

BEYOND NOSTALGIA: YAVUZ BÜLENT BÂKİLER'S FACTUAL POEM *SİVAS HASRETİ*

Nostaljinin Ötesinde: Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler'in Olgusal Sivas Hasreti Şiiri



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Abstract

This paper examines the emotional, factual, and documentary elements within Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler's 1970s poem, *Sivas Hasreti* (Longing for Sivas). Over several decades, the poet has been a significant contributor to Turkish culture and literature, expressing national sensitivity and the authentic essence of the country. In his rhymed, six-stanza composition, he reflects on memories from the 1940s and 1950s, presenting a nuanced portrayal that captures both positive and negative aspects of his childhood in a realistic manner. All over *Sivas Hasreti*, Bâkiler sensitively articulates his yearning for his hometown in a nostalgic tone, simultaneously highlighting various factual features of Sivas in Türkiye. Through the lens of nostalgia, the poet intricately weaves together details encompassing demography, religion, architecture, cultural heritage, climate, geography, history, icons, transportation, and life standards of Sivas. In this way, Bâkiler adeptly constructs a vivid mental image of his childhood hometown, allowing readers to immerse themselves in the multifaceted layers of memories from that era. The poet's skill enriches the emotional depth and historical context of *Sivas Hasreti*, thereby solidifying the work's special and enduring place in Turkish literature.

Keywords: Nostalgia, Sivas, *Sivas Hasreti*, Turkish Poetry, Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler.

Öz

Bu makale, Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler'in 1970'lerde yazdığı *Sivas Hasreti* adlı şiirindeki duygusal, gerçekçi ve belgesel unsurları kapsamlı bir şekilde incelemektedir. Şair, onlarca yıl boyunca milli duyarlılığı ve ülkenin otantik özünü ifade ederek Türk kültürü ve edebiyatına önemli katkılarda bulunmuştur. Bâkiler, altı kıtadan oluşan uyaklı şiirinde, 1940'lar ve 1950'lerden Türkiye'nin Sivas şehrindeki anılarını yansıtarak çocukluğunun hem olumlu hem de olumsuz yönlerini gerçekçi bir şekilde okuyuculara sunar. *Sivas Hasreti* boyunca Bâkiler, memleketine duyduğu özlemi nostaljik bir tonda hassasiyetle dile getirirken, aynı zamanda Sivas'ın çeşitli gerçek özelliklerini de vurgular. Şair, nostalji merceğinden demografi, din, mimari, kültürel miras, iklim, coğrafya, tarih, simgeler, ulaşım ve yaşam standartlarını kapsayan detayları özenle bir araya getirir. Bu şekilde, Bâkiler, çocukluğunun memleketinin canlı bir zihinsel imgesini ustaca inşa ederek, okuyucuların o dönemin çok katmanlı anılarının içine dalmalarını sağlar. Şairin bu yeteneği, *Sivas Hasreti*'nin duygusal derinliğini ve tarihsel bağlamını zenginleştirerek, söz konusu eserin Türk edebiyatındaki özel ve kalıcı yerini pekiştirir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nostalji, Sivas, *Sivas Hasreti*, Türk Şiiri, Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler.

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Introduction

Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler (pronounced Baakiler) is a multifaceted figure, recognized not only as a poet but also as a writer, lawyer, and bureaucrat. His diverse contributions to Turkish culture and literature encompass a wide range of genres, including essays, reviews, biographies, and travel writing (Yükselen, 2012, p. 124; Biçer, 2014). Bâkiler's literary career spans from the mid-twentieth century to the first three decades of the twenty-first, reflecting his profound effect on contemporary Turkish thought and culture. Born in 1936 in Sivas, a city strategically located in the heart of Türkiye, Bâkiler completed his primary and secondary education in his hometown. His venture into professional writing began during his studies at Ankara Faculty of Law from 1955 to 1960, where he initiated his engagement with poetry. Although he established a successful career as a lawyer, his passion for literature consistently took precedence, and his work often focused on preserving and popularizing Turkish history, language, traditions, and customs. Given his extensive body of work, Bâkiler is particularly celebrated as a poet, and this article will focus on his poetic contributions, specifically his 1970s poem *Sivas Hasreti* (Longing for Sivas).

