

## Lefebvre's Theory of Space in Urban Poetics: Sensory Experience in Orhan Veli's *İstanbul'u Dinliyorum* and Louis MacNeice's *London Rain*<sup>\*</sup>

*Lefebvre'nin Mekân Teorisi ve Kentsel Poetika: Orhan Veli'nin İstanbul'u Dinliyorum ve  
Louis MacNeice'in London Rain Şiirlerinde Duyusal Deneyim*

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### **Abstract**

This paper applies Henri Lefebvre's triadic theory of spatial production, which consists of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces, as a conceptual approach to examine how urban environments are constructed through sensory and cultural dimensions in Orhan Veli's "İstanbul'u Dinliyorum" (I'm Listening to Istanbul) and Louis MacNeice's "London Rain". By interpreting cities as socially produced rather than fixed or purely physical entities, the study focuses on how these poems articulate urban subjectivity through embodied perception. Veli's auditory emphasis evokes a multi-layered Istanbul shaped by everyday life and communal rhythms that stand in contrast to state-centred modernization discourses. In comparison, MacNeice's tactile and visual descriptions portray London as a space marked by disconnection and emotional distance during a time of political uncertainty. Both poems construct spatial meaning via sensory engagement, emphasizing the relationship between perception and the material as well as symbolic character of the city. Through a comparative perspective, the analysis draws attention to the specific cultural contexts of Istanbul and London while situating both within the broader field of modernist urban poetics. The poems, written in the mid-twentieth century are discussed not only as literary artefacts, but also as spatial practices that contribute to the ongoing production of urban meaning through lived experience.

**Keywords:** Henri Lefebvre, Louis MacNeice, Orhan Veli, Poetics, Sensory Perception, Spatial Theory

### **Öz**

Bu makale, Henri Lefebvre'in mekânsal üretim kuramında yer alan üçlü modeli olan mekânsal pratik, mekân temsilleri ve temsili mekânları Orhan Veli'nin "İstanbul'u Dinliyorum" ve Louis MacNeice'in "London Rain" (Londra Yağmuru) şiirlerindeki kentsel çevrenin duyusal ve kültürel boyutlarını incelemek amacıyla kuramsal bir temel olarak benimsenir. Şehirlerin sabit ya da yalnızca fiziksel yapılar değil, sosyal olarak üretilen mekânlar olduğu anlayışı doğrultusunda, çalışma bu şiirlerin bireysel algılar aracılığıyla kentsel özneyi nasıl ifade ettiğine odaklanır. Veli'nin işitsel yoğunluğu, gündelik yaşamın ve ortak hafızanın belirlediği çok katmanlı bir İstanbul sunarken, bu yaklaşım modernleşme politikalarının tekdüze anlatılarına karşı bir alternatif üretir. Öte yandan MacNeice'in dokunsal ve görsel betimleri, savaş öncesi Londra'yı kopukluk ve içe kapanışla karakterize eder, şiirsel mekâni siyasi belirsizliklerin içinde yeniden kurar. Her iki şiir de duyusal

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algıyı merkeze alarak kentsel deneyimi hem maddi hem de simgesel yönleriyle işler. Karşılaştırmalı yaklaşım, İstanbul ve Londra'nın kültürel bağamlarına dikkat çekerken, modernist şiirde mekânın üretimine ilişkin ortak temaları da tartışmaya açar. Yirminci yüzyıl ortalarında yazılan söz konusu şiirler yalnızca edebi metinler olarak değil, aynı zamanda yaşanmış deneyimler aracılığıyla kentsel anlamları biçimlendiren mekânsal pratikler olarak değerlendirilebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Henri Lefebvre, Louis MacNeice, Orhan Veli, Poetika, Duyusal Algı, Mekânsal Kuram*

