

Dictionary of Literary Biography® • Volume Three Hundred Seventy-Three

# Turkish Novelists Since 1960

Edited by

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A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book

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**Dictionary of Literary Biography,  
Volume 373: Turkish Novelists Since  
1960**

Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay-Erkol

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## Zülfü Livaneli

(20 June 1946 – )

Ayşe Naz Bulamur

Boğaziçi University

**BOOKS:** *Arafat'ta Bir Çocuk* (Istanbul: Cem, 1978);  
*Geçmişten Geleceğe Türküler* (Berlin: Ararat Verlag, 1981);  
*Bütün Kuşların Uykusu* (Istanbul: Can, 1985);  
*Dünya Değişirken* (Istanbul: Can, 1987);  
*Sis* (Istanbul: Logos, 1990);  
*Orta Zekalılar Cenneti* (Istanbul: Telos, 1991);  
*Diktatör ve Palyaço* (Istanbul: Telos, 1992);  
*Sosyalizm Öldü mü?* (Istanbul: Telos, 1994);  
*Engereğin Gözündeki Kamaşma* (Istanbul: Can, 1996);  
republished as *Engereğin Gözü* (Istanbul: Doğan  
Kitap, 2011);  
*Livaneli Besteleri* (Istanbul: Boyut Müzik, 1998);  
*Bir Kedi, Bir Adam, Bir Ölüm* (Istanbul: Remzi, 2001);  
*Mutluluk* (Istanbul: Remzi, 2002); translated by  
Çiğdem Aksoy Fromm as *Bliss* (New York: St.  
Martin's Griffin, 2006);  
*Gorbacov'la Devrim Üstüne Konuşmalar* (Istanbul:  
Remzi, 2003);  
*Leyla'nın Evi* (Istanbul: Remzi, 2006);  
*Sevdalım Hayat* (Istanbul: Remzi, 2007);  
*Son Ada* (Istanbul: Remzi, 2009);  
*Sanat Uzun, Hayat Kısa* (Istanbul: Remzi, 2010);  
*Veda: Bir Dostluğun Öyküsü* (Istanbul: Remzi, 2010);  
*Serenad* (Istanbul: Doğan, 2011);  
*Harem* (Istanbul: Destek, 2012);  
*Edebiyat Mutluluktur* (Istanbul: Doğan, 2012);  
*Kardeşimin Hikayesi* (Istanbul: Doğan, 2013).

**PRODUCED SCRIPTS:** *Yer Demir Gök Bakır*, motion  
picture, Interfilm, 1987;  
*Sis*, motion picture, Interfilm, 1988;  
*Şahmaran*, motion picture, Interfilm, 1993;  
*Veda*, motion picture, Kamera Film, 2010.

A musician, composer, screenwriter, film director, newspaper columnist, and political activist as well as a novelist, Zülfü Livaneli is one of the most prolific Turkish artists to receive awards in Turkey, Europe, and the United States. His collaborations with world-famous people, such as Joan Baez, Mikis



Zülfü Livaneli (courtesy of the author)

Theodorakis, Maria Farantouri, Elia Kazan, and Arthur Miller have added to his international renown. His music has been recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra. He has contributed to world peace as the founder of the Greek-Turkish Friendship Committee with Theodorakis in 1986 and as UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador since 1996.

A left-wing social democrat, Livaneli has also been active in politics, serving as the CHP (Republican People's Party) Deputy from 2002 to 2005. In the 5 April 2012 issue of *BBC Monitoring European*, he stated that he resigned his post because of the party's "non-democratic and authoritarian system of politics." Frustrated with the political institutions in Turkey, he writes in his autobiography, *Sevdalım*

*Hayat* (2007, *Life, My Sweetheart*), that an artist can express himself best through art. As a novelist, he has written about social and political issues, such as Turkish political refugees in Europe, honor killing, military coups in Turkey, Turkish capitalist economy, and Turkish political leaders' desire for absolute power. Many of his novels have been translated into Greek, French, Italian, English, and Swedish.