In his literary endeavours, the poet undertakes the task of identifying key aspects of Türkiye through realistic observations while simultaneously extolling the virtues of the Turkish language, history, and culture. Indeed, Ergüzel (qtd. Gürsu, 2010, p. 15) highlights Bâkiler's prowess as one of the finest writers and orators in Turkish, emphasizing the poet's dedication to language sensitivity. Taşdelen (2010, p.23) further observes that Bâkiler forms the language of poetry by harnessing everyday language and the expressive potential of common usage, considering it his duty to perpetuate the beauty of Turkish through its correct handling and preservation (Akçay, 2010, p. 28). Moreover, Bâkiler's literary approach extensively draws from traditional Turkish poetry, eloquently expressing themes of nature, humanity, and national sentiments, as noted by Durman (2010, p. 32). Across his poems, the poet consistently elevates themes of love, passion, longing, motherhood, and homeland with a plain and understandable voice, resonating with readers (Parlak Kalkan, 2013, p. 1199). On the other hand, when examining literary history, the term 'National Literature' defines a Turkish literary movement that took place between 1911 and 1923. As highlighted by Dayanç (2012, p.91), prominent figures such as Mehmed Emin Yurdakul, Ömer Seyfettin, Ali Canip Yöntem, and Ziya Gökalp played fundamental positions during this period. Writers of the National Literature movement depicted Anatolian and Turkish people, emphasizing nationalist and patriotic sentiments. Their objective included the purification of the Turkish language by eliminating Arabic and Persian influences. Ergüzel (qtd. Gürsu, 2010, p.16) contends that Bâkiler serves as a contemporary representative of the National Literature movement. In agreement, Biçer (2014) draws parallels between Bâkiler's poetry and the characteristics of that historical period, further solidifying the poet's alignment with the legacy of the National Literature movement:

Anatolia and its people emerged as central themes in Turkish literature during the National Literature period (1911-1923). This thematic focus on Anatolia, observed during the National Literature Period, is also evident in the poetry of Bâkiler. Through his poems, Bâkiler not only brings the reality of Anatolia to the forefront for readers but also explores the Anatolian people, their roots, civilization, and the culture of the Turkish nation in his works¹ (Biçer, 2014).

The majority of Bâkiler's poetic creations find their compilation in his 2002 publication, *Harman* (Blend), although he had previously introduced several poetry works (Çetişli, 2010, p. 34). Comprising one hundred and twenty poems, *Harman* unfortunately lacks specific dates of composition. Typically, Bâkiler's poems adhere to a rhymed structure, commonly spanning six or seven stanzas. Within the verses of *Harman*, the poet delicately explores themes of family, history, religion, identity, nationality,

¹ Throughout this paper, I translated all the original Turkish text into English myself.

love, and homeland, all approached with an intense sensitivity. In this respect, Bâkiler employs a concise and accessible language in his poems, characterized by short lines designed to resonate with the general public. He attributes the development of his rhyming art to the influence of folk poets encountered on the streets, the tales narrated by his mother, and the folk songs she sang (Bâkiler, 2010b, p. 12). This connection to folk traditions infuses his poetry with a distinct accessibility and relatability. Noteworthy is the influence of Bâkiler's childhood experiences on his literary output. Reflecting on his earlier years, the poet provides a glimpse into the formative effects that shaped his artistic sensibilities:

“I spent my entire childhood in Sivas, then an Anatolian city with the ambiance of a small town. Despite my father holding the position of department chief, our family faced financial difficulties. Consequently, my entire childhood unfolded in the backdrop of poverty, where my toys were crafted from mud, and my days were filled behind ox-carts and phaetons” (qtd. in Tüzer, 2009).

One of the outstanding poems encapsulated within the collection *Harman* is *Sivas Hasreti* (Longing for Sivas), a masterpiece by Bâkiler. This poetic creation proceeds as a nostalgic journey, vividly portraying the documented realities of Türkiye's cityscape during the transformative decades of the 1940s and 1950s. Through Bâkiler's evocative verses, readers are transported back in time to an era marked by its unique cultural, social, and architectural characteristics. Thus, *Sivas Hasreti* stands as a testament to Bâkiler's ability to transcend time and immerse readers in the rich tapestry of Türkiye's history. Through his nostalgic lens, the poet not only captures the documentary facts of Sivas but also infuses them with the emotions of longing, love, and pride for his beloved city.