## Introduction

In the mid-twentieth century's modernist literary imagination, cities transcended their roles as mere settings, emerging as dynamic entities embodying sensory, social, and existential complexities (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Orhan Veli's 1947 poem "*İstanbul'u Dinliyorum*" (I'm Listening to Istanbul) and Louis MacNeice's 1939 poem "*London Rain*" are selected for comparative analysis due to their shared focus on urban experience through sensory engagement and their temporal proximity, which reflects distinct yet parallel responses to urban modernity in Türkiye and Britain. In this respect, this study applies Henri Lefebvre's<sup>1</sup> spatial theory, specifically his triadic model of spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and representational spaces (lived space), to evaluate how these poems construct Istanbul and London as socially produced spaces shaped by cultural and historical dynamics (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–39). Michel de Certeau, Edward Soya, and Doreen Massey have each also contributed influential perspectives on urban space, emphasising practices of movement, hybrid spatialities and relational multiplicity (Certeau, 1984, p. 96; Soja, 1996, p. 10; Massey, 2005, p. 10). Their approaches demonstrate the complexity of spatial thinking in the twentieth century and remain valuable touchstones for literary analysis. Yet the poems considered in this study demand a theoretical model that can address institutional structures, embodied perception and imaginative reconstruction together. Lefebvre's triadic articulation of perceived, conceived and lived space provides such a model by linking sensory immediacy with the broader cultural and historical processes that shape the city (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–39). This makes his theory particularly apt for the reading of "I'm Listening to Istanbul" and "London Rain", in which sound, texture and atmosphere are inseparable from social and spatial production. Lefebvre's model is therefore particularly productive for this study because it enables an integrated reading in which institutional design, sensory immediacy, and imaginative transformation are examined together. This capacity makes it especially suited to poems such as "I'm Listening to Istanbul" and "London Rain", where auditory, tactile, and visual impressions are inseparable from broader socio-cultural forces. The application of Lefebvre's spatial theory thus provides a comprehensive way of addressing how poetic representation renders urban space simultaneously structured, sensed, and lived.

<sup>1</sup> Henri Lefebvre (1901-91) was a French Marxist philosopher and sociologist. For a more detailed information, see Leach (2005).

Lefebvre's landmark work, *The Production of Space* (1991)<sup>2</sup>, rejects the notion of space as a static or neutral backdrop, arguing instead that it is actively produced and continually reshaped through social practices, power relations and human imagination (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–39; Gottdiener, 1993, p. 131). Besides, Molotch (1993, p. 894) emphasizes that Lefebvre offers a system that invites both theorists and empirical researchers to engage with the physical environment as a fundamental element of human relations, social organization, and the continuity of society. According to Schmid (2008, p. 41), Lefebvre's perspective has become influential within the social sciences, leading to increased attention to spatial questions in connection with the intertwined processes of urbanization and globalization. As stated before, Lefebvre's triadic model comprises three interconnected dimensions. Spatial practice involves the material and social interactions structuring daily life. Representations of space refer to conceptualized designs by planners and authorities. And representational spaces are lived and imagined through symbols, emotions and art (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Lefebvre's approach can be particularly suited to literary analysis, as it bridges the material, conceptual, and imaginative dimensions of urban environments, offering explanations how poets articulate the sensory and social dynamics of cities. By depicting sensory experience, both Orhan Veli<sup>3</sup> and MacNeice refer to the dominance of conceived spaces such as urban plans or architectural designs and privilege the lived, subjective dimensions of urban life. In the context of urban poetics, Lefebvre's interplay manifests in how these poets use sensory language to present the material and imaginative dimensions of cities. For instance, the rain in "London Rain" not only alters the physical landscape but also prompts existential reflections, blurring the boundaries between perceived and lived spaces (MacNeice, 1966, pp. 161-162). Similarly, the auditory richness of "I'm Listening to Istanbul" bridges the material reality of the city with its symbolic power, as sounds remind both presence and memory (Veli, 2020, pp. 115-116). These poetic strategies correspond with Lefebvre's (1991, p. 26) argument that space is a continuous process of production, where social practices, power structures, and imaginative acts are mutually constitutive.

Moreover, Lefebvre's theory clarifies the cultural and historical specificity of urban portrayals (Biagi, 2020, p. 215). London, as depicted in "London Rain", reflects the industrialized city where rain and neon lights symbolize both constraint and potential liberation (MacNeice, 1966, p. 161). Istanbul, in contrast, emerges as a postcolonial metropolis in "I'm Listening to Istanbul", its sensory vibrancy tied to a reassertion of cultural identity amidst modernization (Veli, 2020, p. 115). In this regard, Lefebvre's model indicates how these cities are not merely physical locales but products of social

2 Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* was originally published in French in 1974 (*La Production de l'Espace*) and later translated into English in 1991. For further details, see Stewart (1995).

