

Grażyna Zając

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7547-7135>

Jagiellonian University

grazyna.zajac@uj.edu.pl

DOI: 10.35765/pk.2020.3003.16

Hikmet Afif Mapolar: About *The Octopus Hunt*

## ABSTRACT

Hikmet Afif Mapolar (1919–1989) was a Turkish Cypriot writer and journalist who contributed immensely to the development of Turkish-language prose, journalism, and the press in Cyprus. Tied to his native country all his life, and especially to his place of birth (the port city of Kyrenia on the Mediterranean Sea), he set most of his stories in coastal towns in the vicinity of Kyrenia, and his characters are inhabitants of this region: villagers and fishermen. This article discusses a short story by Mapolar, *Ahtapot Avı* [The Octopus Hunt], published in 1943, i.e., during the colonial period. The realism of the descriptions, which is typical of this writer, combined with the fast-paced and engrossing storytelling bring to mind scenes from a movie drama where the sea plays the lead role. Many plot elements in *The Octopus Hunt* evoke associations with Hemingway's short story, *The Old Man and the Sea*, which leads me to formulate a universal truth that sea people have similar desires and a similar fate no matter where they live, and that "their" sea is not a peripheral place, but a central one. For the inhabitants of the coastal region, the sea is the center of their world, the center of life, the meaning of life, and the determinant of fate.

**KEYWORDS:** Turkish Cypriot literature, Hikmet Afif Mapolar, Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus

## STRESZCZENIE

Hikmet Afif Mapolar: rzecz o polowaniu na ośmiornice

Hikmet Afif Mapolar (1919–1989) to tureckocypryjski pisarz i publicysta, bardzo zasłużony dla rozwoju tureckojęzycznej prozy, publicystyki i prasy na Cyprze. Całe życie związany ze swoim ojczystym krajem, a szczególnie z miejscem urodzenia (miasto portowe Kyrenia nad Morzem Śródziemnym), w swojej twórczości na miejsce akcji najczęściej wybierał nadmorskie miejscowości okolic Kyrenii, a na bohaterów swoich utworów – mieszkańców tego rejonu: wieśniaków i rybaków. Przedmiotem opisu w tym artykule jest opowiadanie Mapolara *Ahtapot Avı* (Polowanie na ośmiornice) z roku 1943,

a więc z okresu kolonialnego. Typowa dla tego pisarza realistyczna metoda opisu połączona z wartką, dramatyczną akcją sprawia, że fabuła przynosi na myśl scenę z dramatu filmowego z morzem w roli głównej. Wiele elementów fabuły *Polowania na ośmiornice* nasuwa skojarzenia z nowelą *Stary człowiek i morze* E. Hemingwaya, co pozwala sformułować uniwersalną prawdę, że ludzie morza mają podobne pragnienia i podobny los bez względu na to, gdzie żyją, oraz że „ich” morze nie jest miejscem peryferyjnym, a centralnym. Dla mieszkańców regionu nadmorskiego morze to ich centrum świata, centrum życia, sens życia i determinant ich losów.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: literatura Turków cypryjskich, Hikmet Afif Mapolar, Morze Śródziemne, Cypr

## Introduction

Hikmet Afif Mapolar<sup>1</sup> (born in 1919 in Kyrenia, died in 1989 in Nicosia) was a Turkish Cypriot writer and essayist and the author of eighteen novels, two collections of short stories, and two volumes of memoirs. He also wrote stage plays and radio plays, collected and published Cypriot legends, and in the 1940s became known as a poet when he joined the poetry group *Çığcılar*, which was popular among Turkish Cypriots at the time. He published his poems under the telling penname Akdenizli Ozan (Mediterranean Songwriter).

Mapolar lived in economically hard times in Cyprus, which influenced the fate of his works: he published many of them in low-circulation newspapers and, in some cases, we only know the titles of these works. This is especially true of Mapolar's novels, of which only nine (i.e. half) appeared in a book form; the rest were published in installments in periodicals. They either survived in fragments or were irretrievably lost.

