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Emotional Reflections of Coffee: From Massieu to Classical Turkish Poetry

Kahvenin Duygusal Yansımaları: Massieu'dan Klasik Türk Şiirine

Abstract

Coffee, which originated in Abyssinia in the 9th century, gradually spread across the world following a goatherd's seen of the energizing effects on his animals after they consumed coffee berries. By the 15th century, the Ottomans had adopted coffee into daily life, and this mysterious beverage eventually entered the palace. In the early 17th century, it reached Europe and acquired a distinctive place in Western literature as an exotic element. The earliest known studies on coffee are attributed to Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, Bengiazlah, and Ibn Sīnā.

One of the most notable poems dedicated to coffee in Latin literature is Abbé Guillaume Massieu's *Caffaeum: Carmen*. It is known that the poem was read and well received at the Académie des Inscriptions. Until the mid-nineteenth century, *Caffaeum: Carmen* appeared in several other anthologies and in translations into French and Italian. His poem focuses on various aspects of coffee such as its cultivation, storage, preparation, physiological effects, and stimulating qualities. The work was later translated into English by John T. Gilmore under the title *Coffee: A Poem*.

In classical Turkish literature, numerous poems were also written about coffee during the same period. Coffee, with its color, aroma, the period in which it was banned, and its vessels of presentation became the subject of numerous metaphors and similes in classical Turkish poetry as a reflection of daily life. The incorporation of coffee into Ottoman poetry can be regarded as contemporaneous with its integration into Ottoman society. Ottoman poets approached coffee not only in terms of its physical characteristics but also through its emotional and cultural dimensions—associating it with love, longing, spiritual contemplation, and social interaction.

This study takes Gilmore's translation as its source text and analyzes the expressions in *Coffee: A Poem* in comparison with their counterparts in classical Turkish poetry. The aim is to explore how coffee, as a literary and cultural symbol, is associated with emotional meaning, and to examine how these associations manifest similarly or differently across Western and Ottoman poetic traditions, with Massieu's poem at the center of this comparative inquiry.

Keywords: Emotions, Didactic Poetry, Latin Literature, Classical Turkish Literature, Coffee, Massieu.

Öz

Kökeni 9. yüzyılda Habeşistan'a dayanan kahve, genel kaniya göre bir keçi çobanının, kahve çekirdeklerini yiyen hayvanlarında gözlemlediği tuhaf hareketleri çevresiyle paylaşması sonucu, zamanla tüm dünyaya yayılmıştır. Kahve Osmanlılar tarafından 15. yüzyılda benimsenmiş; kısa sürede gündelik yaşamın ayrılmaz bir parçası hâline gelerek saraya kadar girmiştir. 17. yüzyılın başlarında ise Avrupa'ya ulaşmış ve Batı edebiyatında egzotik bir öğe olarak özgün bir yer edinmiştir. The earliest known studies on coffee are attributed to Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, Bengiazlah, and Ibn Sīnā.

Latin edebiyatında kahve üzerine yazılmış en dikkat çekici şiirlerden biri Abbé Guillaume Massieu'nun *Caffaeum: Carmen* adlı didaktik şiiridir. Şiirin Académie des Inscriptions'da okunup beğeni topladığı bilinmektedir. On dokuzuncu yüzyılın ortalarına kadar *Caffaeum: Carmen*, başka antolojilerde ve Fransızca ile İtalyanca çevirilerinde yer almıştır. Bu şiir, kahveyi yoğunlukla yetiştirilmesi, muhafaza edilmesi, hazırlanması, fizyolojik etkileri ve uyarıcılığı yönüyle ele alır. Eser, John T. Gilmore tarafından *Coffee: A Poem* adıyla İngilizceye çevrilmiştir.

Klasik Türk edebiyatında da kahveye dair pek çok şiir kaleme alınmıştır. Bu gizemli içecek rengi, kokusu, yasaklandığı dönem ve sunum kapları gibi özellikleri bakımından günlük yaşamın bir yansıması olarak klasik Türk şiirinde çok sayıda mecaz ve benzetmeye konu olmuştur. Ancak Osmanlı şairleri, kahveyi yalnızca fiziksel özellikleriyle değil; aşk, özlem, manevi tefekkür ve sosyal etkileşim gibi duygusal ve kültürel boyutlarıyla da işlemişlerdir.

Bu çalışma, Gilmore'un çevirisini kaynak metin olarak kabul ederek *Coffee: A Poem*'deki ifadelerin klasik Türk şiirindeki karşılıklarını analiz etmektedir. Amaç, kahvenin edebî ve kültürel bir sembol olarak duygularla nasıl ilişkilendirildiğini ve bu ilişkinin Batı ile Osmanlı şiir geleneklerinde nasıl benzerlikler ya da farklılıklar gösterdiğini Massieu'nun şiirini merkeze alarak ortaya koymaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygular, Didaktik Şiir, Latin Edebiyatı, Klasik Türk Edebiyatı, Kahve, Massieu.

Introduction

Throughout history, certain beverages have transcended their role as mere nutritional substances, acquiring various cultural, social, and even literary meanings. Coffee is among the foremost of these beverages. Originating in the highlands of Ethiopia, coffee was reportedly discovered in the 9th century when a goatherd noticed unusual behavior in his goats after they consumed the berries of a particular plant. Over time, coffee became not only a drink that revitalizes the body but also a symbol associated with mental stimulation, intellectual productivity, and literary imagination.

Although the origins of coffee are often shrouded in legend, historical data indicate that by the 15th century, Sufi dervishes in Yemen were using coffee to remain awake during night-long rituals. In this context, coffee was consumed as a spiritual stimulant, valued for its ability to enhance wakefulness and vitality. By the 16th century, coffee had reached the Ottoman Empire and quickly permeated daily life—from the palace to the public sphere. Particularly in Istanbul, the establishment of coffeehouses marked a significant transformation in the social fabric, as these venues became central to urban social and intellectual life (Hattox, 1985, pp. 23-45).

In the Western world, coffee was initially encountered through travelers, merchants, and diplomats. By the 17th century, coffeehouses had emerged in major European cities such as Venice, Paris, and London. Coffee was introduced to the West as a 'Turkish beverage,' and its exotic origins rendered it a mystical and alluring subject within Western literary imagination (Ellis, 2004, pp. 51-78).

Within this broader context, the Latin didactic poem “Caffaeum: Carmen”, written by Abbé Guillaume Massieu in the early 18th century, is considered one of the most significant Western literary texts devoted to coffee (Massieu, 2019, pp. 1-12).

In Ottoman literature, by contrast, coffee was explored more intensively within its social and emotional contexts. Ottoman poets did not portray coffee solely as a beverage; rather, they imbued it with deeper symbolic meanings—linking it to love, longing, joy, conversation, and especially spiritual contemplation.

Method

This study is built upon an investigation into the literary reflections of coffee, which has historically held one of the most influential positions among beverages in terms of cultural, social, and literary significance. At the center of the research lies *Caffeum: Carmen*, a Latin poem by Abbé Guillaume Massieu, along with its English translation titled *Coffee: A Poem* by John T. Gilmore. The expressions about coffee in this poem are compared with those found in the works of classical Turkish poets. In doing so, the study examines the emotional impact of coffee as represented in both Western literature and classical Turkish literature.

The Etymology and Discovery of Coffee

The word, which came into Turkish from the Arabic word "qahwa", means "a known tree, the fruit of the tree and the drink prepared from its fruit" (Tietze, 2016, p. 55), "a tree from the madder family that grows in hot climates; the seed of the fruit of this tree; the powder obtained by roasting and grinding these seeds; the drink prepared with this powder" (TDK Sözlük). European languages, on the other hand, adopted the name of this beverage as “kahweh” in the 1600s, not directly from the original Arabic qahwa, but by transfer from Turkish. As a result, “coffee”, a word of Arabic origin, is pronounced with similar phonetics in all the world's languages (Ukers, 1935, p. 265).

There is no record of when or how the word qahwa was first in use in Arabic. It is likely to come from the Arabic root k-h-y (قهي). In the Arabic language the verb “kahiye” means “appetite lost.” This meaning is related to the fact that the word qahwa was originally used to describe a type of wine that lost the appetite of those who drank it. In other words, the ancient Arabs used the word coffee to mean wine. This Arabic root is cognate with the Hebrew root k-h-h (כהה), which is related to meanings such as "weak," "faint," "smoky," and "dull". It is assumed that the word coffee was used in this sense until the 14th century. Towards the end of this century, in Yemen, it came to mean - in today's sense - a kind of beverage made from the fruits of the coffee tree. Some researchers associate the etymology of the word coffee with the Kaffa (ክፋ) region in Ethiopia, which is the possible homeland of the coffee tree. However, the word for the coffee tree, fruit and drink in this region is “būn” (Ayyıldız, 2021, p. 62; Şemseddin Sâmî, 2009, p. 303).

It can be said that coffee culture emerged in the middle of the 15th century in the Sufi lodges of Yemen in South Arabia (Weinberg & Bealer, 2002, p. 3). The lack of information about the origin of coffee led Arab historians to be influenced by legends and rumours. Among these legends is that Prophet Solomon was the first to use coffee. Most authors limit the history of coffee to more recent times. According to this, the consumption of coffee can be traced back to Ethiopia.

However, traditionally, coffee's general use has also been seen in the Islamic world. However, traditionally, coffee's general use was seen in the Islamic world. Therefore, the narratives of 17th century European writers about seeing coffee for the first time in the Islamic world were decorated with various arguments, just like the Arabs. The most famous of these stories may be that of a shepherd who observed strange behavior in his goats.

In addition to all of this, the earliest and most comprehensive work that serves as a foundational source for research on the origins of coffee, its medicinal properties, and its dissemination throughout the Islamic world is attributed to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī in the 16th century. In his treatise entitled *'Umdat al-ṣafwa fī ḥill al-qahwa*, al-Jazīrī asserts that virtually all stories and legends regarding coffee converge upon two points of consensus: first, that the use of coffee can be definitively traced to Yemen; and second, that it was consumed in Sufi lodges during ritual gatherings in order to keep dervishes awake and alert (Hattox, 1996, pp. 12-14; Bostan, 2001, pp. 202-205).