3 Even though the poet's full name was Orhan Veli Kanık (1914-1950), he is commonly known as Orhan Veli. For a detailed account, see Veli (2021).

and historical forces, shaped by the connection of spatial practices and imaginative reconstructions. This perspective enriches literary analysis by situating urban poetics within broader socio-political contexts, emphasizing how sensory imagery reflects and resists dominant spatial orders. Despite its analytical power, Lefebvre's theory has faced critiques for its abstract nature and limited attention to individual agency (Shields, 1999, p. 165). However, its application to literature mitigates these concerns, as poetry inherently emphasizes subjective experience and imaginative resistance. Indeed, both "London Rain" and "I'm Listening to Istanbul" demonstrate how individuals, through sensory engagement, reclaim and reinterpret urban spaces, relating to Lefebvre's emphasis on representational spaces as sites of cultural production. This interaction highlights the relevance of Lefebvre's structure for literary studies, particularly in analysing how modernist poets such as Orhan Veli and MacNeice engage with the sensory and social complexities of urban environments.

## 1. I am Listening to Istanbul and London Rain: An Overview

Written during Türkiye's early Republican era in the 1940s, Orhan Veli's "I'm Listening to Istanbul", a cornerstone of the Garip Movement<sup>4</sup>, captures Istanbul's sensory vibrancy through free verse and modern Turkish language, reflecting the nation's post-Ottoman identity and its blend of tradition with Western modernity (Veli, 2020, p. 45). The poem's six stanzas, with five to seven irregular lines and no consistent rhyme, adopt an intimate, contemplative, and lyrical tone, weaving vivid, everyday imagery of bustling markets, docks, and natural sounds to celebrate the lives of ordinary people (Veli, 2020, pp. 46–47). In contrast, Louis MacNeice's "London Rain" was composed during the British modernist period, a time marked by economic depression and the looming threat of World War II (Brown, 2009, p. 112). Although Irish by origin, MacNeice spent most of his life in London, where he developed his poetic voice. The poem employs structured verse with a consistent ABCBDB rhyme scheme across eleven six-line stanzas of uniform, metrical lines. As a member of the Auden Group<sup>5</sup>, MacNeice crafts a reflective, restless, and sceptical meditation on a rain-soaked London, using metaphorical, surreal, and philosophical imagery in complex, rhetorical modern English to explore morality and desire against an existential urban backdrop (Stout, 2023, p. 89). The poems' contrasting formal structures, with Veli's conversational free verse set against MacNeice's formal, structured lines, offer complementary portrayals of Istanbul's vibrant, timeless vitality and London's moody, transformative existentiality, making them well suited for comparative analysis (Stout, 2023, p. 90).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The Garip Movement, emerged in the 1940s Türkiye and emphasized simplicity, everyday language, and the rejection of traditional poetic forms. For further information, see Ankay Kardaş, 2023; Akin, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> The Auden Group refers to a circle of 1930s British poets, including W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day-Lewis, and Louis MacNeice, known for their political engagement and modernist approach. See Kitamoto, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Orhan Veli's "İstanbul'u Dinliyorum" with its English translation, together with Louis MacNeice's "London Rain", are included in the appendix at the end of this paper.

## 2. Lefebvre's Spatial Theory in the Poems

Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory helps to clarify how "I'm Listening to Istanbul" and "London Rain" present urban space through physical form, perception and cultural meaning. In "London Rain", rain merges the material city with internal mood. Images such as "pimpling" streets and neon light flowing through "canals of night" (MacNeice, 1966, p. 161) suggest sensory interaction, echoing spatial practice. The chimneys, lights and streets reflect structured planning, but this order is unsettled as rain blurs clarity and the speaker drifts into introspection. Representational space appears where emotion disrupts functional order (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–39). In contrast, "I'm Listening to Istanbul" shifts attention from vision to sound. The speaker hears the city "eyes shut tight" (Veli, 2020, p. 115), focusing on voices, markets and waterfronts. These spaces emerge from lived use, not abstract design. Despite their differences, both poems treat the city as shaped by daily activity, social systems and personal feeling.

