

## The Poet of the Sea: The Fisherman of Halicarnassus from the Heart of the Mediterranean

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### Abstract

Mediterranean studies have been popular since Fernand Braudel published his groundbreaking book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* which created new perspectives in the field and influenced many scholars of history and literature. Similar endeavors had taken place in Bodrum Turkey by Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (the Fisherman of Halicarnassus) who lived and breathed at the same time as Braudel. This study will shed light on Kabaağaçlı's contribution to the Mediterranean which has been neglected by the world. Via comparing his book titled *The Sixth Continent Mediterranean* (1982) with the works of other literary figures or scholars, it will demonstrate connections between them along with new perspectives. The study will also analyze his two novels respectively *Aganta Burina Burinata* (1976) and *Deniz Gurbetçileri* (1969) in terms of Mediterranean characteristics.

**Keywords:** Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, the Fisherman of Halicarnassus, Turkish literature, Mediterranean identity

### Denizin Şairi: Akdeniz'in Yüreğinden Halikarnas Balıkçısı

#### Özet

Tarih ve edebiyata yeni bakış açıları kazandıran ve alandaki birçok araştırmacıyı etkileyen Fernand Braudel'in çığır açan *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (II Felipe Döneminde Akdeniz ve Akdeniz Dünyası) eseri ile birlikte Akdeniz çalışmaları popüler hale gelmiştir. Braudel ile aynı dönem yaşamış ve aynı havayı solumuş olan Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (Halikarnas Balıkçısı) da Bodrum, Türkiye'de benzer çalışmalar gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu çalışma, Balıkçının bugüne kadar dünya tarafından ihmal edilen Akdeniz katkısına ışık tutacaktır. *Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* (1982) isimli eserini başka araştırmacıların eserleri ile karşılaştırarak yeni bakış açıları ile birlikte bağlantıları göz önüne serecektir. Çalışma ayrıca *Aganta Burina Burinata* (1976) ve *Deniz Gurbetçileri* (1969) romanlarını Akdeniz açısından değerlendirecektir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, Halikarnas Balıkçısı, Türk edebiyat, Akdeniz kimliği

In the beginning, there was the Mediterranean. This statement may come across as cliché due to the biblical sense of creation and overuse of it; however, considering thousands of years of human history around the Mediterranean Sea, one may not be able to track any other geography with human activity that dates back earlier. The Mediterranean can be the only one that people, living or dead, have been familiar with due to the origins of literature, religion, history, art, architecture, politics, and civilization. It was such a big area (and still is) covered with land that Socrates metaphorically referred to it by associating people around it with “frogs around a pond” (Horden and Purcell 8). Literature literally started in the Mediterranean with the earliest forms of epics, political and historical texts one of which is by Homer, *Odyssey* which cannot be thought of without the Mediterranean Sea, “the basis for our history and culture” (ibid.). The same goes for Herodotus or Strabo as well because of the human interaction and appeal of the region. This pond (Socrates), magic lake or pool of exchanges (Gnisci 263), a sea of close neighbors (Matvejević 202), the great sea (Bible, Herodotus), *mare nostrum* (Ceramella 16) or our sea (Greeks), the sea beside us (Plato), has been the playground of all civilizations and an intriguing source for literary products due to the abundant materials and history. Horden and Purcell assert that in the Mediterranean, not the land but the sea “gives its shape to everything including the land itself” and it constructs “a single entity” (9-10). It also functions as the fabric of the people which allows a unique way of communicating a Mediterraneanness, meaning sensual fullness (Ceramella 16). Anti-heroes such as Don Juan or Anastasius demonstrate the traits of Mediterranean type of characteristics.

The Mediterranean is a “hybrid meeting place and [a] network of communications, transportation, exchange, migration, and travel” (Gnisci 263-264). It serves as the point de départ for interconnectivity, growth, decline, multiculturalism, and unification since the sea allows connection, trade, interaction, and alteration which enables growth and decadence at the same time (Marino 408-409). As the Mediterranean provided this sense of richness in an environment that everything coexisted, it led itself to transform into “a plot-like character” (Ricoeur 208) in the history of civilizations for which Fernand Braudel, the Herodotus of the Mediterranean history, states that they are “realities of the extreme *longue duree*” (qtd. in Ricoeur 104). He also argues that it takes centuries of “miscellany of trivia” and daily happenings to shape these stories of earlier times that are essential for a civilization which is “the distant and far distant past clinging to life” (1972a 758-775). At the same time, Ricoeur and Goethe reached the same conclusion about the Mediterranean since it “has endured the time” and “preserved much of its ancient character” (qtd. in Horden and Purcell 29) which makes it like a “rock of endurance” (Ricoeur 104). Fernand Braudel has a unique description

for it as he states that it is “a history of a constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles” (1972a 20). Civilizations after civilizations, the same occupations, economic history, cultural rites, and advent of religions makes the regions have these timeless realities of long durations as stated above. It is first of all “a creating space” and “a unit” that provides endless possibilities with its various sea routes and districts which are “so different yet so alike” (Braudel 1239).