Ömer Zülfü Livaneli was born on 20 June 1946 in Ilgın, Konya, located in Central Anatolia, and until he was three he lived in Fethiye, a seaside town in the southwest of Turkey. His family moved frequently because his father, Mustafa Sabri Livaneli, was an attorney at the Supreme Court. His mother is Şükriye Livaneli. In elementary school, he was exposed to lessons from the Quran as well as to the ideals of secularism promoted by the founder of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He reflects on his childhood naiveté in his autobiography by remembering the day of Joseph Stalin's death in 1953; he and his classmates were happy to skip school and attend a walk shouting, "Stalin cehennem!" (Stalin go to hell), without even knowing who Stalin was or that he had died.

When his brother, Asım, was born, his family left Livaneli with his grandparents in Ankara. Despite their financial problems, they sent him to the highly prestigious and expensive Ankara Maarif High School. He writes in his autobiography that his passion for literature started when he received Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) as a gift. His interest gradually deepened as he read the works of Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, Erskine Caldwell, and John Steinbeck. In his 2007 interview with Barnes and Noble, he pointed out the important influence of Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) on his literary career:

At my parents' home in Ankara, the walls of my room were full not with photographs of famous people from the world of music and cinema, but with portraits of Hemingway. I had read all his biographies. On Saturdays, I used to go to the American library in Ankara to check whether there was anything new about him in the journals. In time, his influence over me grew to such an extent that when I was 16 years old, during my summer holiday, I went to a fishing village—without letting my parents know—to live like him. I started to work in a fishing boat. At night, I slept in the boat with the novel under my pillow. At the end of the two months, I had to return to my parents' house, but at that point I knew for sure that I was going to be a writer.

His two-month stay at the boat illustrates his belief as a child that self-development should not be limited

to formal education. The Turkish education system seemed too rigid and monotonous compared to his extracurricular activities, such as publishing a film journal, reading novels, and seeing the absurdist plays of Samuel Beckett and Edward Albee while he was in middle school.

As a high-school student in the early 1960s, he was also influenced by the existentialist works of Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, which encouraged him to question the established institutions and traditions in Turkey. Like many leftist youths in Ankara, he followed the fashion of wearing a black turtleneck sweater, wandering about the streets with a worried look on his face, and reading the books of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. In addition to studying existentialist philosophy, he played Anatolian music with his *saz*, a traditional Turkish musical instrument, a gift that started his music career. The more he read world literature and practiced folk music, the more he wanted to leave Ankara, the city he describes in his autobiography as a dark, cold capital with diplomats and official buildings.

Livaneli finally left Ankara after his marriage to Ülker Tunçay in 1964, and the birth of his daughter, Aylin, in 1966. To support his family, he worked for a German drug company in Trabzon, a city located in Turkey's Black Sea region, until he was fired because of his leftist political activities. He and his left-wing friends believed that the socialist ideals of friendship, equality, and work ethics were essential for the future of Turkey. In *Sosyalizm Öldü mü?* (1994, *Is Socialism Dead?*), he defines socialism as "insan vicdani" (human conscience), which continues to exist despite colonialism, violence, and the annihilation of human rights.

On his return from Trabzon to Ankara, Livaneli and his friend Akay Sayılır started a publishing house to distribute leftist books, such as Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy's *Socialism in Cuba* (1968) and the political writings of Che Guevara. The publishing house was shut down, and he and his partner were arrested for publishing such books with the 1971 military intervention. He writes in his autobiography that it was ironic for him to sit on a victim's chair after growing up with the ideals of the Turkish legal system in a family of attorneys. His father, however, told him not to be ashamed of being imprisoned, a fate shared by many other journalists and academicians, for defending their political views. The songs he composed while being held under military detention became national hits in later years.

After being released from prison, Livaneli signed a two-year contract with the Sayan recording

company and started working on his first record. He comments in his autobiography that he was insecure and troubled because of the horrors he witnessed in prison. With the moral support he received from his friends and family, however, he recorded songs about the resistance to the military coup and to the Turkish government. The deadly clash between the left and the right wings was at its peak in 1972, when many leftist activists were hanged, tortured, or imprisoned. He was on the suspect list for the fourth time even though he was not involved in any political activity other than reading and publishing leftist works. Concerned with his safety and freedom in Turkey, he left with a fake passport first for Germany and then for Stockholm, Sweden, to bring up his daughter in a safe country without the threat of being tortured or even murdered by the police.