The story of goats beginning to dance after consuming coffee beans is the most frequently cited account in Western literature concerning the early use of coffee. However, the various narratives and legends regarding the discovery and initial consumption of coffee, transmitted over centuries, have remained primarily of literary interest and have not progressed beyond the status of anecdote in terms of historical reliability. According to general consensus, coffee first appeared as a food product in Abyssinia and began to be consumed as a beverage in Yemen during the 15th century. By the early 16th century, it had reached Mecca and Cairo; by the mid-century, it had spread to Istanbul; and by the mid-17th century, it had arrived in major cultural and commercial centers across Europe (Bostan, 2001, pp. 202-205).

Although numerous stories and legends exist concerning the discovery of coffee, the account most widely accepted in Turkish literature is a tradition recorded by al-Jazīrī, which attributes the introduction of coffee into Yemen to 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Shādhilī. Often confused with the founder of the Shādhiliyya Sufi order, 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Shādhilī came to be regarded as the patron saint of those who cultivate, prepare, and consume coffee. According to this narrative, Shaykh 'Umar, a disciple of Shaykh Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, cured the people of Muḥa (Mocha) during an epidemic by boiling coffee and having them drink its infusion (Yaman, 2004, pp. 5, 6).

Coffee in the Ottoman Society

The precise date of coffee's introduction into the Ottoman Empire remains a subject of debate. Kātip Çelebi records that coffee was brought to Istanbul by ship in 950/1543. However, the existence of official decrees ordering the closure of coffeehouses as early as the first half of the 16th century suggests that coffee consumption may have begun even earlier. Ālī Mustafa Efendi dates the opening of the first coffeehouses in Istanbul to 960/1553, while Peçuyllu İbrāhim places it in 962/1555 (Bostan, 2001, pp. 202-205).

The introduction of coffee into the Ottoman Empire occurred through Egypt, owing to its close connections with Mecca and Medina. Coffee was first observed in Istanbul and the Rumelian provinces during the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. The first coffeehouse in Istanbul was established in 1554 by two individuals—one from Aleppo and the other from Damascus—and became popular among people from all segments of society. This widespread enthusiasm led to a rapid increase in the number of coffeehouses. However, religious authorities began to view coffeehouses as detrimental to the mosques, prompting the ulema to initiate efforts to have coffee declared forbidden (ḥarām). Although bans on coffeehouses were imposed during the reigns of Sultan Ahmed I and Sultan Murad IV, these prohibitions were short-lived and ultimately ineffective. By the 17th century, coffee had assumed a significant role in Ottoman social life, and its consumption had increased substantially. This growing demand was reflected in the coffee trade as well; of the thousands of tons of coffee transported annually from Yemen to Egypt, approximately half was sent to Istanbul and distributed to other Ottoman cities and Europe. However, due to the immense popularity it enjoyed, this volume of importation proved insufficient, and coffee prices began to rise steadily.

In the Ottoman Empire, the consumption and presentation of coffee were accompanied by a distinct ceremonial protocol. Wealthy households possessed valuable coffee cups, holders (*zarf*), trays, and ewers, which reflected both social status and aesthetic refinement. Moreover, coffee consumption had a set of customs and rituals. In the imperial court, the position of *kahvecibaşı* (chief coffee maker) was established; this individual was not only responsible for preparing and serving coffee but also for maintaining the coffee utensils and serveware used in the palace (Çalışıcı Pala, 2011, p. 374).

Coffee in Europe

Due to its aroma and soothing effects, coffee quickly gained popularity among the Turks and soon across Europe and the wider world. By the 17th century, coffee consumption had begun to expand in major European cities, and interest in Yemeni coffee had grown steadily. The first coffeehouse in Venice opened in 1615, and by 1645, coffeehouses had spread

throughout Italy. Subsequent establishments followed in Marseille in 1644, London in 1650, Vienna in 1651, and Paris in 1669 (Bostan, 2001, pp. 202-205).

Europe's introduction to coffee is often associated with Süleyman Ağa, who was appointed as the Ottoman ambassador to Paris. In 1669, Süleyman Ağa brought coffee with him to the French capital, thereby playing a pivotal role in making the beverage known to Parisian society (Açıkgöz, 1999, p. 98). The French chemist and pharmacist Antoine-Alexis Cadet de Vaux (1743–1828), in his treatise *Dissertation sur le café; son historique, ses propriétés*, explicitly states that it was the Turks who introduced coffee to the world:

As he remarks: "...un Turc prenait du café, il a bien fallu en prendre..." (A Turk was drinking coffee, so we had no choice but to drink it too.) (Cadet de Vaux, 1807, p. 17)

The introduction of coffee into Europe through the Turks contributed to its perception not only as a beverage but also as a cultural symbol associated with the Ottoman world. As in the Ottoman Empire, coffee initially encountered prejudice in Europe. While the Ottomans imposed bans on coffee due to concerns about its potentially harmful effects—both in terms of its roasted nature and social impact, such as the disruptive role of coffeehouses—Europeans regarded it with suspicion as “the drink of infidels and the devil,” fearing that its consumption might lead to a form of cultural “Turkification” (Özkaymak & Baş, 2024, pp. 417-418). Although by the 17th century, coffee began to appear in European medical books as a curative and even miraculous drink (Schivelbusch, 2012, p. 27), it had previously been noted primarily in travel accounts as an exotic beverage from the East. For many Europeans, coffee evoked associations with boiling tar -an element of medieval torture - and thus the act of drinking something hot, black, and bitter seemed unfathomable. Over time, however, coffee found its place within European taste culture, particularly in Vienna, where its bitterness was tempered by the addition of honey. Alongside chocolate, tea, and tobacco, coffee eventually secured its status as a refined and pleasurable consumable (Schivelbusch, 2012, p. 24).

Within the context of everyday life in European societies, the growing cultural dependency on coffee -as depicted in Johann Sebastian Bach's Coffee Cantata (1734)- signifies the transformation of coffee consumption into a shared cultural heritage between Eastern and Western civilizations (Timur Ağildere, 2019, p. 15).

The second volume of the travelogue *Reise in die Morgenländer*, published in 1582 by the Augsburg-based physician Leonhart Rauwolf, is considered one of the earliest European works to mention coffee (Schivelbusch, 2012, p. 23).

The Beginning of Coffee Literature

The earliest known studies on coffee are attributed to Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, Bengiazlah, and Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037). Following these early texts, numerous legends about coffee circulated in the broader literary tradition, inspiring poets across various cultures -including Arabic, French, Italian, and English literary spheres.

The first reliable record concerning the origins of coffee was written by ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī in 1587. His renowned Arabic manuscript *‘Umdat al-ṣafwa fī ḥill al-qahwa*, which praises the use of coffee, is preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris under the catalog number “Arabe, 4590.” Comprising seven chapters, the work not only recounts the origins of coffee but also offers refutations against its critics and concludes with Arabic verses composed by some of the finest poets of the period. De Nointel, an ambassador from the court of Louis XIV to the Ottoman Empire, brought al-Jazīrī's manuscript to Paris from Constantinople, along with another manuscript by Bichivili, one of the three chief treasurers of the Ottoman Empire. The second manuscript, dated later than that of al-Jazīrī, primarily concerns the introduction of coffee into Egypt, Syria, Damascus, Aleppo, and Constantinople (Ukers, 1935, pp. 661, 662).

By the late 16th century, additional Arab poets began composing works in praise of coffee. Fakhr al-Dīn Abū Bakr authored a treatise titled *The Triumph of Coffee*. Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ contributed a significant metaphorical dimension to coffee literature by likening his beloved to coffee (Ukers, 1935, p. 663).

Coffee in Classical Turkish Literature

Classical Turkish literary works often provide access to a wealth of information that is absent from official historical records, including insights into the history, social fabric, customs, imagination, collective traumas, and joys of the society to which they belonged. Beyond factual historical data, these texts also allow for the tracing of emotional responses to historical events, offering valuable perspectives on how such experiences were internalized. Virtually every element that played a role in daily life finds expression in poetry and prose, manifesting in diverse and multidimensional forms within the literary imagination.

Coffee, with its color, aroma, the period in which it was banned, and its vessels of presentation -particularly the coffee cup (*fincan*)- became the subject of numerous metaphors and similes in classical Turkish poetry as a reflection of daily life.

The incorporation of coffee into Ottoman poetry can be regarded as contemporaneous with its integration into Ottoman society. Poets reflected on coffee from a variety of angles, including its appearance, preparation, consumption, beneficial and harmful effects, and even its symbolic relationship with wine. Prior to the introduction of coffee and coffeehouses into everyday Ottoman life, wine and the tavern (*meyhane*) held a central position in the literary domain. The wine metaphor, with all its associated imagery, constituted a key element in classical Turkish poetry—painstakingly reflected by poets through multilayered and symbolically rich expressions (Açıkgöz, 1999, p. 6).

In classical Turkish literature, there are poems of various lengths and themes composed specifically on the subject of coffee; however, the majority of these compositions consist of *beyits* (couplets). The most frequently employed and most beloved verse form among Turkish poets was the *gazel*. While there is a general thematic coherence among the couplets that constitute a *gazel*, each *beyit* is also expected to express a complete and self-contained meaning within itself (Dilçin, 2004, pp. 104, 117). For this reason, the examples drawn from 17th century classical Turkish literature throughout this paper are presented in the form of individual couplets.

In classical Turkish poetry, the poets' acute observational skills enabled them to incorporate diverse elements of social life into their works. By transforming everyday experiences into literary subjects, these poets not only produced aesthetic compositions but also provided valuable insights into the socio-cultural realities of their time. The treatment of themes ranging from the prohibition of coffee—a significant social development—to metaphoric expressions such as a coffee cup symbolizing a lunar eclipse exemplifies the genre's ability to encapsulate cultural memory. Such portrayals underscore the richness of both Ottoman literary imagination and the broader cultural history it reflects (Kaya Kol, 2018, p. 354).

