



How Did Halit Ziya Read Shakespeare?

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Abstract

Although it can be said that the influence of William Shakespeare from the early periods of modern Turkish literature was initially limited to the field of theatre, in time this influence spread to the field of fiction through the development of the novel. Accepted as a “master” by the writers of the Tanzimat period in the 1860s, Shakespeare exerted a strong influence on Turkish writers, especially novelists. From the 1890s to 1910s, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil and Mehmet Rauf, two prominent novelists of the Servet-i Fünûn period, praised Shakespeare in their essays, referring to French literary historian Hippolyte Taine. Uşaklıgil’s interpretation of Shakespeare, who is considered the “founding father” of the Turkish novel, allows us to see Shakespeare’s influence on the development of modern Turkish literature. In his book *Hikâye* [The Novel] (published in 1891-1892), written to explain the history of the novel in the West and Turkish, Uşaklıgil did not include Shakespeare but when he started to teach at the university, he took a close interest in Shakespeare, and from 1909 onwards, he published essays on Shakespeare, along with other Western writers, in the magazine *Servet-i Fünûn*. In 1909, his main aim in these essays was to introduce Shakespeare to students and readers. Halit Ziya’s comprehensive essays on Shakespeare were published in 1941, entitled “English and French Poets and Authors: William Shakespeare” in the newspaper *Son Posta*. In these essays, Halit Ziya commented on Shakespeare as “a name considered the greatest genius in all world literature.” Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil does not include Shakespeare in 1892 but gives him a special place in 1909 and 1941. This means that the place given to Shakespeare in Halit Ziya’s literary universe has expanded over time. This influence, which can be traced in his essays, is not limited to Uşaklıgil. Between 1909 and 1941, Shakespeare received widespread attention in Türkiye. Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil not only acknowledges Shakespeare as a literary “genius” but considers him a “founder” in terms of his perspective on humanity. He claims that Shakespeare’s characters are not based on myths, as in ancient Greece, but on human emotions and actions. He finds the works of Shakespeare, who does not hesitate to show the evil side of humanity as well as its beauty, valuable as a reflection of reality. He praises Shakespeare’s ability to combine contrasts such as “tragedy and comedy”, “monarch and jester”, and “wisdom and madness”, which he sees as human passions. It is quite obvious that Halit Ziya’s appreciation of Shakespeare’s interpretation of humanity directly influenced Uşaklıgil’s portrayal of humanity in his novels.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, Hippolyte Taine, Servet-i Fünûn, World Literature

Introduction

Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, one of the “founder” figures of the novel genre in Turkish, contributed to the development of the genre with his theoretical writings as well as his novels. Two of Uşaklıgil’s books in particular stand out as critical contributions. First, in *Hikâye (The Novel)*, published in 1891, he analyses the development of the novel genre in terms of the conflict between realism and romanticism in Türkiye. Secondly, he wrote a four-volume book entitled *Sanata Dair (On Art)*, in which he addressed the theoretical problems of art, and wrote about the writers of world literature who had influenced him. The articles entitled “English and French Poets and Authors: William Shakespeare” in *Sanata Dair* (2023), which are the subject of this study, have their first seeds in the articles serialised in the *Servet-i Fünûn* magazine (March 25-April 29, 1909). The articles that were later published in a series in the *Son Posta* newspaper (September 30, October 8, 13, 20, 1941) and included in the book under the title “English and French Poets and Writers” are in the fourth and final volume of the *Sanata Dair* books.

As İnci Enginün expressed (2008) in her book *Türkçede Shakespeare Çevirileri ve Etkisi* (Shakespeare Translations into Turkish and Their Influence on Turkish Literature) what led Halit Ziya to think and write about Shakespeare was “his teaching of Western literature at Darülfünun [İstanbul University]” (p. 259). Halit Ziya, who inserted the dedication “A Gift to the Masters of Darülfünun: William Shakespeare” in the serial published in *Servet-i Fünûn* magazine, presents his essays on Shakespeare as a gift to the students he taught at the university (Öğütçü, 2023, p. 90). Therefore, essays on Shakespeare are informative and instructional.