During his 70 years, the author witnessed the turbulent history of the island. He was born and raised during the colonial era, when Cyprus was under British rule. He first attended a Turkish elementary school, then an English elementary school, and finally a private secondary school—the American Academy Nicosia, which is still operating today—but he dropped out for financial reasons. Despite his lack of education, he was involved in journalistic, publishing, and literary activities throughout his adult life and he achieved success in those areas. For many years, the main source of his income was the book trade.

---

1 For more on the life and work of Hikmet Afif Mapolar, see Bozkurt & Karakartal (2019, Vol. 4, pp. 21–29; Vol. 5, pp. 23–29), Atun (2010, pp. 78–79, 87–91, 94–96), and Atun & Fevzioglu (2004, pp. 41–62).

Mapolar made his debut at the age of 13, when he sent a short story and several poems to the magazine *Embros*,<sup>2</sup> which agreed to publish them. In 1936, he published his first novel and three years later his first collection of short stories. The story *Ahtapot Avı* [The Octopus Hunt] comes from the second collection, which came out in 1943. The first period of creativity in Mapolar's life was the years 1936–1963, although during both the British reign on the island and the period of joint power of the Greeks and Turks in the newly proclaimed Republic of Cyprus (1960–63), the conditions for writing literature were difficult, as was the economic situation of the inhabitants of Cyprus, and contact with native culture in Turkey was obstructed.

After the “Bloody Christmas,”<sup>3</sup> the cultural activity of the Turkish community was severely curtailed and contact with the outside world ceased almost completely. This translated into stagnation in literary and publishing life. After the division of the island (1974) into the southern and northern parts, the standard of living of Turkish-speaking Cypriots increased significantly and the culture began to recover. However, Mapolar remained silent. The reason was diabetes, which had not been diagnosed and was left untreated for several years, leading to blindness. The name Mapolar reappeared on the book market in 1982, when his first novel, dictated by the writer to his daughter, was published after a twenty-year hiatus. This was followed by several more novels, while two volumes of his memoirs did not become available to the public until the 21st century.

Mapolar went down in the history of Turkish Cypriot literature primarily as a pioneer of novels and short stories<sup>4</sup> and as a leading publicist: the creator of the modern Turkish-language press in Cyprus. His prose is classified as combining the features of realistic and naturalistic styles, but Mapolar likes to stray from serious writing, unexpectedly weaving in strongly romantic images and sometimes quite exalted descriptions and

---

2 *Embros*—a periodical from Nicosia in the 1930s which published texts in three languages—English, Greek, and Turkish—and was founded by the Englishman G. Blunt Pusey; it was the only periodical in this period in which Turkish Cypriots could publish in Turkish (See Soyalan, 2018).

3 *Kanlı Noel* [Bloody Christmas]—a term used by the Turks for the bloody events of late December 1963, which resulted in the escape of thousands of Turks to closed enclaves.

4 The novel and the short story as genres entered Turkish Cypriot literary discourse very late. In Ottoman Turkey, such works began to be published in the 1870s, which was the aftermath of modernization reforms and Turkey's opening up to Western culture during the Tanzimat era; however, under British rule, Cyprus was isolated from Ottoman influence, and British culture was available only to very a small group of Turkish Cypriots educated in British schools. The first Turkish Cypriot novel was not published until 1892, and the first novella was published in 1897. After a long hiatus, novels and short stories began to appear in Cyprus in the 1930s—they were written by Mapolar.

comparisons. A female character is always a very important plot element in his works. The author grants her full rights, puts her on an equal footing with men, and selects for his stories independent heroines who decide about themselves, or at least try—against tradition—to decide about their own fates. The setting of Mapolar's stories and novels is his hometown, the Mediterranean "pearl" of Kyrenia and the surrounding fishing villages. The author was born and raised in this picturesque city of unique beauty, where the azure of the Mediterranean Sea almost meets the steep rocks of the Kyrenia Mountains. This sea, known in our culture as the Mediterranean and called "white" (Akdeniz) by the Turks, is a very frequent setting for his works. In *The Octopus Hunt*, it even rises to the rank of one of the main characters and is a determinant of the tragic development of events.