Livaneli's music career in Europe started when a Belgian music company offered him a contract. Including songs that lamented the imprisoned students during the coup, his first album, *Chants Revolutionnaires Turcs* (1973), was censored in Turkey during the presidency of Süleyman Demirel, who, as Livaneli states in his autobiography, also prevented his father's promotion at the Supreme Court. The album, which he thought would be forgotten, was soon popular among the Turks in Europe, who sent copies to their friends in Turkey. As the university students in Ankara started singing his songs during their protests, the album became the symbol of the resistance movement against the coup. His album was also a hit in Europe, where popular singers, including Farantouri and Angel Parra, performed his songs and invited him to their concerts. He gave his first international concert in Paris in 1974. He also produced soundtracks for many Turkish movies and television programs in Sweden and Germany. Having succeeded as a political refugee with no connections or money, he writes in *Sevdalım Hayat* that "real art" is not about favors and flattery.

Despite his career as a professional musician, he writes in his autobiography that his real passion was for writing. As a political refugee in Sweden, he wrote his first collection of short stories, *Arafat'ta Bir Çocuk* (1978, *A Child in Purgatory*), about the predicaments of Turkish workers who lived as outcasts in Europe. In the title story, for example, a Turkish immigrant boy wears an evil eye, a good luck charm to protect him against the blond and blue-eyed children, whose language he does not understand. Labeled as "karakafa" (dark heads), Turkish characters, too, strengthen cultural and religious barriers as they discriminate against Europeans as "gavur" (heathens). His book sold over fifty-thousand copies



Cover for Livaneli's novel first published in 1996  
(Collection of Burcu Alkan)

in Turkey, and the book was made into a film by a Swedish television channel. In the same year this first book was published, he received the Best Film Music Award in Turkey for his soundtrack for *Sürü* (The Herd), by the Turkish film director Yılmaz Güney. He also started to write about the political refugees in Sweden for the Turkish newspaper *Politika* (Politics); his articles were later collected in *Dünya Değişirken* (1987, *As the World Changes*).

Believing that his art and music were rooted in his homeland, he moved back to Turkey in 1978. In his autobiography, he expresses his longing for Turkey in Sweden: "Bir kez daha derinden kavradım ki ben bu toprağı seviyorum, buraya aitim ve dünyadaki hiçbir kültür beni Türkiye kadar çekemez, tatmin edemez, ve mutlu kılamaz" (Once again I realized deep in my heart that I love this country, I belong here, and that no other culture in the world can make me happier and more content). Upon his return, he was again in the midst of the accelerating clash between

the left and the right wings, which resulted in the 1980 military coup. He describes Istanbul of the 1980s as a "hayaletler şehri" (ghost town) and Turkey as "sapık katiller cenneti" (the heaven of psycho killers). Afraid of being arrested again, he left first for Sweden and then for Paris. Yet, when he came back to Istanbul, he was wrongly accused of recording Kurdish music. He mentions that the cover picture on the fake Kurdish album did not even look like him. Even as he was arrested in Turkey for an album he did not record, he was becoming more of a celebrity in Europe. He even made the headlines of the German newspaper *Die Zeit*: "O halkın türkülerini, halk onun türkülerini söylüyor!" (He sings folk songs and the public sings his songs). Turkish people of all different ages, professions, and class groups—housewives, villagers, professors—were listening to his songs with lyrics by the Turkish poet Nâzım Hikmet, who had also been imprisoned for promoting communism. The German press, Ararat Verlag, published musical notation of his songs in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Türküler* (1981, Folk Songs from Past to the Future; translated on Livaneli's website as Between Past and Tomorrow).

According to Livaneli, leftist intellectuals in Turkey were jealous of his fame in Europe, and he was accused of being a traitor when he made a record with the Greek singer Farantouri in 1982. Their album received the Record of the Year in Greece, West German Critics Record of the Year Prize, and the Edison Award in Netherlands. In 1982 he was also honored with the Cannes Film Festival Golden Palm Award for the soundtrack of *Yol* (The Road), directed by Yılmaz Güney and Şerif Gören. A year after being chosen as the Musician of the Year by *Nokta* magazine in Turkey in 1984, he received the Golden Record Award for the album he recorded with Theodorakis, *Güneş Topla Benim İçin* (1985, Collect Sun For Me). His albums and books were always on the top-ten lists in Greece. He writes that he has always been impressed with the love, support, and friendship he received from the Greeks.