Halit Ziya begins his essays in the fourth volume of *Sanata Dair* titled “English and French Poets and Authors” with Jonathan Swift. He then discusses Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, William Shakespeare, William M. Thackeray, Walter Scott, Samuel Richardson, and Charles Dickens. He aims to explain the origin and development of the English novel. Although the primary aim is to tell the history of the novel, he considers it a necessity to mention Shakespeare and says the following:

It would have been very convenient, after mentioning the authors who, together with Charles Dickens, brought the genre of the novel to its perfection in English literature, to proceed immediately to that great writer [Thackeray], if these articles had not been confronted with a more important mission. That mission would be to talk about English dramatic literature, and for that purpose it would be necessary not to dwell on the primitive stages of that literature, but to go directly to a name that is considered to be the greatest genius in dramatic literature of the whole world, past and present: William Shakespeare. (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 134)

However, he does not express such a “mission” in his book *Hikâye*, where he discusses the novel genre in detail, and in 1891 he does not mention Shakespeare at all. In other words, in Türkiye, from the 1890s to the 1940s, mentioning Shakespeare became a “mission”. The fact that Halit Ziya considers it a “mission” to mention Shakespeare while describing the novel genre shows how Shakespeare’s place in the field of literature has changed in Türkiye.

Halit Ziya also points to this change, saying that in earlier periods Shakespeare was only mentioned by name, but his works were not well known. However, in recent years (i.e.

the 1930s), many of Shakespeare's works have been translated into Turkish and his plays have been staged (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 135). He mentions Seniha Göknil's translation of *King Lear*,¹ the translation of *Othello*² by the young critic and academic Orhan Burian and *William Shakespeare*³ by the famous Servet-i Fünûn poet and his close friend Cenap Şahabettin as important works on Shakespeare in recent years.⁴ Halit Ziya also points out that there was a lack of detailed analysis. He argues that getting to know great poets and writers like Shakespeare not only by their names but through their works, especially by witnessing and understanding their works on stage, is essential (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 135). Hence, Halit Ziya believes that the interest in Shakespeare since the Tanzimat is superficial, and that the real development took place in the 1930s.

Halit Ziya's observations and suggestions, presented as a fiction writer, also reveal his expectations from critics. According to Halit Ziya, Shakespeare has been studied over the centuries, with both positive and negative evaluations, and his works have often been the subject of criticism. In addition to his home country, England, Shakespeare has admirers and passionate readers in countries where English is not spoken, such as Germany, Italy, and Spain. For Halit Ziya, Shakespeare is an immensely influential writer in world literature (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 135). Therefore, the greatness of a writer is directly related to their ability to transcend the boundaries of their geographical location and expand their sphere of influence.

Halit Ziya acknowledges that Shakespeare's prolific body of work and enduring fame throughout the centuries have turned him into an unshakable monument despite his short life. He expresses his hesitation to interpret this great writer properly and states that he cannot describe him comprehensively. Thus, he states that his essays will remain within a narrow framework and that he needs a guide to describe Shakespeare properly. Halit Ziya's guide is the French literary critic and historian Hippolyte Taine.⁵

Halit Ziya's Guide to Shakespeare: Hippolyte Taine

As Halit Ziya says, Taine is his guide to the analysis and interpretation of Shakespeare. He goes on to quote Taine at length throughout his article. To understand Halit Ziya's interpretation of Shakespeare, it is necessary to look briefly at Taine's critical approach. René Wellek (1959), one of the most important representatives of the New Criticism, writes: "Today, the name Taine almost compulsively evokes three words: race-milieu-moment. He is known as the founder of a sociological science of literature" (p.1). Under the influence of the positivism of the 19th century, Taine developed a determinist approach that saw literature as the result of certain social conditions. Taine writes: "If these forces [climate

¹ W. Shakespeare, (1941), *Kral Lir* [King Lear] (S. B. Göknil trans.), Yücel Press.

² W. Shakespeare (1940), *Othello* (O. Burian, trans.), Yücel Press.

³ Cenap Şahabettin (1931), *Vilyem Şekspir* [William Shakespeare], Kanaat Library.

⁴ See Vural Özbey in this special issue.