1. Sivas in Brief

Sivas, one of Anatolia's oldest cities, boasts a rich history and culture that traces back to 2000 BC. Its vast expanse establishes its position as the second-largest province in Türkiye in terms of land area, with an elevation of 1250 meters. Throughout history, Sivas has been a significant province during the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires, owing to its socio-political significance. As a result, the city has been a hub of multicultural interaction, particularly in terms of commerce, economics, and cultural exchange for generations (Kaya, 2006, p. 10). Moreover, a landmark event that signifies Sivas's historical importance is the Sivas Congress of 1919, presided over by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. This essential congress marked a critical milestone in the process of the Independence War (1919-1922) and solidified Sivas's reputation as the birthplace of the Turkish Republic. Despite the city centre's population being less than half a million, Sivas has left a lasting imprint globally, with more than three million people hailing from Sivas known to reside in other major Turkish cities and an additional three million abroad, commonly due to economic migration (Munyar, 2019). A popular local saying, “Sivas's cold weather is harsh, its people are brave” encapsulates the city's climate and the character of its inhabitants. Moreover, Sivas is renowned for its historical architecture, folk poets and songs, Kangal dogs, distinct cuisine, and wintry weather. Nestled in an agriculturally rich region, the local economy thrives on agricultural activities. The city is also home to two state universities, an international airport, a ski resort, and various cultural and historical attractions, making it an appealing destination for visitors and locals alike.

2. Cultural Facts in *Sivas Hasreti*

Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler's *Sivas Hasreti*, composed in the early 1970s, progresses with a poetic structure comprising six rhymed stanzas. Throughout his work, the poet intentionally employs authentic, easily comprehensible Turkish language and concise verses. This stylistic choice serves to highlight the significance of his hometown, Sivas. Despite the fact that “Bâkiler's parents are from Azerbaijan” (Adıyaman, 2014, p. 52; Bâkiler, 2010a), the poet unequivocally identifies Sivas, the city of his birth,

as his true home. Additionally, Miyasoğlu (2010, p. 31) notes that Bâkiler enjoys recognition in Azerbaijan, thereby illustrating the extent of his cultural influence. A notable feature of *Sivas Hasreti* is the recurrent use of the word 'şehir' (city) as the concluding word in each stanza. This deliberate refrain serves as a touching echo, emphasizing the depth of emotion Bâkiler associates with his birthplace. Thus, each repetition of 'şehir' acts as a thematic anchor, underscoring the central function that Sivas plays in the poet's lyrical exploration of longing and nostalgia. Despite the initial impression of a platonic love poem created by the first two lines, the reader soon discovers the true nature of the composition—an expression of deep nostalgia for the city:

Ne güzel seni sevmek böyle uzaktan
 Ve seni düşünmek bir çocuk hevesiyle.
 Her sabah yeniden ezan sesiyle
 Müslüman Müslüman uyanan şehir. (Bâkiler, 2002, p.70).²

How pleasant to love you from this afar,
 And thinking of you in childish delight...
 Each morning with the prayer call yet
 Most in Muslim faith awakening city. (1st St.).

The theme of longing for the homeland, rather than nostalgia alone, forms the central motif in Bâkiler's work. While nostalgia, a term originally coined by Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer in 1688 (Herrmann, 2007, p. 23), does play a role in shaping the emotional undercurrent of the poem, it is more accurately described as a deep sense of yearning for the poet's homeland. As Sweeney (2020, p. 184) notes, this kind of longing often influences our life decisions, serving as a driving force behind both personal and collective memories. The *Mirable Dictionary* (2012, p. 552) defines 'nostalgia' as a sentimental connection to the past, often evoked by childhood memories. However, in the context of Bâkiler's *Sivas Hasreti*, the emotional tone goes beyond mere reminiscing; it touches upon *hasret* which is a deep yearning for one's homeland. Kusumi et al. (2010, p.150) describe nostalgia as a favourable attitude toward the past rooted in autobiographical memory, but here, the poet's reflection on the past is intrinsically tied to a longing for Sivas, his homeland. This longing acts as a near synonym to homesickness, evoking a powerful emotional connection to both personal and collective identities. In Bâkiler's portrayal, the memories of Sivas not only provide emotional solace but also act as anchors that ground the poet in a rapidly changing world, reflecting his deep-rooted attachment to his homeland. Thus, while nostalgia plays a role, it is the concept of longing for the homeland that dominates the emotional landscape of the poem.