The Mediterranean has been a huge geography and the cradle for many historical events that have affected humans in the long term. This practical lived experience according to Ricoeur is one dialectic definition of history especially when it is set by time and narration (207). In addition, Braudel (qtd. in Horden and Purcell) argues that conditions and the “physical environment” defines and limits the Mediterranean and “freedom of movement in it” (37). In the north, mountains function as the barrier between Europe and the Mediterranean; the same goes for the desert in the south or the ocean in the west. What constitutes these human activities remains although peoples and cultures are temporal (Ricoeur 212). Braudel’s concept of *longue duree*, therefore, is the true definition of the Mediterranean of which Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (the Fisherman of Halicarnassus) is also the product of. This plot-like character and the “virtual plot” of the history of the Mediterranean by Braudel strike us with combined layers, circles, and incidents with “heterogeneous temporalities and contradictory chronicles” (Ricoeur 216). Kabaağaçlı shares similar perspectives regarding the history and the interconnectedness of the Mediterranean and he utilizes them consciously in his maritime (Mediterranean) narrative.

Regarding “connectivity”, Kinoshita at this point asserts that along with the fragmented cultural environment, it actually led to the advent of Mediterranean literature which was eventually distributed to all corners of the world (320). He also argues that “Mediterranean literature is a project of reterritorialization” (314) and if we remove the notion of nation in the area, which is imagined, The Mediterranean stays intact as a territory for connectivity and literary production. Masterpieces such as *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Tempest* by Shakespeare, works by Dante, and Goethe, along with great romantics including Byron, and Percy Shelley; and modernist authors D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster, Mark Twain, Lawrence Durrell, Naguib Mahfouz, Amin Maalouf, Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (the Fisherman of Halicarnassus), Orhan Pamuk and many more exploited this endless sea and its possibilities to a great extent which enabled scholars to focus on the area with new perspectives. Literature is the means of communication among people across centuries and the Mediterranean functions as the space for “returning and departure at the same time” in literature (Horden and Purcell 25). The stories of old epics, adventures, shipwrecks, lively ports, and mosaic coastal destinations are the result of an eclectic Mediterranean narration. Gnisci associates this “magic

lake” with a “pool”, or “a net and a matrix of metaphors and icons” (262). He also adds that behind these stories and songs are “the consonantal voices of the three continental lands” in the Mediterranean (264). Thus, the Mediterranean as the “horizon” or “network” of interactions and “communications” cannot be explained with mundane political issues or simple “confrontations” (Horden and Purcell 24-25). It is rather an “inventory of the turning points, and the mingling of all the civilizations and the adventures, of all the exchanges” (Gnisci 264). Goldwyn and Silverman also refer to this same exchange along with the “zone of contact” into which the Mediterranean transformed at later points in history, as “a place where not only goods and people moved freely but also ideas, aesthetics, ideologies, and cultures intermingled (10). Civilizations that have been a part of this geography, regardless of their races or origins form an imagined community out of pieces of land and the sea (Goldwyn and Silverman 12).

### **The Fisherman of Halicarnassus and *The Sixth Continent Mediterranean* (1982)**

Fernand Braudel points out that the “Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian” (1972a, 14). Without knowing or accessing the sources in the East Mediterranean, he accomplished to be the authority in Mediterranean history. What Braudel could have realized if he had had the chance was a colleague with an excessive love and passion for the Mediterranean who placed it to the center like himself. This referent is Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, also known by his pen name the Fisherman of Halicarnassus who spent most of his (late) life in Bodrum (the birthplace of Herodotus) writing stories, novels, and essays with Mediterranean settings. Özveren argues that it was not Braudel, but Kabaağaçlı who developed Turkish Mediterraneanism via influencing other authors who initiated “the Blue Movement” in the 60s and 70s (*Writing with the Mediterranean* 214). Reading Kabaağaçlı penetrates the Mediterranean into the mind of the reader and his poetic style and descriptions elevate the Mediterranean as a character, which places him in a vital place in literature. Yaşar Kemal, a 1973 Nobel Prize nominee, believed that Kabaağaçlı should have been given the Nobel Prize due to his literary achievements and vast knowledge of history and art, especially about the Mediterranean.

Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı may be deprived of worldwide recognition due to his untranslated works, yet he was a true artist and intellectual in his time. He was born in Crete and lived in Athens for a while before his family moved to Istanbul where he studied at American Robert College. He also studied history at Oxford University for which he criticised that he spent three or four additional years to forget what they had taught him there (Atılğan & Çoban 15). It was his father who wanted him to study history yet Kabaağaçlı was in fact more

interested in arts and therefore he dropped out of Oxford and went to Italy to study fine arts. When he came back to Istanbul, he wrote and drew for certain magazines. After a chain of unfortunate incidents, he ended up in Bodrum as an exile which enabled him to realize his deep desire for nature, the sea, and its people. This is where he took up the name Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı and worked for the wellbeing of the people, studied the ancient history and stories of the region, underplanted trees, helped divers with upgrading their gears and fisherman with their types of equipment, wrote short stories and articles, translated books, painted and sailed (Uçan Eke). It was the Mediterranean that “lured” him to Bodrum where he felt the “Mediterranean touch” and he gazed at this beautiful land as if it is “a text full of meaning”, and it became his “conscience” (Özveren, *Writing with the Mediterranean* 203, 207, 208-209).

Kabaağaçlı is unique due to his modernist ideas about the Mediterranean about which he relied mostly on his own intuitions. He believes that inventions on the sea and science definitely started in the Mediterranean as those great navigators such as Magellan and Columbus are just some of the examples. He thinks that the source for these achievements and discoveries is the desire for progress that the Mediterranean bestows on humans, which is the foundation of civilization (*Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 30-31). Heraclitus of Ephesus who is renowned for his fashionable expression “Πάντα ῥεῖ” (Pantha rei or everything flows) is among Kabaağaçlı’s best philosophers who think positively about the land on which people settle (*Anadolu’nun Avukatı* 2010). He considers them as the follow-up of the synthesis of the previous civilizations on the land. Another example would be Thales from Miletus (Söke) who calculated the first eclipse of the sun on May 28 585 BC, a date which for Fisherman must be the start of time, when mythology left its place to science (Ibid.). It is Kabaağaçlı’s belief that the Mediterranean is a continuum where civilizations come and go, and mix with one another, and it is vital for humanity to protect these cultures. His ideas draw much parallelism with other literary scholars and history researchers mentioned in this paper. For instance, Horden and Purcell also refer to “this Great Sea... of the continuum, unity”, and “greatness of the Mediterranean” (10). Kabaağaçlı places Ionia (today’s Anatolia) at the center of this continent of the Mediterranean as he believes it is the heart of it and starts a novel discussion that he supports with historical facts and characters. He argues that Anatolia was the first center of science, history, and literature in the world thanks to Homer, Herodotus, and Thales (Halikarnas Balıkcısı, *Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 33). Along with the aforementioned figures, Kabaağaçlı refers to Diogenes who protested Alexander the Great and said “stand out of my sun”; and he approaches them without biases or nationalist attitudes. He gives the example of the parents of Herodotus who were not Greeks but from Caria and spoke Cretan and other

languages. Kabağaçlı challenges the common Hellenistic belief that there was only ancient Greece with its dominant culture and language; instead, he demonstrates alternative sources for the advent of the western culture.

