of the Tanzimat period.

Here, it may be necessary to open a separate parenthesis for a detail that is thought to have an impact on the formation of Cemil Bey's temperament. That's because he was orphaned at a very young age. In the article published in the music magazine, which was held on the occasion of the 52nd anniversary of Cemil Bey's death and where a psychiatrist was present for a modest psychic study, the following diagnosis was made for Cemil Bey:

“Deaths, abandonments and constant environmental changes, called 'object-loss' in psychoanalysis, caused Cemil to become stuck in a feeling of loneliness that grew in direct proportion to his expanding circle of friends throughout his life, thus causing the emergence of an introverted schizoid-neurotic personality” (Tanrıkorur, 1968, 273).

It would probably not surprise anyone that a group gathered to praise Cemil Bey's genius and commemorate his memory reached a Freudian analysis based on some common themes in the genius biographies. However, if we want to develop a more comprehensive understanding, we must expand psychoanalysis from the classical Freudian family scheme to the social level. In her study investigating the epistemological foundations of the Tanzimat novel, Jale Parla (1993, 13) states that both political and literary discourse reflected an intense search for a father in the early stages of the Westernization of Ottoman culture. The father/sultan is a political as well as a symbolic object of desire in Ottoman culture, gathering collective power and energy within himself. In the Ottoman cultural norms system, when the institutional authority that supports the absoluteness of these norms weakens and the possibility of succumbing to Western rules and institutions comes to the fore, the fear of fatherlessness emerges as an acute symptom. “An autocratic culture, which can no longer rely on the authority of an autocratic and patriarchal sultan, is looking for its symbolic father” (Parla, 15). In this respect, the fact that the main characters in almost all Tanzimat novels are fatherless cannot be explained by coincidence. Therefore, if we return to the above diagnosis, we need to look for the effects of the collective trauma arising from the death of a symbolic father rather than the death of a singular. Kristeva (2024, 8) states that, “the periods that witness the downfall of political and religious idols, periods of crisis, are particularly favorable to black moods. While it is true that an unemployed worker is less suicidal than a deserted lover, melancholia does assert itself in times of crisis; it is spoken of, establishes its archeology, generates its representations and its knowledge”. There are many reasons to think that this was true for Istanbul at the beginning of the twentieth century.

It may be possible to follow the traces of this sensitivity from Orhan Pamuk's reflections on the mood of the period. In *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, Pamuk (2005) “draws on the reservoir of his memory to construct a text that flows within the temporal dynamics of selective/voluntary remembering. Thus, on the one hand, the narration defies any historical analysis, but on the other hand, it bears the

trademark of Baudelaire's modern aesthetic tradition and the critical analysis of Walter Benjamin's memory" (Helvacıoğlu, 2013, 163). One of the most unique aspects of Pamuk's text is the distinction he makes between melancholy, which implies an individual experience, and *hüzün*, which implies a collective experience. "We might call this confused, hazy state melancholy, or perhaps we should call it by its Turkish name, *hüzün*, which denotes a melancholy that is communal rather than private" (Pamuk, 2005, 79). As Helvacıoğlu (2013, 173) points out, by amalgamating references to *hüzün*, Pamuk uses it as both a cultural concept and as the defining feature of Istanbul's essence. From a historical perspective, Istanbul's *hüzün* is intrinsically linked to the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. In this respect, in Pamuk's depiction of *hüzün*, Istanbul appears as a representation of both historical decline and ungrievable loss. The desire for Westernization and modernization is pursued simultaneously with a systematic attempt to suppress 'all bitter memories of the fallen empire', while the city is still home to Ottoman architecture, fountains, mosques, and monuments. Each new modern and formless building rising from the rubble of a destroyed historical monument represents this conscious attempt to forget and the desire to get rid of the burden of remembering.