Building on this concept of longing for the homeland, Bâkiler's poetic creation skilfully taps into the universal sentiments of nostalgia, weaving a tapestry of emotion that resonates with readers on a deeply personal level. Beyond mere sentimentalism, nostalgia is a complex mix of emotions encompassing happiness, sadness, and a longing for the past (Fleury et al., 2020; Della Porta & Tufaro 2022, p. 1388). It is a bittersweet feeling that brings both joy and warmth while evoking a sense of loss and longing. Bâkiler's exploration of his yearning for Sivas encapsulates the multifaceted nature of nostalgia, making

² Undoubtedly, the most difficult type of translation is rhymed poetry, because the translator must remain faithful to the original text and convey the author's feelings and thoughts into the target language's culture. Since each literary work is unique, reading it in its original language will give the greatest pleasure. While translating Bâkiler's poem into English, I tried to keep loyal to the meaning, rhyme scheme and line lengths. Moreover, like in the original format, I finished each stanza with 'city'.

his work a reflection on the details of human emotion and connection to one's roots. In his heartfelt poem, Bâkiler mentions the cherished memories of his hometown, Sivas, painting a vivid picture of his mid-1940s childhood, an evocative narrative that resonates with nostalgic undertones from the poem's inception to its conclusion. The central theme that encapsulates the essence of the first stanza is that of longing, a sentiment highlighted in the opening line. Bâkiler, with verses such as "How pleasant to love you from this afar, and thinking of you in childish delight...", reveals a deep-seated yearning for his beloved hometown, suggesting an extended period of physical separation. The foundation of this sensitive longing is rooted in love, emphasizing that an absence of affection for one's hometown precludes the possibility of such evocative yearning. Bâkiler's longing, however, transcends ordinary yearning; it reaches the level of homesickness, intimately tied to the realm of nostalgia. Through this heartfelt expression, Bâkiler frankly acknowledges that, for him, Sivas is primarily a repository of recollections from a beautiful and joyous childhood. As the poem progresses beyond its initial stanza, Bâkiler shifts his focus to offer demographic and religious insights into Sivas during the 1940s and 1950s. Notably, he features the predominantly Muslim population of the city, whose mornings are punctuated by the call to prayer—a practice that held sway over daily life. This historical backdrop aligns with Ünalın's report (2004, p. 49), stating that in 1945, Sivas boasted a population of around 330,000, with 2% comprising non-Muslims. Despite Bâkiler's birth into a Muslim family, his literary works steadfastly eschew discrimination or humiliation towards other religions. Indeed, he emerges as a humanist, displaying meaningful respect for all religions, nationalities, and races. A testament to Bâkiler's inclusivity is evident in his recollection of Christian Armenian neighbours in Sivas and his permanent friendship with Vahan Seyran, a classmate (Zal, 1989, p.6). Bâkiler fondly recalls the deep bond forged since primary school, a relationship characterized by unwavering harmony, devoid of the slightest quarrel or disagreement. Through these nuanced narratives, Bâkiler weaves a tapestry that transcends mere nostalgia, portraying Sivas not merely as a geographical location but as a repository of diverse human connections and shared histories.

The second stanza of *Sivas Hasreti* goes deeper into the tapestry of Sivas, providing additional factual details about the city centre:

Bir Selçuklu nakışında seni bulmak ne güzel
 Ne güzel seni duymak bir ney sesinde.
 Şemsî Sivasî'nin mübarek türbesinde
 Kandil kandil yanan şehir. (Bâkiler, 2002, p.70).

To find you in a Seljuk embroidery, how lovely,
 How beautiful to hear you in a ney's melody.
 And the blessed tomb of Shamsi Sivasi,
 Which illuminates the whole city. (2nd St.).