However, there are also instances of poems written solely on the subject of coffee. One notable example is by the poet Nâgzi, who lived during the first half of the 17th century and composed the most extensive *mathnawî* (narrative poem) on coffee in Turkish literature. Titled *Munâzara-i Kahve vü Bâde* (The Debate Between Coffee and Wine), this poem, written in 1625/1626 (1035 AH), consists of 4,092 couplets and presents a fictional dispute between coffee and wine (Şener, 2014).

In the 18th century, the poet Kânî composed a *ghazal* with the repeated word (*redif*) "coffee." In this poem, Kânî praises coffee through a series of poetic comparisons and metaphors:

*"Şeb-i Zulmâda nûr-ı Hak gibi pinhândur kahve
Ya zulmât içre reşk-i çeşme-i hayvândur kahve*

*Nebâtîdür veli hayvânda da vâye-düzd olmuş
Tesettür itmiş anda gerçi kim hayvândur kahve*

*Te'emül eyledük de na'mi-i rahmânı zâhirde
Muharrâyâna gûyâ rahmet-i rahmândur kahve*

...

*Muvakkat mey gibi Kânî degüldür neş'e vü zevki
Safâ-bahşaylıkda her dem ü her ândur kahve"* (Yazar, 2017, p. 241)

(Coffee is hidden like the light of God in the dark night; it even makes the water of life concealed in darkness feel envy.

It is a plant that has veiled its fortune in life, yet in essence, it is life itself. Upon reflection, we realize that coffee is seemingly a divine blessing; for well-cooked meats, it is almost like mercy. Kânî! The pleasure and joy that coffee brings are not as fleeting as wine; coffee brings delight to the soul at every moment, at all times.)

Coffee in Western Literature

In 1671, Faustus Nairon (Banesius) published the first study devoted solely to coffee in Rome. That same year, Dufour published the first French-language treatise on the subject, and in 1684 he released *The Manner of Making Coffee, Tea, and Chocolate*. The manuscripts and letters of Venetian physician and botanist Prosper Alpini (1553–1617), who lived in Egypt for three years during the 16th century, served as a vital source of inspiration and reference for countless researchers studying coffee in later centuries. While traveling through Ottoman territories as a physician, Alpini observed local coffee consumption practices and described the medicinal properties of the coffee plant in his work *Plantis Aegypti* (The Plants of Egypt).

Following Rauwolf and Alpini, numerous figures contributed to the documentation and dissemination of knowledge about coffee. In England, these included Sir Antony Sherley, Parry, Biddulph, Captain John Smith, Sir George Sandys, Sir Thomas Herbert, and Sir Henry Blount; in France, Tavernier, Thévenot, Bernier, P. de la Roque, and Galland; in Italy, Delia Valle; in

Germany, Olearius and Niebuhr; and in the Netherlands, Nieuhoff and others (Ukers, 1935, p. 663).

By the 17th and 18th centuries, French, Italian, and English poets and writers began to produce inspired literary works on coffee, drawing upon earlier scientific and cultural studies. In the eighth book of his *Praedium rusticum*, Vanière offered eloquent praises of coffee, while Fellon—a Jesuit professor at Trinity College—composed a didactic poem titled *Faba Arabica, Carmen*. The poem *Carmen Caffaeum*, written by Abbé Guillaume Massieu in 1718 and forming the subject of this paper, is thought to have been inspired by Fellon's work. Massieu's poem, which was read at the Académie des Inscriptions, appears to have been well received in its time (Ukers, 1935, pp. 663, 664; Massieu, 2019, pp. 12-14).

It is understood that a common characteristic of poems written about coffee in the West is that they are inspired by earlier studies or commentaries on coffee. For example, this can be observed in the following poem by Jacques Delille (1738–1813). The poet describes "the divine nectar" and provides a depiction of its preparation.

"Divine Coffee

*A liquid there is to the poet most dear,
'T was lacking to Virgil, adored by Voltaire,
'T is thou, divine coffee, for thine is the art,
Without turning the head yet to gladden the heart.
And thus though my palate be dulled by age,
With joy I partake of thy dear beverage.
How glad I prepare me thy nectar most precious,
No soul shall usurp me a rite so delicious;
On the ambient flame when the black charcoal burns,
The gold of thy bean to rare ebony turns,
I alone, 'gainst the cone, wrought with fierce iron teeth.
Make thy fruitage cry out with its bitter-sweet breath;
Till charmed with such perfume, with care I entrust
To the pot on my hearth the rare spice-laden dust:
First to calm, then excite, till it seethingly whirls,
With an eye all attention I gaze till it boils.
At last now the liquid comes slow to repose;
In the hot, smoking vessel its wealth I depose,
My cup and thy nectar; from wild reeds expressed,
America's honey my table has blest;
All is ready; Japan's gay enamel invites—
And the tribute of two worlds thy prestige unites:
Come, Nectar divine, inspire thou me,
I wish but Antigone, dessert and thee;
For scarce have I tasted thy odorous steam,
When quick from thy clime, soothing warmth round me stream,
Attentive my thoughts rise and flow light as air,
Awaking my senses and soothing my care.
Ideas that but late moved so dull and depressed,
Behold, they come smiling in rich garments dressed!
Some genius awakes me, my course is begun;
For I drink with each drop a bright ray of the sun."* (Ukers, 1935, p. 667)

A French poet from the 18th century, in the following lines, spoke of the effects of coffee, noting that it stimulates the mind and brings pleasure:

"Lines on Coffee

*Good coffee is more than a savory cup,
Its aroma has power to dry liquor up.
By coffee you get upon leaving the table*

*A mind full of wisdom, thoughts lucid, nerves stable;
 And odd tho' it be, 't is none the less true,
 Coffee's aid to digestion permits dining anew.
 And what 's very true, tho' few people know it,
 Fine coffee 's the basis of every fine poet;
 For many a writer as windy as Boreas
 Has been vastly improved by the drink ever glorious.
 Coffee brightens the dullness of heavy philosophy,
 And opens the science of mighty geometry.
 Our law-makers, too, when the nectar imbibing,
 Plan wondrous reforms, quite beyond the describing;
 The odor of coffee they delight in inhaling,
 And promise the country to alter laws ailing.
 From the brow of the scholar coffee chases the wrinkles,
 And mirth in his eyes like a firefly twinkles;
 And he, who before was but a hack of old Homer,
 Becomes an original, and that 's no misnomer.
 Observe the astronomer who 's straining his eyes
 In watching the planets which soar thro' the skies;
 Alas, all those bright bodies seem hopelessly far
 Till coffee discloses his own guiding star.
 But greatest of wonders that coffee effects
 Is to aid the news-editor as he little expects;
 Coffee whispers the secrets of hidden diplomacy,
 Hints rumors of wars and of scandals so racy.
 Inspiration by coffee must be nigh unto magic,
 For it conjures up facts that are certainly tragic;
 And for a few pennies, coffee's small price per cup,
 "Ye editor's" able to swallow the Universe up." (Ukers, 1935, p. 668)*

Abbé Guillaume Massieu

Massieu was born in Caen on April 13, 1665, and died in Paris on September 26, 1722. He received his primary education in Caen as the son of a poor family and he was sent to the Jesuit College in Paris at the age of sixteen to study philosophy. From 1682 onwards, this institution became known as the Collège de Louis-le-Grand. After completing his training there, he was appointed to teach the humanities in Rennes. He received training in rhetoric in Rennes, and subsequently returned to Paris to pursue studies in theology. Despite successfully completing this phase of his education, the Jesuit authorities deemed him overly inclined toward poetry and insufficiently committed to religious life. Massieu left the order in 1695. Following this, Massieu secured a position under Louis de Sacy and took responsibility for the education of his son. He was fortunate in securing the support of influential patrons, which proved instrumental in advancing his career. He was first admitted as a member of the Académie royale des Inscriptions et Médailles (now known as the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres). In 1710, he was appointed Professor of Greek at the Collège Royal de France; the following year, he was elected to the Royal Academy of Inscriptions and Medals, and in 1714, he became a member of the Académie Française. In the last years of his life, he suffered from gout and double cataracts, and lived in a state of poverty. Despite these hardships, he remained committed to his scholarly pursuits until his death (Boze, 1740, pp. 307-325; Massieu, 2019, pp. 13, 14).

Caffeum: Carmen

The date of composition for this poem remains uncertain. It is possible that *Faba Arabica*, a Latin poem on coffee written by Thomas-Bernard Fellon, SJ (1672–1759), may have inspired its creation. Alternatively, Massieu might have composed it during his tenure as a teacher of the humanities. It is known that the poem was read and well received at the Académie des Inscriptions. Until the mid-nineteenth century, *Caffeum: Carmen* appeared in several other anthologies and in translations into French and Italian. A prose English translation was also included in a study on coffee published in the early twentieth century. When translating *Caffeum: Carmen* into English, John T. Gilmore notes that he aimed to preserve both the self-

consciously artificial nature of eighteenth-century Latin verse and the treatment of verbal virtuosity as an end in itself (Massieu, 2019, pp. 13-14).

Comparative Analysis

Discovery of Coffee

In recounting the origins of coffee consumption, Massieu invokes a classical legend that has been frequently repeated in both Eastern and Western narratives: the tale of the goatherd. As the story goes, while his goats were grazing, they happened upon coffee berries and consumed them. That night, the herder observed that the animals remained restless, jumping around vigorously instead of sleeping. This unusual behavior led him to believe that his goats had fallen under a spell. The anecdote, while folkloric in nature, is emblematic of the mythic aura surrounding coffee's early history and its cultural dissemination.

