



METAFOR

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi
Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü
&
Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü
Ortak Yayını
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The Department of Western Languages and Literatures and the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Boğaziçi University are pleased to announce the launching of a new journal: *METAFOR: The Boğaziçi University Journal of Literary Studies*.

Our mission is to issue an academic periodical of the highest standards, one that provides a forum for innovative discussions in the field of literary studies and literary criticism. The journal accepts submissions of original essays, book reviews, interviews and short commentaries.

We especially welcome contributions that take an interdisciplinary and comparative approach. *METAFOR* will be a semi-annual journal, accepting submissions in Turkish and English. All submissions will be peer-reviewed by referees assigned by the editorial board.

*We thank Burak Şuşut and FİKA
for our cover design...*

*Kapak tasarımımız için Burak Şuşut ve
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METAFOR

Table of Contents

1. Eda Dedebaş Dünder, “Narratives of Rights and the Travel of Stories in J.M Coetzee’s <i>Elizabeth Costello</i> ” / “J. M. Coetzee’nin <i>Elizabeth Costello</i> Adlı Romanında Hakların Anlatıları ve Öykülerin Seyahati”	1
2. Gülfer Göze, “Is a <i>Bildungswoman</i> Possible? The Making of a West Indian Heroine in Jamaica Kinkaid’s <i>Annie John</i> ” / “Kendine Ait Bir Bildungsroman: <i>Annie John</i> ”	15
3. Burcu Kayışçı Akkoyun, “Autobiography as (E)utopia: <i>Reveries</i> of the Solitary Writer” / “Bir Ütopya olarak Otobiyografi: Yalnız Gezen Yazarın Düşleri”	32
4. Başak Demirhan, ““Are You Real My Ideal?”: Embodiment and Popular Culture in the ‘Nausicaa’ Episode of James Joyce’s <i>Ulysses</i> ” / ““Gerçek Misin İdealim?” James Joyce’un <i>Ulysses</i> Romanının ‘Nausicaa’ Bölümünde Beden ve Popüler Kültür.....	45
5. Azer Banu Kemaloğlu, “Fictional History Writing of Gelibolu Campaign: An Interview with Stephen Daisley on <i>Traitor</i> ” / “Çanakkale Muharebeleri Kurmaca Tarih Yazımı: Stephen Daisley ile <i>Traitor</i> Romanı Üzerine Bir Söyleşi”	63
6. Aişe Handan Konar, “Divan Edebiyatında Etkilenme Endişesi: Tâci-zâde Cafer Çelebi Üzerine Bir Örneklendirme Denemesi” / “Anxiety Influence in Ottoman Literature: An Exemplary Attempt with the Case of Tâci-zâde Cafer Çelebi”	70
7. Çiğdem Kurt Williams & Semiha Şentürk, ““Abdullah Efendi’nin Rüyaları’nda Metinlerarasılık” / “Intertextuality in ‘Abdullah Efendi’nin Rüyaları””	88
8. About the Authors.....	102

Azer Banu Kemaloğlu, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University

**FICTIONAL HISTORY OF THE GELİBOLU CAMPAIGN:
AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN DAISLEY ON *TRAITOR*¹**

**ÇANAKKALE MUHAREBELERİNİN KURMACA TARİHİ:
STEPHEN DAISLEY İLE *TRAITOR* ROMANI ÜZERİNE SÖYLEŞİ**

Stephen Daisley was born in 1955 and grew up in the North Island of New Zealand. He has worked on sheep and cattle stations, on oil and gas construction sites and as a truck driver, among many other jobs. Daisley's first novel, *Traitor*, won the 2011 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction. He lives in Perth, Western Australia with his wife and five children. He has won the major New Zealand Literary award, The Acorn Foundation Literary Award in 2016 with his second novel *Coming Rain*, a story of shearers in 1950's Australia.