### 2. 1. Spatial Practice: The Material City

Lefebvre's concept of spatial practice, or "perceived" space, refers to the material and sensory dimensions of urban life, shaped through bodily rhythms and habitual interactions (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). Rather than being abstract or symbolic, this spatial component is embedded in the everyday movements and physical engagements that structure how inhabitants experience and traverse the urban environment. In "I'm Listening to Istanbul" and "London Rain", poetic language transforms such spatial practices into lived, sensory encounters. The poets do not merely describe their cities; they reconstitute them through rhythmic, corporeally grounded imagery that draws upon ordinary urban existence.

In "I'm Listening to Istanbul", Veli creates an auditory cityscape in which spatial practice is intertwined with Istanbul's communal fabric. Phrases such as "the Grand Bazaar's alive, cool and bright" and "hammers are clanging, docks in rhythmic beat" (Veli, 2020, p. 115) create a multisensory engagement with labour and place. The recurring aural motifs like far-off "bells of water-sellers" and "pigeons fluttering in courtyards old" capture the textures of routine urban phenomena rooted in Istanbul's cultural memory and collective identity. These elements correspond with Lefebvre's view that perceived space arises from the routines and connections between areas designated for work, private life, and leisure (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). The poem's use of free verse, devoid of metrical constraint, mirrors the organic, unscripted flow of daily urban activity. In privileging sound over sight, the speaker relinquishes visual control in favour of sensory immersion, replacing observational detachment with attentive listening. The city becomes palpable not through architecture or layout, but through shared acoustics and embodied proximity.

In contrast, "London Rain" presents a spatial experience shaped less by communal routine and more by the elemental dominance of weather. The opening lines, "The

rain of London pimples / The ebony street with white" (MacNeice, 1966, p. 161), establish a tactile urban world where precipitation marks surfaces, changing how they feel and function. Rain imposes instability: streets become treacherous, parks morph into "jungles," and reflective puddles serve as a "mirror for self-regard" (MacNeice, 1966, p. 161). In doing so, the poem presents the fluid and contingent nature of spatial practice. As Lefebvre suggests, perceived space is subject to material transformations that reorganise how bodies move and behave (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40). The park's metamorphosis from a site of leisure into an unruly space emphasizes this instability, showing how environmental shifts reconfigure otherwise familiar urban forms. The poem's structure amplifies this impression of constraint and imposition. Regular metrical lines simulate the steady, inescapable rhythm of rainfall, reinforcing a sense of monotony and suppression. Unlike Veli's free-flowing verses, MacNeice's formal constraints embody a city shaped by regulation and restriction. The experience of space becomes one of tension between bodily presence and external compulsion.

These two poetic treatments of spatial practice, while divergent in tone and structure, both remain grounded in materiality. Veli's Istanbul pulses with activity, commerce, and sensory openness, showcasing sound as the principal mode of orientation. MacNeice's London, meanwhile, is shaped by a weather-induced detachment that isolates the individual and disrupts social rhythm. Yet, both correspond to Lefebvre's spatial theory in their attention to the ways urban life is lived, perceived, and conditioned by physical and sensory engagement (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40). The poems' formal choices, whether adopting free verse or following metrical regularity, are not simply stylistic but closely connected to cities being shaped within the poetic imagination. When read comparatively, the poems yield a broader interpretive framework. Veli's acoustic Istanbul evokes a post-imperial city whose vitality resides in communal rituals and the continuity of urban life. MacNeice's London, by contrast, expresses interwar anxieties through the motif of unrelenting rain, signalling broader social and political undercurrents in 1930s Britain. The juxtaposition reinforces the view that modern urbanism is never monolithic but shaped by contextually specific spatial formations. This comparative insight responds to current calls in modernist studies to extend critical engagement across geopolitical boundaries and localised histories (Friedman, 2015, p. 23). Accordingly, both poems contribute to an understanding of spatial practice as a bodily experienced and materially inscribed phenomenon, never neutral and always contextually grounded, as Lefebvre maintains.

## 2. 2. Representations of Space: The Conceptual City

Lefebvre's notion of representations of space, also referred to as "conceived" space, designates abstract urban plans produced by authorities to impose order and express dominant ideologies (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38; Watkins, 2005, p. 212). This conceptual layer of the spatial triad emphasises the influence of institutional visions on the shaping of the urban environment, yet such top-down designs frequently contrast with the lived

and sensed realities of inhabitants. In "I am Listening to Istanbul", the evocation of "The Grand Bazaar's alive, cool and bright; / Mahmupasha's humming, vibrant, bold" foregrounds the city's official and historical landmarks while simultaneously situating them within daily sensory experience. Similarly, in "London Rain", the description of the city's infrastructure in "The rain of London pimples / The ebony street with white / And the neon lamps of London / Stain the canals of night" projects an image of an ordered, illuminated metropolis conceived through urban design. These images demonstrate how the poets translate the abstract into the perceptible, showing the coexistence of authority-driven representations with the immediacy of everyday life. Each poem thus presents a city shaped by tension between institutional structures and lived moments, echoing Lefebvre's critique of spatial practices moulded by authority (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 41).