### The Plot of *The Octopus Hunt*

In the first sentences, the author provides details about the time and location in which the story takes place:

It was already two hours after sunset. Preparations were still underway at the marina. Finally, the lamps were filled, two okka<sup>5</sup> of kerosene were added to them, each harpoon was thoroughly checked, the fishing rods and nets were inspected. The sea was calm. The boat swayed in the gentle waves of the dock, like a drunk woman. (Mapolar, 2004, p. 93)

Thus, it looks like another quiet night at sea—an ordinary, mundane night. One that holds no surprises to experienced octopus fishermen. In the following paragraphs, we learn who the character in the story are. The crews of two boats are preparing for a catch; two Greeks work in one boat—old Kakkari and his young helper, Pavlo; the crew of the other boat is three Turks—the elderly Osman and Hüdai and the young harpooner, Hasan. As Pavlo, who was sent to the shopkeeper for provisions, is late, the other fishermen begin a chat over a cigarette while waiting for him. The rule is that a boat never sets out on its own for a catch. If one of the crews is not ready to go to sea, the other must wait for them. Only after reaching the fishery do the boats move away from each other, and after the hunt is over, they go back to the harbor together. This custom guarantees their safety: if one of the boats starts to sink, the other one will come to its rescue.

---

5 *Okka*—an ancient Ottoman unit of weight, equivalent to 1,283 grams; the term has a Latin origin (*uncia*), and was passed into the Turkish language via Arabic.

Here we learn some details about the fishermen:

Osman's and Hüdai's boat had long been ready to go to sea. They lit a cigarette and stood next to each other on the deck. They were both heavy smokers. It even happened that while they were eating barrel herring, which they mixed with onions to make something like a salad, they not only sipped on wine, but also puffed on cannabis joints ... They both had spent their entire lives at sea, from early childhood. They didn't go to school. Only in their thirties did they go to the evening reading course organized by the imam at the mosque, and in three months they learned with great difficulty to write their names. (Mapolar, 2004, pp. 93–94)

When everything is finally ready and they are about to go to sea, the fishermen—despite the windless weather—unfurl their sails, hoping that the wind will pick up, and eagerly grab their oars.

Leaving the marina behind, the boats moved like swans through the water. The strong light of the lamps sparkled in wide arcs on the surface of the water, turning the waves into a silvery mist, and the oars gracefully plunged in and out of the water. (Mapolar, 2004, p. 94)

As the boats sail towards the rocky islets where octopuses like to gather, one of the harpooners begins to sing his favorite folk song about a sea mermaid in a beautiful and poignant voice. It is his daily ritual: all participants of the fishing catch know that every trip to the sea will be accompanied by this singing. This is how we get to know the main, tragic character of the story, Hasan. His friends call him Hasanos, which is a playful distortion of a Muslim name, to make it sound Greek. Hasanos is a man of extraordinary beauty, with a statuesque build; “the fiery red of the Mediterranean sun has turned his body bronze” (Mapolar, 2004, p. 95). He always goes fishing in red swimming trunks, bare to the waist.

Hasanos is an extraordinary character; his singing is also out of this world:

If at that moment someone on the boat shone the light of the lamp on his face, he would see Hasanos weeping, lost in some boundless dream. He sang, tormented by the pain of an unknown memory, and cried, tormented by this pain. Every time he started singing the mermaid song, he would laugh, and he would always sob at the end. Even his closest friends in the boat did not know the reason for this behavior. (Mapolar, 2004, p. 96)

When the fishermen arrive at the fishing site, Hasanos, with a harpoon in his hand, jumps to the rock, followed by Hüdai carrying a lamp. Osman

stays on the boat and throws them a rope. They tie the boat to the rocks. It is a place where rocky islets rise above the water surface, and octopuses come at night to hunt for small fish hiding at the foot of the rocks. If the fishermen are lucky, they will bring back a few large octopuses from the catch and sell them to owners of Greek cafés, who will prepare a traditional Cypriot delicacy to be served to their guests: “The meat of these eight-legged sea animals was made into a pickled delicacy: first dried thoroughly in the sun, then boiled in vinegar, then poured into the jars” (Mapolar, 2004, p. 96).

It looks as though it is going to be a good catch tonight. After he disembarks from the boat, Hasanos immediately sees the shape of an octopus in the dark water and hurls his harpoon. Now he must dive in and see what he has caught.