*"who first this liquid's uses kind reveal'd
(Whose strenght thro' many a year remain'd conceal'd)
Is now a truth by me at least unseal'd.
An Arab herdsman led his goats to grass,
But they now wand'ring through rough pleaces pass,
And crop herbage there, which they had ne'er beheld.
Straightway, as they could reach the branches low,
Then 'gan to seize the green with bites not slow,
And pluck the tender fruit, whose bitter taste allures.
Their herdsman meanwhile knows not what they do,
But fits his tales to rhyme the whole day through:
Out to the woods in song his loves he pours.
At length admonish'd by the evening star,
he homeward drives his flock. Well fed they are,
Yet they close not their eyes in gentle sleep
As they were wont to do in times now past,
But all night caper, each with butting leap.
With sudden fear the herdsman stands aghast,
Craz'd with the thought some neighbour's wish to harm
By magic arts hath done this, or some charm.
Within a hidden valley close at hand,
Made they their rev'rend seat a holy band
Of Brothers, each one vow'd GOD's praise to sing,
And to His altars gifts deservéd bring.
But though at night full loud the bell would sound
And summon all to prayer with brazen cries,
In bed the hast'ning dawn them often found,
Unmindful that they should at midnight rise:
So great their love of sleep. There did predise
O'er the holy house an Elder as their guide,
Respected fot his hoary head and beard beside.
To him the herdsman speeds and tells his tale of woe;
The ELder inward smiles, is pleas'd to go,
The matter's hidden causes to unfold.
As crops may be laid waste by tempests bold,
So now he sees the shrubs unknown gnaw'd bare
By nanny-goats and kids their tender care.
"Tis this the cause!" he said; with no word more
He berries round from laden bushes bore,*

*Which ground at home, with water boil'd and pains,
He boldly from a mighty goblet drains.
In ev'ry limb the lively hat soon dweels,
And weakness from the old man's flesh expels.
Joyful with what he for himself has found,
He shares it with his brothers all around.*" (Massieu, 2019, pp. 26-30)

In Turkish literary tradition, the origin of coffee is frequently attributed to 'Alī b. 'Umar al-Shādhilī, the Yemeni founder of the Shādhiliyya Sufi order. This attribution became so widespread within Turkish society that expressions such as *Yā Hazret-i Şeyh Şāzilī* (Yā Ḥaḍrat al-Shaykh al-Shādhilī) or *Her seherde besmeleyle açılır dükkânımız / Hazret-i Şeyh Şāzelī'dir pîrimiz üstâdımız* (With the name of God, our shop opens every morning / Our master and guide is Shaykh al-Shādhilī) were inscribed on the walls of coffeehouses.

Poets, too, embraced this narrative. For example, Sülūkī, a poet believed to have lived in the 16th century, explicitly states that the knowledge of how to brew coffee was transmitted by Shaykh al-Shādhilī.

*"Kahve-nūşa t'an idüp sen cehlün ızhār eyleme
Kutb-ı Şeyh Şāzilī itmiş bu resm u âdeti"* (Açıkgöz, 1999, p. 50)

(Do not mock those who drink coffee and thereby reveal your ignorance; For it was the Pole of Saints, Shaykh al-Shādhilī, who established this custom and practice.)

This couplet functions as both a defense of coffee consumption and a sacralization of its origins. By linking the act of drinking coffee to the authoritative figure of Shaykh al-Shādhilī, the poet not only legitimizes the practice but also embeds it within a sanctified Sufi lineage. Such associations reflect how deeply coffee was woven into the religious and cultural fabric of Ottoman society.

The Roasting of Coffee

*"With these to hand, the task thou next shalt find,
Will be the beans to roast, and then to grind.
Let not the pestle cease to pound its blows,
Till from the roasted beans their hardness goes,
And work'd on they become the finest dust,
The which obtain'd, 'tis then with care thou must
Ensure that straightway in a bag 'tis laid,
Or in some box for suchlike purpose made."* (Massieu, 2019, pp. 14-16)

In his poem, Massieu treats the roasting of coffee beans as a procedural task and does not attribute any emotional significance to it. In fact, he appears more concerned with the grinding and storage of coffee than with its roasting.

In contrast, classical Turkish poetry -where one of the dominant themes is *love*- frequently uses the imagery of burning and roasting as a metaphor. The act of being scorched or roasted may signify love, separation, oppression, or other forms of inner torment. For instance, the 17th century poet Nābī writes that coffee is roasted with grimness.

*"Kahveyi âteş-i zulm ile kavurdu kemerün
Tütünü yakdı külin göğşe savurdu kemerün"* (Bilkan, 1993, p. 1120)
(They roasted the coffee in the fire of oppression. They burned its smoke and scattered its ashes to the sky.)

In this couplet, Nābī personifies the act of coffee roasting as a violent and unjust process, metaphorically linking it to persecution and suffering. The image of smoke rising and ashes being cast into the sky evokes both physical transformation and emotional turmoil. It reflects a poetic tradition in which even a mundane act like roasting coffee becomes a canvas for themes such as injustice, loss, and transcendence.

Coffee has also been used in Ottoman poetry as "*yüz karalığı*" (black face) and "*yüz aklığı*" (white face"). Because coffee is black in color due to its roasting. In Kani's couplet, coffee lovers are described as "*esvedân*" while those on the opposing side

are described as "rû-sepîdân". In return, he is "the sultan of the land of black." (Şentürk, 2025, p. 143)

*"Eğerçi esvedânda rû-sepîdân neş'e bulmazlar
Ve-lâkin karalar mülkinde san sultândur kahve"* (Yazar, 2017, p. 242)

(Even if the white-faced ones do not find joy among the black-faced ones, coffee is the sultan of the black people's realm.)

Coffee as a Healing Beverage

*"The stomach burden with too great a load,
Which seeks from outward heat a helping hand."* (Massieu, 2019, p. 18)

*"For downwards when its hidden course it takes,
And deep within its presence felt it makes,
Through ev'ry limb it sends a vital heat
And 'neath the heart a joyful strength doth seat,
With fire added, digests whate'er is raw,
Each secret passage opes and slender pore
Through which the useless humours find their way
From ev'ry vein frives seeds of sickness and decay.*

*Come ye, by worries for your health distress'd -
Each with his triple chin upon his breast,
Wgo each a belly slow to move must strain -
By you in chief this hot draught should be ta'en.
Thi filthy humours, which your limbs do yet
O'erwhelm, it will dissolve; in streams of sweat
Your body wash; and, by degrees it soon begins,
The swelling of your belly round it thins,
And from your burden'd joints as time shall pass
It lifts the weight, takes off the cruel mass."* (Massieu, 2019, pp. 20-22)

*"These powers did Apollo's self bestow,
They say, a tale worth telling as I'll show.
Parnassus' pipils by a strange disease
Of old did find their frames both far and wide,
And reaches deep within their brains inside.
Now all the witty race this plague constrains,
And none for Art will take the slightest pains.
Some unreal aches proclaim, and sichness feign,
That they may to a life of ease attain.
The dangerous softness enters everywhere,
Delighting all who've cast off work and care.
No longer can the GOD enrag'd endure
The spread of this contagion so impure:
That poets to deceive may have no cause,
From Earth's rich lap this friendly plant he draws.
None better is the weary spirit to restore
Of him whose life to study is giv'n o'er,
And so permit him, now refresh'd, once more
His labours to resume. Nor can we finf
A better cure for headaches' pains unkind."* (Massieu, 2019, p. 32)

Massieu also refers to the healing properties of coffee through a narrative set in the age of Apollo. Similar in structure to the legend of Shaykh al-Shādhilī, this story tells of a community afflicted by a widespread epidemic. In their desperation, the people turn to a rich, miraculous plant—presented as a divine gift—and use it to find relief and healing. Since its discovery, numerous scholars have studied the properties of coffee -its structure, the conditions in which it grows, and its effects on the human body- producing works on both its benefits and harms. As previously noted, many of these scientific texts served as sources of inspiration for literary compositions. Massieu’s statements and the expressions of Turkish poets reveal striking parallels in this regard, substantiating this observation. Perhaps the most compelling commonality in these comparisons is the depiction of coffee as a substance possessing miraculous qualities. Massieu states that, from the very moment it is consumed, coffee spreads a vital warmth throughout the organs, strengthens the heart, aids digestion, reduces internal heat, and eliminates harmful microbes from the body before disease can even take hold. Moreover, he claims that coffee imparts lightness and vigor to the individual.

During his tenure as Shaykh al-Islam, Bostanzāde Mehmed Efendi received two petitions concerning the use of coffee. In response, he issued a legal opinion (fatwa) in verse. Following a series of prohibitions on coffee after its introduction to Istanbul, it is stated that the eventual legalization of coffee in the years 1591–1592 occurred as a direct result of Bostanzāde’s poetic fatwa (Açıkgöz, 1999, p. 33). This poetic fatwa, written in response to İштиpli Emin Efendi’s inquiry regarding whether coffee is *haram* (forbidden), includes arguments demonstrating that all of the petitioner’s doubts were merely unfounded suspicions. The excerpt below from the fatwa enumerates the health benefits of coffee.