⁵ Taine's views strongly guided Ottoman writers and intellectuals from the Tanzimat period to the Republic era. However, Taine's works have not been translated into Turkish, and his ideas have only been quoted in some articles. For a recent translation of Taine, see., Hippolyte Taine (2022, Summer), "A History of English Literature: Introduction", (G. Ö. Ayaydın Cebe, trans.), *Kün: Edebiyat ve Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2(1), 19-37. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54281/kundergisi.19>

and social conditions] could be measured and deciphered, one could deduce from them, as if from a formula, the characteristics of the future civilization”, and adds: “When we have considered race, milieu and moment, we have exhausted not only all real causes but even more all possible causes of movement” (Taine 1866, as cited in Wellek 1959, p. 3). Inevitably Wellek, who advocates a text-oriented approach such as the New Criticism, criticises Taine. As expected, Wellek (1959) states: “the claim that literature is primarily a product of society, that a work of literature is a social document which can be reduced to its social causes” (p. 2). Wellek claims that “On every point Taine fails to how to complete concrete determination of literature by race, milieu, moment” (p. 3).

Although Taine’s importance waned after the text-oriented approaches of the 20th century, he was an important “founding figure” of 19th-century literary criticism and deeply influenced Turkish literary criticism. Especially from the 1890s, Taine became a pioneer in the approach to literary history and literary text. As Orhan Okay (2005) notes, “the histories of Turkish literature were written entirely by the French system” (p. 206). Okay also points out that the history of English literature was learned from Hippolyte Taine’s book in 19th century. Indeed, Taine was very influential in this period, both with his critical approach and especially with his book *History of English Literature* (1863-69). As we have seen in Bilge Ercilasun’s (2004) seminal book *Servet-i Fünûn’da Edebî Tenkit* (Literary Criticism in Servet-i Fünûn), Taine’s ideas found a wide resonance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Taine was favoured both for his identity as a literary historian and, as Hacer Gülşen (2019) notes, for his positivist approach.

Hippolyte Taine, who was a guide for Halit Ziya’s interpretations of Shakespeare, also has a special place in the introduction of Shakespeare in Turkish. Taine’s ideas directly influenced the introduction and appreciation of Shakespeare by the writers of Servet-i Fünûn in the 1890s and early 1900s. Taine is mentioned at length in Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın’s articles entitled *Estetik* (Aesthetics, 2021), Mehmet Rauf’s essays entitled *Tekamül-i Tenkit Yazıları* (Essays on Genesis and Development of Literary Criticism, 2019) and Ahmed Şuayb’s *Hayat ve Kitaplar* (The Life and Books, 2005). They directly accept Taine’s idea that Shakespeare was a genius. The essays of Mehmet Rauf in 1898, articles of Hüseyin Cahit in 1898, and the book of Ahmed Şuayb in 1901 show that Taine became a guide when talking about Shakespeare in Turkish. Halit Ziya followed the same path, preferring to translate Shakespeare into Turkish using Taine’s approach. In the introduction to his articles in *Servet-i Fünûn* in 1909, he states: “Hippolyte Taine’s *English History of Literature* and the corpus of the poet [William Shakespeare] have been used with various sources”. Sabahattin Çağın writes (2020):

Although it seems strange that Halit Ziya, who mostly hides his sources in his books and writings on Western Literature, makes this explanation, the reason for this can be understood when looking at the whole article. Halit Ziya quotes Hippolyte Taine quite a lot throughout the article. For instance, almost of the second chapter is a quote from Hippolyte Taine. Halit Ziya, who makes great use of Taine in the first two chapters where Shakespeare’s life story is told, emphasises his judgements and impressions in the third and fourth chapters where he talks about his works. (p. 139)

Halit Ziya, as he clearly states, interpreted Shakespeare thanks to Taine. Both Halit Ziya and his contemporaries discovered Shakespeare not from English sources or translations from English into Turkish, but from French sources. Since French was the most preferred second language in Türkiye until the 1950s, Turkish literature was also shaped by French

influence. Especially in the Servet-i Fünûn period, the influence of French literature can be seen very intensely (Mete Yuva, 2017). The transfer of European and world literature into Turkish through French can be clearly seen in the interpretations of Shakespeare in the Servet-i Fünûn period. Taine's *History of English Literature* is crucial for that generation in the recognition and introduction of English literature.

In Halit Ziya's comprehensive essays on Shakespeare, published in 1941, the concepts of "race", "milieu", "moment" and Shakespeare's life come to the fore as a result of Hippolyte Taine's method. Halit Ziya, just like Taine, recognises Shakespeare as a genius and tries to explain the conditions for the emergence of a genius. However, he does not content himself with merely describing Shakespeare's life but also tries to analyse his perspective on humanity in his plays.