Bâkiler, in this section, draws attention to the traditional Turkish musical instrument, the ney-flute, whose melodic strains evoke a sense of comfort in the hearts of its listeners. It becomes apparent that, for the poet, Sivas exudes a tranquil ambiance akin to the soothing sounds of this centuries-old musical marvel. Furthermore, Bâkiler finely weaves references to the Seljuk State, its enduring heritage, and Shamsi Sivasi into the fabric of his poem (Bâkiler, 2002, p. 70). The historical significance of the Seljuk State in Turkish history is paramount, as it was the first Turkish entity to embark on a westward journey

from Central Asia and establish a lasting settlement in Anatolia. Founded in 1077, the Seljuk State reigned for approximately two hundred and fifty years until its overthrow by the Ilkhanid State in 1308. Widely acknowledged as the precursor to the Ottoman Empire, which held sway for six centuries until the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 by Atatürk, the Seljuk State played a foundational position in affecting the cultural heritage of today's Türkiye. In essence, the cultural roots of Türkiye predominantly trace back to the Seljuks. As Güney (2022, p. 272) aptly observes, numerous cities worldwide, including Anatolia, have witnessed human settlements throughout history, leaving an indelible mark on their cultural legacies. Bâkiler, attuned to this historical reality, emphasizes the immense cultural wealth of Sivas in his poem *Sivas Hasreti*, attributing much of it to the foundational influence of the Seljuk State. This portrayal by Bâkiler aligns with the broader understanding that many cities, as repositories of human history, carry an everlasting cultural heritage that transcends time.

Actually, Sivas held great strategic importance during the era of the Seljuk State, primarily due to its location along prominent trade routes. This vital role is highlighted by Kaya (2008, p. 212), who notes that Sivas was not only a key trade hub but also emerged as a significant centre for learning during the Seljuk period, boasting medreses (old universities) that nurtured numerous scholars and intellectuals. Rogers (1965, p. 63) further accentuates the persistent legacy of the Seljuk Turks, asserting that their architectural designs stand as a lasting contribution to world history. This contribution, both technically accomplished and creatively adorned, has left an indelible mark on the world's architectural landscape. Despite the presence of Ottoman artefacts in Sivas, it is the Seljuk architecture³ that predominantly outlines the city into an open-air museum. The architectural style of the Seljuks is distinguished by the use of brick and stone, delicate geometric patterns, and elaborate decorations. Indeed, Seljuk architecture is characterized by its pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and domes, drawing inspiration from the architectural traditions of the Byzantine Empire. The distinctive features of Seljuk buildings include decorative tiles, stone carvings, and glazed ceramics, creating intricate and colourful patterns on both exterior and interior surfaces. As Bâkiler articulates in the stanza, the historical structures in Sivas inherited from the Seljuks are exemplars of fine decorative patterns, transforming the city into a veritable fairyland. This architectural richness, highlighted by Bâkiler, presents the magnificent outcome of Seljuk construction methods. Due to this fact, the poet's portrayal in the stanza not only showcases the city's historical significance but also emphasizes the transformative beauty of Sivas, designed by the skilled hands of Seljuk artisans into a breath-taking tapestry of stone-carved fairyland architecture.

Continuing the narrative in the second stanza of his poem, Bâkiler introduces an intriguing facet of Sivas's cultural tapestry—the resting place of an individual of profound significance in Turkish-mystical history. This notable figure is none other than Shamsi Sivasi, whose importance reverberates through the centuries. Shamsi Sivasi, a luminary who graced Sivas during the sixteenth century, holds a revered status in Turkish-mystical history, often symbolically referred to as the spiritual sun (Şarkışla, 2017, p. 119). In his poem, Bâkiler strategically places emphasis on Shamsi Sivasi, depicting him as a spiritual beacon that continues to illuminate the entire city. This portrayal demonstrates the spiritual influence, a sense of mystical radiance that transcends time. It is worth noting that Shamsi Sivasi was not only a mystic but also a poet. However, Aksoy (2005, p. 1) points out that, despite his poetic contributions, his literary identity did not garner as much attention as his mystical persona. This intriguing duality adds layers to the narrative, showcasing Shamsi Sivasi not just as a spiritual guide but also as a poet whose literary legacy, though somewhat overshadowed, contributes to the rich cultural mosaic of Sivas. Thus, in Bâkiler's poetic exploration, Shamsi Sivasi emerges as a multifaceted figure, a spiritual luminary

