

Contemporary Turkish Literature

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THE LOVING CLOUD

"Sevdali Bulut," *Masallar* (1997 -- first printing 1962). Istanbul: Adam Yayinlari, pp. 75-85.

The Dervish sat down under the cypress tree. He pulled his flute out of his sash and began to blow into it. Out of the holes of the flute, trees rushed into the air; it was as if they had been hidden there and were now being pushed from the holes as the Dervish blew. Mountains, streams, and roads rushed into the air one after the other. The trees, the hills, and the streams that came from the holes of the flute descended onto a desert at the other end of the world where there were no mountains, no streams, no roads, and no trees. Hills and trees appeared in the desert; streams began to flow and toads stretched themselves out. And from then on the place was called FLUTELAND.

—The Dervish took a short breath and then continued playing. From one hole of the flute there sprang a man with a black beard, a beaked nose, and bulging eyes; he turned a few somersaults in the air and landed near the Dervish. His name was Seyfi, Seyfi the Black. He looked around, put his hand into the Dervish's pocket, stole his purse, and then started to run away. The Dervish picked up a stone, took aim at Seyfi the Black, and threw the stone at him. The stone struck Seyfi the Black with such force that the fellow bounced up into the air like a rubber ball. And he bounced up so high that he reached the sky. There, he flew on and on and fell down on a mountaintop in FLUTELAND, at the other end of the world. To be exact, he fell onto the silver studded saddle of a gray horse already standing on top of the mountain. Seyfi the Black settled himself into the saddle properly and took a look around. Some flocks of sheep were moving down the side of the mountain towards the plain. In fact those sheep belonged to him. On the opposite plateau there were long-maned horses, red and black. Those horses also belonged to Seyfi the Black. Down below, on the road, there were caravans of camels carrying spices, coffee, silk, and ivory. Those caravans also belonged to him. Fields of wheat, rye, and cotton stretched across the plain as far as the eye could see. Those fields also belonged to Seyfi the Black. To cut a long story short, Seyfi the Black had become the wealthiest man in FLUTELAND.

—Sitting on his gray horse at the top of the mountain, Seyfi the Black surveyed the surrounding countryside. His bulging eyes shone with ambition; his hard, bushy black beard twitched. But now let us leave Seyfi the Black there and go back to our Dervish. From another hole of the flute that the Dervish was playing, still seated under the cypress tree, there sprang a young girl who gently fell onto the ground before the Dervish. She was the most beautiful girl in the world. Her golden hair cascaded to her heels. Her face was as lovely as the new moon. The black lashes of her hazel eyes were long and curling. She was only fifteen and her name was Ayse. She kissed the old Dervish's hand. She bowed to him, her arms respectfully folded. "I'm at your service, Father Dervish," she said. "Is there anything I can do for you? If you're hungry, I'll make you some soup; if you're tired, I'll prepare you a bed."

—The Dervish smiled. "God bless you, my dear Ayse," he said. "But I'm neither hungry nor sleepy."

—Thus spoke the Dervish and patted Ayse on the shoulder. And Ayse rose up into the air, floating gently like a feather, and she flew far away, gracefully balancing herself in the air. She landed on the flowery branch of an apple tree in FLUTELAND, at the other end of the world. Now, which was more beautiful? The apple blossoms or Ayse? If you asked me, I would say Ayse was more beautiful than the blossoms. Ayse settled herself comfortably on the branch. She gazed around through the blossoms. The apple tree was in a garden. This garden belonged to Ayse. Roses were in bloom; they were of every color: crimson, yellow, white, and pink;

flame-colored roses and apricot-colored roses. Tulips were in bloom, too, in a myriad of different shapes; carnations, with their lacy petals, were also blooming. Ayse descended from her branch in the apple tree, took a bucket in her hand, and began to water the flowers. The garden was surrounded by a fence. To Ayse's gate there came Seyfi the Black, galloping on his horse. Without dismounting, he called over the fence, "Ayse, hey Ayse!"

—Putting down her bucket, Ayse asked Seyfi the Black, "Is it you again?"

—Seyfi the Black deepened his voice, "Yes, it's me again," he said, "and I'll come back every day, until you agree to sell me this wretched garden."