In Veli's work, conceived space is expressed through rich auditory impressions that bring Istanbul vividly to life. By focusing on sounds from daily activities, including the "humming of Mahmupasha" and the "clanging of docks" as well as the vibrancy of the Grand Bazaar (Veli, 2020, p. 116), the poem situates the reader within a city experienced by its inhabitants, where commerce, social interaction and communal rhythms shape everyday life. These details demonstrate that conceived space is not simply an abstract plan but a site of lived engagement, where official organisation intersects with the continuous negotiation of social and economic practices. The poem's irregular free verse mirrors these rhythms, giving form to the spontaneity and vitality of Istanbul's urban life while reinforcing Lefebvre's observation that formal representations of space cannot fully capture the unpredictability of lived experience (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42).

MacNeice's "London Rain" similarly captures the dynamic relationship between built structures and lived experience. The city is depicted through its "countless chimneys" and "neon lamps" staining the "canals of night" (MacNeice, 1966, p. 161), emphasising London's architectural character and historical significance as an industrial and imperial centre. These features operate as poetic markers of conceived space, demonstrating how urban design expresses authority and social order. Yet, the falling rain interacts with these structures, creating shifts in perception and revealing the city's capacity for adaptability and sensory richness. Rather than undermining the city, the rain complements MacNeice's exploration of London as a lived environment, where environmental and human factors continuously shape experience. The steady rhythm of the poem enhances this effect, giving the planned city a pulse that resonates with everyday life.

Together, Veli and MacNeice illustrate how conceived space is simultaneously planned and experienced, structured and lived. Veli presents Istanbul as a city animated by sensory engagement and communal practice, while MacNeice portrays London as a city where historical, industrial and social forces converge with human and environmental experience. By anchoring Lefebvre's theory in vivid poetic imagery and historical

context, both poems demonstrate the tangible presence of conceived space as a lived, sensory, and socially meaningful dimension of the urban environment.

### **2.3. Representational Spaces: Real Spaces**

Lefebvre's concept of representational spaces, or lived spaces, refers to the symbolic and imaginative dimensions of spatial experience. In these spaces, emotions, memories and cultural values infuse the built environment, transforming physical locations into personally and collectively meaningful places. As Lefebvre notes, these spaces are directly lived through their associated images and symbols, not imagined, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users' (1991, pp. 38–39). Unlike conceived space, which is the imagined order imposed by authorities through planning, design and technical schemes, lived space emerges through artistic practice, sensory perception and daily experience, offering an intuitive and affective engagement with the city. Poetry functions as a medium that conveys this dimension, allowing readers to inhabit the city emotionally and symbolically rather than through imposed structure.

In "I'm Listening to Istanbul", Veli constructs a lived space through immersive auditory imagery. The poem begins with the line "I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight," which immediately shifts attention from visual order to a sensorial and emotional connection with the city. Sounds such as "a breeze is whispering, soft and light" and "curses, songs and taunts are filling the street" convey the layering of individual and communal experience, transforming familiar locations like Mahmupasha and the Grand Bazaar into sites of lived engagement (Veli, 2020, p. 116). These auditory and atmospheric images function as Lefebvre's non-verbal symbols, enabling inhabitants and readers to access the affective qualities of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). Through this approach, Veli's poem moves beyond the structured, planned city of conceived space, allowing Istanbul to be felt, remembered and imagined in its lived immediacy.

MacNeice's "London Rain" similarly evokes lived space, emphasising introspection, emotional depth and urban ambiguity. The transformation of the park into "a jungle" signals a shift from structured spatial order to a more experiential and symbolic environment, while the recurring motif of rain saturates both the city and the speaker's emotional perception (MacNeice, 1966, p. 161). Lines such as "Falling asleep I listen / To the falling London rain" (MacNeice, 1966, p. 163) illustrate how natural and sensory phenomena can embody lived experience, allowing London to be apprehended affectively rather than solely through its planned structures. In this way, MacNeice's imagery demonstrates that lived space is inseparable from emotion, perception and symbolic resonance.