"The remains of a glorious past and civilization" inflict heartache. "The people of Istanbul simply carry on with their lives among the ruins. Many Western writers and travelers find this charming. But for the city's more sensitive and attuned residents, these ruins are reminders that the present city is so poor and confused that it can never again dream of rising to the same heights of wealth, power and culture" (Pamuk, 2005, 91).

In his work titled 'Mourning and Melancholy', Freud (Freud, 1917) distinguishes between melancholy and mourning and defines melancholy as an unsuccessful act of mourning. In other words, melancholy is the failure of a person to separate or break away from a loved person or thing upon the loss of it. This does not always have to be a specific person or thing, in fact it is usually something that is not brought into consciousness. "Although Pamuk does not refer to Freud's distinction between the "normal effects of mourning" in response to the "loss of a loved person, or to the loss of an abstraction" and "a pathological disposition in melancholia", his narration does not spare the tragi-comic ramifications of how the decline of the Ottoman Empire registered in Istanbul's psyche" (Helvacıoğlu, 2013, 174-175). From this perspective, underneath the *hüzün* that defines the collective mood of Istanbul, there is the grief resulting from the loss of the Ottoman Empire and the father/sultan as an object of desire, as well as the pain of historical losses brought about by Westernization and modernization efforts in the twentieth century.

When we return to Cemil Bey again, the melancholic subjectivity attributed to his temperament should not be considered separately from the common mood he shared with his contemporaries. On the other hand, we can find his genius in the vitalist resistance he showed against the intrusive demands for transformation. People who force the door of their own field of subjectivity, who shape external, oppressive and coercive demands for change by molding them into their own mold, and thus transform them into aesthetic, political and scientific productions by including them in their field of subjectivity, are generally referred to as geniuses. This situation can be exemplified through Cemil Bey's art. There are endless debates in classical Turkish music as to whether Cemil Bey's tanbur style implies a revolution. While the old style in tanbur was based on the principle of 'less plectrum, more timbre', the new style developed with Cemil Bey can be summarized as quickness, 'agility', displaying surprising innovations with hand and finger dexterity and creating unusual sound combinations. While some musicians rejected this style as a sign of degradation, others saw it as a revolution and adopted it. A reasonable look can see that both positions are wrong. As Ayas stated:

“Cemil Bey's innovation is based on the transformation of the old, not the denial of it. This need for transformation is one of the results of the socio-political change experienced by Istanbul in the second half of the 19th century. This is a period in which Western culture gained ideological superiority among the Istanbul elite and a demographic transformation that made local cultures more visible in Istanbul. During this period, the old tradition faced strong challenges from outside. Cemil Bey's innovation, to put it in Toynbee's terms, is an effective response to the challenge faced by the tradition. In this context, Cemil Bey's importance stems not from the radicalism in the innovations he introduced, but from his success in keeping the tradition alive (...) Cemil Bey used the three basic sources (old traditional style, folk music, Western music) that guided his preferences in tanbur performance and composition in a way that served the tradition to reproduce itself” (Ayas, 2017, 47)

Another issue that can be mentioned in the context of Cemil Bey can be collected under the title of 'encounters'. Cemil Bey is, first of all, an urban (Istanbul) musician, and among other definitions of his music, the most competent one is 'Istanbul music'. Therefore, above all, his music offers us an auditory experience that makes us feel all the colors of Istanbul. Of course, this cannot be achieved only by staying in the musical circles of the middle and upper classes. Slums, Greek taverns, coffeehouses, dervish lodges, side streets, passages, in short, every element that contains a piece of musical activity and forms a part of the cultural texture of the city, constitutes the auditory space of Cemil Bey's encounters. Moreover, he does not do this with the motivation of a collector for a practical benefit. Therefore, this expresses an encounter rather than a pursuit. “He who listens hard doesn't see,” Benjamin wrote in his essay on Kafka (Benjamin, 1930; as cited in Sontag, 2013, 91). This equally applies to Cemil Bey. This is the motivation of a man who was carried away by the folk song sung by a beggar passing through the gate and walked for miles while trying to write down the folk song on the cigarette paper in his pocket. Cemil Bey's life is full of such encounters. Langa taverns where Greek melodies are heard, wrestling matches accompanied by the sounds of zurna, gypsy neighborhoods such as Sulukule, lodges where ney is played, *semai* cafes where folk music is performed, all these places are popular encounter venues reported by Cemil Bey's close circle. All these encounters that trigger and revitalize Cemil Bey's musical imagination represent, in Benjamin's term, an *Erfahrung*. That is, the possibility of real experience, which is exactly what modernity has begun to steal from us. In a sense, the visual images that Baudelaire inventoried as dead effects turn into auditory images in Cemil Bey. On the other hand, a Benjaminian understanding of time is hidden in the nature of all these encounters. As Öztürk stated:

“He realized that some of the performances he heard from people from the public were "one-time only" and "cannot be repeated". Therefore, he is aware of the vital importance and meaning of being "there, at that moment". While listening to the music, he imprints the performance into his mind with all his perceptions; In his *taksim* (improvised form of music) and descriptions, he makes full use of those melodies that he processed and matured with the workmanship of a jeweler” (Öztürk, 2017, 76)

Cemil Bey represents a figure who hurriedly tries to record the last living remnants of a dying culture in his auditory inventory among the rubble of a collapsing empire. Listening to the music of the city, recording it in musical imagination and transforming it into aesthetic productions can be included in Cemil Bey's field of subjectivity as one of the signs of an advanced sensitivity matured by creative contemplation.

Another encounter of Cemil Bey is with Chopin (not with himself, of course), as it exemplifies the encounter with Western music. Altar (1963, 251) states that Cemil Bey read Chopin's biography through authors such as Lavignac and Marmontel, and gained a deep impression of himself through the Western musician Godowski. The encounter narrated by Mesud Cemil took place during a concert organized at Tepebaşı Theatre:

“After his performance, while he was trying to slowly sneak out of the backstage, holding me by the hand, he saw the pianist Hegyei coming on stage, stopped and started listening to the pianist from a dimly lit part of the backstage. Then I saw my father blanch at with deep excitement and crying, worried that someone would see him. I learned later that pianist Hegyei played especially Chopin that day. I saw my father repeatedly and in a state of obsession, trying naively to decipher a piece he remembered from that concert day on his kemenche. And again, I learned later that this piece was Chopin's Nocturne in B flat major” (cited in Altar, 1963, 251-252)

Hasan Ali Yücel “If Chopin had been born in our country, he would have been Cemil Bey; If Cemil Bey had been born there, he would have been Chopin.” says. “Both of them have only the soul of music. Absolute music. Cemil Bey's *taksims* are such that they are a '*Marche funebre*' in spirit.” (Yücel, 1950, 239) Indeed, at first glance, a spiritual kinship can be detected between these two musicians, even though they were born in very different geographical and cultures. Both musicians wandered around the borders of pathologic melancholia throughout their lives and died of the same disease (tuberculosis) at similar ages. Sontag emphasizes the romantic inspiration on tuberculosis in her book *Illness as a Metaphor*:

“But it takes a sensitive person to feel such sadness or, by implication, to contract tuberculosis. The myth of TB constitutes the next-to-last episode in the long career of the ancient idea of melancholy—which was the artist's disease, according to the theory of the four humours. The melancholy character—or the tubercular—was a superior one: sensitive, creative, a being apart (...) So well established was the cliché which connected TB and creativity that at the end of the century one critic suggested that it was the progressive disappearance of TB which accounted for the current decline of literature and the arts” (Sontag, 2001, 27).