—"I have no intention of selling my garden to you or anybody else. How many times have I told you this?" Ayse answered him, her voice sweeter than birdsong.

—Seyfi the Black beat the fence with his silver-handled whip and howled, "Everything in this land is mine except your garden; this wretched garden stands in the middle of my property like a black thorn. Sooner or later I'll dry up this garden of yours!"

—Before Seyfi the Black could finish, his horse whinnied and bucked, throwing him off. If you wonder why this happened, let me tell you. While Seyfi the Black was sitting on his horse and talking over the fence to Ayse in the garden, a rabbit passing by gave such a hard bite to the left hind leg of the horse that the poor animal bucked in pain, and this is why Seyfi the Black tumbled off. Meanwhile, something that I ought to mention happened. As Seyfi the Black was lying in the dust, kicking and howling with pain, and the frightened rabbit was running away, a white dove flew out of Ayse's garden. It came flying over the head of Seyfi the Black, and aiming just between his eyebrows, shit on him from high above. Seyfi the Black got so angry that he immediately jumped to his feet, completely forgetting all about his pain. He picked up his bow and arrow and took aim at the white dove. Upon seeing this, Ayse gave out so loud a cry that the white dove flew away. When the white dove had flown away, Seyfi the Black mounted his horse and began to chase it, galloping at full speed.

—Let us leave Seyfi the Black thus chasing the white dove and return to our good old Dervish. The Dervish was still blowing into his flute, still leaning against the cypress tree. From one hole, there sprang a cloud. The Dervish continued blowing and the Cloud rose higher and higher in the sky; like a lamb grazing in the meadow of the sky, it glided slowly towards FLUTELAND, at the other end of the world. When the Cloud crossed over the border into FLUTELAND, he saw the rabbit in a field down below licking its whiskers. That was the very rabbit that had bitten the left hind leg of Seyfi the Black's horse. The rabbit looked up at the same moment and saw the Cloud. The way the rabbit licked its whiskers amused the Cloud so much that he could not keep from bursting out in laughter. The rabbit did not understand why the Cloud was laughing, nor what he was laughing at, but seeing a Cloud laughing for the first time, he was both astonished and amused. Briefly, as the Cloud and the rabbit were becoming friends like this, Seyfi the Black had reined in his horse on a hilltop and was searching for the white dove that had shit on him right between his eyebrows. At the very moment he spotted the dove, the Cloud rushed towards the bird. Nearing the dove, the Cloud looked down and frowned. Seyfi the Black had stretched his bow and was taking aim at the white dove now. The Cloud quickly descended and completely enveloped Seyfi the Black. The man was baffled by the thick fog that settled over him; completely blinded, he started to cough and sneeze. Well, of course, the dove took advantage of this situation and flew off in a hurry. Now the Cloud was happy that the dove had escaped, so he left Seyfi the Black alone, and gathering himself up to the sky, he went on his way. He went here, he went there, he went over hill and dale, and at last arrived over Ayse's garden. There was Ayse, lying among the tulips, watching the sky. Nearby, on her right was the rabbit and upon her left shoulder was perched the white dove that had just escaped from Seyfi the Black. The sunlight was reflected in Ayse's hazel eyes. Her golden hair shone in the sun. With one hand she was stroking the long ears of the rabbit on her right, and with the other she was caressing the dove on her left shoulder. It was just then that the Cloud appeared over the garden. A shadow was cast over the garden for a

moment, but this did not last long; the garden soon became sunlit again. Then the same shadow passed over the garden once more, this time not from left to right, but from right to left. Actually what happened was this: the Cloud had first passed over the garden from left to right; then looking back and seeing Ayse in the garden, he had decided to pass over the garden once again. Now, Ayse saw the cloud, too. So did the rabbit, which recognized him. The dove also saw the cloud, and realizing it was the very Cloud that had rescued him, flapped its wings gently. As for the Cloud, he could see neither the rabbit nor the dove, for whether a human, a beast, or a cloud, once you had set eye upon Ayse, you could not possibly see anything else! The Cloud sighed and uttered a deep "Oh!.." and then a deep "Ah!.."