The Path to Genius: Poverty, Natural Talent, and Semi-Madness

Halit Ziya recognises Shakespeare as a genius and first tries to identify the source of the genius. Not surprisingly, he attributes Shakespeare's genius to his English heritage. Uşaklıgil (2023) states:

He is an immense presence who has occupied the whole world literary field more than anyone else. The reason for this is very difficult to determine. He is the highest expression of the English race, the most eloquent expression of the spirit of that race. This poet's mind has been stamped with a seal composed of the strange combination of wisdom and madness, genius and fever, which has kept him safe from the gnawing teeth of the years for four centuries and has handed it down to him from generation to generation as the most magnificent and at the same time the strangest example of world literature. (p. 135)

Although Halit Ziya makes a direct connection between genius and race, he does not go into the details of this connection. Instead, he attempts to explain the formation of genius by looking at Shakespeare's life. In describing Shakespeare's life, he highlights the poverty he suffered. Taine, again, is behind the claim that adverse conditions created Shakespeare.

The most prominent feature that Halit Ziya emphasizes in Shakespeare's life is his poverty, which he believes played a part in his genius. Being a member of a low-income family with ten children, having to leave school to work to support his family, the ability to closely observe his surroundings from an early age due to his early start in working life, making observations about different types of people, and focusing on reading books and self-education are the early influences that nourished Shakespeare's artistry. Halit Ziya, acknowledging that there is not much information available about Shakespeare's youth, states from his readings that the most significant event during this period was his marriage to a girl from a farming background ten years older than him when he was only eighteen years old. However, for Halit Ziya, "Since he saw life as a series of rolling waves of various desires, his lively, restless nature and vagabond thoughts were not hindered by the worries of making a living, and family ties did not put a leash on his free spirit" (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 136). In most biographical studies about Shakespeare, it is repeatedly noted that there is insufficient information about a period of approximately seven years following his marriage. Graham Holderness, in his book *Nine Lives of Shakespeare* (2011), in which he

intertwines Shakespeare's roles as a writer, player, "butcher boy", businessman, lover (husband, fair friend), and Catholic with factual documents and some rumours, mentions that the period between 1585 and 1592 in Shakespeare's life is referred to as the "lost years" (p. 4). Therefore, it is not possible to create a complete biography of Shakespeare. Nevertheless, Halit Ziya does not refrain from describing Shakespeare's life in detail.

According to Halit Ziya's account (2023), the struggle for a livelihood has increased, and living conditions have become more difficult. Shakespeare finds a way to escape these difficulties by leaving his family and hometown behind and heading to London to pursue a career in the theatre. Shakespeare's first stage experiences, on the other hand, are quite surprising. One of the stories passed down by Halit Ziya is that Shakespeare was a stable hand who held and waited for the horses of wealthy theatregoers. His early years in London are filled with experiences that one would not expect from a genius's life. Halit Ziya explains this event by saying, "One would like to disbelieve that such a servile page exists in the life of this genius" (p.136). Halit Ziya, who comes from a bourgeois family, considers a job belonging to the lower class as "miserable" and states that jobs belonging to the working class do not qualify a genius. This argument is obviously a manifestation of Halit Ziya's ideology. He places great importance on the difficulties that Shakespeare experienced during his youth. Because painful experiences will serve as a source of inspiration for the works that a genius artist will create in the future. Halit Ziya (2003) claims: "If Shakespeare had not experienced these hardships, he would not have gained impressions of intense human emotions" (p. 137) such as sorrow and grief reflected in his works.

Halit Ziya underlines the poverty and difficulties in Shakespeare's life to show that he was an exceptional person. While quoting Taine's biography of Shakespeare, Halit Ziya draws attention to Shakespeare's disadvantaged background. According to Taine, despite limited knowledge, Shakespeare possessed an exceptional artistic talent and a greater understanding of people, objects, and the world in his nature. They quickly and keenly perceive the external world with a sharper eye than others. Therefore, Shakespeare's genius comes from his nature. In Halit Ziya's translation, Taine claims that genius is innate: "They [geniuses], with an innate ability, immediately put their souls in the place of objects and things, creatures and existence. [...] They seem to live differently from other people, they do not need to learn, they discover and comprehend" (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 140). Halit Ziya, who wants to show Shakespeare's genius to his readers, not only underlines poverty but also tries to identify Shakespeare's extraordinary characteristics by drawing his personality and especially his emotional portrait.