Together, these poems distinguish clearly between conceived and lived space. Veli foregrounds the sensory rhythms and social practices that animate Istanbul, while MacNeice portrays London as experienced through reflective, introspective engagement. Both works illustrate how representational spaces allow urban environments to be

inhabited emotionally and culturally, complementing the structural dimensions of conceived space and revealing the city as simultaneously ordered and experienced.

## Conclusion

This study has examined Orhan Veli's simple, accessible and evocative language alongside MacNeice's intellectual and rhetorical style. It has shown how both poets construct their cities as dynamic spaces shaped by sensory experience, cultural history and modernist innovation, thereby demonstrating the correlation between urban life and poetic expression in line with Lefebvre's theory. Orhan Veli and Louis MacNeice both indicate that urban spaces are primarily experienced through sensory and bodily engagement rather than through abstraction or purely visual representation. In "I'm Listening to Istanbul", Veli emphasises the city's auditory landscape, capturing everyday rhythms through sounds that bring Istanbul's material and social life to the fore. This matches with Lefebvre's idea of spatial practice, which focuses on lived routines and habits. The speaker's choice to listen with "eyes shut tight" suggests a way of knowing the city through memory and perception rather than imposed order. Conversely, MacNeice's "London Rain" begins with images of London's planned infrastructure, such as "neon lamps" and "countless chimneys," yet the persistent rain blurs and unsettles these structures. This illustrates Lefebvre's notion that conceived space, the ordered and planned city, remains fragile when confronted by natural forces and exposes a more unstable and emotional urban reality.

The poems also adopt distinct approaches to Lefebvre's concept of representational space, which concerns the emotional and symbolic experience of place. In Veli's Istanbul, the city unfolds as a vivid soundscape, filled with culturally significant noises that evoke the city's collective identity and shared history. These sounds create a textured atmosphere where memory and tradition blend with daily life, giving the city a deeply felt presence beyond its physical form. By contrast, MacNeice's London is presented through a more melancholic perspective, where the persistent rain becomes a tactile presence that mirrors the speaker's introspective mood. Rather than conveying a sense of communal belonging, the rain reflects a personal state of detachment and emotional complexity. Both poets thus engage with their urban settings on multiple levels, moving beyond the physical and planned structures to explore how personal and collective imagination shape the city. Through their poetry, Istanbul and London are transformed into symbolic spaces where emotion and memory give form and meaning to the urban experience.

By applying Lefebvre's spatial triad to these poems, this study shows how modernist poetry goes beyond mere physical description to present cities as dynamic sites of social practice, conceptual design and lived experience. Veli and MacNeice use sensory language to bring their cities alive, blending everyday life with cultural and emotional textures. Their work confirms Lefebvre's continuing value in literary and spatial studies,

demonstrating that urban space is always shaped by multiple forces and experienced through the senses. This comparative reading invites further investigation into how poetry and other art forms contribute to understanding the complexities of urban life, encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue between literary criticism, urban theory and cultural geography.

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## Appendix A:

### İstanbul'u Dinliyorum

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı  
Önce hafiften bir rüzgar esiyor;  
Yavaş yavaş sallanıyor  
Yapraklar ağaçlarda;  
Uzaklarda, çok uzaklarda,  
Sucuların hiç durmayan çingirakları  
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı.

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;  
Kuşlar geçiyor, derken;  
Yükseklerden, sürü sürü, çığlık çığlık.  
Ağlar çekiliyor dalyanlarda;  
Bir kadının suya değiyor ayakları;  
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı.

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;  
Serin serin Kapalıçarşı  
Civıl civıl Mahmutpaşa  
Güvercin dolu avlular  
Çekiç sesleri geliyor doklardan  
Güzelim bahar rüzgarında ter kokuları;  
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı.

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;  
Başında eski alemlerin sarhoşluğu  
Loş kayıklaneleriyle bir yali;  
Dinmiş lodosların uğultusu içinde  
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı.

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;  
Bir yosma geçiyor kaldırımdan;  
Küfürler, şarkılar, türküler, laf atmalar.  
Bir şey düşüyor elinden yere;  
Bir gül olmalı;  
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı.