³ The most impressive Seljuk buildings in the city centre of Sivas are Gökmedrese, Ulu Mosque, Buruciye Medrese, Eğri (crooked) Bridge, and Shifaiye Medrese, which served as a hospital. Besides, the Divriği Ulu (Great) Mosque and Hospital is protected by UNESCO as a cultural heritage which is located in Sivas's Divriği district. Please check for images on the internet for these specified buildings.

whose presence continues to cast a radiant glow over the city of Sivas, and a poet whose literary contributions, though less celebrated, form an integral part of its cultural heritage.

In the third stanza of *Sivas Hasreti*, Bâkiler seamlessly intertwines factual elements, portraying Sivas as a natural repository of cultural wealth:

Halayların, türkülerin çağırır beni uzaktan

Yüreğim hep Mısmıl Irmak gibi tertemiz...

Nerde Çifte Minare'miz, Gök Medrese'miz?

Sımsıcak dualarla maziyi anan şehir. (Bâkiler, 2002, p.70).

Your halays and songs beckon me from afar,

My heart, like the Mısmıl River, pure and clear.

Çifte Minaret, Gök Medrese, are they near?

Minding the past with warm grace in the city. (3rd St.).

The city, likened to a natural factory, has nurtured a multitude of precious folk poets, including luminaries like Pir Sultan Abdal, Ashik Veysel, Muhlis Akarsu, and Ali Kızıltuğ. Bâkiler's lyrical exploration highlights Sivas as a cultural crucible, rich in halays (folk dances) and folk songs. For Bâkiler, Sivas is not just a geographical location but a vibrant tapestry where Turkish folk poetry flourishes, boasting the legacy of nearly a thousand folk poets. His assertion, "there is no other city in Türkiye, other than Istanbul, that is kneaded with so much folk poetry" (Bâkiler, 2010b, p.11), captures the essence of Sivas as a cultural epicentre. Şarkışla (2017) further corroborates this sentiment by noting that one-fifth of Turkish national broadcaster TRT's repertoire comprises Sivas folk songs. Besides, Taydaş (2020, p. 172) states the extensive repertoire of Sivas folk songs, estimating around a thousand compositions with themes centred on love, sayings, and laments. This wealth of lyrical expression contributes to the cultural vibrancy of Sivas, creating a mosaic of emotions and narratives that echo through its history. On the other hand, halay, a term synonymous with centuries-old Turkish folk dances, holds a special place in Sivas's cultural fabric. These dances, deeply rooted in Turkish history, continue to be a celebratory staple at weddings and other special occasions. Kaya (2011, p. 34) sheds light on the unique characteristics of Sivas halays, describing them as starting with slow movements and gradually accelerating towards the end, where men and women traditionally do not dance together. This cultural practice further presents the sophisticated and nuanced nature of Sivas's folk traditions, encapsulating a history that resonates through the lively melodies and rhythmic movements of halay dances.

As observed, Bâkiler in the third stanza of *Sivas Hasreti*, introduces the majestic River Mısmıl, a branch of the Kızılırmak, which stands as the longest river in Türkiye. The poet nostalgically reminisces about the pristine state of the river during his childhood in the 1940s and 1950s, emphasizing its cleanliness. This sentiment is echoed by Şarkışla (2017), who recalls a time when the people of Sivas would wash their clothes and carpets in the crystal-clear waters of River Mısmıl. However, the passage of time witnessed the unfortunate transformation of this once-pure river, as industrial wastes led to pollution. By the early twenty-first century, the river flowing through the heart of Sivas had metamorphosed into Aksu Park. Continuing his exploration, Bâkiler focuses on two iconic landmarks of Sivas, the Çifte Minaret Medrese and Gökmedrese, both from the thirteenth century and featuring distinctive double minarets. Despite being constructed by the Ilkhanids, the Çifte Minaret showcases the architectural finesse of the Seljuks. Similarly, the Gökmedrese, a masterpiece of Seljuk architecture, captivates with

its ornate decorative arts. These ancient structures, over seven hundred and fifty years old, stand proudly in the heart of Sivas, within a mere ten-minute stroll from each other. Up until this point, Bâkiler has celebrated the beauty and cultural richness of his hometown. However, the forthcoming stanzas will reflect the darker facets of the city, offering a nuanced exploration that balances the poetic nostalgia with an open reflection on the problems faced by Sivas.