Kabağaçlı disagrees with the common belief that Ancient Greece was the foundation of civilization in the West and refutes it with concrete evidence suggesting that it was in fact Eastern Mediterranean civilizations, specifically Ionia or Anatolia (for which he also uses the term Mediterranean), from where the *West* learned the science that will save the mankind. To mock this common approach along with “the philhellenic, Eurocentric, and Orientalist biases” (Özveren, *Writing with the Mediterranean* 212), Kabağaçlı stereotypes Greeks as their idealized homeland was not as romantic as the West imagined (*Anadolu'nun Sesi* 33), and claims (to target Greeks) that Plato and Socrates did not even know about sewage system or sanitation which caused epidemics all the time, and he states that if Homer had lived at the same time, they would have executed him like they did Galileo, another Mediterranean (Halikarnas Balıkçısı, *Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 55). In fact, he gives a related example when he mentions Anaxagoras, a philosopher who was born in Urla, Izmir then moved to Athens where they executed him due to his ideas about the core of the sun and the moon about which he claimed the origin was the mass, not the gods they believed (Halikarnas Balıkçısı, *Anadolu'nun Sesi* 106). Putting this distraction aside, Kabağaçlı is merely interested in the initial function of Anatolia in the mix of people in and around the Mediterranean (Özveren, *Fisherman and Braudel* 16). In most of his books, he praises Anatolia as he argues that it is not Asia but the Mediterranean and he views this “great” land as the salvation of the world. Despite the fact that Kabağaçlı loves Anatolia to a great extent, he also states that “if these Anatolian thinkers were from Patagonia, what is written about them would be the same here” (Halikarnas Balıkçısı, *Anadolu'nun Sesi* 9). It is also his wish that people in Turkey will eventually own their Anatolian roots and identity instead of looking back to Middle Asia which actually takes them further away from their true origins (Özveren, *Fisherman and Braudel* 16). Kabağaçlı has indeed romantic views about the distant past of the land when the society was first matriarchal before the rise of myths and religions that brought patriarchy which ruined the structure of it. His core agenda is to show people the direct impact of Ionia or Anatolia (he uses the metaphor “the heart”) on the Mediterranean from where everything flowed to the rest of the world which for him is a fact that Europe deliberately ignores and it urges him to think that Anatolia is at the top of the hierarchy in the whole landscape and also in the Mediterranean. (Özveren, *Writing with the Mediterranean* 212).

This idea of the Mediterranean “preceding the others”, derives from the notion that it unifies “its zone of influence” and leads to shared civilization due to the sea about which Kabağaçlı hints that distances on land are more complex than at sea and states “The sea does not divide but unites. Mediterranean history is a proof of this case” (qtd. in Özveren, *Fisherman and Braudel* 15). Kabağaçlı places the Mediterranean in the center as an encompassing continent embracing countries that are originally considered as parts of either Europe, Asia, or Africa. He believes that this is an illusion that geographers caused by dividing big land masses; and adds that Africa begins with the Great Sahara, Asia with the plateau of Iran; and all these countries, together the coasts in the Mediterranean are not of Europe, Asia or Africa, but “first and foremost of the Mediterranean” (Halikarnas Balıkçısı qtd. in Özveren, *Fisherman and Braudel* 16).

With regard to the effects of the climate of the Mediterranean on people, Kabağaçlı identifies this climate with life and civilization since it allows people to live without being dependent on thick coats or air conditioners; and if people from cold climates are placed here, they will be “Mediterraneans to their bones as the sun, sky, and clouds and the sea will be closer to them than their homeland” (*Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 23-24). These cold weather people such as those from Scandinavia or Moscow are affected by the beauty of the Mediterranean as they feel that this continent is from their childhood and somehow they got separated. Due to the fact that this “human geography” can easily “assimilate foreigners” and that they were once Mediterraneans who discovered other continents, they feel alienated wherever they go (*Writing with the Mediterranean* 215). Kabağaçlı argues that the “Mediterranean is the core of humanity” (*Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 60). In most of his other works, he repeats this idea that the Mediterranean is “fertile”, young, alive, eternal, and will always be. It was because of this fertility that Sardinia was founded by the Hittites, Palestine by Pulasatis, Rome by Etruscans, and Marseille by Phocaeans (*Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 136). Around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, this Mediterranean culture from Phocae sailed to Corsica, Marseille, and east Wales where there they introduced Kybele and it led to the “spread of goddess Artemis to England” (Halikarnas Balıkçısı, *Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 78-79).

Kabağaçlı places the Mediterranean into the heart of the world and adds that the people of Anatolia were called by Egyptians “the people of the heart of the sea” (Halikarnas Balıkçısı, *Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 136). He asserts that the Mediterranean was also the center of art (especially sculpture), music, and folklore and implies that religions ruined art in this sixth continent (*Altıncı Kıta Akdeniz* 178). Although Kabağaçlı’s Mediterranean seems to focus too much on Anatolia or Archipelago, it does not indicate that the rest of the geography is deficient;