Halit Ziya attempts to identify certain aspects of Shakespeare's personality by examining his works. He concludes that Shakespeare had a sensitive and gentle soul, in need of both love and being loved. He sees purity in his temperament, compassion, and tenderness in his emotions, and sincerity and submission in his heart. In addition to these calm qualities in his nature, his vivacious, dynamic ideas and his soaring imagination drive him to create magnificent works that will continue to have an impact for centuries. For this reason, Halit Ziya prefers to see a great poet like Shakespeare separately behind the two identities. One is Shakespeare in his family life after withdrawing from the struggle for life, and the other is Shakespeare in the passions of his works that have made his real fame last forever (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 139).

Halit Ziya once again presents Shakespeare's character through Taine's perspective. Taine claims that artists, like Shakespeare, whose minds overflow with ideas and who do not rely solely on reason, have thoughts, dreams, and impressions brimming and

overflowing with the ideas that touch their minds. When their emotions come to the surface, they translate their attitudes, actions, and feelings. They become passionate about figuration and images, and according to Hippolyte Taine, even in their speech, one can see this power of imagination and invention. The artist experiences intense, tumultuous emotional changes during the creative process. Halit Ziya concludes from the quoted texts that, for Shakespeare, joy and sorrow follow one another. Among feelings of compassion, he is a semi-mad being who is constantly distressed in the struggle between joy and sorrow, sensitive to the slightest thing, prone to excessive sorrow, and fluttering in contrast to intense ambitions and delicate emotions (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 141).

Halit Ziya's view of Shakespeare as a genius is also reflected in his emotional portrait of him. Shakespeare's emotional fluctuations are presented as a kind of virtue and a prerequisite for creative talent. The state he defines as "semi-mad", which is often attributed to artists, is the oscillation between madness and genius. By painting such an emotional portrait, it is again pointed out that Shakespeare was an extraordinary person. Although Halit Ziya focuses mainly on Shakespeare's personality, he also tries to trace the state of "suffering" and "semi-madness" in Shakespeare's plays, which he sees as a sign of genius. He even claims that the emotional dichotomy enabled Shakespeare to understand human beings in all their complexity, with both their good and bad sides.

Shakespearean Human Being

Halit Ziya's essay primarily focuses on Shakespeare's life story, but in the final section, he tries to evaluate Shakespeare through his works, albeit "difficult." One of the most significant reasons for this difficulty is the rapid emotional transitions of the characters he created. The disparity between Shakespeare's temperament and his actions is so pronounced that this discord allows his imagination to transcend boundaries. The boundary-pushing creative process does not allow his works to be easily classified into broad or narrow categories. "Shakespeare, swiftly transitioning from tragedy to comedy, seriousness to humour, from noble emotions to vulgarity," can easily cover great distances in his imagination (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 142). His style draws from the intertwining of contrasting emotions. According to Halit Ziya, Shakespeare does not have time to deal with words and expressions. His works are a direct reflection of his fervent state of mind. "Occasionally strong, harsh, even ugly and obscene, elegant, polite, or rude and hurtful words" speak with wild enthusiasm (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 142). Halit Ziya does not believe that any of Shakespeare's texts were written through careful study and effort. Terry Eagleton states in his book *William Shakespeare* (1986) that "Desire is for Shakespeare a dangerously destabilizing force, permutating bodies indifferently and disrupting all secure identity." (p. 102). Eagleton also highlights the aspect of surpassing boundaries in Shakespeare, which Halit Ziya frequently highlighted.

Halit Ziya believes that Shakespeare differs from the familiar and conventional features of dramatic literature of his time: "His heroes are not loaded with harsh attitudes, loud voices, proud and majestic legends" like the mythological war heroes of ancient Greece or Rome, on the contrary, they appear on stage with actions and emotions typical of humanity. According to Halit Ziya, Shakespeare's single purpose in portraying heroes with their virtues and vices is "to reveal and show the truth" (Uşaklıgil, 2023, p. 144). In

Shakespeare's plays, the hero is "only human", and his "miserable" sides are also described. He reveals an important feature in his view of art by saying that Shakespeare, while describing these miserable characteristics of human beings, "does not fear that the excellence and sublimity of art will be harmed by them" (p. 144). Halit Ziya, who thinks that art should not only talk about virtues but should introduce the human being in every aspect, thus revealing his understanding of humanity and literature. He admires Shakespeare's plays because they depict a dichotomy between virtue and vice. Therefore, he sees both a virtuous and a vile subjectivity as human reality and finds this existence, which will be defined as "Shakespearean human being", in his plays.