3. Climate and Negative Facts in *Sivas Hasreti*

In the fourth stanza of *Sivas Hasreti*, the tone shifts as Bâkiler candidly addresses the less favourable aspects of his beloved hometown. In this exploration of the city's negative features, Bâkiler paints a vivid picture of a Sivas caught in the crossroads of history and modernity, grappling with the complexities of progress and preservation. Expressing a mix of disappointment and shame, the poet reflects on the common architecture and living standards in Sivas during his childhood in the 1940s:

Alaca karanlıkta yoksul kağnılar

Ağlar inim inim senin yerine.

Tozlu sokaklarına, kerpiçten evlerine

Bakarak kendinden utanan şehir. (Bâkiler, 2002, p.71).

In the dimming twilight, carts so poor,

Wail and weep, their anguish to pour.

Down your dusty roads, homes of clay,

Gazing upon you, the self-pity city. (4th St.).

Bâkiler, deeply affected by the current state of Sivas, laments the visual impression created by the city's silhouette. In his description, he conveys a sense of desolation that seems incongruent with Sivas's historical significance. The poet is troubled by the realization that Sivas, once an important city throughout history, now projects an image that falls short of its deserved stature. A key element Bâkiler highlights is the predominant use of ox-carts as the primary mode of transportation in Sivas during the 1940s and 1950s. This observation emphasizes the stark contrast between the traditional means of travel and the modern world's technological advancements. However, it should be mentioned that the train used for intercity transportation started to operate in Sivas in 1930 (Ağraz et al., 2020, p.73). The poet's mention of "dusty roads" (Bâkiler, 2002, p. 71) demonstrates the absence of asphalt roads in Sivas during his childhood, revealing a lack of infrastructure development. Additionally, Bâkiler draws attention to the construction materials of the houses in his neighbourhood, highlighting the prevalence of adobe structures and the absence of concrete apartments. This detail further reflects the economic and developmental sides faced by the city, as well as the persistence of traditional building practices.

Bâkiler, in the fifth stanza of *Sivas Hasreti*, mentions the climatic nuances and the refreshing cold waters that characterize the city, infusing his words with a strong sense of nostalgia. The poet's deep yearning for Sivas is palpable throughout this stanza, as he nostalgically recalls the unique features of the city that are etched in his childhood memories:

Tozunla, toprağınla, yoksul kağnılarla

Yılın altı ayında yağıp duran karınla

Ve soğuk sularınla, serin rüzgârlarınla

Gözümde tütüyorsun can şehir. (Bâkiler, 2002, p.71).

With your dust, your soil, and carts so bare,

Snowfall for half the year, an endless affair.

With your cold waters and cool winds that air,

In my eyes, you kindle, my darling city. (5th St.).

When Bâkiler mentions 'cold waters', he not only alludes to the rivers coursing through Sivas but also the neighbourhood fountains. These fountains, known for their 'sweet water' or 'tatlı su' by the locals, have been a longstanding source of fresh, "low-hardness drinking water in Sivas" (Değirmenci, 2020, p. 52; Demirel, 1992). This traditional water source, a cherished part of Sivas's identity, remains prevalent in the twenty-first century, showcasing the city's lasting connection to its historical roots. In emphasizing the city's climate, Bâkiler notes that Sivas experiences six months of snowfall, portraying it as a city with harsh continental winters. The poet's reference to snowy winters likely evokes memories of playful snowball fights and snowman building during his childhood. However, we subtly acknowledge the changing climate dynamics in the twenty-first century, with a shorter snowy season and the associated problems, such as water scarcity. Bâkiler further highlights the geographical reality that Sivas sits at a high altitude, evident in the 'cool winds' he mentions. This geographical characteristic, acts like a natural air conditioner, ensuring a comfortable summer for the residents of Sivas. Obviously, the poet's keen observation of the climate underscores the intimate connection between the city's geography and the happy experiences of his childhood.