Livaneli republished many of his short stories that first appeared in *Arafat'ta Bir Çocuk* in *Bütün Kuşların Uykusunu* (1985, The Sleep of All Birds). He remembers 1986, the year he started working on his first movie based on the Turkish writer Yaşar Kemal's novel, *Yer Demir Gök Bakır* (translated as *Iron Earth Copper Sky*), as one of the most fruitful times of his life. The movie received the Best Foreign Film Award at San Sebastian Film Festival in Spain, the Golden Camera Award at Cologne Photokina Fair in Germany, and was named One of the Ten Best Films of the Year Award in France. The same year, at the

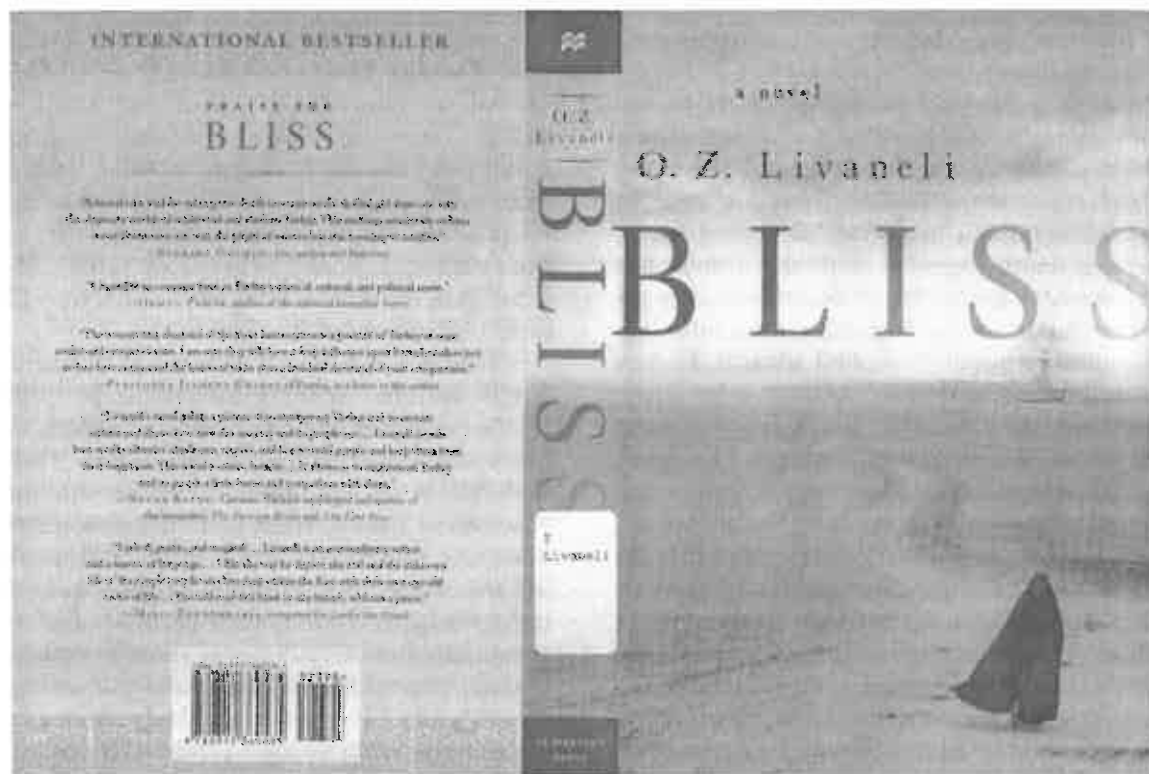
invitation of the Kyrgyz author Chingiz Aitmatov, he attended the Issyk-Kul Forum, which was established by a group of artists and intellectuals. The group met near the Lake Issyk in Kyrgyzstan to discuss social and environmental problems as well as their expectations for the new millennium. After the forum, Livaneli, James Baldwin, Arthur Miller, Yaşar Kemal, and Aitmatov met with Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who expressed his admiration for Livaneli's music. Although *Time* magazine provided full coverage of the meeting, the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic) omitted Livaneli and Kemal's names from Gorbachev's guest list. Livaneli later published his meeting notes in his book *Gorbaçov'la Devrim Üstüne Konuşmalar* (2002, Conversations with Gorbachev on Revolution). In 1988 he directed his second movie, *Sis* (Mist), and received the Montpellier Film Festival Golden Antigone Award, the Valencia Film Festival Golden Palm Award for Best Director, the Antalya Film Festival Second Best Film Award, and the Best Film Director of the Year Award by *Nokta*. After the movie script of *Sis* came out in 1990, he published *Orta Zekalılar Cenneti* (1991, The Heaven of the Mediocore) and *Diktatör ve Palyaço* (1992, The Dictator and the Clown), which are collections of essays on his critique of social corruption, power struggles, and despotic politicians in Turkey.