*“Fevāyid-i Kahve
Evvelā balgamı izāle ider
Eridüp mahv idüp komaz aslā
Gaseyān ile kay’a māni’dür
Nef’i var agrıya dimiş hükemā
Kat’ idüp cümle-i rütübānı
Hem haşāda olan riyāha devā
Nef’i vardur dimiş Bū Esīre
Dahı kulunca ey esīr-i belā
Şol baş agrısı kim anun sebebi
Zahmet ü şiddet ü harāret ola
Ya cereb ola göz kapagında
Kızarup nitekim gül-i hamrā
Ya belā-yı reved ki ana devā
Olmaya bir tarik ile cānā
Gözin açmağa kâdir olmaya hîç
Geze ‘ālemde şöyle nā-bīnā
Mütesā’id olup buhār-ı reddi
Bürüyüp kaplaya dimāğını tā
Gözin açdurmaya hücūm-ı seyl
Tā elif kâmetini ide dü-tā
Çāresi def’i kahve içmekdür
Kahvedürür ana ilāc ü şifā
Kahve iç kahve dāfi’-i gamdur
Vire saykal dimāga ‘akla cilā” (Eliçık, 2020, pp. 1447-1448.)*

*(The Benefits of Coffee
First of all, it eliminates phlegm,
It melts and removes it, never leaving a trace.
It prevents nausea and vomiting,
Scholars have said it is also beneficial for pain.
It cuts off all bodily moisture,
And is a remedy for bloating caused by indigestion.*

*It is said to be beneficial, according to Bū Esīr
 O you who are a prisoner of affliction, heed this!
 That headache, whose cause is
 Fatigue, intensity, or internal heat,
 Or perhaps an ulcer upon the eyelid,
 Reddened like a crimson rose—
 Or a misfortune so grave that
 No cure can be found by any means—
 You can't even open your eyes,
 You wander the world like the blind.
 When rising vapors cloud your brain,
 So that the flood of pain won't let you lift your head,
 And bends your upright stance
 The cure is to drink coffee,
 For coffee is the medicine and the healing.*

*Drink coffee! Coffee dispels sorrow,
 It polishes the mind and brings clarity to the intellect.)*

Coffee as a Sacred Beverage

*"The many cures this juice divine hath wrought,
 Its nature potent 'gainst all human woes" (Massieu, 2019, p. 10)*

*"Plant, by whose gift the GODS do man befriend,
 No other plant with thee can e'er contend." (Massieu, 2019, p. 34)*

In his poem, Massieu frequently emphasizes that coffee is a sacred beverage. At first, this may appear to refer to coffee simply as a naturally grown fruit. However, in his second mention, he speaks of the divine drink's hidden powers, thereby highlighting its miraculous properties and reinforcing its status as a sacred substance.

In Turkish literature, the 17th century poet Ahmed Nāmī (d. 1673) describes the origin and qualities of coffee in one of his poems, likening its aroma to the divine breath of al-Raḥmān. In doing so, he alludes to the ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him): "I sense the breath of al-Raḥmān coming from the direction of Yemen." (Mūsneḍ, II, 541). Some scholars interpret this prophetic saying as a reference to Uways al-Qaranī, a saintly figure from Yemen.¹

*"Kahve-i rū-siyehi bun sanur idüm Nāmī
 Meger ol rind-i Üveysi imiş aslı Yemenī
 Āşinādur gibi gālība nefes-i Raḥmāna
 Cān meşāmına irişdürdi şemīm-i Karenī" (Yenikale, n.d., p. 242)*

*(I, Nāmī, once mistook the dark-faced coffee for mere shadow,
 Yet it turns out to be Yemenite Uways al-Qaranī.
 It seems familiar with the breath of al-Raḥmān,
 For it delivered to the soul's senses the fragrance of Uways.)*

This couplet offers a profound example of how coffee is elevated to a spiritual symbol in classical Turkish poetry. The poet associates the physical essence of coffee with Uways al-Qaranī, whose name is deeply embedded in Islamic mysticism. The metaphor of "fragrance reaching the soul" parallels the ḥadīth of the Prophet, thus framing coffee as more than a drink: it

¹ Uways al-Qaranī, originally from Yemen, longed to visit the Prophet Muhammad in Medina but refrained from doing so out of duty to care for his elderly mother. Later, with her permission, he briefly traveled to Medina; however, upon his arrival, the Prophet was not at home, and Uways had to return to Yemen the same day. It is reported that when he heard of the Prophet's tooth being broken during the Battle of Uhud, he broke one or even all of his own teeth in solidarity (Tosun, 2013, pp. 74-75).

becomes a transmitter of divine proximity.

Coffee as a Symbol of Immortality

*“So better to thy very bones 'twill flow,
Deep within thy bosom and thy marrow,
Through ev'ry limb the liv'ning juice will go.”* (Massieu, 2019, p. 20)

When Massieu refers to coffee as the “water of life,” he emphasizes how each sip spreads vitality throughout the body and invigorates the organs. However, this phrase closely resembles *āb-ı ḥayāt*, one of the most frequently used metaphors in classical Turkish poetry. *Āb-ı ḥayāt* is a legendary elixir believed to grant immortality to those who drink it and is said to be located in a land of darkness (Ocak, 1988, pp. 1-3). Inspired by the vitality and joy that coffee provides, many Turkish poets likened it to *āb-ı ḥayāt*. For instance, Gelibolulu Mustafa Ālī describes coffee as the water of immortality in the following couplet.

*“Kahve sahbā-yı Hızr-ı devrāndır
Şekl-i zulmetde āb-ı hayvāndır”* (Aksoyak, 2018, p. 657)

(Coffee is the wine of the Khidr of this age. Though it appears as darkness, it is the water of eternal life in form.)

Another 17th century poet, Sābit, asserts that coffee possesses such invigorating power that it could even revive the dead.

*“Nisāb-ı kahve gibi nasbı virdi tāze hayāt
Tabiāt olmış iken semm-i kahr ile mesmūm”* (Durmaz, 2010, p. 260)

(A measured dose of coffee bestows fresh life upon the soul, even when one's nature has been poisoned by the venom of anguish.)

Coffee and Mental Clarity

*“Whose eloquence divine must feed the list'ner's mind,
You likewise it behoves to taste this liquor kind.
Indeed all weakness of the voice it cures:
New strength of speech, new grace of discourse yours,
As quick'ning force through all your limbs it pours.*

...

*These now, in th'early watches of the night compete
In drinking deep, their pamper'd selves with dainties treat,
For they no longer, as before, do dread
Their sleep to break, and leave the comforts of their bed.
How blest by Fortune they, who often feel
This gentle liquor through their innards steal!
A slothful dullness siezes not their hearts -
They hasten to each task their Rule imparts,
And joy to rise before the dawn's first light.”* (Massieu, 2019, p. 30)

Massieu states that drinking coffee enhances both mental clarity and eloquence, adding that it brings about a heightened sense of alertness. As a result, the speech of a coffee drinker becomes more effective and powerful. He also emphasizes that coffee alleviates the heaviness of sleep, dispels fatigue from both mind and body, and enables one to browse through books throughout the night without exhaustion.

*“Ne'er by this drink are wayward minds oppress'd,
But when with sleep one's heavy eyes are lull'd,
The sluggish mind, and bod'ly powers dull'd,
Sleep from the eyes, sloth from the heart, wilt drive.
These then, themselves should wet with this sweet dew*

*Who must an end to endless tasks contrive,
Or tireless thumb their books the long night through.”* (Massieu, 2019, pp. 24-26)

One of the poets who speaks of coffee with praise is Nev’î. He emphasizes that a Muslim does not become an infidel by drinking coffee. Furthermore, he notes that thanks to coffee, scholars are able to read books at night, prepare their lessons, and as a result, deliver better lectures in the morning.

*“Muhtesib kahve-fürûşa ne ta’addî eyler
Yohsa kâfir mi olur içse Müsülmân kahve*

*İrte derse çıkamaz gice kitâba bakamaz
Eger içmezse müderris iki fincan kahve”* (Tulum, Tanyeri, 1977, p. 589)

Kânî, in one of the couplets from his ghazal with the rhyme word “coffee,” emphasizes that coffee is the beverage of those who pursue wisdom:

*“Mu’âvindür ser-i sevdâ-yı hûbândur siyeh-hâle
Hele hem meşreb-i sevdâger-i irfândur kahve”* (Yazar, 2017, p. 242)

The Joy-Giving Nature of Coffee

*“And sad cares Coffee chases from pur hearts;
Joy to our minds its gentle strength imparts.
One have I seen, who ere the nectar sweet
He'd tasted, silent enter with slow feet,
And look severe, and brow with wrinkles bound.
Yet he, soon as the beverage sweet he'd down'd
And from his knitted brow fled ev'ry cloud,
With witty sayings straightway pleas'd the crowd.
But none are thus to cruel scorn inclin'd,
Or rous'd to hate, who drink this liquor kind:
From malice free their merriment we find.”* (Massieu, 2019, p. 24)

Massieu states that coffee awakens a sense of joy in the heart of the one who drinks it. He also illustrates how coffee brings joy to the individual through vivid description. Before drinking coffee, a person’s eyebrows are furrowed in frustration or tension. Yet, with the very first sips, their mood lightens- they begin making jokes and entertaining those around them.

The poet Bâkî expresses that his sorrowful heart found pleasure through coffee.

*“Dil-i mahzûn bulurdı kahve vü berş ile Bâkî zevk
Dirîgâ aradan zevk-i dil-i mahzûn ise gitdi”* (Küçük, n.d., p. 311)

Material Culture of Coffee

In his poem, Massieu discusses—almost in the manner of a lesson—the various tools and containers needed for grinding and storing coffee. These descriptions lack any emotional expression. Indeed, in the line *“As much thou know'st as will thy needs demand”* (Massieu, 2019, p. 14) he explicitly states that this knowledge is purely a matter of utility.

*“Let there lack nor some vessels small design'd
To hold as it is drunk the liquor kind,
Nor pot with narrow neck and little lid,”* (Massieu, 2019, p. 14)

*“Wrap this in hide, and seal with waxen coat
Lest some small crack should gape, through which may float
The tiny specks and what more pure they bear,*

And all its strenght be lost in empty air.

...

*There is a hollow engine known to fame,
Shap'd like a tower small, a mill by name.”* (Massieu, 2019, p. 16)

In contrast, when we turn to classical Turkish poetry, we encounter something absent from Massieu's poem: the coffee cup. This difference stems from the fact that the literary works of this period were deeply influenced by social life and its emotional dimensions.

Poets attributed a wide range of emotional meanings to the coffee cup. For instance, Cinānī, who lived in the late 16th century, likened a large cup of coffee to the Sea of Azov.

*“Kahve-fürüş sanma bu kahve çanağıdır
Fincān egül Karadeniz'ün bir kulağıdır”* (Açıkgöz, 1999, p. 17)

(Do not mistake this for a mere coffee-seller's cup. It is no ordinary finjan—it is but a bay of the Black Sea!)