4. Homesickness in the Final Stanza

Homesickness, a widespread sentiment encountered by individuals distanced from their familiar surroundings, is notably prevalent among students and expatriates. This complex emotional response is often described as an intense longing, nostalgia, or a melancholic yearning for one's home (Temircan, 2022). In the culminating stanza of *Sivas Hasreti*, Bâkiler poignantly likens his experience to that of a wandering and beseeching dervish, vividly capturing the depth of his homesickness as he resides in a distant city far from his beloved Sivas:

Bir gün bir derviş gibi çıkıp gelirsem eğer

Görürsem bir daha gönül gözüyle seni

Anla bir rüzgâr gibi yüreğimden geçeni

Ve sonra anam gibi sar beni sultan şehir. (Bâkiler, 2002, p.71).

If one day, like a dervish, I come once more,

If I see you again with the eyes of heart, I adore.

Understand the whispers from my heart's core,

Then, like a mother, embrace me, oh sultan city. (6th St.).

Metaphorically adopting the persona of a dervish, a symbol of humility and neediness, Bâkiler conveys the intensity of his homesickness, a yearning so deep that he begs to reunite with Sivas. In this emotional state, the poet longs to behold his hometown, even if only through the eyes of his heart. The concluding line, 'sultan city', a term popularized by Bâkiler in *Sivas Hasreti* (Bâkiler, 2002, p. 71), serves as a

powerful denouement to the poem. By likening Sivas to a 'sultan city', Bâkiler elevates its status, portraying it as the epitome of excellence and nobility. The term sultan conveys notions of the best and monarch-like grandeur. Although the term 'sultan city' has gained popularity in recent decades, it is essential to note that the prevailing title for Sivas remains 'republic city'. For Bâkiler, Sivas embodies the warmth, love, and steadfast reliability akin to a mother's embrace in every aspect. Obviously, the poem's conclusion, marked by the evocative term sultan city, encapsulates the poet's meaningful affection and reverence for his hometown.

Conclusion

Yavuz Bülent Bâkiler stands out as a prominent figure in contemporary Turkish literature, leaving an indelible mark since the mid-1950s. His exceptional command of the Turkish language serves as the bedrock for the clarity, fluency, and extraordinary expression found in his poetry. Notably, his work *Sivas Hasreti* (Longing for Sivas), penned in his mid-thirties, offers an affecting exploration of nostalgia and homesickness, fuelled by an intense yearning for Sivas—the locus of his joyful childhood experiences in the 1940s and early 1950s. Separated from his hometown for an extended period, Bâkiler's emotional journey in *Sivas Hasreti* explores the factual intricacies of Sivas. The poet draws attention to Sivas's rich historical legacy, particularly the architectural marvels inherited from the Seljuk State, which play a central role in constructing the city's cultural landscape. Besides, Bâkiler's poetry endeavours to convey Sivas's significance as a major Turkish city, emphasizing its vibrant folk songs and dances. The Chifte Minare Medrese and the Gökmedrese emerge as iconic symbols, reflecting the grandeur of Sivas. The poet further offers a glimpse into the living standards and transportation of his hometown during the 1940s and 1950s, depicting a time when ox-carts were the primary mode of transport, adobe houses were prevalent, and roads remained dusty due to the absence of asphalt. Furthermore, geographical and climatic features find a place in Bâkiler's verses, where he accentuates Sivas's snowy continental climate and cool winds, attributes shaped by its elevated altitude. The Mısmıl River, once a pristine watercourse flowing through the heart of Sivas during the poet's childhood, has undergone transformation in the twenty-first century, now converted into a park. As a result, in *Sivas Hasreti*, Bâkiler paints a vivid and multifaceted portrait of Sivas, capturing not only the physical details of the city but also the emotional landscape of his significant connection to his birthplace. Through the lens of nostalgia, the poet weaves a narrative that resonates with readers, offering a heartfelt exploration of longing and the enduring ties to one's roots.

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