Hasanos jumped into the water. Diving to the foot of the rock, he found his harpoon. He smiled. And he said to himself in his mind, “Thanks be to God a thousand times! What a specimen! How lucky am I! Finally, I will be able to buy an engagement ring!”

Then, without pulling out the harpoon, he grabbed the octopus by the head and turned it inside out with all his strength. The surface of the water turned navy blue. It was the ink that squirted from its head.

Oh, too bad, thought Hasanos, a few bottles of ink are gone. Well, nothing can be done about it now!

Octopuses always released their ink when caught: sometimes when a harpoon hit the head, but most often when the head was turned over. However, to do this was necessary, as an octopus that was not yet killed could be very dangerous. Sometimes it would wrap a fisherman with eight tentacles and, if he was alone, it could even kill him. (Mapolar, 2004, p. 96)

When Hasanos emerges from the water with his booty, the other fishermen hand him a scale from the boat. But before he weighs his trophy, he smashes the octopus’s body against the rock with all his might until the carcass is completely white and soft.<sup>6</sup> After he is done weighing the octopus, Hasanos exclaims triumphantly to Hüdai, “5 okka 750 dirhem,<sup>7</sup> Captain! But we will not stop there! This night belongs to us!” (Mapolar, 2004, p. 96).

6 The author describes a method that has been used for centuries by the inhabitants of the Mediterranean Basin: to ensure the carcass remains supple, immediately after being caught, the fishermen would repeatedly hit the dead animal against a hard surface.

7 *Dirhem* [Greek: drachma]—an old Ottoman unit of weight corresponding to the weight of seventy millet grains; approximately equal to 3.2 grams.

Hasanos, delighted with the size of the first octopus hunted that evening, enthusiastically sets out in search of more prey. Leaping from rock to rock, he moves away from the boat, and the old Hüdai who follows him notices at one point that they have completely lost sight of the boat. Hasanos keeps throwing the harpoon and diving to follow it, then emerges from the water and tries his luck elsewhere by jumping from one rock to another. He uses the *anya*<sup>8</sup> to help in the search for prey. Suddenly, Hüdai notices a large shape in the water:

“Hasanos! Watch out! A huge swordfish is swimming by!”

Hasanos began to look around frantically. Suddenly something occurred to him. He jumped off the rocks and looked into the water with his mirror.

“Boss, it’s not a swordfish! It’s a giant octopus! It’s at least ten okka!!”

Hüdai shouted, “Throw the harpoon, then!”

Hasanos hurled the harpoon with all his might. The octopus shuddered, swam beneath the surface, and began slapping the rocks with its tentacles like a sword.

“Oh, Hasanos! Careful! It might get away!”

“Don’t be afraid! Let it bruise itself a little against the rocks, and if it goes down deeper into the water, we’ll hit it again! I’m sure I’ll get it! My God, how enormous it is! We haven’t caught such a giant one yet!” (Mapolar, 2004, p. 97).

The octopus calms down after a while and settles on the bottom, and Hasanos casts the harpoon again. This time he aims and hits better, because the tip hurts the octopus, but the huge animal, thrashing furiously, frees itself from the harpoon. The wounded octopus hits the rocks with terrifying force, and Hasanos decides to dive and finish the job as he has done before, manually catching an octopus he has wounded.

As the octopus sank to the bottom again, Hasanos dove and grabbed one of the tentacles lying in the sand. At this point, the octopus began expelling ink. So much so that the sea became completely dark and the moonlight illuminating the surface of the water became invisible.

Hasanos felt an enormous weight tightening his throat and his veins going numb. His whole body began to burn as if he was being whipped. In the depths of the sea, a terrible scuffle began, and a gurgling sound piercing through the water came to the surface. Hüdai fell to his knees just above the water, clutched at his head, whispered a short prayer, then shouted loudly:

---

8 *Ayna* [mirror]—here it refers to a primitive device made by fishermen for observing the underwater depths, made of a tin bucket with a cut-out bottom and a well-fitting round glass.

“Hasanos, what’s happening?! Should I get you a harpoon to finish it off?”