In 1994 Livaneli decided to take a more active role in politics by running for mayor of Istanbul. He writes in his autobiography: "Madem ki yeni ve adil bir dünya özlemini milyonlarca insana taşıyordum o zaman bu milyonları siyasete taşımak da benim görevim ve sorumluluğumdur" (If I was carrying the longing for a new and just world to millions of people, then, it was also my responsibility to carry those millions to politics). Frustrated with the industrialization of Istanbul, his dream was to make the cosmopolitan city a cultural center for international literature and science conferences. His political rivals used such tactics as accusing him of burning a Turkish flag in Greece and publishing his pictures taken on the day he applied for immigration in Sweden. He lost the election to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who served as the mayor of Istanbul from 1994 to 1998.

After the election Livaneli wrote his first novel, *Engereğin Gözündeki Kamaşma* (1996, Glitter in the Viper's Eye; translated on the author's website as The Eunuch of Constantinople). The novel is about the Ottoman emperors' cunning plots for power. By not providing specific dates and names of the sultans in the novel, the novelist portrays the desire for authority as timeless and universal, thereby providing a commentary on modern political rivalries. The treacheries in the Ottoman Empire are narrated



Cover for Livaneli's 2002 novel (*On Dokuz Mayıs University Library*)



Dust jacket for the American edition of Livaneli's novel originally published in 2002 as *Mutluluk* (*Richland Library*)



from the viewpoint of Süleyman, a black eunuch of the Topkapı Palace. Captured as a slave from Abyssinia, Süleyman was castrated to become the eunuch of the imperial harem, the sacred or forbidden space reserved for the sultan's wives and children. He witnesses the terrors of the palace when, out of jealousy, the Sultana imprisons her son for spending too much time with his lover and in doing so paves the way for her seven-year-old grandson's accession to the throne.

Highly devoted to the imprisoned Sultan, the eunuch often visits him in his cell and encourages him to kill his son to get back on the throne. In the violent struggle for power, it is common for brothers to poison each other and sultanas to strangle the sultan's pregnant concubines, whose sons are the potential future successors to the throne. Livaneli's depiction of imperial Istanbul as a violent and oppressive city serves as a critique of 1996, when political parties were striving to win the presidential election in Turkey. In the interview published in *Engereğin Gözü* (Eye of the Viper), the retitled 2011 edition of the novel, Livaneli remarks that the novel is about people who are like flies that risk their lives while whirling around the fire of omnipotence. He further comments that many are ready to burn with the flame of power by taking dangerous positions as sultans, presidents, or public officials. In fact, the novel ends with the eunuch's comment that the position of authority seems dazzling and fascinating even in the eyes of a viper.

Two years after the publication of the novel, Elia Kazan commented that he had never read a book as impressive as *Engereğin Gözündeki Kamaşma*. The novel received the Balkan Literature Prize in 1997, and it became a best seller in Turkey, Spain, Greece, and South Korea. In 1997 the author also received the Abdî İpekçi Peace Award in Turkey for promoting Turkish-Greek friendship. The following year he published a collection of his music in *Livaneli Besteleri* (Livaneli's Songbook). In 1999 he received the Best Songwriter Award in San Remo, Italy, and in 2000 he was awarded the Lifelong Achievement Award at the thirty-seventh Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival in Turkey.

Livaneli's second novel, *Bir Kedi, Bir Adam, Bir Ölüm* (2001, One Cat, One Man, One Death), is about Turkish political refugees in the early 1970s in Stockholm. Even though he started working on this novel in the 1970s, he delayed working on it for many years. He explains in the introduction to the novel that, a refugee in Stockholm himself, he took a break from the novel to keep his distance from the characters who lived between the Turkish and Swedish cultures.