on the contrary, their richness stems from the Mediterranean culture, a fact that all scholars agree; and Kabağaçlı adds another point of departure here and it is the origins of the Mediterranean. Özveren argues that according to Kabağaçlı, the Mediterranean is the core and beginning of humanity as well as the first of the six continents in time and hierarchy (*Writing with the Mediterranean* 216). He backs his arguments with real historical figures such as Herodotus and Homer (the origins of history and literature) who lived around the eastern parts of the Mediterranean where the sun rises and gives beauty to Aphrodite who bathed with the foam of the Mediterranean Sea and became more beautiful (Halikarnas Balıkçısı, *Merhaba Anadolu* 27). In addition to its creativity and truthfulness, Kabağaçlı also resembles the Mediterranean, because of the microorganisms in its water which he calls “sea milk”, to breasts (he also believes that the sea is the symbol of motherhood) from which the coast of the Mediterranean is enlightened from one end to the other (*Merhaba Anadolu* 23-24). Özveren argues that the Mediterranean as “a body of water” is “a dramatic actor” in Kabağaçlı’s writing (*Writing with the Mediterranean* 212). The statement he repeated until he died was “the civilization is never a monopolization of a race” and his motto was to greet everyone with “Merhaba” (hello in Turkish) meaning that “from me, there can be no harm to you”; and he convinced people that this Mediterranean manner can “clean the world out of dirt and rust” along with the Mediterranean provezza (*Anadolu'nun Avukatı*). Reading Kabağaçlı urges the reader to grasp the importance of the Mediterranean and he seems to be the only author with such powerful language and description about it.

### ***Aganta Burina Burinata (1976)***

So far, regarding Kabağaçlı, our focus has been his writings *of* the sea; as of now, his writings *in* the sea will be analyzed by referring to his ideas about the Mediterranean. “Mediterraneans read glossaries as if they were memoirs, which they sometimes are,” says Predrag Matvejević indicating the high sense of nostalgia and metaphoric language of the people around the region which is also the case for *Aganta Burina Burinata* (153). *Aganta* means “hold” and the rest are high and low sails; together it is used for setting sail. In our case, it is a Dickensian Mediterranean coming of an age (bildungsroman) novel about a protagonist’s journey from land to sea. The main character Mahmut loves the sea and he is the son of a sailor who is filled with shame as he caused his brother’s death at sea. Therefore, he does not allow his son Mahmut to become a sailor and sends him to school and also Kirpi Halil’s shop at the same time. Kirpi Halil is also a lover of the sea and keeps telling stories about it which affects Mahmut since he also learns maritime vocabulary including *aganta*



burina burinata from him. During these times, Mahmut plays truant and secretly goes fishing with another fisherman, his girlfriend Fatma's father. After a while, he drops out of school and joins his uncle's vessel, and gains his first open-sea experience. After leaving him, losing his parents, and working with other ships, Mahmut returns and finds Fatma who is now blind and does not want to ruin his life. Unable to persuade Mahmut, Fatma runs away and Mahmut marries a landlord's daughter and becomes one of "them". After three years of nonsense of land, he leaves everything behind and sets sail again.

Similar to *Deniz Gurbetçileri* (1969), this novel also includes vivid descriptions of the sea and the land. Kabağaçlı again sets the story in Bodrum where "all roads reach to the sea" (7). Within this landscape, Mahmut is also exposed to the ancient Mediterranean civilizations that took place in and around Bodrum. On the way to Milas, they see Genoese, Seljuk, and Greek ruins, and Mahmut is astonished by their age and deserted place where no one lives and he says "whatever I saw, I absorbed them like a hungry sponge" (17). These lands change colors depending on the time of the day. At night, the Mediterranean Sea again dominates the land. He depicts how a big castle seems smaller at night when dark water is everywhere (19).

At Kör Halit's coffee house, Mahmut sees a poster of Othello (from Venice), a nice Mediterranean connection (36) along with Christopher Columbus's portrait. He listens to the stories about him and his fleet which makes him desire to be on the same ship as Columbus. He does not understand why the captains he knows never sail to discover unknown lands and keep sailing between the same ports (51). As man needs to explore, and reach beyond the horizon and to the unknown, he knows that he belongs to open seas. Just like Ricoeur says "the waters are there to be discovered, explored, traveled" (209). During his first voyage in his uncle's vessel, Mahmut experiences a storm called Provezza which is the greatest of the storms in the Mediterranean. He says,

Provezza is an absolute poet. We as barelegged sailors cannot view kings' and queens' palaces, crowns, or jewelry. That night, Provezza opened the orange gates of the western sky for the setting sun. Clouds as glorious as thousands of years were moving north with distant color pieces. At that moment, there was a pause in creation... as if the creation reached thinking. (87)