The underwater struggle went quiet for a moment, then moved a little further and a little deeper. The gurgling sound was driving Hüdai mad. He started screaming as loud as he could, but no one answered him. After a while there was silence. The old fisherman saw a faint outline in the distance, amid the blue foam; something like a motionless human body. He washed his eyes, grabbed the mirror and pressed it against the water, which was starting to lighten.

He saw the terrifying face of the drowned man. He threw the harpoon at the rocks, looked at the water with petrified eyes, and ran across the rocks, screaming in panic. Suddenly, he stopped and began pounding his head with his fists. Before him, on the surface of the water, the moon was reflected, and it grew, then shrank, then splashed into pieces. (Mapolar, 2004, pp. 97–98).

The author could have basically ended his story here, but it is at this point in the story that Mapolar’s talent for writing starts to shine. When—it would seem—the story is over, the author separates the paragraphs with three stars, makes a space, and moves on to the last, short scene. Its scope is short when counted in sentences, but in terms of time, it lasts months and years. It is the culmination of the whole, a dramatic epilogue, a semi-fairy tale, and an explanation of why the poor octopus hunter cried whenever he sang a love song and why he wanted so much to get a good catch and a tidy profit. This desire was so strong that he was willing to risk his life for it.

\* \* \*

The day after the death of Hasanos, Esma, the village administrator’s daughter, disappeared from the village. A long and thorough search was carried out, but no trace of the girl was found.

Months and years passed... The villagers forgot both Esma and Hasanos. Like all memories, it faded.

Until one evening, a mountain shepherd saw Esma lying on a sandy shore near where Hasan died in the moonlight. In a sad and poignant voice, she was singing a song about a mermaid, and shedding tears every now and then. (Mapolar, 2004, p. 98).

As we can see, the author deliberately leaves very important information “understated.” The reader, following the plot of the story, becomes convinced that it is about the hard and dangerous work of a Mediterranean fisherman and that it will end tragically. The story does end tragically



for the main character, but in this epilogue, separated by the three stars from the main story, we encounter one more drama, which was not described directly. It is a tragedy of two young people in love who cannot be together because of the social rules established by the centuries-old tradition. Though handsome as an ancient statue, hard-working, courageous, and endowed with musical talent and a beautiful voice, the young man could not ask for the hand of the village administrator's daughter. To do this, he would need to be wealthier, and he is just a simple fisherman.

It does not seem that Mapolar's main message is the moral that the Cypriot researcher İsmail Bozkurt extracted from it: "In this story, the author, summoning the proverb 'Whoever goes hunting gets hunted,'<sup>9</sup> is trying to warn the reader that greed always ends badly" (Bozkurt&Karakartal 2019, vol. 5, p. 27). I tend to agree more with the statement of Dervişe Güneyyeli, who wrote that "in this work, the author tells the truth that time blurs the memory of events" (2003, p. 316). Without refuting either opinion, it is worth adding another important message flowing from this work: nature is a powerful being against which man is a tiny, powerless speck; you should respect the power of nature (here, the sea), but this does not mean it is not worth pursuing your dreams and your happiness.

### The Young Man ... the Old Man ... and the Sea ...

The motif of a fisherman at sea most often appears in literature in the context of struggles with the elements. It is the element of the sea, the power of the huge mass of water, an element which, especially in unfavorable weather, makes the protagonist powerless, lonely, and left completely at the mercy of fate. In Mapolar's story, the characters struggle not only with the elements, but also with another force, which turns out to be an even deadlier threat. It is—if an animal can be called an element—a powerful octopus. The author chose not to describe the fight that Hasanos fought. We can only guess the drama that took place below the surface of the water from the reaction of the old fisherman Hüdai, who remained on the rocks. Although we are not given a description of Hasanos's struggle with his victim, the story inevitably evokes in the reader associations with Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. This was also noted by Ali Nesim, who wrote that Mapolar's story is as moving as Hemingway's work (Nesim, 2011, p. 9). It is worth recalling here that *The Old Man and the Sea* was published in 1952, therefore much later than Mapolar's story.