Mustafa Sāī, another poet from the late 16th century, compares a coffee-filled cup to a lunar eclipse. In his verse, the finjan held in the beloved's hand causes a cosmic disturbance—just like an eclipse that throws the world into turmoil:

*“Ya Ay tutuldu ya destinde kahve fīncānı
Cihāna velvele saldı o hüsn-i şeh̄r-āşūb”* (Açıkgöz, 1999, p. 25)

(Perhaps it was a lunar eclipse, or just a coffee cup in her hand. Such beauty, like a city-stirring enchantment, caused an uproar in the world.)

Terzizāde Ulvī, a poet from the same century, likens the cup to a hunter and the coffee to a black-feathered bird. In doing so, he suggests that he finds solace in coffee rather than in wine.

*“Çakıra murg-ı safā ok atmağ olaldan yasağ
Kahve güya bir kara kuştur ider fīncān şikār”* (Özmen, 2017, p. 348)

(It has long been forbidden to shoot an arrow at the the bird of joy. Yet coffee, it seems, is a black bird that captures it with a cup as its snare.)

The Prohibition of Coffee

Coffee was not always received with tolerance by religious authorities in either the East or the West. For instance, when ships brought coffee from Yemen to Istanbul in 1543, it was poured into the sea at the Tophane docks under the order of Shaykh al-Islam Ebussuūd Efendi, who issued a fatwa against it. The rationale behind categorizing coffee as a harmful substance to Islam was the belief that substances roasted to the point of carbonization lose their natural essence and could harm both body and soul (Timur Ağıldere, 2019, pp. 14-28). In 17th century Europe, the opposition to coffee differed significantly from the objections raised in the Muslim world. Members of the bourgeoisie during this period did not engage in physical labor outdoors; rather, they worked at desks using intellectual effort. In this context, coffee—with its stimulating properties and capacity to keep the mind alert—contributed to extending working hours and increasing cognitive intensity. However, because coffee manipulated and strained the body, it was perceived as disruptive to its natural balance. It was also criticized for absorbing bodily fluids and causing dehydration. One of the main concerns was that coffee altered the body's humoral balance—blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm—by increasing dryness in all temperaments. Until this period, beer had served as the primary source of hydration and nourishment, especially for phlegmatic temperaments, which were considered healthy and balanced. Beer was heavily consumed in daily life, and its fat-retaining quality helped protect the body from dryness. The abrupt shift from this medieval dietary regime to one centered on coffee was not easily accepted. In this sense, coffee came to be regarded as a stimulant that marked the threshold of modernity (Schivelbusech, 2012, pp. 30-55).

Although no poems criticizing or prohibiting coffee have been found in Western literature, numerous verses addressing coffee bans can be identified in classical Turkish literature. This distinction can be interpreted as a reflection of how classical Turkish poetry closely mirrors the social realities of Ottoman life.

For example, Bağdatlı Rūhī writes that after the ban on coffee and coffeehouses was lifted, the sounds of *chang*, *chegāne*, and *ney* once again filled the air. This reveals that music was performed in coffeehouses. He also notes that individuals leaving drinking gatherings would visit coffeehouses at dawn to recover from their hangovers:

*“Yine çalındı her taraf çeng ü ney ü çegāneler
Düşdi cihāna velvele açıldı kahve-hāneler*

.....

*Kalkıla bezmden seher varıla kahve-hāneye
İçile kahveler ola def’-i mey-i şebāneler”* (Buyruk, 2015, p. 249)

Nev’izāde Atāyī criticizes the clergy for attempting to drive pleasure-seekers away from coffee through reproach. He suggests that if they are truly concerned, they should instead try to wean wine addicts off their habit—assuming they are capable of doing so.

*“Kahveden kesmedesin ta’n ile ehl-i keyfi
Vā’izā kādir iseñ mey-gede kallāşın kes”* (Yalap, 2017, p. 1916; Karaköse, 2017, p. 192)

Shaykh al-Islām Yahyā criticizes the prohibition of coffee by targeting the person who distributes it in the coffeehouse. Through this figure, he conveys his disapproval of the ban, noting that the coffee-seller himself has no authority over such matters.

*“Seni ārifler ilzām itmesün ey sākī-i kahve
Ko bahs-i cām u fīncānı bilürsün hod idāren yok”* (Kavruk, n.d., p. 208)

The Relationship Between Coffee and Wine

*“Happy peoples! How happy must they be,
Whom Titan rising with's first light doth see!
No harm came ever here from Bacchus' use,
Both law and faith forbid Lyaen juice:
By Coffee here they live, and so enjoy
In strenght their span of years, without alloy -
To them, the ills which dainty feasts attend
Unknown, those Bacchus' daughter, Gout, doth send,
And all the many plagues so near allied
Which half the sick-beds of our world bestride.”* (Massieu, 2019, p. 22)

While drawing upon mythology -the foundational material of Latin literature- Massieu notes that when law and religion prohibited the flowing of wine, people turned to coffee as a new source of joy and cheer. In doing so, he references Bacchus, the god of wine and revelry. This is the only section in which Massieu discusses coffee and wine side by side, and his emphasis is on how those who abstained from wine found delight in coffee.

In classical Turkish poetry, the relationship between wine and coffee is approached from a distinctly different perspective. This difference can once again be attributed to the close ties between Ottoman poetry and daily social life. As people increasingly gathered in coffeehouses and coffee became fully integrated into everyday life, a cultural shift occurred in poetic imagery: wine (*mey*) and the tavern (*meyhāne*) -long-established icons of Ottoman poetry- gradually gave way to coffee and the coffeehouse (*kahvehāne*). This transformation itself became a subject of poetic expression.

Nābī was not particularly pleased with the growing popularity of coffee over wine. He regarded it as unfortunate that wine -whose color resembles the tulip, a symbol of elegance- was no longer as celebrated as coffee, which he described as dark-faced and therefore flawed or inferior:

*“Ruhsār-ı lāle-reng ile hayfā degül şarāb
Rūy-ı siyāh kahve kadar iştihārda”* (Bilkan, 1993, p. 887)

In the 16th century, Gedizli Kabūlī referred to coffee as "black water" and remarked that when coffee was poured into wine goblets, the goblets lost all their vital qualities for drunkards. Through this expression, the poet disparages coffee in contrast to wine.

*“Kāseyle kahveler içilür şimdi sākiyā
Mey tura tura kara su indi ayagina”* (Erdoğan, 2008, p. 704)

Coffee and Yemen

*“From Nilus' seven mouths, from Libyan sands,
Far off, there once did dwell Sabean bands,
Where happiest Asia opes in many a field
Of wealth untold, and woods sweet odours yield.
I that place believe our general mother,
Nature, better loves than any other.
More gentle here the breath of heaven blows,
So that e'en out of season blooms the rose.
The burgeoning eart's with various fruits replete,”* (Massieu, 2019, pp. 10-12)

Massieu describes the land where coffee is grown with expressions of admiration. In addition to directly naming geographical regions such as the Nile and Libya, his reference to the people of Sheba is particularly noteworthy. He portrays the natural beauty, climate, and vegetation of the region in poetic detail (Yiğit, 2009, pp. 241-243). Similarly, in classical Turkish poetry, the poet Hilmī refers to the Yemeni origin of coffee by calling it “miskī” a term that alludes to musk, a fragrant black substance found in a pouch beneath the belly skin of a species of gazelle native to regions such as Yemen, Oman, Baghdad, and Damascus. By stating that coffee wears a "musk-scented kaftan," Hilmī likens it to musk both in color and aroma.

*“Sürh cāmeye gezer yerli şakīdir bāde
Yemenīdir ki giyer miskīce kaftān kahve”* (Çukurlu, 2021, pp. 239, 240)

The 17th century poet Nāmī, referring to both the Yemeni origin and the black color of coffee, likens it to Uways al-Qaranī. In doing so, he draws a symbolic connection between the drink and a revered figure in Islamic mysticism:

*“Kahve-i rū-siyehi bun sanur idüm Nāmī
Meger ol rind-i Üveysī imiş aslı Yemenī
Āşinādur gibi gālībā nefes-i Rahmāna
Cān meşāmına irişdürdi şemīm-i Karenī”* (Yenikale, 2017, p. 289)

The Cultivation of Coffee

*“Turn'd to the midmost sun and south winds fair,
A tree grows wild, by human hands not sown,
Not found elsewhere, to ancient times unknown.
Its limbs it spreads not wide, nor yet on high
Its head doth raise unto the lofty sky.
...
Many have tried in our own fields to grow
This plant, on it did ev'ry care bestow -
In vain: fot to rhe sowers' wish and pains
Teh crop ne'er answer'd. Gone their hope of gains:
Despite their toil it withers at the root;
This clime apt food denies the foreign shoot.
O thou who art by Coffee's love possest
Grieve not it comes from Araby the Blest:
The healthful bean there finds its own abode,*

Whose merry juice thence to the nations flow'd" (Massieu, 2019, pp. 12-14)

Massieu describes coffee as an endemic fruit that grows naturally in its native geography. He goes on to explain that although many have attempted to cultivate coffee in their own regions, these efforts have largely failed. He says the lands surrounding Yemen constitute the fertile and original homeland of coffee.