Daisley's novel, *Traitor*, transforms the cruelty of the trenches into the story of a spiritual friendship when New Zealander shepherd David and Turkish doctor Mahmoud meet during an explosion in Gelibolu Peninsula. Mahmoud, a Sufi and a whirling dervish of the Mevlevi order becomes a prisoner of war and David, his guardian in Lemnos. Mahmoud teaches David Sufi philosophy and 'sama', the journey of remembrance back to self during his captivity. The philosophical conversations enthrall David and he betrays his country by helping Mahmoud escape. Eventually he is court martialled but pardoned on condition that he serve as a stretcher bearer on the Western Front. David suffers from this dishonour all his life yet the reverential words of Mahmoud transform the trauma of his wartime experience and change David's perception of life. The narrative is fragmented, juxtaposed with David's memories of the Gelibolu Campaign and the Western Front due to shell shock. Just like his shattered memories, fragmented episodes of the novel reveal how difficult life is for the victims of war. David not only recalls the events that dishonour him as a traitor but also the beauty of Mahmoud's teachings that haunt him. Broken memories mixed with the peaceful

¹ The interview was edited for clarity and length. It was made in Perth, Australia on November 22, 2015 as part of the research project entitled 'Fictional History Writing: The Gallipoli Campaign in Contemporary British Commonwealth Novels', funded by TÜBİTAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) in 2015-2017.

spiritual healing portray an unsettled mind as memories and images clash. David realizes Mahmoud has taught him to look in solitude into his self for salvation.

Daisley manages to transform the battlefield experience of David and Mahmoud into a meaningful one bringing a Turkish and an Anzac soldier together, regardless of their religion and nationality. Connecting east and west, Sufi philosophy enables reconciliation in the very trenches while the reader feels the atmosphere, the past, the human bond and the effect of the true-life experience of 1915. In this way, Daisley's fictional rewriting of Gelibolu becomes a site of learning and healing rather than mere carnage.

Azer Banu Kemaloğlu (ABK): Your first novel *Traitor's* plot starts in the chaos of the Gelibolu Campaign and bears the effects of post war trauma. Why did you start your writing career with a Gelibolu Story?

Stephen Daisley (SD): The reason "why Gelibolu" is because of my family's involvement in the Gelibolu Campaign. My grandfathers and grand uncles were at Gelibolu in the New Zealand Army. The landings at Gelibolu on the 25th of April 1915 and the subsequent disastrous campaign there are part of our national identity. All of the literature which came out of that time seems to emphasize the fact that Gelibolu was a very causative factor in our national identity as independent people, as New Zealanders and Australians. As a result, it was always spoken about. My grandfather for example didn't speak about it a lot but he did tell us once in New Zealand at the beach bits and pieces about the campaign. He was probably suffering from some post-traumatic stress as so many of the men did which was undiagnosed in those days. In addition, in several of the properties which I worked at there were men who were badly affected by the war including shell shocked men who worked at very remote areas from where I developed the character David.

ABK: Do you find your novel a Gelibolu story because there are other stories embedded in the plot connected to the Campaign?

SD: I find it mainly a story of love and redemption. I find it an examination and meditation upon that which can redeem us through love. I think that is central for me and for the book and as a result, the Sufi practices come through Mahmood. David basically is quite a simple, uneducated man but Mahmood is educated and articulate, the wiser of the two which is also an inversion of what I was told. We were basically told that Turks were barbarians and we were the enlightened ones. It's probably the reverse.

ABK: Your novel challenges oriental discourse in the way you present an uneducated, simple New Zealand shepherd, David, opposed to the intelligent Turkish sergeant, Mahmoud, educated in London, teaching Sufi practices, fascinating David with stories of Majnun and questions of God's existence. Was that your intention in portraying such an inversion? And what is your source for Mahmoud?

SD: It wasn't my intention. It evolved naturally. I think I just began to write as E. L. Doctorow, the great American writer who says that when he writes he writes as if he is driving at night and he can only see so far in front of himself but he gets to where he is going and a lot of that was how I wrote. My book just came, it just spoke. Mahmoud's voice came when I met a wonderful Sufi man at the market. I used to work in a market selling second hand clothing and this wonderful fellow Mahmoud came. We spoke, we got on really well and this is how we became friends. And that's when I began my examination but it was also through the poetry of Rumi. He said this wonderful thing to me once when a fellow stole a shirt from the racks of the market. He came along and said: "Why are you so angry Steven?" I said "That fellow running, he stole my shirt". And he says "Perhaps he needed it more than you". This is a wonderful way to see things, you know. It set me off on the examination of this philosophy.