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;  
Bir kuş *çırpınıyor* eteklerinde;  
Alnın sıcak mı, değil mi, bilmiyorum;  
Dudakların *ıslak* mı, değil mi, bilmiyorum;  
Beyaz bir ay doğuyor fistikların arkasından  
Kalbinin vuruşundan anlıyorum;  
*İstanbul'u* dinliyorum. (Veli, 2020, pp. 115-116).

## Appendix B:

### I am Listening to Istanbul<sup>7</sup>

I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight;  
A breeze is whispering, soft and light;  
Leaves are swaying in gentle, quiet dance,  
Branches trembling with a tender trance;  
Far away, oh so far away,  
Bells of water-sellers ring clear;  
I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight.

I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight;  
Birds are sweeping by in fleeting flight;  
Nets are pulling where fishers' hopes ignite;  
A woman's feet are splashing, soft and slight;  
High flocks are shrieking, piercing through the air;  
I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight.

I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight;  
The Grand Bazaar's<sup>8</sup> alive, cool and bright;  
Mahmutpasha's<sup>9</sup> humming, vibrant, bold;  
Pigeons are fluttering in courtyards old;  
Hammers are clanging, docks in rhythmic beat;  
Sweet spring breeze carries scents of sweat and heat;

I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight.  
I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight;  
My soul's reeling, drunk on ancient light;  
A waterhouse's looming, boathouses in sight;

7 The poem has been translated from Turkish into English by the author of this article.

8 The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, established in the 15th century, is one of the world's largest and oldest covered markets, renowned for its vibrant atmosphere and diverse goods. For details, see Wohl, 2015.

9 Mahmutpasha Bazaar in Istanbul, dating back to the 15th century, is a bustling open-air market known for its affordable clothing, textiles, and traditional goods, attracting both locals and tourists.

Lodos winds are roaring, lulled tonight;  
I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight.

I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight;  
A coquette's swaying, steps bold and spright;  
Curses, songs, and taunts are filling the street;  
Something's falling—her hand lets slip its treat;  
A rose, perhaps, is lying where it fell;  
I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight.

I'm listening to Istanbul, eyes shut tight;  
A bird's fluttering in her skirts, I might;  
Is your brow glowing? I feel its warmth ignite;  
Are your lips shining? My heart knows right;  
A pale moon's rising where pines in silence gleam;  
Your heartbeat's speaking—I hear its dream;  
I'm listening to Istanbul.

## **Appendix C:**

### **London Rain**

The rain of London pimples  
The ebony street with white  
And the neon lamps of London  
Stain the canals of night  
And the park becomes a jungle  
In the alchemy of night.

My wishes turn to violent  
Horses black as coal—  
The randy mares of fancy,  
The stallions of the soul—  
Eager to take the fences  
That fence about my soul.

Across the countless chimneys  
The horses ride and across  
The country to the channel  
Where warning beacons toss,  
To a place where God and No-God  
Play at pitch and toss.

Whichever wins I am happy  
For God will give me bliss  
But No-God will absolve me  
From all I do amiss  
And I need not suffer conscience  
If the world was made amiss.

Under God we can reckon  
On pardon when we fall  
But if we are under No-God  
Nothing will matter at all,  
Adultery and murder  
Will count for nothing at all.

So reinforced by logic  
As having nothing to lose  
My lust goes riding horseback  
To ravish where I choose,

To burgle all the turrets  
Of beauty as I choose.

But now the rain gives over  
Its dance upon the town,  
Logic and lust together  
Come dimly tumbling down,  
And neither God nor No-God  
Is either up or down.

The argument was wilful,  
The alternatives untrue,  
We need no metaphysics  
To sanction what we do  
Or to muffle us in comfort  
From what we did not do.

Whether the living river  
Began in bog or lake,  
The world is what was given,  
The world is what we make.  
And we only can discover  
Life in the life we make.

So let the water sizzle  
Upon the gleaming slates,  
There will be sunshine after  
When the rain abates  
And rain returning duly  
When the sun abates.

My wishes now come homeward,  
Their gallopings in vain,  
Logic and lust are quiet,  
And again it starts to rain;  
Falling asleep I listen  
To the falling London rain.

(MacNeice, 1966, pp. 161-163).