—Ayse blew a kiss to the Cloud with her fingertips. When this kiss reached the Cloud, he was at first bewildered. But then he pulled himself together and transformed himself into an enormous rose. Ever since the sky was the sky, there had never bloomed such a beautiful, such an enormous rose under that blue expanse. While Ayse was watching the white rose in amazement, the Cloud began to move again; he first stretched, then contracted to take the shape of a heart; that is, he became a cloud again. To cut a long story short, from that day on he never left Ayse. Wherever Ayse went, there followed the cloud. Perhaps Ayse would be digging in the garden with the white dove on her left shoulder and the rabbit on her right -- the Cloud would be watching her from above. Perhaps Ayse would be wiping the sweat from her brow and shading her eyes with her hand as she looked at the sun -- the Cloud would immediately move over the sun, obscuring it and thus casting a shadow over the garden. Once Ayse was resting and had begun to think, "It's nice to have a rest in the shade, but the flowers need sunshine," and the Cloud immediately took the shape of a Chinese umbrella so that Ayse was in the shade while the rest of the garden was flooded with sunshine.

—One night, Ayse was sitting in the garden in front of her tiny house, near the pond. The dove was dozing on her left shoulder, the rabbit in her lap. In the sky were the stars, a crescent moon, and the Cloud in one corner. And Ayse was watching their reflection in the pond. The water in the pond was like a mirror, but the stars and the moon were shining only faintly in that mirror. Ayse lifted her eyes towards the sky, and to her wonder, noticed that they were shining rather dimly there too. "Why?" wondered Ayse, "What's happened to them? Why aren't they shining brightly?" As always, the Cloud immediately sensed what was on Ayse's mind and called down to her from his corner: "They've become a bit dusty. I'll dust and polish them right away." And no sooner had he uttered these words, then he turned himself into a dust cloth and dived into the pond. There he soaked himself, then went up to the sky again. Starting with the moon, he finished his job with the stars. He wiped and cleaned them all, then polished them thoroughly. Ever since the stars were the stars and the moon was the moon, they had never shone so brightly. Ayse was very happy and said, "Thank you very much, my dear Cloud. I love you dearly!" Then she stood up and entered the house. She was sleepy. The Cloud descended from high above and stopped in front of the house. Ayse got into her bed. The Cloud in front of the house turned into a saz. Approaching Ayse's bedroom window, he began to sing her a lullaby:

————— *Sleep, the fairest of all, sleep,*
————— *From the gardens I've brought you sleep,*
————— *In your hazel eyes lie all the green leaves,*
————— *Sleep, the fairest of all, sleep,*
————— *Sweet dreams,*
————— *Lullaby.*

————— *Sleep, the fairest of all, sleep,*
————— *From the stars I've brought you sleep,*

—————*From the sky, the dark-blue velvet,*

—————*Sleep, the fairest of all, sleep,*

—————*My heart is watching over your bed,*

—————*Lullaby.*

—As the Cloud in the shape of a saz was singing this lullaby in front of Ayse's window, as he had begun to do every night, Seyfi the Black tiptoed into the garden. Grasping a huge knife in his hand, he looked to the right and he looked to the left -- the way those about to perform some evil deed always do. Then he began to cut the flowers in the garden. Each flower, be it a rose, a tulip, or a carnation, moaned a deep "Oh!.." as it fell to the black earth; but since they were flowers, they were moaning so faintly that nobody else heard their "Oh!.."

—Let us cut our long story short; finally Seyfi the Black approached a thistle to cut it. The Thistle found a tongue and cried out, "Pray, don't cut me! I may be of use you some day." And Seyfi the Black refrained from cutting the thistle, not because he pitied it but because he thought he could make use of it some day.