Halit Ziya mentioned the dichotomy in Shakespeare's plays much earlier, in his article published in 1914. After watching *King Lear*, he was excited and expressed his admiration for the way human beings were portrayed in the play. Halit Ziya, in his essay "Bir Leyle-i Müstesna" [An Exceptional Night] (1914) in the *Şehbal* magazine, talks about *King Lear*, which he watched at the Odéon Theatre in Paris in April 1914 (Enginün, 2008, p. 264). He was so excited after watching the play that he felt like his feet were lifted off the ground and wrote the first analysis of *King Lear* in Turkish (Enginün, 2008, p. 267). Halit Ziya's thoughts on his experience with *King Lear* can be summarised as follows:

Shakespeare, while bringing to life the magnificent truth of wretched humanity with these two legends, does not conform to the prohibitions and taboos of false art. Indeed, his art is like the brilliance in the turning of the sun in his genius. Colours and lines have not served the idea of thrift and moderation. At the same time, in painting and drawing, the artist's eyes have enlarged, and their arms have lengthened, granting them widths and lengths beyond the natural dimensions of humanity. And, he who did not bow to those who mould morality in any way, presented life's realities as they are, with an independent personality. (As cited in Enginün, 2008, p. 266)

It is important to note that the scenes in *King Lear* that had the most impact on Halit Ziya focused on the pursuit of individual desires. In his novels such as *Mai ve Siyah* (Blue and Black), *Aşk-ı Memnû* (Forbidden Love), and *Kırık Hayatlar* (Broken Lives), Halit Ziya contributed to the development of the novel genre in Turkish literature by exploring the conflicts of individuals with societal norms and depicting the experiences they go through in pursuit of their dreams and desires. In Turkish novels, where boundaries had not been pushed to this extent before, the influence of the Western authors Halit Ziya read is significant. In his evaluations of the play *King Lear*, he explains in detail why he was most impressed by the character who once again pushed boundaries, the mad jester, with the following words:

The philosophy of ancient works deemed it necessary to include the admonitions, warnings, and satires of a madman, a jester, a lunatic, a buffoon, a hunchback, or a dwarf alongside the majesty and power of rulers and commanders. If power were to induce excessive intoxication, their laughter would serve as a warning; if falsehood or duplicity were to sneak in, they would be lashed with their subtle mockery; if sycophancy and flattery were to drag them down to the lowest depths, their disparaging fist would lift them. (As cited in Enginün, 2008, p. 266)

Halit Ziya constantly points to the dichotomy in Shakespeare's plays and praises him for describing human beings from every angle. Halit Ziya believes in a kind of Shakespearean human existence. This human existence enables the representation of the "immoral", the "other" of power. Halit Ziya's emphasis on the representation of the "other" is, of course,

remarkable. It allows us to see what aspects of Shakespeare he was influenced by as a novelist, and what he wrote.

Conclusion

Halit Ziya, as a novelist, has always taken French culture and literature as an example. However, during the period after the Second Constitutional Era, when he taught Western literature courses at the university, he began to write about William Shakespeare. These initial readings later diversified with a growing interest. Halit Ziya, in his essays aimed at introducing William Shakespeare to his students, used Hippolyte Taine's *History of English Literature* as a source and applied the 19th-century critical approach. He attempts to analyse Shakespeare by focusing on the environment in which he was born and raised, as well as the period in which he lived. He then evaluates his artistic personality shaped by the conditions in which he lived. He tries to explain Shakespeare's genius by considering his background in a low-income family, the various jobs he worked in, and the life experiences he gained at an early age. The aspect of Shakespeare that Halit Ziya praises the most is his way of depicting human beings. Shakespeare tells the stories of people who resist societal norms, pursue their desires, and are unafraid of making mistakes. He values Shakespeare not for depicting events similar to the heroism stories in classical works of ancient times but for exploring the essence of humanity by presenting the contrast between good and evil, right and wrong, and beautiful and ugly behaviours, and questioning the truth of human nature. Halit Ziya, while interpreting Shakespeare as a genius, seems to adhere more to the ideas of Hippolyte Taine, and while analysing Shakespeare's plays, he seems to depict his understanding of literature and ideology.

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