ABK: What is the significance of Sufi philosophy in your novel? Is David and Mahmoud's intimate relationship a reflection or an extension of the friendship established between Rumi and Şems Tebrizi?

SD: Absolutely, well spotted. Because that is also what informs the story of Şems Tebrizi and his meeting with the intellectual Rumi. Their story tells us that you know everything and suddenly you begin to know nothing which is a wonderful way of seeing things. I did a great deal of reading, a great deal of research on Rumi and Sufi philosophy. However, I do not read Persian. I referred to the books and interpretations of Coleman Barks which was great for me. And I read his poetic translations and a lot of other translations. Barks is on YouTube as well. He is very modest and clear. In addition, speaking to my friend Mahmoud from the market and to other friends I learned a lot. Yet I have several Muslim friends who consider Sufis to be crazy, lunatics. In fact, they pointed their fingers at their heads and made some circular motions. I was lucky enough to get several sides of it. But I was just entranced by it, and I find it lifesaving.

ABK: Writing on a historical event is difficult. Actually, it is a challenge, considering the fact that you wrote on one of the most significant campaigns of the First World War. For the credibility and authenticity of your story did you carry out some research before writing about war?

SD: Yes, I read extensively. About the Western Front, for example as it was the classic of this war. And again, one of my techniques, if you like to hear, is I try to get out of the way of myself and just allow the work to come through me. I used to be a shearer earlier in my life. When I was taught to shear it was very like saying that you allow the hand piece to do the work. So you take yourself out of the equation. If I can remove my ego, ‘nefs’ I think, if I can remove that from my work, or me from the work, it becomes okay. And it begins to work. If I put myself in it, it tends to be clouded and egoistical and almost grandiose at times. Hence, I try not to show off.

ABK: Do you have any experience of war? Because you reflect on war and your depictions are so authentic, especially some of the scenes from Gelibolu and the Western Front.

SD: I’ve been asked that a lot. But no, I don’t have any direct personal experience of war, I did not fight. I was in the military and I had a lot of friends who, for example, fought in Vietnam and Rhodesia. They were close friends and we spoke a lot. So, I used my imagination in the war scenes.

ABK: Along with the First World War scenes, your novel is rich with narratives of the post-war life of David on a New Zealand farm. Your depictions of lambing, shearing and skinning are so powerful, creating a reality effect. The relationship David formed with the animals is amazing. How do they contribute to the novel?

SD: Isn’t that interesting because a fundamentalist Christian that I knew rang me and asked if he could have coffee with me because he saw us rebirthing. I’m very much a Hemingway adherent and one of his messages was that you write as truly and authentically as you can of life and allow the reader to find the symbols and the messages. Don’t try to be didactic, don’t try to tell people what they should think. I actually think that people see what they want to. And you academicians know that the reader is more important than the writer as argued by Roland Barthes’ *The Death of the Author*. I happen to believe that because so many different people have found so many different messages and symbols from this novel, I’m an astounded, delighted and a humble poet. I have received feedback from various people in

New Zealand and Australia. A fishing boat charter captain loved the farming scenes of the novel. A woman who works at Red Cross in Wellington wrote me and said “Thank you, did this really happen?” or “Does this mean such and such?” And I again stress that readers-you are one of them as the reader- are much more important than me as the writer.

ABK: Since you wrote on a historical subject, a part of your novel is based on the Gelibolu Campaign and you connect it with personal history. Which is better at getting the truth for you? History or fiction?