Meanwhile, Ayse had fallen asleep listening to the lullaby of the Cloud in the shape of a saz, who had by now transformed himself into a cloud again and wafted up into the sky. He intended to have a look around from up there and then to come down to continue guarding Ayse's door. He looked in front, he looked in back, he looked right, he looked left; all the hills and dales, all the birds and beasts were sound asleep. Actually the Cloud himself was feeling a bit sleepy, but he kept his eyes open, and peering into the garden, spotted Seyfi the Black there. He saw the man cutting the flowers and nearly lost his mind. "You bastard!" he screamed, and taking the form of a hand he took hold of the grip on the handle of the nearby moon. I already told you that the moon was in the form of a sickle. No sooner had the Cloud grasped hold of the crescent moon than he swooped down and swung his moon-sickle into Seyfi's baggy pants, aiming at the buttocks. Seyfi the Black was completely baffled. Who wouldn't be in such a situation? Whirling around, Seyfi the Black challenged the hand-shaped Cloud and the sickle-shaped moon with his knife. But as soon as the knife met the edge of the sickle, it shattered into a thousand pieces as if it were made of glass. The Cloud let go of the crescent moon and returned to the sky. While the moon was having a one-to-one fight with Seyfi the Black down in the garden, the Cloud began to pluck the stars from the sky and throw them down at Seyfi's head. The sickle moon on the ground and the bombardment of the stars from the sky -- who could withstand such an attack? Seyfi escaped as quickly as he could, like a scruffy dog with a tin can tied to its tail.

—The next morning, weeding in the garden, Ayse met the Thistle. She said, "Don't be cross with me, Thistle, but there is no place for you in my garden any more. Either you leave on your own or I'll have to pull you out and throw you away." The Thistle retorted, "I won't go on my own accord. Try and see if you can pull me out!" Ayse was not offended by these words at all. She uprooted the Thistle with her spade and taking hold of it at one end, threw it over the fence. The Thistle, falling to the ground on the other side of the fence, turned into a serpent and began to slither along the dusty road. As the Thistle slithered along the dusty road, time passed, night fell and it became quite dark. Mounted on his horse, Seyfi the Black approached Ayse's door. He called to Ayse in his hoarse voice, "Ayse," he said, "I'm the wealthiest man in the world. Come, marry me!" Ayse answered from the garden, "It's not me that you want but my garden! I'd turn into a stone before I married you!" Seyfi the Black became enraged at this reply; he stood up on his silver-studded saddle preparing to jump into the garden. But the Cloud, who had been watching all this from above, immediately turned into a frightening ghost; descending to the ground, he attacked Seyfi the Black. Seyfi the Black was scared out of his wits. He galloped away. The ghost-Cloud chased Seyfi the Black to the far bank of the stream; then coming back, he entered the garden, took the shape of a furry sheep dog and lay down at Ayse's feet. Ayse patted the Cloud and said, "Thank you, my dear Cloud." The Cloud let out a bark unexpectedly gentle for a sheep dog and wagged