The Turkish male protagonist of the novel, Sami Baran, immigrates to Stockholm after being tortured and imprisoned for not giving a false statement on his innocent fiancée's accidental death by an officer during the 1971 military intervention. Years after the tragic incident, Sami coincidentally ends up in the same Swedish hospital with the former official who presented Sami's fiancée as a leftist terrorist to justify her shooting by the Turkish military. While planning to murder the despotic politician, Sami nevertheless finds it comforting to have a companion with whom to speak Turkish at the hospital. Through the relationship of the former enemies, Livaneli shows the power of native language and the displacement of political refugees, who feel at home neither in Sweden nor in Turkey. Published in Greece, Serbia, Switzerland, and Iran, this novel received the Yunus Nadi Novel Award in 2001.

The author's third novel, *Mutluluk* (2002; translated as *Bliss*, 2006), was published in Greece, Sweden, France, and Italy, as well as in the United States, where he received the Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Authors Award. *Mutluluk* portrays how Eastern Anatolian villagers suffer from poverty, patriarchal traditions, and the ongoing thirty-year armed conflict between the Turkish military and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which seeks the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the southeast region of Turkey. His rural characters dream of leaving their small village to find well-paid jobs with health benefits in Istanbul. Growing up with the tales of the "golden city," a fifteen-year-old girl, Meryem, is excited to travel with her ex-commando cousin, Cemal, to Istanbul, and escape from her rapist uncle. She does not know that the purpose of their journey is for Cemal to carry out her honor killing. Ignorant of her death verdict, Meryem is happy to travel to Istanbul where, as it is commonly said, "the streets are paved with gold."

Meryem's dream of Istanbul as a magnificent city is shattered as she witnesses the predicaments of the migrants in the shantytowns with muddy fields and illegally-built, decrepit houses. The novel undermines the cultural construction that opposes "backward" Eastern Anatolia to progressive Western Turkey, as the shantytowns in the outskirts of Istanbul remind Meryem of her underdeveloped village. Living in harsh conditions, migrant women are also victims of domestic abuse as their husbands beat them up and even kill their female relatives who lose their virginity before marriage. Meryem understands the purpose of their journey when Cemal asks her to jump from a half-built bridge in the outskirts of the city. Even as Cemal subsequently spares Meryem's

life, she realizes that Istanbul does not provide an escape from patriarchal traditions. In the same year *Mutluluk* was published, the author participated in a panel in New York about honor killings in different racial, ethnic, and religious groups. The novel was translated into French and was chosen "The Book of the Month" by a group of libraries in France. In 2007 it was adapted into a movie by the Turkish film director Abdullah Oğuz, and Livaneli received the Best Film Music Award for it at Antalya's forty-fourth Golden Orange Film Festival.

Livaneli's next novel, *Leyla'nın Evi* (2006, Leyla's House), examines changing class dynamics in Istanbul exacerbated by the get-rich-quick mentality that flourished during the government of Prime Minister Turgut Özal. Many climbed the social ladder either by fraud, bribery, or by marrying into wealthy families. In the novel, for example, Ömer Cevheroğlu gets rich by deceiving every company he works for in Istanbul. His wife, Necla, once his former secretary, escaped her destitute life in a shantytown by seducing Ömer at work.

The state also supports the rising bourgeoisie by selling them the Ottoman-era mansions of the elderly. Officials obtain fake medical reports showing that the current owners are not mentally stable enough to make decisions on financial matters. Despite her certificate of ownership, Leyla, an elderly single heiress of the Bosnalı Abdullah Avni Pasha family, is forced to leave her mansion by the new landlord, Ömer. The novel portrays the new upper class's neglect of history as Ömer and Necla eagerly dispose of the Ottoman antiques and hire an American architect to modernize the mansion. While erasing the Ottoman imprints in the house, they also try to break from their working-class background. Necla seldom visits her poor family, and Ömer asks his father, a butler who devoted his life to his son, not to live with them in the mansion. Their neglect of the past and their social responsibilities are juxtaposed with the sacrifices of Leyla's grandfather, who fought during the Balkan War (1912–1913) and even hosted his immigrant relatives and acquaintances from Bulgaria at the mansion. The author clearly laments the fact that vulgar, selfish, and pretentious capitalists are now living in the mansions of those who worked for the well-being of the society and fought for Turkey's independence. The novel was adapted into a play by the Turkish theatre director Nedim Saban. In the same year *Leyla'nın Evi* was published, Livaneli received the Theodorakis Music Award in Greece and the Best Foreign Song Award in the Zecchino d'Oro contest in Italy.