In the Ottoman territories, coffee was at times a rare and expensive commodity, and at other times outright banned. Nevertheless, society appeared so devoted—almost addicted—to coffee that people always sought alternative ways to meet their need for it. During a period of scarcity in the early 18th century, a substitute known as “Anatolian coffee” or “Kahve-i Rūmī” emerged: a drink made by boiling, roasting, and grinding chickpeas. Poets referred to this as “hileli kahve” (deceptive coffee) and expressed their dissatisfaction. For example, Osmanzāde Tāib laments that ever since “Kahve-i Rūmī” became widespread, all his friends have taken to drinking it:

*“Olalı kahve-i Rūmī nümāyān
Nohūdī-meşreb oldı cümle yārān”* (Açıkgöz, 1999, p. 15)

Coffee Rituals

Although composing poetry about the preparation of coffee was not a common practice in Turkish literature, the 17th century French orientalist and traveler Jean de Thévenot offers a vivid description of the Turkish coffee ritual:

“When they want to drink it, they take a special vessel made for that purpose, which they call an ibrik, and fill it with water to boil. Once the water is boiling, they add a heaping spoonful of the powder—enough for about three cups. As it begins to boil again, they promptly remove it from the heat or stir it; otherwise, it will overflow, for it rises very quickly. After ten or twelve such boilings, they pour it into porcelain cups, which are arranged on a lacquered wooden tray, and serve it to you piping hot.” (Mantran, 1995, as cited in Işıkhan, 2011, p. 411)

*“Come then, the pot upon the fire is fix'd,
As soon thou see'st it at the brim to boil,
Then lift it from the flames or lose thy toil.
Let not the liquor's stregth burst forth in haste,
An douse the fire below and go to waste.
Wherefore, lest such a fate thy joys defeat,
Watch till the water bubbles with the heat
No more: then to the hearth the pot restore
To boil again for three times and for four
Until the powder, midmost in the fire,
With all its strenght the swelling wave inspire.”* (Massieu, 2019, p. 18)

Massieu explains the processes of roasting, grinding, storing, brewing, and drinking coffee almost as if delivering a formal lesson. He outlines a set of principles concerning how coffee should be consumed. Like every beverage, coffee has its own ceremony. This drink, once expertly prepared, must be consumed with a sense of artistry. One must not act impatiently; the grounds should be allowed to settle at the bottom, and the coffee should be sipped slowly, one mouthful at a time.

*“with art this liquor sholud be cooked and drunk,
Not as some other liquors may be sunk:
When thou hast brought it smoaking from the flame,
And to the bottom settled are the lees,
Let not impatience with one draught it claim,
But slow, with little sips to take will please,
Not all at once, but drink with sweet delays,
While yet 'tis warm, and on thy palate plays.
...
Oft from the very bottom of the cup*

*A purer air, which drinkers will sniff up
With nostrils wide, doth rise - the liquor's spent,
But still there's great delight in such sweet scent."* (Massieu, 2019, p. 20)

In his mesnevî titled *Münâzara-i Kahve vü Bâde*, Nağzî includes a section called "Der-ta'rif-i Kahve-i Latîf" ("On the Description of Delicate Coffee"), which appears to offer a definition of coffee. However, unlike Massieu's detailed procedural account, classical Turkish poets -Nağzî among them- generally do not focus on how coffee is prepared or brewed. Instead, they are more concerned with the social and symbolic dimensions of coffee, often likening it to the beloved. Accordingly, Nağzî's description centers not on the brewing process, but rather on the manner in which coffee is served and offered.

*"Her kim itse evinde cem'iyyet
Virür idüm o cem'e germiyyet*

*Olmasa anda bende-i miskîn
Olmaz idi o meclise tahsîn*

*İçmese şerbetüm havâss u avâm
Mîz-bâna değer çok düşnâm*

*Kahvesüz gelse meclise şerbet
Ehl-i keyf eylemez idi râğbet*

*Olsa bir meclis içre dürlü ta'âm
Kâse kâse şarâb-ı anber-hâm*

*Dürlü helvâ vü baklavâ vü gülâc
Kahvesüz gelse istemezdi mizâc*

*Sâhib-i hânenün bitüp yemeği
Zâyi' olurdu kahvesüz emeği*

*Ya'ni kim nî'metini yirler idi
Kahvesiz 'ıyş olur mı dirler idi*

*Olmasam ben ocağı başında
Lezzet olmazdı kimse aşında*

*Mîz-bânun ider idüm yüzün ak
Ben olaydum eger ki evde konak*

*Olmasa anda kahve fîncânı
Ehl-i keyfün kurur idi kan"ı* (Açıkgöz, 1999, pp. 82, 83)

In Ottoman society, it was customary for coffee to be accompanied by delights such as lokum (Turkish delight) or sugar confections. For instance, the 17th century poet Nedîm likens his beloved's lips to rose-flavored candy served alongside coffee. In his view, coffee cannot be enjoyed properly without rose sugar.

*"Zevk-bahş-ı hâb-ı nûşin fikr-i la'lindir senin
Gül-şekersiz kahveyi erbâb-ı dil nûş eylemez* (Macit, 2017, p. 228)

Nedîm, a poet of the Tulip Era known for his fondness for pleasure and revelry, compares the coffee served after rose-flavored sweets in social gatherings to the fine down (peach fuzz) around the lips of the beloved:

*"Ol benefîşî hat gelir evvelde la'l-i dilbere
Kahve der-peydir bezmde âdetâ gül-şekkere"* (Macit, 2017, p. 262)

Having found no benefit from pills or powdered medicines—and, it seems, with no other food or drink remaining—Nedîm turns instead to a fine, aromatic cup of coffee, accompanied by a well-prepared sweet sherbet:

*"Sefûf u hab yeter vakt oldu gayri ne yensin içilsin
Mürebbâlar mu'anber kahveler pâkîze şerbetler"* (Macit, 2017, p. 174)

Coffee-scent

Massieu emphasizes that the aroma of coffee is as invigorating and pleasurable as its taste. After a cup of coffee is slowly and delightfully consumed -almost as if appreciating a work of art- the lingering fragrance continues to offer the same sense of enjoyment.

*"Oft from the very bottom of the cup
A purer air, which drinkers will sniff up
With nostrils wide, doth rise - the liquor's spent,
But still there's great delight in such sweet scent."* (Massieu, 2019, p. 20)

In one of his *ghazals*, the poet Sâbit plays on the double meaning of the word *tahmîs*, which refers both to "adding a fifth line to a quatrain" in poetic terminology and, in colloquial usage, to "dry-roasted coffee." Through this wordplay, he draws a witty parallel between poetic structure and coffee culture:

*"Meşâm-ı cāna virür tâze kahve bûy-ı nefîs
'Aceb mi ehl-i tîbâ şî'rûm itseler tahmîs"* (Karacan, 1981, p. 491)

In Ottoman culture, and consequently in Turkish poetry, there exists a mystical metaphor associated with the scent of coffee that is absent from Western literature. It was believed that when coffee was stored within resin, it could preserve its aroma indefinitely. Accordingly, cups made by blending amber with resin would impart the scent of amber to the coffee poured into them. The poetry of Antepî Aynî suggests that coffee and amber were once considered an inseparable pair. (Şentürk, 2025, p. 139)

*"Ârzû-yı bûs-i la'l ü 'aşk-ı hâl ü hattına
Gel 'akîdeyle şeker yi kahve ile 'anber iç"* (Arslan, 2004, p. 71)

Coffeehouses

*"All through the East this custom holds its sway -
A foreign custom Gaul doth ow obey;
Each street opes doors for Coffee-drinking wide,
Hangs sings of laurel or of ivy up,
Which call the city's wanderers inside,
To pass the day with many a pleasing cup.
When once its tepid vapour warms the mind
We gentle brawls and soft contention find,
And all around the hubbub rings with merry jest."* (Massieu, 2019, p. 24)

Coffee has become a public beverage throughout the world, and coffeehouses can be found in nearly every region where coffee is consumed. Massieu, too, does not fail to mention the social phenomenon that emerged around coffee. His verses suggest that when coffee arrived in Europe -particularly in France- from the East, it brought along its traditions as well. Although coffee may be regarded as a natural fruit, Massieu notes that European society came to embrace the unfamiliar cultural practices surrounding it. He goes on to describe the coffeehouses, portraying them as places where people engage

in cheerful and lively conversations.

Since their introduction to the Ottoman Empire, coffeehouses have played a significant role in shaping cultural life (Ayalp, 2011, p. 310). In Turkish literature, alongside poems written about coffee itself, there are also numerous poems devoted to coffeehouses. Manisalı Şuhūdī, a poet who lived in the late 16th century, describes the public's obsession with coffee and coffeehouses as bordering on illness.

*“Ma’cūn berş ü şerbet ü kahve delisi halk
Dārūs-ş-şifā-yı ehl-i safā kahve-hānedür”* (Açıkgöz, 1999, p. 8)

The 17th century poet Nev’izāde Atāyī, in comparing wine with coffee, asserts that a coffeehouse could never substitute even a ruined tavern. His remark reflects a preference for the traditional imagery of wine and the tavern over the emerging culture of coffee and coffeehouses.

*“Harāb olsa da kasrı mey-hānenün
Yirin duta mı kahve-hāne anun”* (Kuzubaş, 2009, p. 76)

Conclusion

This study has provided a comparative literary analysis of how coffee is represented in Western and Turkish literature, focusing on Guillaume Massieu’s *Caffaeum: Carmen* and selected examples from 17th century classical Turkish poetry. The findings reveal that coffee occupies distinct literary roles in the two traditions, shaped significantly by their respective cultural, social, and aesthetic frameworks.

In Western literature, particularly in Massieu’s work, coffee is primarily presented within a didactic structure. The poem details the origins, preparation, medicinal benefits, and mental effects of coffee, reflecting the Enlightenment’s emphasis on scientific inquiry and rational thought. Massieu’s verses extol the beverage’s ability to invigorate the body, facilitate digestion, and stimulate intellectual productivity. The consumption of coffee is portrayed almost as a ritual, yet the emotional or symbolic dimensions of the drink remain largely secondary. Thus, in Western poetry, coffee is approached more as a subject of knowledge transmission and personal experience.

In contrast, classical Turkish poetry situates coffee within a richly symbolic and emotional framework. Poets often relate coffee to the beloved, spiritual ecstasy, and communal rituals. Imagery surrounding the coffee cup, its aroma, and the social gatherings it inspires are frequent motifs. Coffee becomes a conduit for expressing love, longing, joy, and philosophical insight. As such, Turkish poetry integrates coffee not merely as a drink but as a profound element of cultural and emotional resonance.