his tail coquettishly. Let us leave Ayse and the Cloud chatting like this and return to Seyfi the Black. Seyfi, who had halted his horse on the other bank of the stream, met the Thistle there. The Thistle said to him, "Hello, Master Seyfi. Ayse has expelled both of us from her garden, hasn't she? Take me up on the back of your horse and go wherever I tell you." Seyfi took the Thistle up on the back of his horse and led his horse wherever the Thistle told him to go. They went here, they went there, they went over hill and dale. The Thistle told Seyfi the Black to buy a sack and an earthen pot; then he had him hang the pot to the right of the horse and the sack to the left. They went here, they went there, they went over hill and dale. Again they passed through forests and bushes. Seyfi the Black's horse turned into a skinny nag after trotting for so long. On the fifteenth day of their journey they arrived at an immense pasture. On the thirtieth day, they found themselves surrounded by rocks. It was as hot as hell. The earth was scorched and cracked. Seyfi the Black looked around but there was not an inch of shade. On the thirty-fifth night, there remained no trace of either earth or rocks. In the moonlight, on the sands that stretched from horizon to horizon, the horse had great difficulty in moving onward. On the fortieth day, the Thistle said, "Here we are; this is the wasteland. Fill up the sack with this sand." Seyfi the Black dismounted from his horse, by now a skinny nag, and filled the sack with sand from the wasteland. Then he loaded the sack on the horse and remounted. The horse found a tongue and said, "Have mercy on me, oh Master Seyfi! I cannot even walk, how do you expect me to carry a sack of sand?" Instead of taking pity on the horse, Seyfi the Black whipped it. The gray horse took to the road, limping. The Thistle then said, "Now we're heading for the wind-land." They went here, they went there, they went over hill and dale; suddenly a very strong wind began to blow against them and it proved impossible to go even one step further. A few trees appeared, their roots reaching down to the seventh stratum of the earth and their canopies to the seventh stratum of the sky. Their leaves and branches shaking, the trees were swaying downward to the ground from the seventh layer of the sky and then back up again. Seyfi the Black said, "I can't possibly go on. My horse can't take this wind any more, nor can I." But the Thistle replied, "We can't stop now! Proceed!" Seyfi the Black continued for three more days and three more nights, whipping his gray horse, which was sweating blood by now and fighting the wind blowing so fiercely against them. At last they reached the seashore. The waves of the sea were nothing but foam, and they rose high up in the air, one after the other, as high as seven minarets before they crashed back upon the spewing waters with the din of doomsday. The Thistle said, "Here we are! Now, fill up your pot with wind!" Seyfi the Black held the mouth of the pot towards the wind. The wind, howling and screaming, filled the pot. Seyfi quickly covered the top with a piece of leather and, using the Thistle as a string, tied it firmly up. He then loaded the pot onto the horse. He set off on his return journey. The horse was now almost flying as the wind was pushing them. Let us leave Seyfi flying back before the wind and return to Ayse. Ayse was now in bed with the white dove at her bedside and the rabbit at her feet; the Cloud was outside in front of her window, and all were fast asleep. Seyfi the Black, covering a distance of forty-three days in only three days, came directly to Ayse's garden. He dismounted and picked up the sack. Entering the garden, he scattered the sand from the wasteland all over the garden, around the roses, the carnations, the tulips, and the trees, and then left. Let us cut our long story short; the dawn broke and Ayse, the dove at her bedside, the rabbit at her feet, and the Cloud in front of her window all woke up with a heartrending groan. They rushed out into the garden. Lo and behold! The tulips, the roses, the carnations, the trees, and the water in the pond were all drying up and moaning. The flowers were withering away, the leaves were scorched as if touched by fire, and the water in the pond was draining away as if through a hole at the bottom. They were all moaning and crying, "Help us, Ayse! We're withering away, we're drying up! Save us!" Ayse was at a loss. In panic she rushed from a wilting rose to a withering tulip and from the withering tulip to a drying-up carnation. Seyfi the Black, on the other hand, was astride his horse at the other side of the fence, scratching his bushy black beard with his black fingernails and grinning with satisfaction. When every single flower in the garden had fallen to the parched earth, Seyfi the

Black yelled again, "Come, sell this garden to me, Ayse! It's no longer a garden but a graveyard, anyway. Sell me the garden and then you can go to hell!" Ayse replied to Seyfi, "I'm not going anywhere! I'd rather be buried in this graveyard together with my dead flowers." While Ayse and Seyfi the Black were going like this, the cloud had gone up into the sky and began watching them from above.