Cover for Livaneli's 2013 novel (Bahçeşehir University Library)

After completing his autobiography, *Sevdağım Hayat*, in 2007, Livaneli published his fifth novel, *Son Ada* (2009, The Last Island), which serves as a critique of the 1980 military coup. His political satire is about a retired chief of the army who becomes the ruler of a utopian island without a government, hierarchical class structure, or legal system. In order to "civilize" the island, he orders the mass destruction of seagulls that attack people and make too much noise at night. After clearing the shores of the seagulls and burning the forests, he plans to build holiday resorts, bars, and casinos to attract tourists. Under the rule of the dictator, the island with equal human rights turns into a violent and capitalist society that destroys nature for financial advantage. On an island formerly without criminals and jails, he orders the imprisonment of those who question his absolute authority. Even though the novel lacks a specific historical and national context, the dictatorship of the officer evokes the military regime of the 1980s when many, including Livaneli, were tortured and imprisoned for their dissenting political beliefs. A year after *Son Ada*, he published *Sanat Uzun, Hayat*

*Kısa* (2010, *Art's Long, Life's Short*), a collection of his essays on various topics, such as literature, love, art, history, politics, and his life.

In 2010 Livaneli directed the movie *Veda* (Farewell), which is based on the life of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The same year, shortly after the movie came out, he published *Veda: Bir Dostluğun Öyküsü* (Farewell: The Story of a Friendship), which brings together important scenes, dialogues, and pictures from the film. The text starts with a foreword by Klaus Eder, the General Secretary of the International Federation of Film Critics, who claims that the movie is not simply a documentary but a historical fiction that portrays Atatürk through his relationships with his mother, his wife, and his childhood friend, Salih Bozok. Rather than focusing on Atatürk's foundation of the Turkish Republic, the movie and the book emphasize the strong bond between the two friends, who were both born in Salonika and attended military school together. The text provides a parallel narration of Atatürk's life story and his final moments on his deathbed with Salih at Dolmabahçe Palace on 10 November 1938. Devastated with Atatürk's sickness, Salih decides to commit suicide upon his death and writes a letter explaining to his son why he cannot imagine his life without his friend. The multi-layered and non-linear narrative juxtaposes passages from Salih's suicide letter with the story of the two friends. At the end of the novel, Atatürk dies and Salih's family cannot prevent him from shooting himself. As Klaus Eder comments, unlike many movies and books on Atatürk, *Veda* portrays him not only as the father of Turks but also as an ordinary man who lamented the death of his loved ones and needed the support of his best friend to endure the hardships in his life.

In his novel *Serenad* (2011, *Serenade*), Livaneli returns to the themes of power and violence he explored in the context of the Ottoman Empire in *Engereğin Gözü*. Through the lives of Jewish, Turkish, and Armenian women, the novel portrays world tragedies, which are often suppressed and censored within official history. When the thirty-six-year-old Maya, a public-relations officer at Istanbul University, is asked to accompany the eighty-seven-year-old German-American visiting scholar, they become friends during their journey into a past that reveals the massacres of Armenians, Crimean Turks, and the Jews. The professor, Maximilian Wagner, points out to Maya that every government kills to sustain its nationalist ideology and its position of authority. The stories the characters tell show how many innocent people were sacrificed for political power.

Among the victims of war and power struggle were Maya's father's parents, who like many other

Armenians were deported from Turkey to Syria in 1915. Ashamed of having "pis kan" (dirty blood), Maya's lieutenant brother conceals his Armenian heritage, which he believes to be an obstacle in his promotion as a general in the Turkish military. From Maya's brother's viewpoint, the novel also highlights the national tendency to ignore the pre-Republican past, which is assumed to have no relation to present-day Turkey.