---

9 A popular Turkish proverb (*Ava giden avlanır*).

When comparing the two pieces, we observe the similarity of the motifs. The victory motif of the aged Santiago—who, after eighty days of failure, finally captures a huge marlin—resembles the success of Hasanos, who harpoons and triumphantly pulls out of the water his first large octopus that day. Both stories approach the theme of struggle and failure. Santiago did not haul his enormous fish to the shore: he fought an unequal fight over it with the sharks and lost. Hasanos, on the other hand, had to fight a dramatic battle with two opponents: with the mighty octopus and with an even more dangerous element, the water. Reading both stories brings the reader to the conclusion that nature once again triumphs over man.

Both authors introduce the theme of an old fisherman, a man who, despite his advanced age and physical infirmity, still goes to sea. For both Santiago and the characters of Mapolar's story (Osman, Hüdai, and Kakkari), their job is difficult and dangerous. However, they continue their paid work because they have no other choice: they have to earn a living; besides, going out to sea for them is something that, once tasted, will not let them go. In Hemingway's short story, we find a vivid motif of a child (Manolin) accompanying the old man, helping him with the difficult tasks. There is no child character in Mapolar, but the main character Hasanos plays a similar role. He throws the harpoon, he dives for the prey and, risking his life, he retrieves it from the water. The old crew members, Osman and Hüdai, have different tasks: one is in charge of the boat, while the other accompanies Hasanos to the fishing spot. The situation is similar in the second boat. Friends with the main characters, the Greek crew consists of old Kakkari and young Pavlo.

One more common theme in both stories is the theme of loneliness. Much more dramatically handled by Hemingway (because Santiago is fighting a mighty fish for several days, with sharks and his own weaknesses all by himself), it also occurs in Mapolar's story. Although the crew consists of three people, when they go to sea, they moor at lonely rocks. The reader has the awareness that they are completely alone, on their own and powerless against the vagaries of the elements. Finally, we encounter literal loneliness, very tragic one: old Hüdai runs alone over the rocks, fleeing in terror from the sight of the drowned man. Loneliness also dominates the last scene of the story, in which we see an unhappy woman mourning the loss of her beloved. The theme of the night can also be considered a common theme. Mapolar's story takes place entirely at night, because only then do octopuses come out. The action of Hemingway's novella takes place over four days, and the night and darkness at sea increase the cruel solitude of Santiago.

## Instead of the Ending: The Center of the World or the Periphery

Ali Nesim, in his study on Mapolar's literary heritage, introduced the writer with the following words:

Hikmet Afif Mapolar was born in the charming town of Kyrenia, sandwiched between the Kyrenia Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. In his novels and short stories, he describes the vibrant lives of the inhabitants of Kyrenia, the Kyrenian fishermen, and their battles with the sea element... He liked to make friends with fishermen, listen to their stories, and spent long hours in fishermen's pubs. Mapolar, who poured everything he heard onto paper, is a great writer in our eyes today, and in those days he was a devoted companion in the eyes of his friends, in the eyes of his drinking buddies—a good buddy, in short, he was “the mad son of Haji Halil.” When I say “mad” I mean that he loved adventures, he paid no attention to money at all, and he valued the human being the most. (Nesim, 2011, pp. 1–2)

Later in the study, Nesim wrote about the most important features of Mapolar's oeuvre (and not only his work, but also his way of looking at the world). That is, he wrote that for Mapolar the most important things were the cult of Aphrodite and a love of the Mediterranean Sea (Nesim, 2011, p. 8).

The writer endowed the female characters of his works with the beauty of the Greek goddess, who was born in Cyprus. They are beautiful women (and even if worn down by life, common, and ugly, they are beautiful in spirit), they drive men crazy, they are independent and haughty—even if they are waitresses serving disheveled fishermen in smelly, dirty pubs. Mapolar would call these women “new Aphrodites” or “illegitimate daughters of Aphrodite” (Nesim, 2011, p. 8). He also liked to use a term that is difficult to translate: when his protagonist discovers her independence and decides to be her own person, and use her feminine charm to her own advantage, the author uses the verb “Afröditleşiverdi” (Nesim, 2011, p. 8). This original verb, coined by the writer on the basis of the name “Aphrodite” and derived from a special modal structure, could be translated as “she suddenly becomes Aphrodite.”