The core distinction revealed in this comparative analysis lies in the Western tendency toward descriptive and informative portrayals versus the Turkish inclination toward symbolic and affective expression. At the heart of this divergence are the differing cultural paradigms: Western literature's emphasis on individualism and empirical observation, and Ottoman society's collective consciousness and spiritual orientation. In the West, coffee symbolizes rational awakening and intellectual clarity; in the East, it evokes shared experiences, emotional depth, and metaphysical contemplation. Ultimately, coffee transcends its material form in both literary traditions. In Western poetry, it emerges as a rational elixir and mental stimulant; in Turkish poetry, it is transformed into a metaphorical emblem of aesthetic and emotional depth. This contrast not only underscores differing literary approaches but also illuminates the broader epistemological and cultural visions of East and West.

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Structured Abstract

Kahve, Türkçeye Arapça “qahwa” kelimesinden geçmiştir. Qahwa kelimesinin Arapçada ise ilk ne zaman ve nasıl kullanıldığı bilinmemektedir. Arapça k-h-y (قهی) kökünden gelmiş olması muhtemeldir. Arap dilinde “kahiye” fiili “iştahı kesildi” anlamına gelir. Bu anlam, ilk başlarda kahve sözcüğünün, iştahın kesilmesi bir şarap cinsinin tanımlanması için kullanılmasıyla ilişkilidir. Yani eski Araplar kahve kelimesini şarap manasında kullanmışlardır. Arapçadaki bu kök, İbranicede “zayıf”, “yılın”, “dumansı” ve “mat” gibi anlamlarla ilişkili olan k-h-h (כהה) köküyle de köktedir. Kahve kelimesinin de 14. yüzyıllara kadar bu anlamıyla kullanıldığı varsayılmaktadır.

Kahvenin menşei hakkında bilgilerin yetersiz olması Arap tarihçilerin, efsane ve söylentilerin etkisi altında kalmasını da ortaya çıkarmıştır. İlk kez kahveyi kullanan Hz. Süleyman olduğu da bu efsaneler arasındadır. Bununla birlikte çoğu yazar da kahvenin geçmişini daha yakın tarih ile sınırlandırmaktadır. Buna göre kahve tüketiminin izi Etiyopya’ya kadar sürülebilir. Ancak geleneksel olarak kahvenin genel kullanıma girmesi de İslam dünyasında görülmüştür. Dolayısıyla 17. yüzyıl Avrupalı yazarların da kahveyi ilk kez İslam dünyasında görmüş olmalarına dair anlatıları tıpkı Araplardaki gibi çeşitli argümanlarla süslenmiştir. Keçilerini otlatan bir çobanın, hayvanlarında gördüğü hareketlilik bu anlatılardan en meşhuru sayılabilir. Genel kanağe göre kahve ilk olarak Habeşistan’da yiyecek olarak ortaya çıkmış, 15. yüzyılda ise Yemen’de tanınarak içecek hâlinde tüketilmeye başlanmıştır. XVI. yüzyılın başlarında Mekke ve Kahire’ye, yüzyılın ortalarına doğru İstanbul’a ve XVII. yüzyılın ortalarında önemli Avrupa merkezlerine ulaşmıştır.

Kahvenin Osmanlı’ya ilk olarak ne zaman girdiği ise başka bir tartışma konusudur. Kâtib Çelebi 950/1543 yılında gemilerle İstanbul’a kahve geldiğini yazmaktadır. 16. yüzyılın ilk yarısından itibaren kahvehanelerin kapatılmasına ait hükümlerin varlığı da kahvenin daha erken tarihlerde kullanıldığına işaret eder. Âlî Mustafa Efendi İstanbul’da ilk kahvehanelerin açıldığı tarihi 960 (1553), Peçuyulu İbrâhim ise 962 (1555) olarak verir. Kahvenin Osmanlı’ya gelişi, Mısır’ın Mekke ve Medine ile olan münasebeti ile olmuştur. Kahve İstanbul’da ve Rumeli’de ilk olarak Kanuni Sultan Süleyman zamanında görülmektedir. İstanbul’daki ilk kahvehâne ise 1554’te biri Halepli ve diğeri Şamlı iki kişi tarafından açılmış ve halkın her kesiminden insanlar tarafından rağbet görmüştür.

Kokusu ve teskin ediciliğiyle çok kısa bir zaman diliminde Türkler arasında revaç bulan kahve, kısa zamanda Avrupa’ya ve dünyaya yayılma fırsatı yakalamıştır. 17. yüzyılda Avrupa’nın önemli şehirlerinde kahve içimi yayılmaya ve Yemen kahvesine olan ilgi giderek artmaya başlamıştır. Venedik’te ilk defa 1615’te açılan kahvehane 1645’te bütün İtalya’ya yayılmıştır. 1644’te Marsilya’da, 1650’de Londra’da, 1651’de Viyana’da, 1669’da Paris’te kahvehaneler açılmıştır. Kahvenin Avrupa’ya Türkler vasıtasıyla girişi, bu içeceğin Avrupa’da bir Türk içkisi hatta bir Türk imgesi olarak tanınmasını sağlamıştır.

Kahve üzerine yapılmış ilk çalışmaların Ebû Bekr Râzî ve İbni Sînâ (ö. 1037)’ya ait olduğu görülmektedir. Bu metinlerin ardından kahve hakkında literatürde pek çok efsane söylenegelmiş ve tüm bunlar Arap, Fransız, İtalyan ve İngiliz şairlere ilham kaynağı olmuştur. Kahvenin kökenine dair ilk gerçek kayıt, Abdülkâdir el-Cezîrî tarafından 1587’de yazılmıştır. Kahvenin kullanımını öven ‘Umdetü’s-şâfve fî hîlli’l-kahve adındaki bu ünlü Arapça el yazması, Paris’teki Bibliothèque Nationale’de muhafaza edilmektedir.

Kahve, rengi, kokusu, yasaklandığı zaman dilimi, ikram vasıtası olan fincanları ile klâsik Türk şiirinde günlük hayatın yansıması olarak pek çok mecaz ve teşbihe konu olmuştur.

Kahvenin Osmanlı şiirine girmesi, Osmanlı toplumuna girmesi ile eşzamanlı sayılabilir. Şairler kahveyi rengi, şekli, fincanı, faydaları, zararları, şarapla olan ilişkisi gibi birçok açıdan ele almışlardır. Kahve ve kahvehânelerin Osmanlı günlük hayatına girişine kadar edebî sahada baş rol şarap ve meyhaneye olmuştur. Şarap fenomeni bütün unsurlarıyla klâsik Türk şiirinde şairlerin ilmek ilmek işledikleri, katmanlarla dolu bir anlam dünyası oluşturdukları oldukça önemli bir unsurdur. Klâsik Türk edebiyatında kahve üzerine müstakil olarak yazılmış çeşitli uzunluklarda ve içeriklerde şiirler bulunduğu gibi çoğunluğu beyitler oluşturmaktadır.

Batı’da ise 1671’de Faustus Nairon (Banesius) Roma’da sadece kahve ile ilgili olan ilk incelemeyi yayınlamıştır. Dufour 1671’de ilk Fransızca incelemeyi yayınlamıştır. Venedikli doktor ve botanikçi Prosper Alpini’nin (1553-1617) el yazmaları ve mektupları ise asırlar boyunca kahve üzerine incelemelerde bulunacak sayısız araştırmacıya ilham ve kaynak olmuştur. Alpini Osmanlı coğrafyasında bir hekim olarak seyahat ederken bölge halkının kahve tüketim alışkanlıklarını gözlemlemiş ve Mısır’ın Bitkileri (Plantis Aegypti) başlıklı eserinde kahve bitkisinin tıbbî özelliklerini anlatmıştır.

Bu çalışma 13 Nisan 1665’te Caen’de doğmuş, 26 Eylül 1722’de Paris’te ölmüş olan Abbé Guillaume Massieu tarafından kaleme alınan Caffeeum: Carmen adıyla Latince yazılmış olan şiirin, John T. Gilmore tarafından Coffee: A Poem adıyla İngilizceye çevirisini konu edilmektedir. Kahvenin duygular üzerindeki etkisi ile ilgili Gilmore’un çevirisi kaynak metin olarak ele alınmış ve Coffee: A Poem’deki ifadelerin klâsik Türk şiirindeki karşılıkları incelenmiştir. Amaç, kahve etrafında oluşmuş duygu dünyasının kelimelere nasıl yansıdığını Latin ve Türk edebiyatları arasındaki ifade benzerlikleri/farklılıkları aracılığıyla ortaya koymaktır.

Kahvenin Keşfi, kavrulması, şifalı ve kutsal bir içecek olması, âb-ı hayata benzetilmesi, zihne berraklık vermesi, gönle neşe getirmesi, sunumu ile ilgili argümanlar, yasaklanması, şarap ile olan ilişkisi, menşei, yetiştirildiği yer ve yetiştirilme şartları, kokusu ve kahvehaneler üzerine incelemeler yapılmış ve bu noktadan hareketle kahve üzerine oluşturulmuş edebî tavırdaki farklılıklar tespit edilmiştir.

Elde edilen bulgular ışığında kısaca şu sonuçlara varılmıştır: Batı edebiyatında kahve üzerine yazılmış şiirlerin daha çok öğretici bir tarafı olduğu görülmektedir. Bu şiirler çoğunlukla eski tıp ve biyoloji kitaplarını referans almış görünmektedirler. Türk edebiyatı ise daha çok toplumsal ve sembolik argümanlar üzerinden kahve ile ilgilenmiştir. Kahvenin nasıl yapıldığı veya nasıl öğütülüp saklanması gibi konulara hiç değinmemiş, doğrudan kahvenin insanın bedeni, zihni ve duyguları üzerindeki etkileri ile ilgilenmiştir. Ayrıca kahvehâneler, kahve yasağı ve kahve etrafında oluşan sembol dünyası daha çok Türk şiirinin konusu olmuştur. Batı şiirinde ise kahvenin etrafında oluşan sembol dünyasına o kadar çok rastlanmaz.