While Maya pities the massacred Armenians, her brother reminds her of the Blue Regiment, the name of the Crimean Turkish soldiers in Russia who were ordered by the Turkish government to change allies and to support the Germans during World War II. When Hitler lost the war and Crimean Turks immigrated first to Italy and then to Austria, the Russian leader, Joseph Stalin, ordered the "traitors" to be returned by train and killed in Russia. Three-thousand Turks drowned themselves in the Drau River. The rest hoped that the Turkish officers would rescue them while the train passed through Turkey to Russia. Following the orders of the government, however, Turkish officers did not save them, and the people on the train, including Maya's mother's parents, were shot the moment they arrived Russia. One of the few survivors of the incident, Maya's grandmother on her mother's side, had to change her name in order not to be deported from Turkey.

As Maya tries to cope with her family secrets, the professor thinks of his Jewish wife, who, along with 769 Jews escaping from the Nazis, boarded the ship Struma which was scheduled to stop in Istanbul on its way from Romania to British-governed Palestine. The passengers soon understand that Struma is a false hope as the overcrowded ship with a broken engine is stuck at the Bosphorus. Romanians do not want the Jews back, the Turkish government does not admit immigrants without a Turkish or transit visa, and the British deny Turkey's request to provide passengers with a visa for Palestine, which would have allowed them to leave the ship temporarily. The professor tells Maya of the days when he looked at the boat from the shore with binoculars hoping to have a glimpse of his wife, for whom he composed a serenade. The ship, however, was torpedoed by a Russian submarine and sank into the waters of the Bosphorus in 1941. The novel reveals how the Turkish government allowed the Jews to drown just to be on good terms with Hitler during World War II and also caused the death of thousands of Crimean Turks by handing them to the Russians. While giving voice to tragedies that are silenced in official national history, *Serenad* supports the professor's belief that

governments become murderers because of political conflicts of interests.

In 2011 Livaneli gave a concert at New York City's Central Park to celebrate the fortieth year in his music career. The author remarks in his 2011 interview with *Kültür ve Sanat Televizyonu* (Culture and Art TV) that he achieved his goals as a musician and that he now wishes to support young singers. His daughter, Aylin, is also a well-known singer and a screenwriter. In 2012 he published *Edebiyat Mutluluktur* (Literature is Happiness), a collection of his pieces on literature that he wrote for *Vatan* (Homeland), where he currently discusses various topics, such as literature, film, music, politics, and the education system. Sections from a chapter of his novel *Engereğin Gözü* were used as the text of a graphic novel and were published under the title *Harem* in 2012.

Livaneli's latest novel, *Kardeşimin Hikayesi* (2013, *The Story of My Brother*), takes place in a small village, near Istanbul that is shaken by the murder of a young, beautiful woman, Arzu, who was unfaithful to her rich, elderly husband, Ali. A young journalist comes to the village to investigate the murder; and she meets the narrator, Ahmet, a retired engineer, who leads a solitary life with his books and memories of his twin brother, Mehmet. Scheherazade is reborn as Ahmet, who tells stories of passion and revenge to the journalist, with whom he falls in love. In order to make her stay longer in the village, he arouses her curiosity by telling her how the jealous husband or the Russian maid, who is in love with Ali, could have stabbed Arzu. Ahmet also tells her the story of his brother. When Mehmet worked in Russia, he fell desperately in love with Olga, whom he lost when Russian officers wrongly imprisoned him for being a Chechen guerilla.

Similar to Scheherazade, Ahmet cuts off the stories at their most intriguing point and saves the

rest for the next day. Fiction and reality are blurred in his narratives that hide the fact that Ahmet was killed in a car crash with his parents and that Mehmet was the only survivor of the accident. The police find out the narrator's real identity when he commits suicide after writing a letter to unravel the identity of the murderer, a mentally disabled man who was in love with Arzu and was jealous of her husband and lovers. The novel intertwines the narrator's tragedy with that of Arzu, who are both victims of love and passion.

Author of best-selling novels that interweave diverse social and historical incidents, Zülfü Livaneli is as accomplished as a writer as he is as a musician, cultural activist, and film director. Livaneli has always expressed his views on the most controversial and even censored topics in Turkey. For his love of country and his willingness to write the truth as he has experienced it, he is one of Turkey's most influential cultural figures and writers.

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