These sailors are the last generation of thousands of years of sea culture and they are peculiar people. Mahmut explains how they know that sharks run away from the shore to deep and "Mediterraneans" take the oil from their head and keep it in different bottles. If a storm breaks

out, the oil gets blurry and Mahmut says it is the first barometer that sailors invented (89). In one of these storms, the crew hears someone calling for help and all of them believe that during these storms other sailors talk to them (93). Mahmut feels at home at sea and he describes places he sees in the Mediterranean as,

...the noisy port of Piraeus with train and steamboat whistle, crane noise; bare orange rocks of the Cape Mataban and Maleas in the evening, Cerigo Island; the three thousand-meter-high Mount Ida, and Etna volcano white with Crete's moonlight at night, pink at dawn, far away; The white cities of Sicily, Catania surrounded by lava, the moon-shaped city of Messina, the high and windy Taormina, the ash pile of Stromboli in the middle of the sea, Naples with noise and songs, Sardinia and Corsica buried in the bosom of blue air, Christopher Columbus statue in Genoa; Marseille with hundreds of docks, music and open air; Barcelona and Malaga, the streets of which flow wine and dark-haired dark-eyed children... (101)

Mahmut says these places were new worlds in front of him. This depiction of the Mediterranean coastal landscape takes the reader to these colorful places and stops at each one of them one by one. Seeing these new places is the best experience for Mahmut and he loves it more than he loves meeting new people and making new friends in the Mediterranean. He utters,

They say people with different languages cannot warm towards each other. It is a lie! People who work and suffer together develop such a strong bond to one another that they become bosom chum even if they are ice and fire. Here I made such good friends and when one of them came to me I would feel like I was with myself, and all foreigners had left. (Ibid.)

The idea that those made of soil return to the land and those made of water mix into the sea is one of the major themes in the novels by Kabağaçlı and the sea functions as the material of the human body. Mahmut has to live on land as a landlord for three years and he detests the greedy and canny villagers that he lives with. The only thing they care about is their property and land. These lands and people tied to them as dogs with leashes actually drive him crazy. He does not understand why they are buried within four walls until they die. He asks himself "Is this living? Or prolonged death?" (195). When he sees sailors launching a big ship, he hears

a song; and when he hears young sailors shouting “aganta” he misses the sea badly and keeps thinking about it. When he sees a sailboat from a distance, he is able to see the inside and hear what people tell each other. He can also hear sailors singing and see the open sea, noisy ports, and taverns with the sounds of plates and raki glasses. These are all places of the Mediterranean, and Mahmut is dreaming about them like Santiago dreaming about lions in Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*.

### ***Deniz Gurbetçileri* (Albatrosses - 1969)**

Kabağaçlı signals the world this “good” bird albatross, a strong symbol of nature in Coleridge’s poem and the biggest flying bird, with *Deniz Gurbetçileri* (“sea expatriates” would be the word-to-word translation), as his novel’s title, written in 1969 and sets in the Mediterranean. It includes many different stories of its various characters who are mostly sailors, specifically divers. They work at sea as breadwinners and have their home on land, exactly the same as albatrosses. They say “he is one of us...has no care about calmness or storms...an expat at sea” (19). There is no protagonist around whom a grand narrative is set, but the main plot is the competition between these two groups of sponge divers, respectively Ateşoğlu Murat and Karakulak Tefvik. However, it functions as a side story or a background image within this big picture of the Mediterranean and its courageous sailors. Demirdağ argues that Kabağaçlı aims to demonstrate a “panorama of sailors’ life” along with a synthesis of people’s understanding and beliefs determined by the oral (folk) culture (103). After reading about his life and interests, one can understand that Kabağaçlı via his biographical characters from Bodrum, tells stories within his stories that are similar to the ancient stories and myths that take place in the Mediterranean and adds his own cultural experience along with ecological awareness which is at a high point with these sea people, and with sea birds, seals, albatrosses, storms, and their stories about all of them, the characters sound as if they are mythological figures.

Most of the characters in the novel love the sea except this Black Hacer who lost her father, uncles, brothers, and sons to sea and is left with her only grandson Aliş. She keeps cursing the sea as if it is a character and throwing stones to break that “bitch’s head” (42). Here, the sea functions as a mythical character whom women hate and are jealous of since “she” takes their people and does not give them back. Yet deep down in their hearts, they understand. Black Hacer at one point hears from very distant the voices of all her ancestors begging to her ears as follows,

“The sea is bitter but sweet, let the men of the land take root in their lands like trees. Wherever we are, we always desire to be somewhere else. Men of the land are always afraid of the sea. It takes a brave and strong heart to taste the hard taste of the horizon. Listen to the sailor's blood circulating through your veins without fear. The distances ring in you and you yearn for the unseen vastness and distant adventures that are unpolluted by money ... One day you will melt in the sea and join us. Let lands keep their gravestones and glorious monuments. If we could return, we would return to our seas, which always broke our hopes as long as we lived on earth. We loved her, just as you do.” (43).