SD: I particularly love to think about and meditate on this question. I can tell a story to illustrate this. Recently I returned to New Zealand for my 60th birthday with some old friends from my military life. They were talking about my perceived success with this novel. I said we don’t sort of speak about it much. There is a Maori saying: “the Kumara (which is sweet potato) does not speak of its own sweetness”, which is a lovely proverb. So they began to ask questions about research and about lies and about how fiction is telling lies. If we go back to that Kumara proverb, that sweet potato does not speak. Does it? So that is a lie. Ostensibly of course it is. But what you are doing with that proverb, you are telling a lie to tell a much more profound truth. They then began to see that sometimes we can lie to tell something that is much more profound and much more true. I think for me, reading history is the beginning. And then the imagination and the telling of the story through the imagination as long as you remain authentic and true to something that you believe as ultimately good.

ABK: How did you create your characters? Did you draw them from personal life experience?

SD: Mahmoud came from the man, the friend of mine I met in the market. He was a wonderful man, a Sufi. There were many fine doctors I knew of, which helped me create Mahmoud as a doctor. David was imagined but an amalgam of the men I’ve known during my military years and also some of the older men that I knew when I worked on sheep and cattle stations. They were usually veterans of war. They were isolated and they were known as “Shell Shock Hogan,” one of James K. Baxter’s characters in his poem called “The Lament of Barney Flanagan.” James K. Baxter was a famous and well-recognized New Zealand poet. He had many community places in New Zealand. James K. Baxter’s father was Archibald Baxter who was a conscientious objector. He was sent out to France for field punishment. David’s punishment in the novel is based on the letters of Archibald Baxter. They are quoted

in the novel. The other characters were people I know. There are no historical characters in the novel.

ABK: In your novel you prefer not to fictionalize historical figures except for a reference made to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Mahmoud's wife Aisha writes a letter to David as her husband's last wish: "Mahmoud was hanged by the jailers of the men who calls himself the Father of Turks. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who is also known as The Perfection and The Chosen One" (177). What is your historical source or evidence on Atatürk's involvement with the execution of Mevlevis? We know from history that Atatürk favoured Mevlevi and Bektashi orders. He did not order their execution at all.

SD: It was simply a rereading of history. Many people objected to it. Many Australians and New Zealanders objected to my treatment. It was not a condemnation as such but I had read that he had harshly come down on all things Islamic in Turkey at the end of the Ottoman Empire. All vestiges of the old world were ruthlessly put down. I saw him as a self-appointed dictator, a very ruthless military commander. I wrote it as a counterpoint. It was probably very inaccurate.

ABK: Did you challenge Anzac myth by creating the friendship between David and Mahmoud and rewriting the story of a traitor?

SD: Yes, this is a question that reoccurs often and it's also been appreciated by lots of Australians and New Zealanders: We question this whole notion of the heroic representation of the Anzac myth. Indeed, I don't challenge it but I just ask people to reread it, re-examine it, look at it from a different perspective but what I am really interested in is the notion of mateship. Notion of mateship is actually a central part of the novel. My stance is to find out where this love between men comes from, which is celebrated by men in Australia as represented in the notion of mateship. The sexual connotations are also there but never mentioned.

ABK: At present we cannot get your novel in Turkey. Is there a chance we will have it on the market soon?

SD: I can give good news to my Turkish friends. My publisher sold the Turkish rights of *Traitor* to Pegasus Publishing House in 2015. I hope Turkish readers enjoy my novel.

ABK: I'm sure they will Mr. Daisley. Thank you so much for your time and we'll be looking forward to reading the Turkish translation of *Traitor*.

SD: Thank you for coming to see me in Perth, Azer. Thanks a lot for your interest.

Bibliography

Daisley, Stephen. *Traitor*. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2010.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Eda Dedebaş Dünder is an Assistant Professor of English at Boğaziçi University. She received her PhD in Comparative Literature from University of Connecticut. Her book manuscript *Adapting Shahrazad's Odyssey: The Female Wanderer and Storyteller in Victorian and Contemporary Middle Eastern Literature* was published by Peter Lang in 2015. She is currently working on her second manuscript on contemporary human rights drama. Her area of interests are human rights theatre and women's writing.