Mapolar's love for the Mediterranean Sea is revealed in the status that the writer grants it in his works. Seaside landscapes and the sea element are a frequent theme in literature; a rewarding, romantic, inspiring theme. Nevertheless, most often the sea is only a background for the unfolding events, a kind of “filler” for the plot, like a board on which the author places

his or her heroes like action figures. In Mapolar's oeuvre, the sea is always more than a backdrop, more than a setting. This is clearly seen in *The Octopus Hunt*, where the sea is neither the background nor the scenery; rather, it is one of the heroes and a determinant of the tragic development of events. We could even say that the sea is one of the most important characters here, along with Hasan and the octopus. Moreover, we may venture to say that Hasan's actual killer is the sea, not the octopus. Would he have allowed himself be killed if he had fought a sea creature on the shore?

Is the Mediterranean Sea, a frequent "main character" of Mapolar's stories, something central or peripheral? For us, looking at the map of the world and the vast oceans covering this map, where the transport and exchange of enormous goods between the "mighty forces" of our time is constantly taking place, the Mediterranean basin seems small, insignificant, and hidden between the lands. But when a Mediterranean fisherman is in his boat at sea, he is at the center of his being, at the center of the world. There is no other world for him then. Anyway, it must be assumed that the Mediterranean Sea accompanies all the inhabitants of Cyprus in their daily lives—not only fishermen—Turks and Greeks alike. After all, it is an island, small enough that it is difficult to imagine a Cypriot who could not smell sea salt in the air on windy days. On Cyprus, it is impossible to escape the sea, even if you live in a city.

Let us conclude our discussion the role of the sea in Mapolar's writings with the words of the previously quoted Nesim, who described the writer by referring to Fernand Braudel, a world-famous historian of the Mediterranean Basin:

Even Braudel saw the Mediterranean as a geographic meeting place of different cultures. And yet, according to Mapolar, the Mediterranean Sea is not a geographical location, but a separate being with its own identity. The Mediterranean Sea is not a determinant of someone's identity, but an identity in itself. There would be no "Mediterranean man" if it were not for this sea. (Nesim, 2011, pp. 8–9)

#### REFERENCES

- Atun, S. (2010). *Kıbrıs Türk Edebiyatı*. Famagusta: Samtay Vakfı Yayınları.
- Atun, S., & Fevzioglu, B. (2004). *Kıbrıs Türk Edebiyatında Öykünün 107 Yıllık Kronolojik-Antolojik Tarihsel Süreci*, Vol. 1. Famagusta: Samtay Vakfı Yayınları.
- Bozkurt, I., & Karakartal, O. (Eds.). (2019). *Kıbrıs Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi 1571–2017*, Vols. 4–5. Ankara: Kibatek.

- Güneyyeli, D. (2003). *Kıbrıs Türk Edebiyatında Hikmet Afif Mapolar'ın Yeri*. Istanbul. <http://nek.istanbul.edu.tr:4444/ekos/TEZ/38965.pdf>
- Mapolar, H.A. (2004). Ahtapot Avı. In S. Atun & B. Fevzioğlu, *Kıbrıs Türk Edebiyatında Öykünün 107 Yıllık Kronolojik-Antolojik Tarihsel Süreci*, Vol. 1. Famagusta: Samtay Vakfi Yayınları.
- Nesim, A. (2011). Eserlerine Kıbrıs Kültürünü Yansıtan Yazarımız: Hikmet Afif Mapolar. In *İz Bırakmış Kıbrıslı Türkler-6*. Famagusta: Eastern Mediterranean University Press.
- Soyalan, S. (2018, September 14). Yitirdiklerimiz: Hikmet Afif Mapolar. *Kıbrıs Gazetesi*. <https://www.kibrisgazetesi.com/kibris/yitirdiklerimiz-hikmet-afif-mapolar-h49214.html>

**Grażyna Zajac** – Prof., Middle Eastern scholar, university lecturer, translator, and since 2019 a professor at the Jagiellonian University. She is the author of three books in Polish and over 70 articles in Polish, Turkish, English, and Azerbaijani. She conducts MA seminars and lectures on Turkish and Turkish Cypriot literature. In her research, she specializes in contemporary Turkish literature, memoirs, and Turkish Cypriot literature. She supports the Polish Tatar community by preparing short translations from Turkish for the Tatar press in Poland.