The novel is the depiction of a sea nation (Mediterraneans) with their sadness, joy, and daily struggles both on land and at sea. It is also very unpredictable in the Mediterranean which can be exciting and dangerous at the same time. In the novel, sickness and death travel at sea very often as they inspect sailors at ports whenever they come aboard (97). One of the minor characters Vangel from Sömbeki (Simi, Symi) just disappears and probably dies alone one night because of a horrible storm (68); another one Yunus dies at the bottom of the sea while collecting sponges as his helmet breaks and one of the hills down there is his tombstone (60). The sailor who witnessed the event says “so many sailors we buried into the sea” (Ibid.). Karabatak Davut cries for Vangel “The man is a sailor! No grave for him! Besides, sailors no matter what their nationality is, have one grave: The Sea!” and adds that there does not exist a Muslim or foreign cemetery, and like most of the islanders his legacy is also “sea” (69). At the end of the novel, Karakaş, a member of another group of divers gets hurt at the bottom and his friend Selim buries him to sand at the beach in Çökertme, Bodrum. Here, the narrator depicts the incident, “In the world, there was Paris with much ado. There was New York and London. There was also the sand cemetery in poor Çökertme village of Anatolia where there was no sound other than dogs barking and cocks crowing” (230).

Teleskop Mehmet (the nickname comes from his sharp sight) tells a story of a time when they landed in Gereme where they saw Genoese, ancient Roman, and Hellenistic ruins, and European archeologists digging out dead bodies with coins on their eyes. They learned that it was to keep their eyes close. Teleskop says some living people are already like them, blind with money which is the source of evilness. It is necessary but one needs to find evasion to live free and he implies that this evasion is the sea (71). Kabağaçlı attacks capitalism via his characters and incidents of the time. About the sponge business, he asserts that sponge lords from Kalymnos hold control of the sponge market of the world and adds that there is no sponge

left in the islands or Bahamas. He stresses the value of the most precious sponge which is called “Mediterranean Silk” and is sold under different names in many countries (256).

Ateşoğlu and his crew always stop by Palamutbükü (Avlonia), a very small coastal village near Datça and the name comes from the valonia oak trade to Europe (80). Here, there is Salih Reis a senior fisherman who is too old to sail anymore, and Çakır Ayşe, an old lady who lives alone and loves sailors (75). Ateşoğlu many times hosts these two elders in his vessel not because of “the sense of trade” which is never the case with sailors, but because of the goodness they learned at sea. This hospitality and kindness at sea or in coastal places is well depicted by Kabağaçlı (129). Whereas in big cities such as Istanbul, no one smiles except salespeople. One of these sailors is Çağanoz Idris who has been there once says that during his stay, he blocked himself from the city due to loneliness and went aboard a ship anchored at sea every day; and he adds that Istanbul is not evil but alien as in the rest of the world is (169-170). Here the narrator criticizes the degeneration of cities and the people living in them. Whereas sailors of the Mediterranean area,

... always good companions to one another regardless of their race, nation, or language. They bond in friendship while smoking cigarettes. Because the sea divides but never separates. The new crew always brings joy. It is also pleasant for a ship to sail with a new crew. The newly recruited sailors have a lot to tell each other...At the end of the voyage, almost every single one of the sailors knows the life story of others as well as theirs. (238)

Kabağaçlı’s sea is the Mediterranean Sea and it is a place of good friendships and connections. A good example is given for the bottom of the sea in Mersa Matruh (North Egypt) where Çağanoz and Karabatak recognize each other and shake hands while diving (160). There exists also the connectedness of the Mediterranean. For instance, when Ateşoğlu and his crew need sackcloth in Palamutbükü, one of them sails to Bozburun to get some although it is known that there are closer places via the land route (133). However, a hundred miles at sea is much easier than ten on the road. On another occasion, Selim sails from Bodrum to Kayıkışiran (today, it is known as Balıkışiran Koyu), and there to Symi, Egypt, and Tripoli (233). One can imagine the sailing route between these four different countries, yet the one between Kayıkışiran and Symi requires great human strength as they have to carry the boat through a narrow stony path from the northern to the southern coast of the peninsula which is similar to sailing through Suez without the canal.