Burcu Kayışçı Akkoyun graduated from the Department of Western Languages and Literatures at Boğaziçi University in 2004 and received her MA degree in English literature from the same department in 2007 with a thesis on Ursula K. Le Guin's and Margaret Atwood's dystopian novels. After completing the coursework for PhD and passing the qualifying exam there, she went to Monash University in Melbourne (Australia) to continue her doctoral studies. She completed her PhD in Literary Studies at Monash University in 2015 with a dissertation on the concept of apocalypse entitled “Imagining the End: Comic Perspectives and Critical Spaces”. She is currently teaching academic writing and speaking at Kadir Has University. Her research interests include contemporary literature, utopian and dystopian fiction, narrative theory, and ecocriticism.

Gülfer Göze works at Kadir Has University and is a PhD student in English at Tufts University, Boston. She received both her BA and MA degrees on English Literature from the department of Western Languages and Literatures at Boğaziçi University, where she also worked for four years as a research and teaching assistant. She taught several composition classes and co-taught a literature course at Tufts. She is currently finishing her dissertation entitled “Authorization, Authority, and Authorship: Paratexts in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Slave Narratives and Twentieth-Century Post-Colonial Novels”. Her research interests include history of the book, intersections of race, gender, and class in literature, slave narratives, travel literature, world literature among others.

Başak Demirhan received her B.A. (2002) from Boğaziçi University, English Literature Department, her M.A. (2004) and PhD (2010) degrees from Rice University, English Department. During her PhD program she also completed the Graduate Certificate Program in the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexualities. Since 2010 she has been working as a faculty member at the

Western Languages and Literatures Department at Boğaziçi University. Her main areas of interest are the Victorian period, the long eighteenth century, feminism and genre theory, literature and medicine. After completing her PhD dissertation on the illness and nursing narratives in Victorian diaries and novels, she worked on the writings of Harriet Martineau and Henry Mayhew. She teaches courses on the eighteenth-century, Romantic, and Victorian literature as well as feminism and gender theory.

Azer Banu Kemaloğlu is a graduate of Hacettepe University, English Language and Literature in Turkey. She has finished her MA in Rutgers, USA. She completed her PhD on Gender and 19th Century English Novel. Currently she is teaching at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. She is the chief investigator of two TUBİTAK funded projects entitled “From Hostility to Lasting Friendship: Cultural Reflections from the Turkish and Anzac Soldier Diaries and Narratives” (2013-2015) and “Fictional History Writing: Gallipoli Campaign in Contemporary British Commonwealth Novel” (2015-2017). Her recent publication is “Anniversaries and Production of Fiction: Gallipoli” in *War Memory and Commemoration* published by Routledge, 2017. Her research interests are Victorian Novel, Cultural Studies and History/Fiction.

Aişe Handan Konar graduated from the department of Translation Studies at Boğaziçi University. Then with the purpose of studying the history and conceptualization of translation during the Ottoman Empire she pursued her MA at Turkish Language and Literature at Boğaziçi University and submitted her thesis named “Hasan Şu’ûrî Efendi’s Translation of Pend-nâme-i Attâr: Text and Textual Analysis”. Now she’s a Research Assistant and a PhD candidate at the same department and still in the process of writing her PhD thesis titled “A Survey into The Ottoman Tradition of Translation Based on the Findings of Ottoman Poet Biographies”. In addition to her academic studies, she has never detached herself from the practice of translation and has been translating books and articles for various publishers.

Çiğdem Kurt Williams graduated from Istanbul University’s French Language and Literature program in a joint major with theater criticism and dramaturgy program. She completed her Masters at Bosphorus University in Turkish Language and Literature and completed a "cotutelle" joint PhD degree with Strasbourg University and Yıldız Technical University in Translation Studies and Comparative Literature. Now she is currently working as a lecturer in

French at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. Her fields of study include the history of translation, comparative literature, and the history of theater.

Semiha Şentürk graduated from Boğaziçi University's Turkish Language and Literature department. She completed her MA degree with the thesis titled *Subjectivity, Language and Narration in Leylâ Erbil's Short Stories* at the same university. She is working as a full-time lecturer at the same university, a position she started after completing her Masters there. She is currently a PhD student at Boğaziçi University, the title of her proposed dissertation is *The Ethics and Aesthetics in Sait Faik Abasıyanık's Fictions*. Her fields of study include modernist literature, narratology, and feminist literature.



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