The similarity between the two artists is not limited to their temperaments or tragic deaths, but is also close to their orientation towards music. Both of them stand out more in terms of their virtuosity characteristics as well as their compositional characteristics. Here, on this occasion, it may be useful to take a brief look at the discussions about how Cemil Bey is tried to be positioned in classical Turkish music. In a series of articles he wrote after Cemil Bey's death, Rauf Yekta (1916, 128) divides the artists who are engaged in music into classes based on their interests and includes Cemil Bey in the virtuoso class. There may be assumptions underlying this definition, such as that his works do not diverge too much from tradition, do not reach the totality to form a corpus, or do not contain any significant originality. On the other hand, Cemil Bey's real talent is the brilliance he shows in the *taksim* form. Tanrıkorur states that his conventional composition in known forms and patterns did not attract Cemil Bey's attention, placing him in a rather paradoxical position as the '*Taksim composer*':

“Cemil's *taksims* (which we hear on records) seem to be born right there when the recording starts, and neither the beginning nor the end gives the impression of a random chase of tunes. On the contrary, these *taksims* have a fluency that is carefully calculated for the 3–4-minute recording time, does not allow for expansion, dispersion, repetition or indecision, and does not have any problems with the direction and melody to follow in the maqam progression. Therefore, it would not be wrong to consider these small compositions, which are balanced in every aspect, as improvised compositions, and to call this artistic phenomenon *Taksim composition*” (Tanrıkorur, 1994, 312)

As for the issue of virtuosity, virtuosity, as a term expressing complete mastery over the instrument played, defines a musical occupation that was valued in the West for a period - especially in the Romantic period - and is gradually losing its importance and value today. As Aksoy (1947, 350) states, for the solipsist artist of the romantic period, musical performance does not represent a vast and serene interpretation of the played works, but an exhibition through finger dexterity. Expressing that he hates virtuosity, Andre Gide, in his comments on Chopin, states that his unpretentious and simple

musical phrases were sacrificed in the context of virtuosity displays. He states that when a certain level of mastery is reached, it is more difficult to play this composer's works slowly than quickly, and when played at an excessive speed, the tonality transitions fall victim to noise (Gide, 2012; as cited in Aksoy, 352). As for Cemil Bey, after all these explanations, it seems quite doubtful to consider him only as a virtuoso. The fact that he mastered almost every instrument he picked up in a short time is clear evidence that he has a natural tendency towards virtuosity. However, the critical question here is, as Aksoy (354) stated, does technical skill represent a value on its own or is it at the service of his art - his music? The second one seems to be more valid for Cemil Bey. For Cemil Bey, technique is not a contentless show-off, but a skill used to give strength to the music he wants to create.

## 7. Conclusion

Cemil Bey died at the age of 43 and left behind a few compositions that did not correspond to his popularity and a few records, all of which were poor copies of his true talent. However, trying to understand him only through the works he left behind provides an incomplete interpretation of cultural history. As emphasized at the beginning of the study, some figures who are considered geniuses, such as Cemil Bey, can be seen as a transition period figure. The twilights, when the old is about to decay and the new is not yet visible on the horizon, are often the habitat of genius. The dynamics of the conflict between the canons of the descending old stratum and the rising new stratum often create the appropriate climate for the emergence of genius figures. It is not a coincidence that the revolutionary generation, in which the historical transition from feudal society to bourgeois society created significant psychological gaps and anxieties, is also remembered as the age of genius in Western Europe. Such periods in which radical and destructive social changes accelerate, fixed reference points consisting of old forms of religious and cultural beliefs decline, and power dissolves with all the symbolic meanings it contains, are harbingers of an upcoming cultural crisis. Being able to measure these threatening challenges with the precision of a seismograph and produce comprehensive responses to them can only be seen as a privilege of exceptional and melancholic souls.

It was shaped by the influence of a chaotic atmosphere in which a similar rupture occurred in the history of national culture and politics during the period in which Cemil Bey lived. Perhaps that is why we should see him from the same perspective as Benjamin saw Baudelaire; as a historical intensity, a vortex; the planet that completes its cycle last; under the ominous influence of Saturn.

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