—He was so miserable that he was unable to utter a word or move a finger. The dove flew up to his side and said, "Oh, dear Cloud! Dear Cloud! Why don't you help Ayse?" The Cloud took a deep breath and said, "What can I do? How can I help her? I would gladly sacrifice my life for her, but..." The dove said, "Well, you've said it! Since you're ready to die for her, why don't you do so?" The Cloud answered, "That's right! Why didn't it occur to me before?" Thus spoke the Cloud, and no sooner had he spoken than he began to give himself up for Ayse. Turning into precipitation he began to rain. Seeing this Seyfi the Black got so angry that he began to shoot arrows at the Cloud. But the Thistle called from the top of the pot, "Don't you know that arrows are useless against a cloud? Untie me and open the pot." As soon as the Thistle said this, Seyfi the Black opened the pot and let the wind free to attack the Cloud in the sky. The wind went after the Cloud, whistling. Ayse cried out from below, "Watch out, my dear Cloud!" The Cloud took the shape of a heart. As the fierce wind struck it, the heart shattered into a thousand pieces; that is, it broke into a thousand tiny hearts. From below, Seyfi the Black was still calling to the wind, "Tear him into pieces; have no pity!" The rabbit was crying out from below, "Hold on!" A thousand tiny hearts were trying to unite, struggling very hard against the fierce wind. And the white dove was helping, carrying back in its beak the tiny hearts that had drifted away. Ayse, the rabbit, Seyfi the Black, the gray horse, and the Thistle were all gazing into the sky. Some cheering for the Cloud and the dove, the others crying out instructions to the fierce wind, all were watching the fight in the sky. Let us be brief and tell you that, in the end, the tiny hearts united as one enormous, single heart again. Seeing this, the Thistle said to Seyfi the Black, "Throw me up there!" And Seyfi the Black sent the Thistle flying into the sky. Clinging itself to the heart-shaped Cloud, the Thistle began to suck its blood. The fierce wind was trying to tear the Cloud apart a second time. The white dove immediately flew to the Thistle and started to tear it apart with its beak. The Thistle fell to the ground in shreds right at Seyfi's feet. The fierce wind was by now out of breath and already feeling weak. Seyfi the Black became really angry, while Ayse and the rabbit were beside themselves with joy. As the fierce wind blew away once and for all, the Cloud took the shape of an eye and began to weep. The white dove asked the Cloud, "Why are you crying, my dear Cloud? Because you pity yourself?" The Cloud answered him, "No, not out of self-pity. I'd gladly sacrifice myself for Ayse; I'm not crying for that, but because I'll be separated from her now..." Then the Cloud transformed itself into rain, which began to pour down upon the earth. In the garden the flowers began to raise their heads, they started to breathe again; all recovered their former glory. Ayse was drying her tears and meanwhile calling up to the Cloud. "My dear Cloud, oh my dear Cloud, please don't kill yourself! I don't want you to die; stop raining now!.. Oh, please, please don't die!.. Beneath the rain, falling faster and faster, Seyfi the Black became soaked, his teeth clattering both in rage and from the penetrating chill of the rain as well.

—Let us leave the Cloud, Ayse, and Seyfi the Black for the moment and see where the white dove has gone. The white dove was chasing the fierce wind, which had disappeared in shame of its defeat. The dove caught up with it on a hilltop and said, "Look here, dear wind! Seyfi the Black belittled you by exploiting your power and energy for an unjust cause. This is why you could not defeat the Cloud. Aren't you going to take your revenge? Aren't you going to make Seyfi the Black pay for this?" As soon as it heard these words, the fierce wind returned. Whistling and howling, it attacked Seyfi the Black. Seizing him up from the back of his horse, it threw him up into the air, spun him and whirled him around before hurling him back to the ground. Seyfi tried to mount his horse, but the gray horse said, "You have never taken pity on me, why should I pity you now?" It gave him such a hard kick that Seyfi tumbled to the ground once more. And now the fierce wind snatched him up

like a dry leaf, carried him away, chased him, pushed him, and threw him over a cliff. Let us leave Seyfi the Black tumbling over the cliff and return to Ayse's garden. All the flowers were gleaming and all the trees were blooming again. Ayse was standing near the pond. The dove was on her left shoulder and the rabbit was at her right foot. The sky was crystal blue and the sun was shining brightly. Everybody but Ayse looked happy. The white dove asked her, "My dear Ayse, why are you so sad?" Ayse replied, "My beloved Cloud saved all of us: my flowers, me, and each one of us, but he himself has died. He sacrificed his life for us. What can I do but mourn?" Ayse sighed deeply, and tear drops rolled down like pearls from her hazel eyes to mingle with the water in the pond. The rabbit said, "You're mourning in vain, Ayse. You must know that good people, good beasts, and good clouds never really disappear. Those who love never die. Just have a look at the pond!" Ayse did so, and what did she see! On the pond, filled with the heavy rain of a little while ago, there emerged a blue swan under the golden rays of the sun!

—Let us once more be brief and say that in a short while the Cloud reappeared in the blue sky; taking his former shape, he gazed down upon Ayse and the garden. He transformed himself into a huge mouth, wide, and smiling with pleasure. And thus good came to good in FLUTELAND, and evil to evil. Thus ended the tale the Dervish was telling with his flute. And putting the flute under his arm, the Dervish walked away.