In *Deniz Gurbetçileri*, all characters are so entangled in the Mediterranean Sea that they are believed to live there even after all of them die in the end. An old fisherman tells the kids about the rainbow which is the ship carrying dead sailors from one island to the other (268). This life of sailors in sponge boats, ships, dockyards, and coastal lands is depicted with beautiful colors by Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı. In the end, all of his drawings, especially the first one with a man blowing a conch shell and an albatross flying, also increase the artistic description of this continent (271). As a sailor, he attempted to show the world the culture and language of the Mediterranean not with literary “elitist conventions” but with “purity” because of the connection he made with the sea and its people (Özveren, *Writing with the Mediterranean* 200).

### **Conclusion**

Braudel states “the Mediterranean speaks with many voices” and one of these is without doubt Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı, who contributed to the Mediterranean history, culture, literature, and identity. His works include worlds of previous civilizations that have existed in the Mediterranean, the sea that shaped the land, and people who have lived and breathed in a Mediterranean. With its long history and huge geography, the Mediterranean is a great setting for literary production as it offers numerous possibilities, variety of places, diversity of people from different cultures and religions. His life experience, especially in Bodrum, allowed him to reconnect with Cretan and Mediterranean roots and he adapted himself to the Mediterranean philosophy about which he did a significant level of research as a historian. The fact that his ideas draw parallelism with Braudel, one of the greatest and most famous Mediterranean historians, shows Kabaağaçlı’s intellectual capacity and accuracy (if we accept that he was not familiar with Braudel in his time) in Mediterranean studies. Regarding his achievements, it is strongly suggested that Kabaağaçlı “deserves recognition” and due to his involvement with people and the folk culture, he is a “universal and true artist” and his scholarly accomplishments “contributed to Mediterraneanism, at home and abroad” (Özveren, *Writing with the Mediterranean* 208, 218). Kabaağaçlı is a remarkable figure for Turkish literature and the pioneer of the Turkish Mediterraneanism due to his scholarly focus on the geography which enables him to enrich his narrative with factual references. His ideas about the true origins of the western civilization, his view of Mediterranean as a synthesis of the previous civilizations prove that he has already reached to a level of wisdom in theory regarding the Mediterranean studies. Like other scholars, he sees the Mediterranean as a uniting sea, and he incorporates this unity and other characteristics to his narrative.

Kabağaçlı's two novels *Aganta Burina Burinata* and *Deniz Gurbetçileri* are somewhat similar in the sense of setting, characters, plot, and even time despite minor differences. In *Aganta Burina Burinata*, Bodrum, a Mediterranean heritage since the days of Halicarnassus, comes into prominence and the coastal landscape is vividly depicted, characters like Mahmut are similar to historical figures such as Columbus who impersonates the Mediterranean spirit for progress. The bond and the level of sharing among people of the whole Mediterranean are described in detail with examples. In *Deniz Gurbetçileri*, the plot-like character of the Mediterranean shines out with the description of the Mediterranean Sea and all of its natural elements inside and around the sea. It includes a romantic perspective that sea encompasses all which gives the reader a sense of the heavenliness of the Mediterranean. Both novels have characters from this geography that are emotional, self-sacrificing, brave, and satiated although they all come from different backgrounds. They cannot be corrupted by capitalism and greed that modern culture forces on them and they understand neither the dynamics that money creates on land nor the web of intrigues that people make to earn more. Kabağaçlı hates the capitalist society and believes that diseases stem from too much work. His characters reflect himself and ordinary Mediterranean people that he met on the *continent* which he calls human geography. He values humanity and shows the reader their feelings, daily struggles and their hard work. He can be targeted due to his careless writing style and messy hair, yet people can easily agree that Kabağaçlı produced notable works for Mediterranean studies and literature.

We have been discussing the Mediterranean touch with all these scholars of history and literature, maybe it is time to give more credit to Kabağaçlı and discuss "his touch" to the Mediterranean and Mediterranean literature. Although he writes about the Mediterranean in a poetic manner, he does not limit himself to conventional descriptions, he shares the exact characteristics of the sea that connects all. For him, the sea divides but never separates; it shapes the land, removes barriers among people. Mediterranean as a character is a unique geography in his narrative and Kabağaçlı incorporates the same characteristics of it just like other theorists and novelists have been writing until today. He also supports his arguments and stories with new perspectives about the origins of the Mediterranean which demonstrate that his works can create new possibilities for Mediterranean studies.

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